

**PATRIARCHAL PRACTICE AGAINST WOMAN CHARACTER'S IN
PAT BARKER'S *THE SILENCE OF THE GIRLS***

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ABSTRACT

Various cultural problems have existed from the past to the present life of society. One of them is patriarchal culture or patriarchal practice. Patriarchal practice can be known through various writings on social media and literary works. This article deals with patriarchal practice happening in a literary work, in this case, in a novel entitled *The Silence of The Girls* written by Pat Barker. The aims of the research are to describe the patriarchal practice portrayed in the novel and the women's struggle to face the patriarchal practice done by the men. This novel tells about Briseis, the main character, and the other two woman characters, who experience domination and oppression from man characters. In conducting the research, Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy is employed. In addition, this study is designed by using a qualitative descriptive method that focuses on presenting data directly through observation. Besides, feminist literary criticism is applied because this study focuses on the issue of women's equality. The results of the study shows that Achilles, Patroclus, and Agamemnon dominate Briseis, Iphis, and Chryseis by abusing their power. The men are more powerful than the women by controlling, oppressing mercilessly with violence and sexuality such as rape, without considering their throne as women. Therefore, the women cannot voice what they want to convey because their voices are rejected, and they do not have the right to speak out, which can result in losing their identity as women. However, Brises and the other women build a community and solidarity to strengthen them, so that they can survive in facing patriarchal practices by strengthening each other and giving the best support. Moreover, they can strengthen self-awareness to achieve prosperity and freedom. Those are women's manner to be able to survive during the war and to face men's domination.

Keywords: *patriarchal practice, oppression, power abuse, male domination.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a collection of values, norms, beliefs, customs, practices and artifacts shared by a group of individuals in society. Culture is a system of meanings adopted by humans that serves as a guide in living life. (Geertz, 2017:24). This culture is passed down from generation to generation by ancestors,

so it is very difficult to change it. One example of culture is patriarchal practices that can affect individual and community life.

Patriarchy creates and exacerbates gender inequality, at the expense of women who are faced with difficulties in accessing power, political rights, and economic opportunities. Patriarchy has strictly regulated gender roles, limiting women's freedom and life choices (Wood, 2019:1-10). According to Sheba Elsa Jose (2019:11) in patriarchal societies, women are often considered to have the primary duty to serve their fathers, brothers, and husbands. This view reflects a social structure in which men hold political, moral, and property authority, while women are expected to obey and serve male family members. However, after marriage, women are dominated by their husbands where the father and husband are like a transaction. This transaction exists when women marry, which makes it like buying and selling.

Patriarchy still becomes a big issue in society because the relationship between men and women is a problem that never ends. It happens because women's position is under men causing gender inequality and making women oppressed. In a patriarchal culture, women need to be protected by men. This only makes them easier to be dominated and not to make them strong in surviving these uncertainties in life. Moreover, women always become number two and get discriminated against the role of society because men are the world standard. Patriarchal culture is a culture in which women do not have an important role by not accommodating equality and balance because in general patriarchy can be interpreted as a leadership system by men. Radical feminists develop the element of woman domination by men and pay less attention to the element of men dominating each other, and to develop the concept and theory of patriarchy into a system that is mutually exclusive with capitalism, also known as racism. Patriarchal culture and ideology can be socialized in society because it gets aspects of life that have been legitimized. This condition can close the participation of women in the public sphere and can lead to discrimination of women. This is the main factor of women's decline with various problems that are maintained. In a patriarchal society, unmarried women are dominated by their fathers and brothers and manage all their affairs. However, after marriage, women are dominated by their husbands where the father and husband are like a transaction. This transaction exists when women marry, which makes it like buying and selling.

The reason why the researchers are interested in choosing the topic of patriarchal practice is because women have right to express their opinion, and they can have the same position as men. This research provides an opportunity for researchers to study about the oppression of women in the Greek era. At that time, women want to share opinions and seize their rights, and this issue makes the researchers interested in studying it. This research is certainly one of the researchers' efforts to fill a void that has never been done by previous researchers, by studying the novel with a deep understanding of patriarchal practices. Although there are previous studies that raise the same topic with different data sources, the researchers tries to present different and new perspectives.

Sylvia Walby is chosen by the researchers for the theory in this research.

Sylvia Walby is a British sociologist. Walby is known for her extensive literary work on gender and social theory, especially about patriarchy. In one of her books, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), she developed a detailed and systematic analysis of patriarchy as a complex system of gender oppression. Walby's theory is often cited in feminist studies because of its comprehensive approach to understand patriarchy in its various dimensions. Walby (1990: 15-18) identifies six key structures through which patriarchy operates: Paid work, The Household, The state, Violence, Sexuality and Cultural institution. There are also private and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy is based on a women household as the main site of women oppression while public patriarchy is based on public side such as employment in the state. The six structures have a causal effect on each other, either reinforcing or hindering each other. This requires are not just one base but reductionism and essentialism.

The novel, *The Silence of The Girls* by Pat Barker tells about Breseis, the main character, and other woman characters that are used as booty for the war leaders who win the war in Greek era. They are dominated and oppressed by man characters. They must do what the man characters want them to do without considering their feeling. They don't have freedom to speak out what they want to say and what they feel. The researchers observe how patriarchal practice is portrayed and how the women fight against patriarchal practice in the novel. It aims to describe the patriarchal practice that happens and activities done by the woman characters to face the patriarchal practice in the novel.

B. METHODS

In conducting the research, qualitative method is used because qualitative method emphasizes a close approach to data with minimal interpretation, making it ideal for research that aims to understand "what" is happening, rather than "why" or "how". According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research focuses on understanding the meaning that individuals give to their experiences. This method is inductive, descriptive, and process-oriented, with the aim of exploring a deep understanding the phenomenon under study. Feminist literary criticism approach is used to reveal how women are represented in literary works and how patriarchal system influences women in Greek era. Feminist literary criticism focuses on analyzing literary works through a feminist perspective to understand, explore, and challenge the representation of gender, especially women.

The data are taken from novel *The Silence of The Girls* by Pat Barker which are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, or a group of sentences which are related to the topic of analysis. The data collected are analyzed by using several steps: reading the novel thoroughly and several times, especially elements related to the topic analysis, identifying the data by marking and underlining them to be examined, and selecting and classifying the data based on the problem statement. After the data have been classified, they are analyzed by using following steps: interpreting the classified data, analyzing the data, relating the data and the theory used, and concluding the analysis.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patriarchal Practice Described in The Novel The Silence of The Girls

The Silence of The Girls is a novel that raises the issue of patriarchy and violence experienced by women as a result of male control and power in the Greek era. The characters in the novel experience various kinds of injustice. The men's power and dominance cause subordination to the women. Patriarchy is a culture that prioritizes men in various aspects of life and makes men become the main holders of power. In a patriarchal system, men have more privileges than women. This male domination occurs in many educational, political, and social life environments. This novel has a patriarchal system that is the root of various violence and oppression against the characters in the novel. Here are some patriarchal practices that exist in the novel The Silence of The Girls by Pat Barker.

Power Abuse By Men

According to Judith Butler, a gender theorist, power abuse often stems from patriarchal structures that privilege men over women. Patriarchy creates social norms where men are more powerful and have control over women in private and public relationships. This abuse arises because of social expectations that a man must maintain power and control over women. Some evidence of power abuse in the novel The Silence of The Girls will be explained in this part.

In ancient tradition, women are often betrothed to a man without the woman's consent, as Briseis is betrothed by her father with Myness when she is very young. On her wedding day, Briseis is carried on a palanquin by her father's soldiers to Myness's palace. This is proved in the quotation below:

'What a disappointment I must have been when, finally, I climbed down from the litter and stood, trembling, as the maids removed my mantle and veils: a skinny little thing, all hair and eyes and scarcely a curve in sight.' (Barker, 2018:14).

The quotation above shows that Briseis's father uses power abuse by setting her up with Myness who is the king of Lynersus. Her father does not think about Briseis's feelings, and the most important thing is that he is satisfied. Unfortunately, after several months of marriage, Briseis does not quickly get pregnancy even though both of them have tried hard. Finally, Myness comes back to his first love, a slave whom Myness has loved since he is 12 years old. In Walby's theory, The State is very related to power abuse by men because men consider women to be the lowest and will never have power until death. It is the nature of women. Walby also argues that a woman does not only become the function as entities that regulate and manage society, but also as an arena where gender inequality is produced and maintained.

Silencing Women's Voices

Silencing women's voices is a phenomenon that silencing or rejecting women's voices in expressing opinions ignores women's opinions or views in various aspects such as social, political, and work environments. This silencing occurs because structural inequalities that make women have no right to speak out cause injustice, reinforce patriarchal norms, and reduce their involvement in social life. Silencing women's voices happens to several women in The Silence of The Girls, which will be explained in this part.

Since Briseis becomes a slave of Achilles, she does not live with the others in the camp but lives with Achilles. On the first night, Briseis feels very scared of being raped by Achilles because Achilles orders Briseis to sleep with him but the fear is only in her mind. This can be seen in this quotation:

'I stepped back and sat down on the narrow bed, pressing my hands together to stop them trembling. I tried to swallow, but my mouth was too dry. Seconds later, the door opened and Achilles's huge shadow blotted out the light. He didn't speak—perhaps he thought I wouldn't be able to understand him—just jerked his thumb at the other room. Shaking, I got up and followed him.' (Barker, 2018:30).

The quotation above shows that Briseis could not bring herself to refuse to sleep with Achilles. Briseis only feels her body trembling and scared until her mouth is dry. Finally, she follows Achilles from behind to his bed. This is the proof that men will never understand about women's feelings.

Oppression on Women

Oppression on women is caused by patriarchal structures and strong social norms of gender equality. Oppression on women is a condition where women are subordinated in various aspects of life such as human rights, education, and social life. Oppression on women also occurs in sexuality and domestic violence as well as in settings that restrict women's right to reproductive health, thus leading them to have abortions. This part will explain about women's oppression that exist in novel.

Every night Briseis and Iphis wait for the men to finish dinner, but at that time Briseis chooses to go to the beach to take a dip and relax her mind for a while. While soaking, Briseis feels her skin shiver from the cold seawater, so she quickly returns to Achilles's camp with her wet dress. After arriving, she is greeted by Iphis, and Iphis helps her to change the clothes and dry her hair. While Achilles is playing his lute every night, he waves his hand to signal Briseis to sleep with him. That night Achilles fucks Briseis by starting from her hair. This can be seen from this quotation.

'What's that smell? Groaning, he buried his face in my hair, then moved across my skin, mouthing and licking till he reached my breasts. When he started sucking my nipples, I arched my back with the shock of it, because this wasn't a man making love to a woman—this was a starving baby, a baby who's sucking so desperately it loses the breast and works itself up into a towering rage.' (Barker, 2018:43).

The quotation above shows that women who experience oppression is not only in violence but also in sexuality. Hence, they feel a loss of honour and lack of self-esteem, which causes trauma to women. In the quotation, Achilles squeezes Briseis's breasts hard as if he is venting something he has been suppressing, like a baby suckling and longing for the warmth of a mother, not like a man fucking a woman.

Eventually, Briseis knows some women who are “gifts” just like her such as Tecmessa who is given to Nestor for sacking Tenedos, Uza also from Tenedos. Ritsa is Briseis's friend in Lynersuss given to Machaon a chief naval doctor.

Chryseis is the youngest among them who is fifteen year old as the slave of Agamemnon. Tecmessa is Ajak's slave for four years and she has gotten a son. Ajak kills her father and brother while raping her on the same night, as seen in the quotation: 'Ajax had killed her father and her brothers and that same night raped her.' (Pat Barker, 2018:47). Oppression on women in this novel is very cruel because not only women who are ready to be slaves but even those under age become slaves. Tecmessa is raped on the same night as the murder of her family, so she couldn't fight back, and for the past four years, she has been a housewife caring for her son.

In Walby's theory of six aspects of patriarchy, there are two things related to oppression on women. Those are violence and sexuality. In this case, women are not only treated with violence but also with sexuality. Women have no self-esteem at all in this case. This relates to the women in the novel. Besides being slaves, they must willingly give their bodies to men. Unfortunately, the men have sex with them roughly and inhumanely. When they are no longer needed, they will be thrown away.

Losing Women's Identity

Simone de Beauvoir in his book entitled *The Sex* states that women are treated as "the other" where they are formed by the patriarchal environment not from themselves. Women are not free to express and develop themselves because they are considered as a complement to men and will never have a position above men. That makes women lose their identity.

Every night at bedtime, Briseis waits for Achilles in the bed. She is eager to engage Achilles in a conversation that will make all the difference, even though she knows it will end in an explosion of anger. Lying down and giving her crotch and breasts is her routine every night. This can be seen in the following quotation.

'I lay underneath this man, who was not a man at all but an angry child, and prayed for it to be over quickly. And afterwards, I'd stretch myself out as straight-legged as a corpse on a funeral pyre and wait for the moment when his sleeping breath would free me to turn onto my side and face the wall. And I prayed for change. Every morning and every night, I prayed for my life to change.' (Barker, 2018:54).

The quotation above shows that the woman has lost her identity, and she will feel resigned and desperate. She will do what she is told without saying a word. It shows that the woman is a realistic human being who needs to be cared for instead of being oppressed which makes her lose her identity. Finally she can only pray for a better life every day.

Women's Fight Against Patriarchal Practice in The Novel The Silence of The Girls

The novel *The Silence of The Girls* tells about the patriarchal practices that are rooted in society. It describes how patriarchy harms women physically. Briseis and other women experience a loss of freedom and dignity, treated as spoils in a larger conflict. However, behind the sadness and depression, there are seeds of resistance. Briseis and the women, although trapped in an oppressive situation, show resilience and strength in facing their fate. This novel not only provides a picture of suffering, but also hope and courage to fight injustice. By highlighting

the struggle of women in the context of ancient Greek mythology, the struggle against patriarchy is a relevant and important theme, both in the past and in the present. Here is how women fight against patriarchal practice that exist in the novel.

Building Solidarity and Community Among Women

Solidarity is a sense of unity and mutual support between individuals that involve difficult and challenging feelings or situations. Community is creating deeper and more personal relationships in order to feel recognized and appreciated. Therefore, solidarity and community have a very close relationship. A solid community is the key to overcome common challenges and achieve greater goals. Building solidarity also involves recognizing the diversity of women's experiences and backgrounds. Every woman has a unique story and challenge influenced by factors such as race, class, religion, and sexual orientation.

The women are gathered to wash the body of Myron, who is infected by a terrible plague. They dislike Myron for always pushing hard and taking advantage of his sexuality. They take off Myron's sweat stained clothes, and one of them exclaims in disgust at his swollen, bursting crotch. Achilles and Patroclus come in to make sure Myron is safe in women's hands, after they leave and the door is closed. A woman takes Myron's poor limp penis between her thumb and forefinger and shook it at us all, and they all laugh out loud. This can be seen in the quotation below.

'The women hooted with laughter—and immediately clapped their hands over their mouths to silence themselves. But nothing could contain that laughter which rose in pitch and volume till it turned to whoops of hysteria that must have been clearly audible outside the hut. The woman waggling Myron's penis was shrieking as she gasped for breath.' (Barker, 2018:79).

The above quotation shows that in a state of grief, women can let out their laughter when they see a man they hate lying helplessly. At that time, the best revenge for women is to see a man who ever has harassed dead. Even though they do not know whether they would be harassed again or not, they only think that today they could let out their laughter freely.

Strengthening Self-Awareness

Strengthening self-awareness is a process to strengthen the ability to recognize, evaluate thoughts, feelings, and understand one's own behaviour that can increase awareness of thinking, acting, and interacting with others. This can affect personal life and social relationships. Strengthening self-awareness is also closely related to developing empathy. When a person understands themselves better, they are more likely to understand the feelings and perspectives of others. This can improve the quality of interpersonal relationships, as individuals with high self-awareness are better able to communicate well and respond to the needs of others.

One morning, Briseis is sitting on the stairs and is approached by Ritsa. Lately, Ritsa seems exhausted from caring for soldiers injured in the war. The hospital where they are being treated is not far from the women's camp, about 20

minutes away. Machaon has permitted me to help Ritsa. At first, on the way Briseis looks very afraid to look back at the Agamemnon complex, but little by little Briseis relaxes and looks around as if she is seeing the world for the first time. Briseis continues to follow Ritsa's steps through the narrow space between two beds where Machaon is sitting on straw sewing a soldier's wound. Then Ritsa takes Briseis to the back of the tent and sits her down at a long table, that's where Briseis feels a very happy, as seen in this quotation.

'It felt good to be sitting beside her on the bench with a pestle and mortar in front of me and several jars of dried herbs close at hand. Above our heads, swaying slightly in the draught, hung a laundry rack with bunches of dried herbs suspended from it. Fresh herbs, those that could be gathered locally, lay in swathes across the table, giving off their sharp, sweet, penetrating scents and attracting bees that flew in through the open tent flap. Many of the herbs—those I could identify—were for pain relief, but others were used to clean wounds.' (Barker, 2018:121).

The quotation above describes how Briseis can get out of her comfort zone by doing new activities that is helping Ritsa treat soldiers who are injured in the war. Briseis can try new things and knowledge about herbs in the hospital and how to cure various wounds or diseases. Briseis has taken action where she can interact with Machaon, a doctor at the hospital. Briseis feels something that makes her happy for something to hold back patience but on the other hand, Briseis also thinks in the same situation that as a woman and a slave is a chasm that cannot be blurred and becomes a sentimental imprisonment together.

Woman's Freedom in Facing Patriarchal Practice

Women's freedom in facing patriarchal practices is a very important and relevant issue in today's social context. In many societies, patriarchal structures are deeply entrenched, creating norms that limit women's rights and freedoms. These practices are often seen in various aspects of life. In this context, women are often trapped in roles that are determined by society, where they are expected to adhere to certain standards that are not always fair. Women's freedom in facing patriarchal practices is a struggle that requires courage and support from the women's community to enjoy an equal and just life without oppression. Women's freedom in facing patriarchal practices is an ongoing struggle, and with the right understanding and support, women can fight for their rights and create positive change in society.

One night, Agamemnon, Nestor, Odysseus, and Ajax gather to drink wine as usual Briseis pours it for them. They talk about the battle between the Greek and the Trojan by making a strategy for Achilles to join the war. They will bribe Achilles by returning Briseis to him. Briseis is there and immediately goes to get a cloak because Nestor orders her. After arriving at the women's camp, Briseis meets Ritsa and tells her what has happened that night. Briseis tidies her hair while biting her lip using sturdy sandals and wearing her best coat. Ritsa hears the sound of men approaching directly pushing Briseis out of the camp. Ajax and Odysseus are waiting for Briseis outside the camp with angry face because Briseis is not wearing her veil, Ritsa quickly gives Briseis a shiny white veil to cover her hair. Before leaving, Odysseus gives Briseis an opal necklace where the necklace

is Briseis's father's necklace that he gives to her mother as the gift on their wedding day. Briseis recall with her family in Lynerssus. When they are going to Achilles camp, Briseis adjusts her veil so she can see the way clearly. Briseis glances back to see that Ritsa is waving her hand to say goodbye. As they pass the beach, Briseis feels free from Agamemnon's clutches, as seen in the following quotation.

'After a few minutes I felt free to raise my veil and gaze out over the sea. Briefly, the moon appeared, just long enough to create a path of light over the water before racing black clouds gobbled it up again. I don't think he believed this mission stood much chance of success, but I don't know, perhaps he did.' (Barker, 2018:129-130).

The quotation above reveals women's freedom which happens to Briseis who is free from Agamemnon and she is happier being a slave of Achilles, even though Briseis is not completely free to be a slave. After arriving at Achilles's camp, Ajax and Odysseus go inside to negotiate the issue of the war. They tell Briseis to wait outside. Briseis wants to find and meet Iphis but she is afraid and worried that she would be called. While waiting for a while, Briseis is called to come inside to meet Achilles, Patroclus, Ajax, and Odysseus.

In the morning Achilles prepares for battle, while Briseis tries to swallow bread to relieve her nausea in Achilles's room. Suddenly the priest and Alcimus come to perform a wedding ceremony. After finishing, Achilles holds Briseis' chin by saying that Alcimus would be good for her and her baby. The incident happens so quickly. Achilles is killed by Paris as Helen's husband, as a form of revenge for killing Hector. Finally, Agamemnon and others burn Troy, and all the women are gathered in a camp. Briseis is approached by a little girl, Hecamade who needs to talk with Briseis. Hecamade asks Briseis to find Polyxena as a Priam's daughter and take her to the cape up the hill. Polyxena already wears a clean white robe and is ready to be killed by Phyrrus. The fire begins to blaze up to the top of Troy but the long black tower is still strong. Briseis is silent there to say goodbye to Patroclus and Achilles before she goes on board the ship with Alcimus.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion above, women are used as booty for the war leaders who win the war that occurs. They lose their identity and agency with man domination on women. This strengthens the patriarchal practices which happen in the novel. Patriarchal practices and their impact on women in oppressive historical and social contexts. Patriarchy is rooted in various aspects of life, including objectification as a war's gift, silencing women's voices, and submission to male desires, and power dynamics. These practices are expressed through acts of violence, domination, and the reduction of women to commodities in a male-centered society. The war brings deep physical destruction to the women who are victims. Briseis, previously a queen in Lynerssus, loses everything, city, family, freedom, and self-respect. She quickly becomes a slave to Achilles because her country has fallen during the war. Since then, a new life for Briseis and other women has begun.

In addition, Briseis and the women experience a patriarchal system, with the abuse of power by men highlighted through an exploration of the violence, injustice, and oppression experienced by women in the context of the Trojan War. Briseis and the other women are treated like chattels with no regard for their dignity or humanity. They have no control over their own lives and are forced to accept the fate determined by the men around them.

The women at that time build communities and solidarity to strengthen each other, for example, when Briseis will become a slave for Agamemnon because Chryseis will be returned to his father. Therefore, Briseis is caring for Chryseis while Ritsa and other women can only give encouragement and hug to her. At least it can reduce Briseis' fear. Not only that, by strengthening self-awareness allows them to face the patriarchal system and in the end there is a fruit from patience in slaves, when Achilles dies because he is killed by Troy. Finally, they are all free to leave.

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