

Woman Domination: A Study Of Taylor Jenkins Reid's The Seven Husbands Of Evelyn Hugo

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Abstract. *This examines the theme of woman domination in Taylor Jenkins Reid's novel, "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo." Employing feminist literary analysis, the study explores the depiction of female characters' reactions to oppression, clearing light on their ability to make choices, challenge stereotypes, and maintain their autonomy in a patriarchal society. The research utilizes qualitative content analysis, concentrating on the portrayal of each husband in Evelyn's life and how she guides societal expectations. The findings reveal examples of resistance, self-awareness, and unconventional choices made by Evelyn Hugo in her goal of personal freedom and happiness..*

Keywords: *feminist, literary analysis, patriarchal society, societal expectations, woman domination,.*

INTRODUCTION

Women who can control themselves in the context of not being victims of patriarchy frequently reflect strength, independence, and the power to challenge social norms that may sustain gender inequality. The following are several characteristics or characteristics often associated with women who can hold themselves and face patriarchy. Independent women can make their own decisions and control their lives without relying solely on men or patriarchal structures that might limit their freedom and opportunities. Women who can handle themselves often have a strong sense of their rights. They realize they have equal rights with men and are ready to defend them. Able to challenge and reject gender stereotypes that can limit women's roles and possibility. These women may not let social expectations restrict their aspirations and desires.

Oppression is a word that directs to the act of choosing to emphasize differences based on typical values. Oppression is any condition, harassment, or exclusion, either directly or indirectly, which is established on human differences based on religion, tribe, race, nationality, level, class, social status, financial status, woman, language, political beliefs. The result is the deduction, deviation or elimination of distinction, implementation or use of human rights and essential freedoms in individual and collaborative life, including the woman, race, economic, educational and social fields. In specific situations, there has been disagreement between feminists and antiracists, with supporters from each group declaring that their particular form of oppression deserves the highest consideration (Baldwin, 2017).

Oppression can be interpreted as an attitude or behavior that violates human rights. According to American Psychological Association, (2022), oppression directs to the unjust or prejudiced treatment of individuals and groups due to characteristics like race, woman, age, or

sexual orientation. That is the basic meaning. However, cracking the reasons behind oppression is a more complex task. The human brain inherently categorizes things to understand the world's complexities. Children swiftly learn distinctions between boys and girls, consistent when very young. However, the importance we attach to these categories is accepted—shaped by our upbringing, the effect of our peers, and our statements of how the world operates. Oppression often arises from fear and misunderstanding. Lexically, prejudice refers to treating individuals or companies based on specific categories. In other contexts, oppression can be defined as the differential treatment of individuals based on aspects such as woman, race, religion, age, or other factors. From these two definitions, it can be figured that the essence of oppression is distinct treatment.

Oppression regarding Human Rights is any condition, harassment or exclusion rooted in human distinctions based on religion, ethnicity, race, group, class, social status, economic status, woman, language and political ideas. The impacts include reducing, shifting, or eliminating recognition, implementation, or use of human rights and essential freedoms in various aspects of life. In this context, oppression is seen as manners that harms woman directly or indirectly, with developments of physical, mental or sexual suffering, as well as dangers that may arise in the association between the perpetrator and the target of oppression.

Woman oppression often appears in society in various forms, including marginalization, stereotypes, subordination, violence and multiple positions. This happens due to several reasons, including government policies that do not prefer women or men and mistakes in religious experience, namely viewing women as weak and secondary. Apart from that, there are elements of tradition, custom, scientific hypotheses and science and technology expertise. Differentiation of roles and functions between women and men, both directly in the form of treatment and perspectives and indirectly in the form of legal regulations and policies that have delivered rise to various injustices rooted in history, customs and norms in society. Woman inequity occurs because of ideas and justifications that have been planted throughout human civilization in various forms, which not only affect females but are also experienced by males. In general, woman inequity is experienced more by women, but woman inequity also affects men. The existence of woman oppression has forced misery and poverty in society, especially for women who more frequently experience woman oppression. To avoid or misjudge this problem, all groups roles are needed to comprehend the concept of woman better and not ignore the attractions of men and women in making government decisions. So that there are more occasional victims of woman oppression.

The data presented in this time-series examination of woman equality in labor force

participation worldwide paints a worrying picture. The incremental decline in woman equivalency since 2009, which worsened seriously in 2020, reflects the real challenges in achieving equality in the workplace. It is crucial to identify the causes of these varying trends and understand their impact on women staying in the labor market. Factors such as economic changes, industry shifts, and work policies can play a role in resulting in these differences. Data shows that in 2022, the woman equality rate in the force will reach 62.9%, which is the most subordinate level since the index began. The fact that women's unemployment rates stay consistently higher paints a complete image of the challenges encountered by women in the workplace (Zahidi, 2022, p. 22)

The *Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid is a novel concerning the life of the fictional Hollywood film icon Evelyn Hugo. The story is described by Monique Grant, a young journalist who wisely decides to write her biography.

Evelyn's life evolves through her seven marriages, each intricately related to her career, personal growth, and challenges in a male-dominated industry. The novel investigates the intersectionality of woman oppression as Evelyn guides the complex world of Hollywood, facing problems such as unequal pay, objectification, and limited possibilities for women. Through the lens of Evelyn's experiences, the novel delves into the more general themes of societal expectations, the sacrifices women make for success, and the price of questioning traditional woman roles. It relieves light on the struggles of a woman trying to assert her agency in an atmosphere where power dynamics are heavily skewed towards her.

In the context of woman oppression, the end of *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* emphasizes the complexity of connections and woman roles in the life of the main character, Monique. This story examines how society perceives strong and sexual women like Evelyn Hugo and how Monique's adventures as a woman are reflected in the developing narrative. In Monique's journey, the reader see how female characters can hold power and decide to take control of their lives despite social forces and woman norms. Evelyn Hugo is an sample of a woman who defied social expectations and cut her path, although perhaps at emotional sacrifice and consequence. This story asks readers to reflect on the role of woman stereotypes in women's lives, specifically those who strive to achieve freedom and autonomy. The ending shows that Monique takes the complexity of love and life, showing that women can have experiences and senses that are much deeper than just their roles in heterosexual connections.

The narrative also highlights the impact of oppression on women in the entertainment industry, demonstrating how female actors are often sidelined as they age while their male companions continue to thrive. By entangling Evelyn's personal and professional journey, the

novel supplies a poignant commentary on woman oppression and women's challenges in seeking success and self-determination.

This research carries the potential to make a significant contribution to the realm of feminism analysis, particularly in involving woman domination theory to understand complex themes within the novel. The study presents an enhanced understanding of the portrayal of woman oppression in literary works, providing readers with the instruments to delve into and demonstrate appropriate elements related to this theme within the story. Further, through the study of *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid, the researcher can contribute to the current understanding of literature, clearing light on how young authors handle and represent issues such as feminism issue.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Second Sex by Simone D Beauvoir

The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir, published in 1947, is today a continuously read feminist classic. "You are not born a woman; you get to be", the famous phrase that would be coined by feminism, in the seventies, sums up well the value, epistemological and political, of a book that, even today, serves as an inspiration to think about women's future. Simone de Beauvoir has told in her *Memoirs* how the idea of writing a book about women was conceived. The proposal, which, according to her book, originates from Jean Paul Sartre, becomes firm because of the need to reveal the meaning of "being a woman" and how the feminine condition will mark her life; how it has influenced her actions and decisions as well as her work. The author tells how the preparation of this book, which will take place over three years, will provide many unexpected surprises and discoveries (Beauvoir, 1949).

Stereotype

A stereotype is a widely held but oversimplified and generalized opinion or idea about a certain group of people or things. Stereotypes often arise from cultural norms, prejudices, or misunderstandings and may not accurately portray the diverse characteristics within a group. In the context of woman, stereotypes can eternalize strict expectations and roles, contributing to woman inequality by supporting defined behaviors and limiting individuals based on societal expectations instead of individual abilities and choices. At first glimpse, one might expect that women would embrace traditional woman stereotypes less than men. The rising sight of women in the workforce, especially in areas traditionally dominated by men, is likely to be specifically noticeable for women. These shifts have clear implications for them that can affect their expectations, aspirations, and real-life meetings. (Hentschel et al., 2019, p. 4).

Prejudice

Prejudice directs to preconceived beliefs or attitudes, often unfavorable, created without sufficient knowledge, reason, or understanding. It involves regarding individuals or groups based on race, woman, ethnicity, or other parts. Prejudice can lead to discriminatory manners and actions, memorializing inequality and encouraging an environment of oppression. Addressing and demanding prejudice is crucial for encouraging inclusivity, understanding, and fostering optimistic social interactions. According to Kleinlogel (2015, p. 4), prejudice can be viewed as a motivational factor wherein people are compelled to articulate their biases when encountered with a subject of their prejudice. However, if this explanation is intercepted, it may lead to dissatisfaction. The outward expression of prejudiced sentiments afterward translates into discriminating conduct.

METHOD

This research is qualitative in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid (2017), with a straightforward focus on the novel's written texts, containing narration and dialogues. The researcher depends on the novel's content to pull and analyze relevant information related to the research topic. Additionally, secondary data will be pulled from various academic references such as theories book from Simone D Beauvoir *The Second Sex* (1949), journals and articles. These additional materials will serve to support and provide further context for the identified issues within the novel, improving the depth and credibility of the study findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Husbands in *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid

Ernie Diaz

Ernie Diaz was Evelyn Hugo's first husband. In the story that Evelyn has told, he is an electrician working in Hollywood.

“Oh, come on,” he said. The store was empty. His arms were strong. He grasped me tighter. And in that moment, I knew he was going to get what he wanted from me whether I let him or not. So I had two choices. I could do it for free. Or I could do it for free candy. (Reid, 2017, p. 48)

This quote displays the complex situation the character Evelyn faces in unpleasant circumstances. The quote explicitly express that Evelyn can control herself, it can be seen that she is aware of the choices before her. In this situation, Evelyn felt tension and discomfort about what Diaz did to her. However, she acknowledged that she had options. Even though the situation is not excellent, the quote shows that Evelyn made a decision or intention to deal with

a difficult situation. She realizes that she has power over the choices she makes, even though the choices may not be ideal.

Don Adler

After she made it big in Hollywood, she divorced her first husband, then fell in love and married a popular actor, Don Adler.

That and the fact that, at least at first, Don Adler treated me like a person. There are people who see a beautiful flower and rush over to pick it. They want to hold it in their hands, they want to own it. They want the flower's beauty to be theirs, to be within their possession, their control. Don wasn't like that. At least, not at first. Don was happy to be near the flower, to look at the flower, to appreciate the flower simply being (Reid, 2017, p. 67)

This passage shows that Evelyn Hugo explains that Don Adler did not treat her as an object to be owned or controlled. Evelyn stated that, at least originally, Don Adler did not try to "take" or "own" her but just enjoyed being around her and respected her presence without trying to control her. It shows that Evelyn feels a difference in how Don Adler treats her likened to people who might tend to notice her as an object to be owned.

Mick Riva

Evelyn made plans to secretly marry singer Mick Riva, which made her her third husband, then had the wedding annulled the next day to prioritize her career.

I was sent an invitation to see Mick Riva perform at the Hollywood Bowl that fall. I decided to go, not because I cared about seeing Mick Riva but because an evening outside sounded fun. And I wasn't above courting the tabloids (Reid, 2017, p. 166)

From this quote, it can be seen that Evelyn Hugo chose to go to Mick Riva's show at the Hollywood Bowl not because of any emotional interest in Mick Riva but because of a wish to have a fun time outdoors. Furthermore, Evelyn said that she "did not mind" getting engagement from the gossip media (tabloids). This analysis shows that Evelyn has control over her individual decisions and is aware of the influence of her appearance in the media. Her decision to go on the show was not established entirely on interest in Mick Riva. However, more on the desire to seek pleasure and possibly gain media attention, indicating that she had some experience and control over her actions as well as her image.

Rex North

The couple lived together for several years. However, when Rex revealed that he got a woman pregnant, Evelyn told the press that she and Harry Cameron were having an affair.

Rex and I went home at around five in the morning, the two of us downright drunk. As our car drove away, I searched my purse for keys to the house, and Rex stood beside me breathing his sour gin breath down my neck. "My wife can't find the keys!" Rex said, stumbling ever so slightly. "She's trying very hard, but she can't seem to find them." "Would you be quiet?" I said. "Do you want to wake the neighbors?" (Reid, 2017, p. 205)

This quote reveals that Evelyn Hugo can still maintain control of herself in certain circumstances, even though she is drunk and in a relationship with Rex, her husband. Even though Rex may attempt to create a situation where she loses control, Evelyn can still answer with a firm attitude and try to maintain order. This analysis could reflect that Evelyn Hugo could keep control of herself, even when patriarchy or male dominance might try to disturb the balance of power. In this case, she shows that she will not allow herself to be controlled by men, even in cases that may be detrimental for women in a patriarchal context.

Harry Cameron

Evelyn decided to marry Harry so that they could both be close to their respective loves: Celia and John. The four of them posed as a heterosexual couple. Years later, Harry asked Evelyn for a son. With Celia's permission, they conceive a baby they name Connor.

I put it out of my head, signed the paperwork on the apartment, and celebrated the purchase with Harry. I was free to go wherever I wanted. And what I wanted was to move to the Upper East Side of Manhattan. I persuaded Luisa to join us. (Reid, 2017, p. 232)

From this quote, it can be seen that Evelyn Hugo can handle herself and make decisions that benefit her. This decision can be thought a step that empowers women in a patriarchal context. Evelyn determines to move to the Upper East Side of Manhattan and manages to persuade Luisa to join her. The decision to move out and celebrate the apartment purchase with Harry indicates that Evelyn is taking control of her life and taking steps to gain her freedom and happiness. This can be considered an act of defiance or freedom from the patriarchal restrictions that may have existed in her previous life.

Max Girard

Evelyn Hugo married Max Girard, but then realized that the only thing this man liked about her was the image she projected. Their relationship lasted for six years, until Evelyn saw Celia again.

I slept with Mick because I wanted to protect our careers, mine and hers. And that was more important to me than the sanctity of our relationship. And I slept with Harry because I wanted a baby, and I thought people would get suspicious if we adopted. Because I was afraid to draw attention to the sexlessness of our marriage. And I chose that over the

sanctity of our relationship. And when Max Girard had a good idea about a creative choice in a movie, I wanted to do it. And I was willing to do it at the expense of the sanctity of our relationship.” (Reid, 2017, p. 271)

This quote displays that Evelyn Hugo has made choices that may be considered unconventional or even violate norms in the idea of patriarchy. Although she admits that these decisions affect sacrifices to the "sanctity" of the relationship, Evelyn appears to prefer to uphold and develop her career, keep her marriage secret, or gain her personal goals. In a patriarchal context, where women are often desired to prioritize relationships and family above all else, Evelyn seems to take steps to follow her ambitions and desires, even if it implies breaking the social norms that have lived in her time.

Robert Jamison

Evelyn Hugo moves to Spain with Connor, Celia and her brother, Robert, whom the protagonist marries so that he can inherit Celia's property when she dies. Celia St. James died, as did his brother a few years later. Over time, Connor died of breast cancer, a disease that also affected Evelyn.

It doesn't matter that I'm already legally married, because we both know that when I was marrying Robert, I was doing it to be with you. We don't need anybody else's rules. We just need each other (Reid, 2017, p. 343)

Analysis of this quote indicates that Evelyn used her marriage to Robert as a plan or excuse to get close to Celia. In this context, in certain cases, Evelyn sees marriage to Robert as a necessary procedure or action. However, in her heart, her purposes focus more on her relationship with Celia. In this case, Evelyn have used her wedding to Robert as a vehicle or tool to acquire her own goals without giving much concern to the social rules or norms generally associated with marriage in a patriarchal society. This can be seen as an shot to control the situation and live according to one's emotional wishes and needs without completely submitting to patriarchal norms that strength require loyalty to a traditional life partner.

CONCLUSION

The study illustrates the slight ways in which Evelyn Hugo, the protagonist, declares herself in the face of female oppression. Through a thorough analysis of her marriages, the narrative showcases Evelyn's resilience, strategic decision-making, and defiance of societal standards. The character's ability to navigate relationships, prioritize individual goals, and challenge stereotypes presents her agency within the patriarchal restrictions of Hollywood. This research donates to feminist literary analysis, highlighting the complex and multifaceted

character of woman domination as described in the novel.

Future research could delve deeper into the intersectionality of women's intimidation, contemplating factors such as race, class, and sexuality in the portrayal of female personalities. Additionally, examining the impact of societal expectations on male characters and their roles in eternalizing or challenging patriarchy within the portrayal could provide a more complete understanding of gender dynamics in the novel.

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