

**THE RESISTANCE OF WOMEN TOWARD
PATRIARCHAL CULTURE IN *THE TESTAMENTS*
BY MARGARET ATWOOD**

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INTRODUCTION

In this paper, the writer analyzes women's resistance toward patriarchal culture as reflected in *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood. *The Testaments* depicts patriarchal culture in the Republic of Gilead where oppression towards women occur. The novel also portrays how women resist the circumstance. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to describe oppression and women's resistance in a patriarchal culture. Feminist theory is applied for this study. Feminism refers to way of expressing disapproval of male domination with the purpose of understanding women's oppression in relation to race, gender and class and sexual preferences also the restrictions on women being low-level positions by the patriarchal culture [1]. The concept of oppression names the endless and profound injustices a few groups endure as a result of as often as possible oblivious presumptions and responses of well-meaning people in conventional intuitive, media, and social generalizations, and auxiliary highlights of a bureaucratic chain of command and advertising instruments, in brief, the typical continuous forms of existence [2]. Resistance is one way of realizing equality, dignity and rights (such as the right to education, the right to family planning, the right to divorce, and decision making) to reject the domination treatment received by women from men in a patriarchal culture [3]. There are still a lot of women in a patriarchal culture that experience oppression. For that reason the writer considers this study essential to be studied.

METHOD

The data is taken from a novel entitled *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood [4]. The research is done by doing close reading and interpretation techniques. Jacobus clarifies that close reading examines details; interpretation aims to establish the overall meaning of

a work [5]. In conducting the research, the writer collected data on any unpleasant treatment the women experiences. The writer classified these data and interpret the data. The data showing male domination in patriarchal culture and the resistance of women put into classification and interpreted. Data are analyzed based on the theory applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The forms of women oppression found in the novel are injustice in jobs and lack of freedom for women. The oppression happens because of unpleasant treatment and women's oppression against the background of policies made by pure movement and the government. The oppression in jobs can be seen through the experience of aunt Lydia. She has been restricted from getting her rights to hold a position.

"Simply by being female I was excluded from the lists of potential usurpers, since no woman could ever sit on the Council of the Commanders."(P. 61)

The women oppression that can be seen from the data above is from the experience of Aunt Lydia. She is a senior aunt in the Republic of Gilead. Before she became an aunt she was a woman who had a career as a judge. Since the new regime in the Republic of Gilead, she was appointed an aunt and her long career ran aground. She said that because she was born a woman she was eliminated from taking up commander positions after the new rules of the commander Judd regime. Women get injustice and have not the freedom to choose their job.

The next data is the oppression of the lack of freedom. It can be seen from the explanation by Nicole who gets a module about Gilead where the women cannot get their right.

We'd had three modules in school on Gilead: it was a terrible, terrible place, where women

couldn't have jobs or drive cars, and where the Handmaids were forced to get pregnant like cows, except that cows had a better deal. What sort of people could be on the side of Gilead and not be some kind of monsters? Especially female people. (P. 47)

The character telling the story in the above quote is Nicole who tells how things were in the Republic of Gilead. Women cannot work, or they have a job but it is not a job that provides many benefits for women other than to survive the harshness of the Republic of Gilead regime. Women cannot own property such as cars and exploitation for there are women who work as handmaids. These rules were in effect as long as the woman was tied to the Republic of Gilead. The position of women is no more than that of men.

The forms of women resistance found in the novel are There are speaking out, giving support, smuggled out, and break the rule. The resistance used to fight injustice and oppression. The women in the Republic of Gilead try to speak up to the media.

The mission described is thought to have been instrumental in initiating the final collapse of Gilead, since the material smuggled out by the younger sister—a microdot embedded in a scarified tattoo, which I must say is a novel method of information delivery (laughter)—revealed a great many discreditable personal secrets pertaining to various high-level officials. Especially noteworthy is a handful of plots devised by Commanders to eliminate other Commanders. (P. 368)

Tearing down the Republic of Gilead is the goal of many women in Gilead. This is the very first form of resistance, namely speaking. Agnes and Nicole are women who convey this mission to the media in Canada. Nicole and Agnes are armed with a microdot containing files containing crimes and offenses committed by the Commander of the Republic of Gilead. Agnes and Nicole go through many obstacles during their escape on a mission. The speaking out that they disseminate is evidence of crimes committed by the Republic of Gilead government against women, such as employing handmaidens without pay to continue the commander's descendants, the murder of commander's wife, etc. Once the information reached the media, the media quickly spread the truth and made the Republic of Gilead slowly crumble. The collapse of the Republic of Gilead made women who previously suffered many things because of the injustice of the

rule that apply there to get their freedom. The next data is the term of resistance namely giving support. The character is Paula who tries to help the handmaid run away.

Paula had befriended the Handmaid and offered to help her escape from Gilead since she knew how unhappy the girl was. She'd even provided her with a map and directions, and the names of several Mayday contacts along the way. (P. 280)

The data above describe that another way women can help other women to resist is by helping them get out of Republic of Gilead. Paula was the wife of a commander and she helped a handmaid escape by giving her information on safe routes and directions to get out of the Republic of Gilead. She also provided contact information about Mayday members so that she could be saved by Mayday members and managed to get out of the Republic of Gilead. Even just can help one women, the resist Paula tried can help the handmaid can be meaning there is way to help and resist the Republic of Gilead regime. Set the handmaid free makes the handmaid never do her job anymore as the maid to give a birth commander's baby and reach her freedom.

Furthermore, the resistance of women is smuggled out. The character is Nicole's mother who smuggled out her baby.

"You were smuggled out by your mother and Mayday. They'd risked their lives. Gilead made a big fuss about it; they wanted you back. They said your so-called legal parents had the right to claim you. Mayday hid you; there were a lot of people looking for you, plus a media blitz."

"Like Baby Nicole," I said. "I wrote an essay about her at school."

Elijah looked down at the floor again. Then he looked straight at me.

"You are Baby Nicole. (P. 130)

Smuggled out baby Nicole was her mother's way of putting up to the resistance Republic of Gilead. Nicole's mother was a handmaid who did not want her child to be taken by the commander's family. Even though what the handmaid was doing was dangerous, she did it anyway and with the help of Mayday, the information about the whereabouts of baby Nicole was never made known to baby Nicole's legal family in the Republic of Gilead.

The next data is breaking the rule.

Aunt Beatrice ordered in pizza for lunch, which we had with ice cream from their freezer. I said

i was surprised that they were eating junk food: wasn't Gilead against it, especially for women? "I honestly don't see what's wrong with ice cream, as long as it has no chemicals." Aunt dove gave her a reproachful look. Aunt Beatrice licked her spoon. (P. 248)

From the data above, it can be seen that the aunts try to break the rules wherein Gilead prohibits women from consuming these junk foods. even if it's just food, the rules are the rules and these women break them. Although the aim is only to get rid of hunger and for pleasure, women have tried to resist the Republic of Gilead regime even if only through food. This small thing shows that there are women who dare to fight male domination of rules that are detrimental to women.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study reveals that all cases of women oppression are experienced by several characters. The dominant data of women's oppression is the lack of freedom for women. Lack of freedom for women happens because of the government's regulation. The women and girls feel the oppression. The girls are only taught about cooking, sewing, and without being taught about general subjects.

The resistance carried out by women consisted of three categories, but the more dominant is speaking out. Speaking out was held to reject and voice disapproval about the regulations made by the government and women wanted their rights and freedoms to be returned to normal. The speaking out was carried out by several women who carried out their actions to speak out to the men. in the end, the resistance through this speaking out was successful and made the Republic of Gilead slowly crumble. For further research, the writer suggests digging deeper into racism, feminism, and the psychological aspects of this novel to provide more knowledge and understanding for readers.

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