



Psychoanalysis Feminism of the Representation of Patriarchy and Autonomy of Woman Character in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the psychoanalysis feminism of the representation of patriarchy and woman autonomy of the character Curley's wife in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. The analysis is conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach, applying Juliet Mitchell's theory of psychoanalysis feminism to describe the woman's condition during the American Great Depression through the character of Curley's wife, who is not named and experiences various forms of oppression as impacts of the patriarchal system. The results show that Curley's wife is portrayed as a character who goes against patriarchal norms. She exhibits various emotional and behavioral responses due to the psychological and social pressures she experiences. Patriarchy affects Curley's wife's self-perception and social interactions, causing her to feel deep loneliness and frustration. Through psychoanalysis and feminist analysis, this study reveals how gender norms and patriarchal structures shape women's psychological conditions. Curley's wife experiences alienation, loneliness, and lack of power in the patriarchal structure that exists in the environment where she lives. Mitchell says that the pervasive suffering experienced by women highlights that extreme physical violence is an ever-present threat. This persistent fear becomes a defense mechanism against their loneliness and a means to cope with male domination. Additionally, their behaviors, often perceived as flirtatious, are ways to express a deep-seated desire to escape the constraints of patriarchy. Curley's wife's flirtatious nature becomes a defense mechanism against her loneliness, a way to deal with Curley's domination, and a way to express her desire to escape patriarchy.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis Feminism; Patriarchy; of Mice and Men*

Introduction

Literature is a work that entertains the reader with the beauty of the story while also conveying a message (Dubourg & Baumard, 2022). A literary work is a work of imagination that explains the expression of human feelings in the form of thoughts, experiences, and so on that readers can enjoy. Literary work is always a reflection of the events that occurred at the time it was created. Plato explained that literature imitates the real world, but that does not mean it provides an exact (Lawtoo, 2022). Literature itself is interrelated and influences each other with psychology. Literature and psychology play an important role in describing the relationship between the human body and soul. Both literature and psychology have something in common in trying to understand and address the complexities of human life.

Literature often reflects the psychological state of people both as individuals and as members of society. On the other hand, psychology can help in understanding the motives, emotions and actions of characters in literary works. There is a close relationship between literature and psychology as both deal with people, behavior, reactions, desires, misery, fears, wishes, conflicts, culture, individual differences, reconciliation, and social concerns (Dar, 2022). Literature provides a unique insight into the human psyche by presenting stories and characters that reflect various psychological states and experiences.

Since long ago, women and men were seen differently. Men are believed to be more dominant than women. Women were then seen to be lower than men. This triggers a patriarchal social system, women's discrimination, and violations. When men become very dominant this will result in a patriarchal system. Patriarchy is a social system that puts men as the leaders of the family, holding the power, and the ruler. The descent of the family follows the male line. The negative effect of patriarchy is that it puts women lower than men. Women are then seen lowly. Patriarchal ideology explains the inherent inferiority of women under male authority. Under male authority, women are deprived of equal access in decision-making (Ferdous & Uddin, 2021).

Discrimination and violations towards women then arise physically and psychologically. As a reaction to the inequality and unfair treatment experienced by women in the patriarchal system that exists in social life, the feminist movement emerged. Feminism appears as the resistance and disagreement towards this gender discrimination and violation. Feminism is any social, political, economic, or other action that advocates for gender equality, especially for women. Mohajan (2022) defines feminism as the awareness of women's oppression and exploitation everywhere and the actions men and women take to make a difference in the situation. Feminism and patriarchy are closely related concepts. Feminism emerged as a resistance movement against a patriarchal system that harms and oppresses women. This is because patriarchy is the cause of gender inequality and violations against women.

Patriarchy and feminism exist in our society and culture. Many literary works reflect the social and cultural context of society. The patriarchal system and feminism may be reflected there. Recent works of literature may contain a feminist message, such as songs and novels that focus on women's fights for their rights, feminism, and gender equality. Works of literature represent the social, cultural, and philosophical ideas of the writer.

There is also a lot of literature about implicit patriarchy, women's oppression, and discrimination. One literary work that reflects the themes of feminism is *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, particularly through the character of Curley's wife. The portrayal of female characters in Steinbeck's novels has drawn criticism from many critics. The novel *Of Mice and Men* is less favorable to the portrayal of women. Babu & Anita Virgin (2023) said that Steinbeck has also gone so far as to show that his books are replete with prostitutes and devoid of rational female characters. They assumed that every female character in Steinbeck's novels was inadequately developed. The negative portrayal of female characters in Steinbeck's works reflects the patriarchal beliefs that dominated society at the time, when women were often depicted in limited or stereotypical roles.

Several studies have analyzed the novel *Of Mice and Men*. For example, a study conducted by Bashar, Zeb, & Khan (2019), entitled "*Stereotyping of Curley's Wife in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men: From Derridean Perspective.*" This study takes a feminist approach to Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, focusing on the stereotyping and oppression of the novel's only female character, Curley's wife. Using Derrida's Logocentrism theory, the author investigates the underlying logical assumptions that contribute to the derogatory characterization of Curley's wife in the novel.

In addition, a study conducted by Rajabova (2023), entitled "*The Analysis of Loneliness Theme in Of Mice and Men.*" This study explores in depth the theme of loneliness for several characters, such as George, Lennie, Curley's wife, and others, to understand how loneliness affects and defines their existence. The study also identifies factors that cause the characters in the novel to feel lonely, such as age, race, and gender differences.

The above researchers have studied the novel *Of Mice and Men*. Yet, none of those studies examined the psychoanalysis feminism in woman's character, which is crucial. Exploring other novel aspects in a more comprehensive but crucial area is necessary to fill the gap that has not been employed in previous studies. None of the previous studies have addressed sensitive issues such as the oppression of woman characters using psycho feminism theory. So, in this study, the author will analyze the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck using the psychoanalysis feminism approach on the character of Curley's wife.

In the novel *Of Mice and Men*, the character of Curley's wife is described as a woman trapped in strong patriarchal pressure. Curley's wife suffers a tragic fate because she cannot escape the situation that limits her and is never truly free from the patriarchal environment and is unable to escape (Alnajm, 2020). Curley's wife

craved freedom and knowledge, and she sought to escape the restrictions imposed by the patriarchal system. She wants to learn and develop as an individual without being bound by traditional norms that restrict women. This shows that Curley's wife is trapped in a patriarchal system that limits her role and governs her life. She cannot completely escape the pressure and patriarchal norms that surround her.

Furthermore, Curley's wife's identity is told as someone's wife, and she remains nameless throughout the story. Wendt (2019) stated that Curley's wife is always shown anonymously apart from the other characters so that Curley's wife becomes marginalized. In this context, the anonymity of Curley's wife represents how women at that time often lost their identity and autonomy in a patriarchal society. In some ways, they were often seen as part of the family or in their relationships with men, rather than as individuals with their own desires and goals. Names symbolize individuality and strength. The lack of naming can also be interpreted as a representation of how, in real life, women often do not have the voice or authority to express or fight for what they want, and how the social system confines women into life roles defined by society.

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that the character of Curley's wife in *Of Mice and Men* represents gender inequality in terms of how women at that time fought for their identity and freedom in a very patriarchal society. Her portrayal in the novel triggered several feminist studies to analyze gender inequality and how women were stereotyped. It is proven in the depiction of Curley's wife's behavior, which is influenced by psychological factors such as attention-seeking, feelings of isolation and alienation, and being demeaned by the men around her.

Nevertheless, in certain moments, Curley's wife shows protest as a form of effort or resistance to the patriarchal rules that limit her. To understand the character of Curley's wife deeply, it is important to analyze feminism from a psychological point of view, because her behavior cannot be separated from the psychological background influenced by the patriarchal social system. A study that can combine psychological and feminist analysis is psychoanalysis feminism, as proposed by Juliet Mitchell.

Analyzing the psychology of Curley's wife with a psycho feminism approach is important because it shows how patriarchy and gender norms affect women's self-perception and social interactions. Mitchell explains that the roles and positions of men and women are affected by society. According to Mitchell, the development of human psychology occurs through two steps of process: the primary and secondary processes. Humans will discover their natural instincts, desires, and rules in the primary process. The secondary process will result in a decision that materializes in human mindset or behavior (Mitchell, 2023).

Within patriarchal structures, women often experience pressures and restrictions that shape their self-perceptions and social interactions. Mitchell argues that oppressive social and cultural structures often influence women's

psychological experiences, and Curley's wife is an example of how gender norms and patriarchy can limit and shape women's social interactions and self-perceptions. As such, a psychoanalysis feminism approach not only deepens the understanding of Curley's wife's character, but also highlights the broader impact of patriarchy on women's psychology.

Examples of how women are subjected to patriarchal treatment can be found in contemporary society. An example of this is what happened to Itha G. Schneider. Itha received unfavorable treatment and violence from her ex-husband, who indicated that he was unable to protect his wife as he should. She received physical and mental abuse such as being beaten during pregnancy and threatened with sharp weapons. Itha also had to struggle on her own feet because her husband did not provide for her.

Therefore, Itha decided to divorce and move abroad. And finally, she managed to build a career as a property entrepreneur in the US, demonstrating her ability to stand on her own feet without dependence on her ex-husband. The development of the times has led to changes in society's views, especially for women in responding to social issues. This can be seen from the attitude of women who no longer passively accept treatment as objects or victims of violence, but instead try to defend themselves or fight against these actions (Black, Hodgetts, & King, 2020). This can be seen in Itha's case, which shows the attitude of women who no longer accept being treated as objects or victims of violence, but instead try to defend themselves and fight back. Itha's decision to leave an unhealthy environment and start a new life abroad is an example of how women can overcome adversity.

By relating the above cases to the psycho feminism analysis of Curley's wife character in *Of Mice and Men*, we can see how patriarchy affects women in both fiction and reality. Gender norms and patriarchal structures create an environment where women are often demeaned and prevented from reaching their full potential. By analyzing the character of Curley's wife with a psychoanalysis feminism approach, researchers can see how literary works can reflect women's struggle against patriarchy and their efforts to achieve gender equality. Therefore, this research will analyze her character and the factors that affect her behavior based on the psycho-feminism analysis. The analysis will follow Juliet Mitchell's theory to see her psychological development as a systematic process.

The analysis examines the complexity of her character and identify how social and gender pressures affect the formation of Curley's wife's identity and behavior. This study will delve deeper into the psychological dynamics that Curley's wife faces as a result of patriarchal dominance, as well as how they affect her social interactions with other characters in the novel.

Based on the explanation above, the author will focus on exploring the impact of the patriarchal system that affects the psychological in the female character, Curley's wife, in the novel *Of Mice and Men*. First, this study will examine the form of behavior in female characters as an effect of psychological influence. Secondly, it will

explain how violence affects the psychology of the female characters in the novel. And finally, this study will analyze how the female characters in the novel resist the patriarchal structure.

Method

In this study, the author analyzed the data using a qualitative approach and descriptive qualitative methods, presenting the information as words rather than numbers. Doyle et al., (2020) state that a descriptive qualitative method is a method which contains the appropriate explanations that are only done if there is the appropriate description as well. In this study, the author, in analyzing existing problems, uses a descriptive approach that aims to describe the situation that occurs through text in an objective and systematic way. Descriptive qualitative will provide a concise and comprehensive research model by collecting research data that focuses on a particular event to be studied (Ezer & Aksüt, 2021). In this study, the instrument used is the author herself. Yoon & Uliassi (2022) say that the researcher can do the research as an Instrument. In research methodology, the term “researcher as instrument” refers to the researcher themselves being the primary tool for data collection and analysis.

This study focuses on the problems of woman characters in the novel studied using Juliet Mitchell’s psychoanalysis feminism approach. According to Mhamane (2021) psycho-feminism is an approach that combines psychological analysis with feminist analysis to analyze the psychological and social causes of gender inequality and oppression of women. By using psychoanalysis feminism theory, the author analyzed her character and the factors that affect her behavior based on the psycho-feminism analysis. The analysis will follow Juliet Mitchell’s theory to see her psychological development as a systematic process and also will analyze what form of resistance Curley’s wife faces in the face of the patriarchal.

The study focuses on two main objects: the material object, which is John Steinbeck’s novella *Of Mice and Men*, and the formal object, which is the personality of Curley’s wife, an unnamed female character in the novel. By examining Curley’s wife’s personality, the author aims to highlight the condition of women during that era, emphasizing the loneliness and limitations she faced, and how these aspects are reflected in her interactions with other characters in the story.

There are several steps that the researcher took in conducting this study, which consist of reading the novel, identifying the data, classifying the data, analyzing the data, and reporting the results. Meanwhile, data analysis stage consists of exposing the data to reveal the problems, pointing out the data, and reporting data.

Results

The novel *Of Mice and Men* portrays the hard life during the American Great Depression era. The novel covers a complex problem of life, society, and economy. The main characters of the novel are George and Lennie, two best friends who dream of having their own land and life properly. As immigrants who hardly ever get employment, they struggle to realize their dreams, particularly during the Great Depression. As a result, they labor on Curley's father's ranch.

Other characters make the story more complex, like Crooks, who experiences loneliness, alienation, and inferiority as a black person. In addition, there is Candy, an elderly ranch worker who experiences discrimination in her workplace. Candy lost her hand and faced the fear of being useless and cast aside because of her physical disability. In this story, almost every character has their own conflict, including Curley's wife, whose name is not even shown. Curley's wife, the only woman living on the ranch. She doesn't even have a name, and the author, John Steinbeck, never once uses her name. She turns into the main issue that triggers the narrative's climax. Lennie accidentally kills her, which puts everything in a precarious situation. She is mistreated and shown no concern by those on the ranch. As Curley's wife, the author, John Steinbeck, treats her as an object of possession, reflecting the woman's status during the Great Depression both in the novel and in real life.

The mean treatment by people on the ranch of Curley's wife is also triggered by her behavior. Despite only having been married to Curley for two weeks, she attracts attention from men. She makes overtures to every rancher. Though Curley's wife has attractive gestures, she is mistreated by the men in that place. She is still cursed even after she passes away. She is lonely despite the way she behaves. On the ranch, she is the only woman without any friends. She doesn't even have a spouse or anyone else with whom to communicate. Her husband only sees her as an object of possession and sexual obsession. Her psychology, which influences her attitude and behavior, may be impacted by loneliness and the patriarchal ideology held there.

The patriarchal system puts men as a ruler and controller. It puts women undervalued. Women are only men's possession. Men did not want to relinquish their control over women, despite the fact that feminism emerged during the American Great Depression. During the Great Depression, men were certainly affected by economic hardship, but this also affected women who were underpaid, undervalued, and left to do housework (Ruane, 2022).

Curley's wife experiences verbal, physical, and emotional abuse from Curley. Curley wears the glove on his lefthand to make his hand look soft and delicate by putting Vaseline on it. Curley is trying to sexually abuse her by touching her private area in an attempt to make her have an orgasm. Curley talks about this to Candy, which shows that Curley has verbally abused his wife. Other violence that Curley also committed was limiting his wife's freedom and making her feel isolated. Based on the treatment that Curley's wife underwent, shows that she did not get social

support wherever she was. Curley's wife here becomes a victim of an unsupportive social system and her husband's possessive behavior. Curley's treatment of his wife reflects that. Women's accomplishments in that era were primarily seen in their marriages. The pride of a lady is measured by their marriage life. Meanwhile, she is unhappy with her marriage. She is oppressed by her husband, shunned, and insulted by the workers. The society and the kinship do not support her at all.

Discussion

This study refers to psychoanalysis feminism by Juliet Mitchell to show the representation of patriarchy and autonomy of woman character in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

1. Curley's Wife Behaviour as a Psychological Influence.

The flirtatious attitude is Curley's wife's character, which she adopts as a psychological effect of the oppression endures. She conveys this through her speech, movement, and attire. She makes eyes with the men on the ranch. She gives eyes on George and then to Slim, asking where is Curley for her strategy. Her voice is playful and nasal as she asks. She wants to pique the men's interest and attention by seducing them. The idea that Curley's wife has eyes on everyone is also brought up numerous times in the book.

"I'm lookin' for Curley," she said. Her voice had a nasal, brittle quality. George looked away from her and then back.

"He was in here a minute ago, but he went."

"Oh!" She put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so that her body was thrown forward. "You're the new fellas that just come, ain't ya?" "Yeah." Lennie's eyes moved down over her body, and though she did not seem to be looking at Lennie she bridled a little. She looked at her fingernails. "Sometimes Curley's in here," she explained. George said brusquely, "Well he ain't now."

"If he ain't, I guess I better look someplace else," she said playfully.

Lennie watched her, fascinated. George said, "If I see him, I'll pass the word you were looking for him."

She smiled archly and twitched her body. "Nobody can't blame a person for lookin'," she said. There were footsteps behind her, going by. She turned her head. "Hi, slim," she said (Steinbeck, 1937, p. 34-35).

The character of Curley's wife, who enjoys playful conversations with the men on the ranch, is vividly described by the author. She uses her search for Curley as an opportunity to approach people, as she speaks to everyone. She gestures with her body that she wants to talk to them more, leaning against the door frame and putting her hands behind her back. She uses reasons to avoid revealing her true

intentions, such as that she is looking for Curley, but in reality, she does not discuss Curley at all with George and Slim. After hearing George's response, she ought to have just left, if she was genuinely searching for Curley. She stays and, as she speaks, makes body language that suggests she intends to delay leaving—for example, by focusing on her fingernails.

Following the two phases of human psychology development by Mitchell, Curley's wife's unconscious mind or primary process wants to talk to people. People on the ranch do not really like her, so if she says so, she will be rejected and appear pitiful. She plays along like she does not know, even though she knows. As a result, her conscious mind controls her body's movement to indicate that she wants to talk to George more and is curious about him. As she speaks, she glances at her fingernails to demonstrate how beautifully they represent her femininity and to delay her leave.

Curley's wife tried to talk to everyone in the barn but no one gave a proper response to her. People on the ranch ignore her to avoid any trouble. If Curley knows, he won't allow them to be. Curley has an arrogant and restless demeanor. He loved to start fights and acted like a little boss because he was the boss's son. Candy attempted to caution George, a newcomer to the ranch, to be careful with Curley and his wife because of this. Curley not only made him dominate with the guys but also with his wife.

After getting married, he became more arrogant and showed his dominance. Rumors spread that he kept his left hand soft enough to beat his wife by putting a glove full of Vaseline on it. He uses it as a psychological ploy to convey his strength and authority. His subconscious must demonstrate his dominance over his spouse and the ranch's occupants. As a result, he shows off his strength and toughness to everyone by holding a glove in his left hand. The elderly Candy drowns out the gossip in their talk with George.

The behavior of Curley's wife in *Of Mice and Men* can be understood as the result of various psychological pressures influenced by social and patriarchal norms. In this novel, John Steinbeck depicts Curley's wife as a woman who feels trapped in rigid and restrictive gender roles, which causes a variety of emotional and behavioral responses. This can be seen in the quote,

She knelt in the hay beside him. "Listen," she said "All the guys got a horsehoe tenement goin' on. It' on'y about four o'clock. None of them guys are goin to leave that tenement. "Why can't I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely" (Steinbeck, 1937, p.98).

It shows that she feels isolated and dissatisfied with her limited role. Her loneliness is the result of patriarchal system that limit her interactions with the outside world. By talking to Lennie, she breaks the unwritten rules that govern

interactions between the rancher's wife and the workers. As Curley's wife, she is expected to stay at home and not associate with male workers. These limitations create a deep sense of loneliness and the need to seek social interaction outside established boundaries. This action can be seen as a form of rebellion against patriarchal structures that limit women's freedom and autonomy.

In this case, the primary process occurs when she feels trapped by her marriage. At first Curley's wife had a dream of becoming an actress. The secondary process is that after marrying Curley, she is faced with a strict patriarchal social structure, which limits her freedom and requires her to adhere to the patriarchal system. These norms limited her interactions with others and required her to stay at home, causing a deep sense of loneliness and isolation.

Who is lonely, frustrated, and trapped in a situation where she feels she has no meaningful place or role. The following quotation from *Of Mice and Men* provides an in-depth look at the frustration and loneliness Curley's wife feels.

"Awright, cover 'im up if ya wanta. Whatta I care? Your bindle bums think you're so damn good. Whatta ya think I am, a kid? I tell ya I could of went with shows. Not jus' one, neither. An' a guy tol' me he could put me in pitchers....' She was breathless with indignation.

"Sat'iday night. Ever'body out doin' som'pin'. Ever'body! An' what am I doin'? Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs-a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy of sheep-n' Orin' it because they ain't nobody else." (Steinbeck, 1937, p. 89).

The sentence in the quote above shows Curley's wife's feelings of disappointment and isolation. Saturday night, which is usually synonymous with having fun and socializing, becomes a moment when she feels trapped in unwanted interactions with people who are considered inferior. From the perspective of psycho-feminism, this situation represents the restriction of women's roles. Thus, the quotation can be interpreted as an expression of disappointment and feelings of isolation as a result of the established patriarchal system.

The above quote can also be linked to Juliet Mitchell's concept of primary and secondary processes in psychology. Primary processes include unconscious drives and desires that are often intuitive and emotional. In this context, Curley's wife's feelings of disappointment and isolation can be seen as a primary process because she feels a deep need for attention and recognition that she does not receive from those around her. Secondary processes involve more conscious actions that are used to achieve specific goals. Curley's wife's desire to socialize can be seen as a secondary process where she attempts to cope with her emotions by seeking more satisfying social relationships. Understanding primary and secondary processes can help researchers better understand human behavior and emotions and how they interact with the world around them.

2. The psychological effect of violence towards Curley's wife

Curley's wife lives a harsh life, which affects the psychology of Curley's wife. Based on the story, Curley's wife experiences non-verbal and verbal violence. The non-verbal violence experienced by Curley's wife is in confinement and isolation. Her husband, Curley, frequently watched and controlled her every move, forbidding her from interacting with others on the ranch. Her confinement made her feel constrained and deprived of freedom. In addition, her social isolation, which left her with no friends or other people to talk to, exacerbated her loneliness and emotional distress. It can be seen in the quote,

"I get lonely," she said. "You can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How'd you like not to talk to anybody?"
(Steinbeck, 1937, p. 98)

The quote shows how Curley's wife is locked up and isolated by Curley. Curley makes her unable to talk to anyone on the ranch. Curley's wife is the only woman on the ranch, so she does not get the connection she craves. Even Curley's attitude towards his wife, besides locking his wife up, also shows that Curley does not have a good attitude. The primary process of Curley's wife's attitude refers to the subconscious need for social interaction and intimate relationships. Her need for socializing and intimacy, which Curley's wife craves, not settled properly, so this makes Curley's wife feel lonely, frustrated, and longing for relationships with people around her. This gives rise to a primary process where Curley's wife finally desires to fulfill her need to socialize.

Curley's wife tries to find someone to talk to, especially when her husband leaves her, is what we can say as a secondary process. Her experience of not having her need to socialize fulfilled is finally interpreted based on the dominant social construction, patriarchy. The patriarchal ideology is the way of believing that men have a higher role than women (Khelghat-Doost & Sibly, 2020). Patriarchy is very close to Curley's wife's life, which makes this patriarchal view have an impact on the secondary process where Curley's wife finally feels that she is weak or worthless. This is shown when Curley's wife says, "They left all the weak ones here," which, when viewed from the outside, the sentence seems to indicate that Curley's wife shows that the workers she meets are weak.

However, this also shows that Curley's wife is there too, which unconsciously indicates that Curley's wife's words also suggest that she is part of "the weak ones." On the other hand, the patriarchal view that considers women as the cause of problems is also shown by Curley's wife's attitude. The experience that Curley's wife received, where the men there did not want to accept her because they were considered the cause of problems, was accepted by Curley's wife by consciously making the patriarchal perception something true. This is shown by Curley's wife who continues to try to seek attention and chat with the men at the ranch.

In the novel, Curley's wife is also verbally violence. Verbal violence experienced by Curley's wife, which was directly said in front of Curley's wife, was "lousy tart" which was said by Old Candy to Curley's wife,

Old Candy watched him go. He looked helplessly back at Curley's wife. And gradually his sorrow and his anger grew into words. "You God damn tramp," he said viciously. "You done it, di'n't you? I s'pose you're glad. Ever'body knowed you'd mess things up. You weren't no good. You ain't no good now, your lousy tart." (Steinbeck, 1937, p. 108).

Candy here commits verbal violence by accusing Curley's Wife of being a tramp who is trying to cause trouble. In Candy's final statement, he verbally attacks Curley's wife by calling her worthless and annoying and ends with a derogatory term, namely, ugly whore. In addition, verbal violence that is not directly spoken in front of Curley's Wife is mocking her as a "tart" and "jailbait" in chapter two. The primary process in the quote above is Curley's wife's desire to protect herself. The series of verbal abuse experienced by Curley's wife creates a willingness to defend herself. Here, Curley's wife has an unconscious desire to protect herself, especially from how she forms her self-perception according to what the men around her say. Curley's wife's decision to shape herself according to what the men there call her is a form of self-defense because subconsciously, Curley's wife understands that showing her dissatisfaction directly will only cause further aggression from the men around her. Curley's wife realizes that she has no more power to fight back.

This subconscious process protects Curley's wife from excessive negativity but distorts her understanding of herself and her situation. So, it finally creates a secondary process, especially from the verbal violence she experiences. With a patriarchal structure that is very close to demeaning women, Curley's wife finally creates a false consciousness by assuming that she is what the men who have patriarchal views describe. This makes Curley's wife seek validation to get the social and intimacy needs she previously did not get, even though it comes through seduction and reinforces the negative label given to her, as shown in the quote above, as long as she can get her needs in socializing.

3. Curley's wife resistance towards the patriarchal structure.

Curley's wife is lonely and needs affection but her husband does not provide it for her. She takes great pride in her appearance as a woman and is aware of it. Her unconscious mind is cold and unloving, but she can't admit it. She has to give up on her dream of becoming an actress and live alone on the ranch with her violent husband. Unfortunately, she is also turned down by the ranch's employees because they fear the jealous and aggressive Curley. According to Kombieni (2020), Curley's wife tries to connect with the ranch workers in an attempt to overcome their loneliness, but Curley isolates his wife and causes the workers to recoil. She must

give up her dreams of independence and love, and get married. She, therefore, acts flirtatiously to mask her feelings of isolation and the barrier she is in.

Curley mistreats her spouse verbally, physically, and sexually. Adhikari, Gartaula, & Neupane (2022) explained that Curley's wife felt sexual alienation. This sexual alienation was not necessarily that Curley's wife was not touched by her husband, but she was only an object by her husband and was touched only for her husband's pleasure. This can be seen from how Candy informs George about Curley's treatment of his spouse. He informed him about the glove he wears on his left hand. He tried to make his hand look soft and delicate by putting Vaseline on it. Curley is trying to sexually abuse her by touching her private area in an attempt to make her have an orgasm; this is blatantly depicting how a husband and wife are ensnared in a joint sexual exploitation scheme.

"This guy Curley sounds like a son-of-a-bitch to me. I don't like mean little guys."

"Seems to me like he's worse lately," said the swamper. "He got married a couple of weeks ago. Wife lives over in the boss's house. Seems like Curley is cockier'n ever since he got married." George grunted, "Maybe he's showin' off for his wife."

The swamper warmed to his gossip. "You see that glove on his left hand?" "Yeah. I see it."

"Well, that glove's fulla vaseline." "Vaseline?"

What the hell for?"

"Well, I tell ya what - Curley says he's keepin' that hand soft for his wife."

George studied the cards absorbedly. "That's a dirty thing to tell around," he said (Steinbeck, 1937, p. 30-31)

Not only is Curley's wife powerless to stop her husband from abusing her, but her subconscious also finds it impossible to accept it. Her conscious mind analyses certain behaviors that may eventually become her means of fending off her husband's oppression. Although she is powerless to stop her husband, she can make him envious. She acts flirtatious and gives other men on the ranch a playful eye, which makes Curley envious. Even though it damages her reputation, it manages to give him anxiety.

"Yeah? Married two weeks and got the eye? Maybe that's why Curley's pants is full of ants."

"I seen her give Slim the eye. Slim's a jerkline skinner. Hell of a nice fella. Slim don't need to wear no high-heeled boots on a grain team. I seen her give Slim the eye. Curley never seen it. An' I seen her give Carlson the eye." (Steinbeck, 1937, p. 31)

The quote shows that Curley's wife is seen flirting with other men, even though her marriage has only been two weeks. The phrase "got the eye" means that she often stares or winks at other men, which is considered a sign of flirting. She is more hateful of Curley than she is of maintaining her positive reputation. She did not make an easy decision. At least her husband can't be at ease, instead of suffering in silence. Still, she is disliked by everyone on the ranch.

Although she is unable to directly oppose him, she demonstrates that she is capable of making him uneasy. George's dialogue states, "Curley's pants is full of ants," implying that Curley is restless and uncomfortable. Through flirting, Curley's wife is able to irritate Curley's ego. It demonstrates that Curley is able to subjugate her but not control her. She uses her flirtatious behavior as an escape from her loneliness. It also becomes her resistance to the barrier, isolation, and violence from her husband.

Conclusion

This study successfully shows that the character of Curley's wife in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is a representation of the dominant patriarchal pressure and women's autonomy during the American Great Depression. Through the psycho-feminism approach, it is found that Curley's wife's behavior and emotional responses are the results of the psychological pressure she experiences due to the rigid patriarchal social structure. Curley's wife is portrayed as a woman who experiences isolation, loneliness, and violations, which affects her psychological development and shapes her flirtatious behavior as a form of protest against her oppression. This analysis shows that patriarchy not only limits women's freedom and autonomy but also affects their psychological state and social interactions.

The author suggests that further literary studies continue to explore the psycho-feminism approach to reveal the psychological and social dynamics of women characters in other literary works. This is important to deepen the understanding of how gender norms and patriarchal strictures affect women's lives and psychology. In addition, this research also suggests further studies on how modern social and cultural changes affect the representation of women in literature, as well as how women in the current era face and resist patriarchal norms.

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