



“WIDE SARGASSO SEA” AND “KECHA VA KUNDUZ” AS RESISTANCE NARRATIVES WITHIN PATRIARCHAL POWER STRUCTURES

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ABSTRACT

This article compares the novels of “Wide Sargasso Sea” and “Day and Night” as against patriarchal supremacy. Both novels portray female protagonists defying oppressive social structures and male authority. The article explores female protagonists' resistance to oppression through voice, psychological struggle and identity, revealing literature as a space of gender resistance.

Keywords: feminism, patriarchy, resistance, gender identity, oppression, colonialism, female voice, power, narrative, representation.

INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, English and Uzbek literature began to explore women's challenges to social structures, particularly patriarchy. In this regard, feminist literary studies focus on how writings reveal and oppose oppressive structures based on gender. Literary writings, according to feminist researchers, are strongly ingrained in ideological frameworks that uphold gender inequity rather than being neutral.

Simon de Beauvoir emphasizes that gender identity is socially produced when she says, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (de Beauvoir, 1949). This concept is crucial in comprehending the shaping of female characters within patriarchal regimes.

This article examines two significant works: “Wide Sargasso Sea” by Jean Rhys (Rhys, 1966) and “Night and Day” by Cholpon as resistance narratives. Despite the events of “Wide Sargasso Sea” are set in 19th century, the novel itself reflects 20th-century feminist reinterpretation. Although the novels reflect different historical and cultural background, both works depict female characters that live under patriarchal control. At the same time, these characters have different resistance against patriarchy psychologically, symbolically and emotionally, respectively.

The purpose of this research is to examine how these novels serve as resistance narratives and how they depict the fight of women against patriarchal power systems.

1. Patriarchal Power Structures in Literature

As an academic method, feminist criticism looks for ways that literature both reflects and upholds patriarchal ideals. According to philosophers like, women have historically been created as the “Other,” defined in reference to males rather than as separate persons.

In both books, patriarchy functions through institutional power, customs, and societal norms in addition to male protagonists. Women's resistance is both essential and complicated because they are frequently denied agency, autonomy, and voice.

2. Female Oppression in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Sharma (2023) explains that “postcolonial females are victimized under the hegemony of mainstream culture” (p. 62). *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be understood as a postcolonial rewriting of canonical literature. As Silvia Cappello argues, the novel is “a product of modern postcolonialism” that “subverts the ideologies of the West” (Cappello, 2009, p. 47).

In the novel of “*Wide Sargasso Sea*” the author shows intersection of patriarchy and colonialism. In “*Wide Sargasso Sea*” Antoinette is excluded as both a Creole subject and a woman. We can see sign of patriarchal domination in Antoinette’s marriage to Rochester. Rochester tries to exert control over Antoinette by renaming her “Bertha” and erase her sense of self. Disappearance of Antoinette’s identity is portrayed by these statements: “Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else.” (Rhys, 1966). Moreover, her psychological fragmentation is conveyed like: “There is always the other side, always.” (Rhys, 1966). Besides that, her identical crisis is clear when she says, “I often wonder who I am and where is my country...” (Rhys’s, 1966).

3. Resistance in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

According to contemporary scholars, Rhys’s novel is a form of resistance writing. Antoinette's resistance is reflected in her psychological refusal to fully submit, in her emotional intensity and inner voice, and in her final act of destruction (the destruction of the house, which could be considered a symbolic rebellion). Although she looks powerless, her narrative voice itself becomes a form of resistance.

Antoinette’s decision to burn Thornfield Hall is one of the most powerful moments in the novel and this final act symbolizes resistance against patriarchy and colonial domination as she declares, “I know why I was brought here and what I have to do.” (Rhys’s, 1966). The text “reclaims the silenced female voice and challenges canonical authority” (Thomas, 2018). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak states, such narratives allow the “subaltern” woman to partially reclaim her voice (Spivak, 1985). Furthermore, recent studies also support this interpretation. For example, Smith (2020) emphasizes that Antoinette’s act is “not madness, but a final assertion of agency within a system that denies her subjectivity.”

4. Patriarchal Structures in *Kecha va Kunduz*

The novel “*Kecha va Kunduz* [Night and Day] depicts lives of woman under the patriarchal system of the 20th century Uzbek society. Female freedoms in the novel are often restricted by cultural traditions, male authority and social norms. They are expected to be dependent, obedient and modest. Women’s lives are largely controlled by male figures, reflecting a deeply rooted patriarchal system.

One of the most emotional moments of the work is reflected in the following lines:

“*A woman’s fate was not in her own hands, but in the will of others.*” (Cho’lpon, 1935/2019, p.54). This depicts a woman’s inability to decide her own fate.

“*A woman is someone else’s entrusted property.*” (Cho’lpon, 1935/2019, p.61). The text portrays social beliefs that woman never truly belongs to herself. She is passed from her father to her husband.

"In this house, a woman's place consisted only of service and obedience." (Cho'lpon, 1935/2019, p.168). The text emphasizes the patriarchal power structure Zebi finds herself in after her marriage to the Mingboshi.

These sentences summarize patriarchal supremacy and Zebi is a victim of this system. However recent Uzbek literary scholars emphasize that Cho'lpon "depicts المرأة (woman) not only as oppressed but as internally awakened" (Karimov, 2019).

5. Female Resistance in Kecha va Kunduz

Zebi's resistance is psychological. Because the "Night" (the patriarchal society) is so overwhelming, her resistance doesn't look like an outward revolution—it looks like a refusal to let her spirit be completely crushed, even when her body is imprisoned. In the novel of "Night and Day" Cho'lpon showed Zebi's silent resistance by the following statements:

"Her tongue was tied, but her soul was overflowing with a thousand different rebellions." (Cho'lpon, 1935/2019, p. 204). It highlights the "internal resistance" of Zebi, where her silence isn't submission, but a forced physical constraint. Zebi's "tongue was tied" is not just a physical silence, but a social cage imposed on her by the patriarchal system. However, by using the phrase "a thousand different rebellions," Cholpon shows that the heroine's inner world has not been defeated.

"Her heart resisted, even if her voice remained silent." (Cho'lpon, 1935/2019, p. 142). The phrase "Heart resisted" refers to the fact that a woman's will is stronger than the men who decide her fate. Although Zebi appears obedient on the outside, her heart does not recognize the system.

These statements emphasize the psychological dimension of resistance, which is less visible but deeply significant. Resistance is not always an open demonstration, sometimes it is simply manifested in a mental refusal to surrender. As Brown (2016) argues, "to give voice to the silenced is itself an act of resistance."

6. Comparative Analysis: Forms of Resistance

Recent comparative studies confirm that "cultural context determines the visibility of resistance, not its existence" (Aliyev, 2021). According to Johnson (2017), "silence in women's narratives should not be interpreted as passivity, but as a coded form of resistance." "Wide Sargasso Sea" and "Night and Day" reveal how patriarchal systems limit female agency. Both novels highlight lack of female agency, control over marriage and social norms and resistance with identity and selfhood. However, resistance is expressed differently in "Wide Sargasso Sea" and "Night and Day". Antoinette shows open rebellion, while Zebi's resistance is internal. This aligns with modern feminist theory, which recognizes that resistance can take non-visible forms.

In Wide Sargasso Sea, the fragmented narrative structure reflects instability and resistance to dominant discourse. Antoinette's perspective allows readers to understand her inner world, challenging the dominant narrative from *Jane Eyre*. In contrast, in "Night and Day", the focus on inner emotional states allows readers to access suppressed female experiences. Both, however, reveal the limitations imposed by patriarchal systems.

CONCLUSION

The analysis demonstrates that both novels function as powerful resistance narratives within their respective patriarchal systems. While differing in form and intensity, they share a fundamental objective: to expose the structural mechanisms of gender inequality and reclaim female subjectivity from the margins of history.

Antoinette's descent into madness and her subsequent dramatic rebellion in *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be viewed not as a defeat, but as a fiery rejection of a colonial-patriarchal identity. In contrast, Cho'pon's portrayal of Zebi in *Kecha va Kunduz* offers a more subtle psychological resistance, where the battleground is shifted to the internal landscape of the soul. These two modes of defiance represent different ends of the same spectrum of agency. Together, they illustrate that resistance is not solely defined by visible, outward action, but by the persistent assertion of identity within oppressive structures that seek to erase it.

Furthermore, while these works emerge from vastly different cultural contexts—the post-colonial Caribbean and early 20th-century Central Asia—they share a universal concern with the systemic confinement of women. The "attic" of Thornfield Hall and the domestic "cell" of the Mingboshi's household serve as twin metaphors for the claustrophobia of male dominance. Ultimately, by giving voice to these "silent" protagonists, Rhys and Cho'pon transform the tragic fate of their characters into a scathing critique of the societies that bound them, proving that the struggle for autonomy remains a borderless human endeavor.

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