

Women Oppression's Portrayal in Taylor Jenkin Reid's *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*

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alfinapiin1112@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

In contemporary times, the prevalence of the phenomenon of oppressing women has increased in society. The subjugation of women, deeply ingrained over generations, can manifest in various circumstances. However, this phenomenon is not only actualized in real life but is also portrayed in Taylor Jenkins Reid's work entitled The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo. The aims of this study were divided into two categories: first, to identify forms of oppression experienced by women characters, Monique Grant and Evelyn Hugo, and second, to describe women characters' struggle against oppression in the novel. The approach used in this study was the sociology of literature since the novel brings up social life issues such as inequalities based on class, race, gender, and other aspects, which these issues might be examined through the perspective of liberal feminism. Additionally, to identify forms of oppression, the researcher used the 'Five Faces of Oppression' theory by Young (1990). The results of this study revealed that Monique and Evelyn experienced oppression due to their gender and racial background. Monique was marginalized in the workplace, whereas Evelyn was subjected to the five faces of oppression mentioned by Young, both in private and public sphere. However, despite the oppression that Monique and Evelyn experienced, they were struggling for their freedom and rights in order to take control of their own lives and careers. Their struggles were intertwined with liberal feminism, a theory that advocates for changing laws, policies, and institutions in order to eliminate gender equality in all aspects of life.

Keywords: *Hollywood entertainment industry, liberal feminism objectification, oppression*

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of women oppression has become more prevalent in today's society. This phenomenon can be found directly in daily activities or indirectly through social media platforms. A global feminist believes that the oppression of women in society

cannot be eliminated because it is systematically recreated in massive economic, political, and cultural institute; “no woman is free unless oppression is eliminated everywhere” (Bunch, 1993). In America, plenty of statistic shows that oppression against women is deeply rooted and one of the causes is inequality between men and women (Aliaga, 2021).

In many cases, women are frequently subjected to oppression by powerful individuals or groups, and this oppression takes many different forms. According to Young (1990) it was classified five forms of oppression including exploitation, powerlessness, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and violence. She stated that violence is the most frequent and visible form of oppression (Young, 1990). The new study by United Nations UN women showed that, on average, more than five women were killed every hour at home by someone in their own family members in 2021, proving that the home cannot be a safe haven for them.

Oppression in the form of marginalization is also extremely terrifying in America. Surveys reported by Catalyst (2023) find that approximately 51% of women from minority racial and ethnic groups were marginalized at their current workplace. Additionally, the oppression against women in the workplace keep continue which women globally earn on average about 20 per cent less than men (Masselot & Ceballos, 2022). *Institute for Women's Policy Research* estimates that Black women must work extra days to earn 64 cents for every dollar a white man earn (Prewitt & Elakbawy, 2022).

The oppression of women happened because of male domination of the public and private spheres, as it has been deeply embedded in a patriarchal system. Millet in *Sexual Politics* (1970) believed that the whole patriarchal culture encourages male authority in all aspects of life and outside of the home, consequently, limits the female in any way. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf asserts that men keep treating women as inferior beings; men define what it means to be a woman and control the political, economic, and social structures. Finally, after reading numerous references, the researcher could conclude that oppression is still relevant in society and happened in various forms.

The phenomenon of women oppression above is not only actualized in real life but also portrayed in Taylor Jenkins Reid's famous work entitled *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. This novel told the mesmerizing story of Evelyn Hugo, a fictional legendary Hollywood movie star who was finally ready to tell the truth about her glamorous and scandalous life to a Journalist, Monique Grant. The story primarily took place in Hollywood during the 1950s to 1980s, a time marked by male-domination society. Reid portrayed two women character, Evelyn and Monique, repeatedly oppressed that were caused not only by men but also by women and the ruling group as well. Reid persuaded readers that women should unite together to fight for equality, end injustice, take risks, make sacrifices, struggle for rights, and to refuse to be governed by those who have power in life.

The researcher found two previous studies which used the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* as the main data. The first study was in the form of a dissertation conducted by Suharni (2021), to see how gender was present as performativity and becomes subversive by using the theory of Judith Butler. The second study was in the form of a journal article conducted by Rosmiati (2022), to find forms of gender discrimination and how patriarchy could affect gender discrimination, used Alison Jaggar and Sylvia Walby theory. The researcher also discovered several previous studies that were related to this research, including the use of feminist literary criticism and Irish Marion Young theory. This research was written by Fauziah, and Natawiria (2019), Dominilla, *et al.* (2020),

Istiadah, *et al.* (2021), Nada (2021), Ardiasyah (2022), Septiana (2022), Kristami, *et al.* (2022), Wardani, *et al.* (2022). However, there has been no previous study that examined more closely about oppression faced by two women characters in the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*.

This study aims to complete the gaps left by previous studies that did not adequately examine the women oppression in Reid's *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. Theoretically, this study was to strengthen and enrich sociological approach, feminist literary criticism, and five faces oppression theory by Iris Young. Practically, this study was to raise awareness of the fact that women oppression still exists and happens in various forms, and to empower them to struggle against the oppression by doing several changes. The researcher intended to narrow the focus of this study by dividing the problems into two questions: first, what are the forms of women oppression portrayed in Reid's *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*? Second, how do the women characters struggle against the oppression in Reid's *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*?

The novel could be studied by using feminist literary criticism with the sociological approach. This approach sought to uncover and challenge stereotypes and inequalities within literary works. It involved how literature represented social groups and explores whether these groups were given the equal agency or voice in society. For feminist literary criticism, it proposed equal opportunities for all women (and, as a matter of fact, all people) through all aspects of life (Bressler, 2011). To answer the problem of the study, the researcher also used five faces of oppression theory by Young in 1990 which she divided into five forms; exploitation, powerlessness, marginalization, cultural imperialism, and violence as well as used liberal feminism theory that advocated for changing laws, policies, and institutions in order to eliminate gender equality in all aspects of life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study belonged to the category of literary criticism since it was mainly focused on the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of the contextualization of a literary work (Klarer, 2014). The primary objective of this study was to identify the portrayal of oppression experienced by women characters Monique Grant and Evelyn Hugo in *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*. This study was limited in discussing how women characters Evelyn and Monique struggle against the oppression that they experienced.

The researcher used an English printed version of the novel, which consisted of 400 pages long and divided into 69 chapters. In order to avoid differences in the data information, the researcher only used first-edition publications from Atria Books, which was published on June 13, 2017.

The researcher went through several stages when analyzing the forms of women oppression and women struggle in the novel. First, the researcher read the printed version of the novel in order fully understand the whole story. Second, the researcher re-read the novel by using a close-reading method to gain a deeper understanding of its contents and took some notes and writes down the data evidence from statements, conversations, interactions, and quotations of women characters; Monique and Evelyn, that were relevant to the five forms of oppression and their struggle against oppression.

After collecting the data, the researcher classified the data based on five faces of oppression by Young's theory in 1990. After that, the researcher analyzed and interpret the data by using Young's theory and the theory of liberal feminism. These theories were

related and contribute to the development of knowledge regarding the connection between women oppression and women struggle which was intended to understand the strength, power, and movement that women could practice. The final step was drawing conclusions regarding the problems of the study.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The forms of oppression experienced by women characters in Taylor Jenkin Reid's The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo

Taylor Jenkins Reid's novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* extensively examined women's lives and difficulties they experienced from the early 1950s to the present day. This study examined two women characters, Evelyn Hugo, a Cuban-American, and Monique Grant, an African-American woman. As women of color in the novel, they were often portrayed as objects, they must follow social norms, and they were frequently marginalized, exploited, and even subjected to violence. In the novel, the oppression that Monique and Evelyn experienced carried out by those in positions of power.

Marginalization

In *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*, the characters Monique Grant and Evelyn Hugo experienced marginalization in the workplace due to their gender and racial background. Marginalization is generally defined as the practice of excluding or restricting a group of people from getting involved in social life, possibly affecting all of them to severe material deprivation or do not have access to basic resources (Young, 1990). According to Erskine, *et al.* (2023), reported that the numbers of marginalization even higher for women of color; Blacks, Latinas, Indians, Asians, African-American, Latin-American, who were frequently discriminated based on skin tone, hair texture, or other physical features.

Monique Grant, as African-American journalist working for a fictional magazine called Vivant, experienced racism and sexism in her professional life. Despite her talent and potential, she was underestimated and undervalued by her boss, Frankie. Frankie expelled Monique from useful participation, diminished her abilities to exercise her jobs, and limited her opportunities to advance her career in the workplace.

Datum 1

*"Look, it's not that we don't love you, we do," Frankie says. "We think you're **destined for big things at Vivant**, but I was hoping to put one of our more experienced, top hitters on this. And so I want to be up front with you when I say that we did not submit you as an idea to Evelyn's team. We sent **five big names**, and they came back with this." (p.5)*

The statement above interpreted as a form of marginalization since Monique felt that her abilities and skills were not fully appreciated or recognized by her boss. Frankie, who held a position of authority and decision-making, has some power to control over Monique and the stories she created. She frequently doubted on Monique's journalistic skills and explicitly admitted that Monique was not submitted as an idea to Evelyn's team, instead, she was sending "*five big names*" or top hitters for Monique's position. Even though in the first phrase Frankie said that Monique was "*destined for big things at Vivant*," which interpreted that she has potential, still, she was excluded from participation in the

workplace and did not receive the equal level of recognition or opportunities as those top Hitter.

The researcher also discovered that Frankie repeatedly underestimated Monique's abilities by assuming she was an inexperienced worker, someone with less clout, weak, and easy to control. Monique experienced highlights the difficulties faced by women, as they received less respect and less representation in the workplace.

On the other hand, Evelyn Hugo, as Cuban-American actress being marginalized in Hollywood entertainment industry. Hollywood during the 1950s and 1960s was a place of extreme racial and gender marginalization. At that time period, white men (producers, directors, and actors) held the majority of positions of influence and power in the industry, while women, especially women of color were frequently marginalized and were never offered the same opportunities as men (Hunt and Ramon, 2022).

Datum 2

*"Ari dropped me from any productions within Sunset and started offering to **loan me out** to Columbia. After being **forced to do two forgettable romantic comedies**—both of them so bad that it was a foregone conclusion they would fail spectacularly—the other studios didn't want much of me, either." (p.154)*

Evelyn marginalized in the form of exclusion. Ari Sullivan, a decision-maker and an influential figure in the entertainment industry within Sunset excluded Evelyn from all Sunset productions. Sullivan offered to "loan out" Evelyn to Columbia, indicating that she was no longer a priority for Sunset Studios anymore. Evelyn was "forced to do two forgettable romantic comedies", which were predicted to be forgettable and unsuccessful, implied that Evelyn was powerless and has a small probability of success. In final statement, which mentioned that "the other studios did not want much" of her after two unsuccessful movies, implied that her future career was completely diminished. In this condition, Evelyn did not receive the chance to express her abilities or opportunities due to Ari limited her for career advancement and, at the same time, excluded Evelyn to contribute in Sunset Studio production.

Overall, the novel highlighted how gender and racial discrimination intersect, causing marginalization against Monique and Evelyn. Monique and Evelyn experienced exclusion and limitation from getting involved in their respective workplaces, naturally due to their gender as women and their racial background as African-American and Cuban-American.

Exploitation

The novel portrayed the main character, Evelyn Hugo, who was not only marginalized but also exploited several times by men in the entertainment industry. During 1950s and 1960s Hollywood, women actresses faced numerous difficulties and limitations regarding representation, opportunities, and treatment, both in front and behind the camera. The first exploitation and mistreatment that Evelyn experiences happened when she was just beginning her career as a female Hollywood actress, where she was being put into inappropriate situations, having her background purposefully changed, and being under pressure to meet particular requirements to conform societal expectations.

Datum 3

Harry Cameron: "I read your answers to the interview questions." He looked at me directly. "Ari is very happy with the changes you've made. He thinks you have a lot of potential. **The studio thinks it would be a good idea if you went on a few dates, if you were seen around town with some guys like Pete Greer and Brick Thomas. Maybe even Don Adler.**" (p.52)

The producers Harry Cameron and Ari Sullivan exercise Evelyn's life under control for the benefit of Sunset Studio. According to Young (1990), exploitation refers to the act of the capitalist class taking advantage for personal gain or benefit from workers, resulting in unequal or unfair transfers of wealth, status, power, and other resources. Harry Cameron and Ari Sullivan purposefully controlled and manipulated Evelyn's personal life, in order to create her to be a more marketable or desirable actress in the entertainment industry. These treatments include changing Evelyn's physical appearance and personal life, manipulating her historical life, and managing Evelyn's sensational relationships with numerous actresses and actors.

Additionally, Evelyn was experienced sexual exploitation carried out by France director and producer, Max Girard. Girard approached Evelyn about acting in the film called *Boute-en-Train* and *Three A.M.*, which both of them were intended to represent a graphic portrayal of women's desire, with sensual scenes that were more vulgar than the original concept of the film. In this situation, Evelyn was positioned into inappropriate representations, sexually exploited, dehumanized, and served as an object or commodity of males and, on contrary, this condition would be very profitable for the producer.

Datum 4

When Max came to my dressing room on the second-to-last day of filming, he said, "Mabelle, aujourd'hui tu seras seins nus." I had picked up enough French by then to know he was saying he wanted to shoot my scene coming out of the lake. When you're an American movie star with huge boobs in a French movie, you quickly learn that when French men are saying **seins nus, they are talking about you being topless.** (p.163)

The statement above was interpreted as sexual exploitation since Evelyn's body, mainly when her breasts "*seins nus*", is being exploited and objectified for the purpose of entertainment or sensationalism of the audience and the filmmakers, rather than for artistic or narrative purposes in the film industry. In this situation, Evelyn did not have much choice but to bring her name back to popularity after being marginalized or excluded by the producers of Sunset Studio.

Due to Evelyn's role in the movie, she became an international sensation, but not because of her acting abilities or talents, but because of the representation of her sexual attractiveness. In case of the sexual exploitation of Evelyn, there was specific injustice and unfairness transferred from Evelyn to a producer. The producers, Max Girard and Evelyn's opposite actor, Don Adler, won an Oscar because of the movie, and Evelyn was not even nominated. Men in the industry were not interested in recognizing Evelyn's talent and hard work but instead only interested in exploiting her sexually.

Powerlessness

Evelyn Hugo in the entertainment industry experienced disparities in power and representation, which could contribute to feelings of powerlessness. Powerlessness, according to Young (1990), is the condition of having little or no authority or independency in most aspects of people's lives in society, particularly in decision-making processes because of the powerless status. In some situations, Evelyn occasionally found herself in a position where she had to follow orders from those who were designated as professionals or decision-makers, rarely given the opportunity to exercise her own authority, and has less experience to develop her skills and abilities. Those because of the power structure in Hollywood, where men held massive power and influence in the entertainment industry.

Datum 5

*Harry laughed. "Look, this is Ari's plan. Like it or not. He wants you in a few more pictures before he's gonna give you Little Women. But he is gonna give you Little Women." "All right," **What choice did I have, really?** My contract with Sunset was for another three years. If I caused too much trouble, they had the option to drop me at any time. **They could loan me out, force me to take projects, put me on leave without pay, you name it. They could do anything they wanted.** Sunset owned me. (p.66)*

Evelyn felt a sense of powerless since Harry and Ari made decisions for her career without her being involved in the decision-making process. In this situation, Ari wanted Evelyn to be in a few more pictured with other famous male actors before he gave her the role in *Little Women*. Evelyn believes her options were limited, but to follow the terms & conditions of the agreement with Sunset Studio, even if she did not want to. She forcefully had to make compromises and sacrifices to advance her career, or Sunset Studio would exert their power to drop or loan her out whenever Sunset desired, force her to accept unwanted projects, or placed her on unpaid leave.

In addition, there was a power structure between Don Adler and Evelyn Hugo. Don Adler, Evelyn's second husband, has significant power and control over Evelyn's life. Don repeatedly took advantage of Evelyn weaknesses and insecurities in order to keep control of her, included limit or isolated her from social and opportunities.

Datum 6

*"Don wants you out of the studio. Ari's planning to loan you out to MGM and Columbia. Don wants Ari to blackball you from getting an Oscar nod, and Ari's agreeing to it. I think he's gonna loan you out and purposefully put you in flops". Because Don's the **goose that laid the golden egg**. We're staying afloat because of stars like Don". (p.139)*

Don known as the "*goose that laid the golden egg*," indicating that his position was a valuable and profitable to the Sunset Studios. Don used his power to persuade Ari, a decision-maker, to remove Evelyn from studio and ceased her from being nominated for an Oscar. Evelyn seemed to be a powerless figure in the conflict of powerful stakeholders in the industry. The statement above was representing images of an industry where only influential people held the ability to succeed, while others described as vulnerable and powerless figure who was subjected to the desire and decisions of those who control success.

Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism was the act of the dominant groups of one culture 'taking over' the culture of the 'Other' groups in society (Young, 1990). In other words, cultural imperialism refers to the condition in which the dominant culture of one society was imposed on another group, attempting to make it as the norm and universal. It involves the spread and promotion of the dominant culture's values, norms, beliefs, language, traditions, and practices, resulting in the suppression, erasure, or devaluation of others cultures.

In the novel, Evelyn, Cuban-American actress faced the cultural imperialism. Evelyn, was labeling as 'other,' or different than the dominant culture, which mostly represent through her physical characteristics. Rahayu (2010) claimed that in a variety of cultures and societies, women were treated as colonized people and were relegated to the position of 'other'. As part of Evelyn's rise to fame, the white producer Harry in the entertainment industry designed and presented her as two opposing images, from Cuban-American to fully becoming American. Evelyn was purposely forced to conform to a particular set of cultural norms, including adopting American beauty standards, such as changing her Latinas name and becoming a white desirable American actress in order to succeed in Hollywood. The erasure of her Cuban identity represented a form of cultural imperialism that oppressed Evelyn.

Datum 7

Harry introduced me to studio stylist Gwendolyn Peters. Gwen bleached my hair and cut it into a shoulder-length bob. She shaped my eyebrows. She plucked my widow's peak. I met with a nutritionist, who made me lose six pounds exactly, mostly by taking up smoking and replacing some meals with cabbage soup. I met with an elocutionist, who got rid of the New York in my English, who banished Spanish entirely. (p.50)

The previous sentence was the portrayal of Evelyn oppression to Hollywood's beauty standards and cultural norms. Evelyn's physical transformations portrayed a form of cultural imperialism since she has to conform to specific look to be successful. Evelyn's forced to transform, which included bleaching her hair, changing her hairstyle, shaping her eyebrows, plucking her widow's peak, lose six pounds by quitting smoking and replacing her meals, meets an elocutionist who removed New York from her English and banished Spanish entirely. This treatment was a representation of how Hollywood took away Evelyn's identities and forced her to adopt a standardized American style. Her experiences as a Cuban-American actress clearly illustrated how minority cultures were expected to adopt dominant norms and beliefs in order to succeed, even if it means completely erasing their cultural identities in social life.

Violence

Oppression against women on multiple levels can frequently contribute to violence in society. Cudd (2006) states that violence has always played a significant role in the development and perpetuation of oppression. Violence was almost usually carried out by men against women; Thus, women may have been the original victims of oppressive violence, and they continue to experience violence as a result of the ongoing oppression. Furthermore, summarizing Irish Young's statement related to violence in her book revealed that violence in society was deeply rooted in the issue of gender inequality, racial background, and sexuality of women (1990).

Sexual Violence

Evelyn Hugo experienced two forms of sexual violence. The action was kissed by the cashier and forced to have sex by her husband which this sexual activity happened without her consent. In the portrayal of the novel, the cultural and social environment in which Evelyn lived have an effect on how the roles between men and women and structures of power made it possible and even justified for violent behavior. By the time Evelyn was thirteen, she was experiencing sexual violence, which was done by the cashier at *five-and-dime*, Billy. In this case, Billy, an older guy than Evelyn in a position of power, gained advantages over her.

Datum 8

"The cashier at the five-and-dime on the corner was this boy named Billy. He was the sixteen-year-old brother of the girl who sat next to me in school. One October day, I went down to the five-and-dime to buy a piece of candy, and he kissed me. I didn't want him to kiss me. I pushed him away. But he held on to my arm. "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 (p.43)

Sexual violence, according to Dartnall and Jewkes (2013), was defined as any sexual activity that was mostly directed against women's sexuality, using coercion, harassment, or advances, and they all occur in circumstances where consent was not given or not given freely. Billy, a sixteen-year-old boy, kissed Evelyn without her consent when the store was empty, and when Evelyn resisted by immediately pushing him away, Billy used his physical strength to hold onto her by grasping her tighter and used other forms of coercion.

Evelyn mentioned that the store was empty, and there was no one around. This situation added the sense of vulnerability that Evelyn felt. Evelyn expressed the way she felt powerlessness and she felt like she had no control over what was happening, despite the fact that Billy was going to use her to get what he wanted, whether or not she allowed it to happen.

Further analysis revealed that Evelyn Hugo had also experienced sexual violence from her third husband, Mick Riva, who was a famous singer in Hollywood. Deosthali, *et al.* (2022) define sexual violence as using physical force by the husband to have sex even if the wife refused. In the portrayal of the novel, Mick asserted his power and control over Evelyn by attempting to force and manipulate her into having sexual activity with him without Evelyn's consent. Mick's behavior was coercive and disrespectful as he ignored Evelyn's boundaries and wishes.

Datum 9

"You catch his eye. He smiles. He grabs you. You push him off and say, "I don't like to have sex in the morning." "What does that mean?" he says. You shrug. "I'm sorry." He says, "C'mon, baby," and lies on top of you. He shakes his head. He gets out of bed. He says, "You know, you're nothing like I imagined" (p.184)

The statement above portrayed a sexual violence in which Mick forces Evelyn to have sex in the morning. Evelyn asserted her boundaries by pushing him away and saying that she did not want to have sex in the morning, but Mick responded by using manipulative and dismissive expressions. This treatment indicated that he was trying to

coerce and pressure Evelyn into having sex. Furthermore, in the last sentence, Mick was blaming Evelyn for not conforming to his desire and expectations.

Physical Violence

The physical violence that Evelyn Hugo experienced in *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* was happened repeatedly and carried out by father and husband in her life. Throughout the novel, Evelyn first experienced physical violence from her abusive and alcoholic father, and in the midst of her fame and wealth, she subjected to physical violence repeatedly at the hands of her second husband, Don Adler. The first incident of physical violence happened when Don demanded Evelyn quitted acting and have children instead, when Evelyn refused, Don responded with violence.

Datum 10

He came right up into my face. "We are not equals, love. And I'm sorry if I've been so kind that you've forgotten that." "I think this should be the last movie you do," he said. "I think it's time for us to have children."

*His career wasn't turning out the way he wanted. And if he wasn't going to be the most famous person in his family, he surely wasn't going to allow that person to be me. I looked right at him and said, "**Absolutely. Positively. Not.**"*

And he smacked me across the face. Sharp, fast, strong. (p.77)

The statement above was a powerful example of domestic violence was portrayed in the form of physical violence in which Don controlled Evelyn's life by reducing her autonomy and quickly turned to physical violence against her. Don was attempting to maintain his power and control over Evelyn by demanding Evelyn to quit acting and have children instead. When Evelyn confidently refused her husband's demand by saying, "*Absolutely. Positively. Not,*" which left no room for negotiation or compromise, Don responded to her with physical violence, smacking her across the face.

Following a single incident, Don's physical violence against Evelyn gradually escalated over time, becoming more frequent and severe. According to *National Coalition against Domestic Violence (2022)*, those who commit acts of violence frequently seem wonderful and perfect at first but eventually, grow more aggressive and controlling as the relationship progresses. In this situation, Evelyn became trapped in the cycle of abuse, feeling unable to leave the marriage because Don has power and influence in their relationship.

Datum 11

*A man hits you once and apologizes, and you think it will never happen again. But then you tell him you're not sure you ever want a family, and **he hits you once more.** The third time, it's a disagreement about whether to go out to Romanoff's or stay in. Which, you realize when **he pushes you into the wall behind you,** is actually about the image of your marriage to the public. The fourth time, it's after you both lose at the Oscars. You tell him it's OK. He tells you that you don't understand. You remind him that you lost, too. He says, "**Yeah, but your parents are trash from Long Island. No one expects anything from you.**" You know you shouldn't, but you say, "I'm from Hell's Kitchen, you asshole." He opens the parked car's door and pushes you out. (p.81)*

The statement above described how acts of violence progressively escalated from physical to psychological violence. The second physical violence happened when Evelyn

was unsure about wanting a family; Don hit her once more and apologized for it would not happen again. In the third situation, the physical violence happened during the disagreement between Evelyn and Don about whether to go out or stay in, where that matter was not about going to the restaurant together but it was about the image of their marriage in public. The underlying issue was revealed when Don pushed Evelyn into a wall after refusing Don's demand. In the fourth situation, physical violence occurred after both Don and Evelyn lost at the Oscars. When Evelyn tried to comfort Don, he dismissed her and makes insulting comments instead about her life background. As Evelyn defended, Don opened the car door and pushed her out. The physical violence continued to the fifth, where Evelyn was pushed down the stairs by Don. Evelyn was unable to escape the violent situation because Don has more power and influence in private and public sphere. Don's violent treatment of Evelyn left her feeling trapped, isolated, and powerless in the abusive relationship, which was often ignored or even normalized in society.

Psychological Violence

Evelyn experienced psychological violence from people on the internet who shared negative comments about her. She was frequently pressured to conform to society's beauty standards in order to maintain a perfect image and constantly adapt to changing trends and expectations in society.

Datum 12

And don't even get me started on that body. No ass, no hips—just huge boobs on a slim frame.

*Mrs. Jeanine Grambs says: I do not care about Evelyn Hugo AT ALL. Her marriages, affairs, and most of her movies just go to prove one thing: **Slut**. Three A.M. was a disgrace to women. Focus your attention on people that deserve it.*

*YuppiePigs3 says: **Too skinny!** Not for me. (p.12)*

The data above portrayed forms of psychological violence that Evelyn experienced in the entertainment industry. In this case, Evelyn was subjected to comments and harsh criticism that devalue her, leading to negative impacts on her self-esteem. The first and the third comment about Evelyn having "no ass, no hips," just "huge boobs on a slim frame," and "too skinny" focused on Evelyn's body and reinforced the idea that woman's worth was only based on her appearance. It was interpreted that Evelyn was not attractive or desirable enough as a Hollywood actress. Furthermore, the comments made by Mrs. Jeanine Grambs, which label Evelyn as a "slut," based on her vulgar scene, discredit her career and personal life.

Women Characters Struggle Against Oppression

The novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* portrayed not only the various forms of oppression that women characters experienced but also portrayed their struggles to deal with that oppression. The struggles between Evelyn and Monique have a connection to the liberal feminism, which advocate for changes in laws, policies, and institutions to eliminate inequality and promote women's rights. Feminist literary criticism itself generally share the main ideas which was to get equal opportunities for all women (indeed, all people) through all aspects of life (Bressler, 2011). In the novel, Evelyn and Monique struggle against the difficulties that have limited their success.

Monique's Struggle

Monique's struggles after being marginalized by her boss, Frankie, could be explained into the principles of liberal feminism. In this case, Monique's struggles revolved around her aspirations and career growth, which indirectly pointed to the need for changes in the practice of her workplace. Her struggles as portrayed in the novel aimed to create a work environment that was free from discrimination, where she could have equal opportunities for career advancement and have the right to negotiate for equal pay. Monique's action referred to a shift in institutional structure that previously confined her to a subordinate role and limited her opportunities.

In the beginning of the novel, Monique, as an African-American journalist at Vivant, a fictional magazine publishing company, was being marginalized. In the middle of her career, Monique has the opportunity to write the historical life of Evelyn Hugo. Unfortunately, her boss, Frankie, always put Monique into a subordinate position. Frankie limited Monique from achieving her full potential, particularly while choosing stories for her works. Moreover, despite Monique's talent and potential, she was underestimated and undervalued by Frankie, assuming that Monique was not capable of handling a high-profile assignment at Vivant. Monique then expressed her desire for career advancement and demand the opportunities she deserved based on her value for their talents and contribution.

Datum 13

*"I want this opportunity. I want to write this story. I'm sick of being the lowest one on the totem pole. And I need a win, goddammit. I'm thirty-five years old. I've been a writer for more than a decade. **I want a book deal one day. I want to pick my stories.** I want to eventually be the name people scramble to get when someone like Evelyn Hugo calls. And **I'm being underused here** at Vivant. If I'm going to get where I want to go, something has to let up. Someone has to get out of my way. And it needs to happen quickly, because this goddamn career is all I have anymore. If I want things to change, I have to change how I do things. And probably drastically. (p.6)*

The main points of Monique's statement were her desire to take control over her career decisions including having a book deal and the ability to choose her own stories as well as to be respected and recognized as valuable individual at work. Because throughout her career, Monique was tired of being marginalized and treated as the "*lowest one on the totem pole*" at Vivant. Therefore, when a great opportunity came her way, she recognized that she must take drastic action in order to achieve her dream career, which all the time has been limited by Frankie's control. By advocating for her own career advancement, Monique was implicitly changed the institutional that has limited in their careers.

The second form of Monique's struggle against her boss was changing workplace institutions by negotiate to get equal pay in the workplace. By advocating equal pay, Monique drew attention to the issue of gender-based wage disparities and promotes awareness of the fact that valuable women could have better employment opportunities and higher earning potential. Monique provided an equitable workplace environment, where individuals were compensated based on their abilities, rather than their gender.

Datum 14

"I think about it for a moment further. The writer at large seems reasonable. Writer at large sounds great. "OK," I say. And then I push just a little bit further. Because Evelyn said, at the very beginning of all this, that I have to insist on being paid top dollar. And she's right. "And I want a raise commensurate with the title." (p.148)

In the previous data, Monique demonstrated her movement to negotiate for equal pay in the workplace. Monique was requesting a raise commensurate with her new title since she aware that her skills, experiences, and contributions at Vivant were worthy of praise. Her act highlighting the importance of valuing women's work and recognizing their worth in the workplace. Her negotiation interpreted as a symbolic act that represented the larger struggle for gender equality in the workplace. By advocating this, she was not only sought to enhance her own financial situation, but also attempted to eliminate the gender pay gap and promoted equal opportunities for women in the workplace.

Evelyn's struggles

In the novel, Evelyn Hugo's struggle after being marginalized and exploited by men in the entertainment industry also could be explained into the principles of liberal feminism. In the context of Evelyn's struggle against marginalization and exploitation, she was leaving her previous agency (Sunset Studio) that support oppressive environments and start joined another agency in France. By joining another agency, she actively sought more empowering and equal environment in which she could exercise career growth, new opportunities, and her artistic value, and completely left the oppressive situation in male-dominated industry. Her courage emphasized the importance of challenging and reshaping institutions in order to create an environment in which women could thrive and be treated equally.

Datum 15

"I closed my eyes and breathed in deeply, considering both how beneath me this opportunity was and how lucky I was to be given it. It's a hard business, reconciling what the truth used to be with what the truth is now. Luckily, I didn't have to do it for very long.

*Two weeks later, I was back on a film set. And this time, **I was free of all the buttoned-up, innocent-girl stuff that Sunset had pinned on me.** This time, I was able to do whatever I wanted" (p.163)*

Evelyn's decision to leave and change the structural institution reflected her agency in seeking empowerment and equality. She recognized the limitations and oppressive nature of her previous agency, Sunset Studio, which imposed a specific image and narrative on her as the "buttoned-up, innocent girl." By leaving Sunset Studio for new opportunities in Paris, France, she could take control of her own career without any agency which proved her freedom from the oppressive system that had previously held her back.

Evelyn's struggle contributed to reshaping the industry's structures in another agency. By making this move, Evelyn exercised her right to choose the agency that better aligned with her goals and values. She was finally could create her own path to success and free from the limitations. She emphasized her ability to do whatever she wants, express her true self without being ruled by the expectations of others, indicating her newfound control over her career choices. Evelyn's struggle to maintain her position ultimately paid off in the

end. Evelyn finally became an international sensation, winning an Oscar, and becoming one of the most the highest-paid actresses in Hollywood.

Through Evelyn's and Monique's experiences, the novel explored themes of empowerment and equality within of their specific fields, particularly on the workplace. While their experiences differ, Evelyn and Monique were a reflection of liberal feminism, which sought to address gender-based inequalities within existing institutions. By support changes in institution, Evelyn and Monique promoted equal opportunity of women's representation and participation in the workplace.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

Based on findings and discussions in the previous chapter, the researcher discovered that women characters Monique Grant marginalized in the workplace while Evelyn Hugo experienced five forms of oppression including marginalization, exploitation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (sexual, physical, and psychological). In the novel, oppression that Monique and Evelyn experienced carried out by those in positions of power in the workplace, in the domestic, in the entertainment industry, and in the society as a whole. Moreover, they were subjected to this oppression naturally due to their gender as women and their race as African-American and Cuban-American.

In the novel, both Monique and Evelyn were directly marginalized in the workplace. They were dismissed from participating in productive life and their abilities to pursue career advancement opportunities was limited. In the forms of exploitation, Evelyn as Cuban-American actress being controlled, objectified, and taken advantage of by white producers in Hollywood entertainment industry. She was also rendered powerlessness as she was rarely given the opportunity to participate in decision-making. In the form of cultural imperialism, Evelyn was expected to adopt American cultural norms and beliefs in order to succeed in Hollywood, which means completely erasing her cultural identity. In the form of violence, Evelyn experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and psychological violence.

Despite the oppression, Monique and Evelyn struggled to get equal opportunity by changing the structural institution. Their struggles have a strong connection to liberal feminism, which concentrated on gender equality and equal opportunity for women. For Monique, she struggled to create a work environment that was free from discrimination, where she could have equal opportunities for career advancement and have the chance to negotiate for equal pay. For Evelyn, it means using her power and influence to stand up for greater representation and diversity in the entertainment industry. Finally, Evelyn and Monique achieved a level of triumph and personal fulfillment by the end of the novel.

During analyzing this novel, the researcher discovered many interesting topics relating Evelyn Hugo, who dealt with larger social issues. Therefore, to enrich the development of the sociological approach or feminism theory, the researcher suggested for future researchers who would analyze the novel *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* continue this study by examining the intersection of race and sexuality in popular culture, how Evelyn's identity was happened by her experiences, or examining the power relation in the entertainment industry. Furthermore, the researcher suggested to examine this novel more deeply by using different approach and theory, such as psychoanalysis, postmodernism, structuralism, or other literary theory to uncover new insights. Lastly, the

researcher hoped that this study would serve as an informative resource for guiding and informing future researchers, particularly those who interested in similar topic.

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