

**Tribhuvan University**

Resistance to Patriarchal and Capitalist Ideologies in Jackie French's *Slave Girl*

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Letter of Recommendation

Janardan Sapkota has completed his thesis entitled "Resistance to Patriarchal and Capitalist Ideologies in Jackie French's *Slave Girl*" under my supervision. He carried out his research work from April, 2014 to September, 2015. I hereby recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva-voce.

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## Abstract

The present research seeks to foreground on resistance to patriarchal and capitalist Ideologies in Jackie French's *Slave Girl*. While analyzing the text, it makes use of the theoretical insights of Marxist Feminism. Marxist Feminism helps to analyze resistance to patriarchal and capitalist ideologies in Jackie French's *Slave Girl*. The basic thrust of this research is to withdraw the capitalist ideologies which is dominant in the text, as per female are subjugated and isolated by the patriarchal values.

This research heavily relies in the theoretical insight of Valerie Bryson. Keeping this theoretical insight in mind, it is argued that Valerie Bryson changes the opinion and adapts the dominant commodification of the feminine subjectivity values. The feminine self of Elizabeth has been made subject to the absolute power that of the male practice. Sandra Bem, Monica Biernat, Peter Burke and Nancy Chodhrow are some of the thinkers of masculinity studies, on the strength of whom the research aims to find the dialectics of the masculine society which is keeping the special attention to the female protagonist being underestimated.

The purpose of changing the male opinion and behaviour towards feminine existence is always silenced in terms of the opportunities and rights. The dream of equality always remains as the soap bubble as regards in the treatment towards the female race in general. The aim of the research is to uncover the dialectics of the patriarchal ideology. The masculinity in the novel tames the feminine self in terms of commodification. In order to assert the superiority of masculinity over femininity in the society the males do not allow the females to know everything about them and they use females as the workers, which the research attempts to dig out. The feminine self has been thwarted with the absolute power that of the males practice.

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## **I. Commodification of the Feminine Subjectivity in French's *Slave Girl***

Jackie French's *Slave Girl* shows subjugation of working class women. The text portrays her as major characters, exploited by the sophisticated and so-called reach Viking rider. The human values, norms and systems are reduced to the level of capital. The central motif of the bourgeois is to make a big profit, for which, the preliterate's' labor is exploited. The proletariats, who are also guided by the hegemonic power, do not dare to go against the rules and regulations. Human values including their personal matters are also strictly put under the supervision of the bourgeois. The proletariats cannot get the profit or bonus as per their work and contribution to the production but according to the wish and will of bourgeois. In the text the males are a representative of capitalist who concerns only with capital and the females are the workers subjugated and isolated.

Commodification is that idea which involves separating out something from the original context, in which it lacks some or all of its original connections. Commodification involves a distortion of consciousness. Actually, commodification occurs when an abstract concept describing a relationship or context is treated as a concrete 'things' or if separate object when this is inappropriate because it is not an object or because it does not truly exist in separation. Marx argues commodification is an inherent and necessary characteristic of economic it manifests itself in market trade, that is the inversion in thought between object and subject or between means and ends, reflects a real practice where attributes which exist only by virtue of social relationship because people are treated as if they are the inherent natural characteristics of things, or vice versa, attributes of human subjects.

Jackie French's *Slave Girl* is the novel, present how the females are subjugated and are treated as the workers in the masculine society. One of the primary tenets of Marxism is the belief that human thought is a product of the individual's social and economic conditions, their relationships with others are often undermined by those conditions, and that the weak or less-fortunate are always exploited by the richer bourgeoisie. A common theme found in Jackie French's *Slave Girl* is the exploitation of the weak and the poor by the strong and the rich, and an obsession with material possession. The female characters in the novel are all affected by the lack of money, and their entire lives and way of thinking are based upon it. Therefore, a Marxist theme pervades throughout much of the play and can be seen from each of the main character's perspectives. Hekja's way of thinking and her outlook on life are both completely dominated by her material wealth and financial conditions.

This thesis deals with the masculine practice in the society making *Slave Girl*, a mirror. Overestimation, underestimation and the gaze of the feminine self in the novel uncovers the issue of masculinity. The female protagonist in the novel represents the feminine gender whose identity has been under dogged and manipulated by the masculine society.

The feminine self of Elizabeth has been made subject of the absolute power that the male practice. Sandra Bem, Monica Biernat, Peter Burke and Nancy Chodhrow are some of the thinkers of masculine studies, on the strength of whom the research aims to find the dialectics of the masculine society which is made keeping in special attention the female protagonist and her being underestimated. The novel is the story of a Scottish wolfhound called Snarf and his owner, Hekja, who's simple but happy lives change unrecognizably when their village is raided by Vikings. As a



puppy, Snarf is fortuitously rescued by a young girl called Hekja when he is badly injured. Both are then captured by raiding Vikings and transported to 'Vinland' with Freydis Ericisdottir, half-sister of Leif Ericson (who is usually credited with 'discovering' America. Both Freydis and Leif are the children of Eric the Red, who founded the Greenland colony). This page-turning story is set against an historical backdrop and the book is both fascinating and historically informative. As a puppy, Snarf is fortuitously rescued by a young girl called Hekja when he is badly injured. When the village is raided by Vikings, Hekja is captured and taken as a thrall (slave) to Freydis Ericisdottir, and transported to 'Vinland'. Snarf is also taken on board the ship and becomes a valuable member of the crew. Both Hekja and Snarf prove their worth on the journey and become part of Freydis household staff. The female characters are treated as the underdogs manipulated and used by the male which proves the relevance of the application of the tool of Marxist feminism.

In her revised introduction to *Women's Oppression Today* (1988), Michele Barrett, concedes that her original intellectual project, the attempt to consider possible alliances between a non-reductive Marxism and feminism, had been shelved: abandoned rather than resolved; and that the project was abandoned due to the impact of postmodernism on the intellectual environment. Postmodernism, she explains, is premised on an explicit and argued denial of the kind of grand projects that both 'socialism' and 'feminism' by definition are, but, she says, it is not something one can be for or against. It is a cultural climate as well as an intellectual position, a political reality as well as an academic fashion, predicting that the arguments of postmodernism represent the key position around which feminist work would have to revolve.

Later on Barrett, along with many others including Leonard, Benhabib, Walby, trace within feminist theory an extensive turn to culture, away from social sciences. They argue that in the feminist theory located within the arts and humanities there has been an overwhelming interest in discourse analysis and that there has been a parallel trend within what was left in the social sciences; away from social structure models to phenomenology and hermeneutics. Harvey assesses the impact of the same move into cultural politics made by the New Left. The push into cultural politics was, he suggests, connected better with anarchism and libertarianism than with traditional Marxism. But by embracing new social movements, abandoning its faith in the proletariat as agent for change, and leaving behind historical materialism, the New Left cut itself from its own ability to have a critical perspective on itself or on the social processes. It is not that the move was unfruitful, bringing to the fore questions of gender and race, politics of differences, politics of disability, problems wrought through colonisation, and an interest in aesthetics, but it, postmodernism, was also a mask for the deeper transformations in the culture of capitalism.

The purpose of the research is to probe into the elements of how the feminine existence is always silenced in terms of the opportunities and rights. The dream of equality always remains as the soap bubble as regards in the treatment towards the female race in general. The aim of the research is to uncover the dialectics of the patriarchal ideology. The masculinity in the novel tames the feminine self in the text; which the research attempts to dig out. The feminine self has been thwarted with the absolute power that of the males practice.

How does the female protagonist show her attitude towards behave of her husband? Why her existence is undermined in the name of the female? What is the

significance of the text behind the problematic relationship between the husband and the wife? Does the grand narrative of equity and equality of American democracy exist in the world? What are the hidden dialectics of patriarchal society in terms of gender? How do the miserable condition that the females undergo miserable condition? How does the difference in the gender affect the gender role, gender attitude and gender discrimination? The research aims to answer the following questions:

In order to assert the superiority of masculinity over femininity in the society the males do not allow the females to know everything about them and they use females as the workers, which is the outcome of gender stereotypes, gender attitude and gender differences deeply rooted in masculine society which makes Hekja and other females obey the norms of the masculine society, which pushes the feminine into crisis.

The limitation of the research is that it will not touch the debate of other aspects apart from Marxist feminism. Especially the perspective of Marxist feminism in *Slave Girl* is used neglecting other aspects to make the thesis prove the hypothesis. The incidents of the novel mirror the contemporary patriarchal society that also confirms the features of new historicism. But, the delimitation of the research is that it only sticks to the notion of the Marxist feminism. The issue of how the protagonist has been as example of the trope of domination in terms of the gender stereotypes has been the basic concern of the research. The limitation is made in terms of the gender biased attitude and its significance in terms of the relation between the males and the females. The feminine self has been thwarted with the absolute power that the male practice, which is the scope of the research.

The story seems to be tries to deal with several themes simultaneously. French manages to present the gender stereotypes in the society. It is at once a classic ghost story and a critique of today's society, covering the themes of mental illness and racism .In this point Stephen Michael claims:

I don't wish to sound ageist by mentioning this, as this is still a well-written piece, and he clearly has at least as much talent as a younger author, but I do feel that he perhaps ought to have written about characters of his own age, as I feel he may have been able to characterize them more effectively. He could also have characterized them better by putting them into a 1940s or 50s setting, where I feel they would have been much more comfortable.(54)

French almost certainly chooses the modern day in order to draw our attention to the continuing prevalence of racism in our society, and to the way in which mental illness can still be treated with some brutality.

However, I feel that the latter of these themes would have fitted equally neatly into an earlier setting, and that the former is a relatively insignificant sub plot which would have been better left untouched in the context. This presents the text as heteroglossic in nature as it manifests the medley of the voices. To highlight the unique themes of the novel, taking it as a best novel of the year, John Kessay claim:

If an author decides to write a realistic novel, they can use the first person perspective only for one character if they don't want to lose credibility. If they use it for a second character as well, they must introduce a third character or an institution who or which brings the

two accounts together in a plausible way. Someone can find two diaries or a confessor reveals the secrets he's heard from two people or . . . As a critic I've got the prerogative to poke in the wound but am not obliged to come up with a remedy. If an author doesn't realize themselves that what he's come up with is not plausible, an editor should point it out. I'm wondering again what editors get their salary for. (84)

John Keplom has given skeptic eyes on its trustworthiness. For Keplom the novel has the greater degree of efficiency to present the notion of the truth and reality in relation of the society. He says:

To some extent this book was what I was expecting, but in other ways I, personally, felt this novel failed to deliver. The story following Hejka and her husband who have been rather unsatisfactorily married for ten years, and are approaching middle age, childless and in a rut until the changes in the husband start had potential I felt. Perhaps the fact that the tale alternates between the two main characters as a narrator, without their "voice" being very distinct.(94)

Thus it is proved that though the novel is analyzed from multiple perspectives, the issue of Marxist feminism has been yet untouched, which proves the innovation of the research. The proposed thesis is a library-based research. The research is based on the authentic cites. Guidance from the lecturers and professors is taken as the supportive tool. In addition to it the notion of masculinity discourse conceptualized by the thinkers of masculinity such as Sandra Bem, Monica Biernat, Peter Burke and Nancy Chodhrow are used to prove the binary of the society in terms of the gender. Different

extracts from the novel related with the notion of masculinity discourse are brought to prove the domination upon the females in the patriarchal American society.

Marxist feminism is a brand of feminist theory that has blossomed, particularly within the UK, has presented distinct, and well-documented, challenges. It has destabilized previously secure categories, and encouraged theorists to analyse meaning and relationships of power in a way that has called into question unitary, universal concepts and radically opened discussions concerning subjectivity, sex and gender. But this attempt to destabilize universal concepts has also been accused of pulling the rug from under the feet of feminism; for if individuals cannot be conceived as women, belonging to a distinct group, then they cannot be expected to mobilize around common concerns, shared political identities or allegiances.

Indeed, unsettling concepts in this way, it has been suggested, has also left feminists unable to discuss the 'structural' context of power and the conditions of subjectivity: by their economic, social, psychological, or linguistic. This is particularly awkward for some third wave feminists, such as Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, who contextualize third wave feminist perspectives by showing how they are shaped both by material conditions created by economic globalization and techno culture and by bodies of thought associated with postmodernism and post structuralism.

The aim of this research is to endeavors what has been subsumed, added and erased in the recent canonization of feminist theory and to suggest that the exclusion of materialism. Feminism within which is a particular thread of anti-realism leading feminism unable to articulate, investigate or analyze its own conditions. Yet one must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, the contradictions internalized

by feminist theory express something true about the situation of its emergence and that cannot be addressed simply by calling for a return to old knowledge's; for a reduction of all social relationships to their material origin. Indeed, the recent discussions within Marxism about the economic crisis in the late 90s, demonstrate that arguments within socialist and Marxist feminism were held aside from the 'mainstream', abandoned rather than resolved:

The radical feminist argued that feminism cannot be combined with Marxism, partly because feminist method and knowledge is based on women's lived experience and a rejection of the distinction between knowing subject and known object, so that 'women grasp the collective reality of women's condition from within the perspective of that experience, not from outside it.(268)

Jiggers and Young attempted to introduce gender distinctive oppression as a necessary feature of capital. Marxist feminism can be described as a unified system theory but those such as Vogel, for instance, stressed that Marxism is actually an inadequate theory as it stands and must be transformed; otherwise it would remain unable to account even for the dynamics of the laboring process. Substituting division of labor theory for class analysis, Young, a unified system theorist, attempted to develop a theory of gender-based capitalism where class and gender relations had evolved together. By concentrating on the division of labor, she believed that it would be possible to be sensitive to the ethnic distinctions of a racist labor market. She argued that marginalization of women, and our function as secondary labor force is an essential and fundamental characteristic of capitalism.

Marxist feminist, Ellen Woods, argued otherwise, stating that capitalism is uniquely indifferent to the social identities of people it exploits, undermining

differences and diluting identities such as race and gender. When the least privileged sectors of the working class coincide with extra-economic identities such as gender and race it may appear that the cause of the oppression lays elsewhere. But racism and sexism function so well in capitalist society because they work to the advantage of some members of the working class in the competitive conditions of the labor market.

*The Slave Girl* is the novel to replicates the status of the female as a worker who has been used and manipulated in the world of patriarchy. The protagonist of the novel lacks the agency despite her contribution in the family and the society. She is the prototype of all workers of the world who are used and misused. Making her the representative of the female's worker crushed in the world of capitalism, the present research uses the tool of Marxist feminism. The tentative chapter division and allocation of the time of dissertation is as follows. The first chapter presents *French* as the spokesperson of the feminist discourse .The second chapter is the presentation of dialectics of the masculine society in *Slave Girl*. The last chapter concludes the research.



## II. French's *The Slave Girl* Voice of Determination and Resistance

Jackie French's *The Slave Girl* expresses the author's attempt to present to mainly middle-class women and the evils of slavery. Jackie French does this through eyewitness testimony of the horrors that she has been victim to as well as witnessed, and her narrative is now regarded as a groundbreaking literary achievement. What is most significant is that Jackie French presents an argument against slavery that could not be formulated by any other individual, unless they too had experienced the same form of oppression.

This is what separates Jackie French's narrative from the literary works of white abolitionists, even the independent works of Lydia Marie Child, known for editing and providing the preface to *The Slave Girl*. White female abolitionists can attempt to expose the ills of antebellum society, which attributes virtue and womanhood only to white women, but they cannot reject this system outright. They remain aware that it is the system that defines them as women and thereby empowers them as guardians of the domestic sphere. They are implicated nonetheless, *French*, on the other hand, bases her argument on her experience as a subjugated woman and reveals to her audience how white society's system of feminine value and virtue not only excludes the female slaves from such consideration, but this system also unjustly perpetuates the power of white men, making tense the relations between white women and female slaves in the process.

Beside, this Jackie French's narrative, Lydia Child also created other abolitionist literature like her book *The Patriarchal Institution, as Described by Members of Its Own Family*. It is interesting to consider the differences of this independent work and *The Slave Girl*. They both provide experiences of slave

women, but there is a distinct withholding that is evident in Child's work. In providing the observations of another white abolitionist that had once lived in the South, Child cites:

The female slave knows that she is a slave. If her master casts upon her a desiring eye, she knows that she must submit. Still, she feels her degradation, and so do others with whom she is connected. White mothers and daughters of the South have suffered under this custom for years. I cannot use too strong language on this subject, for I know it will meet a heartfelt response from every Southern woman. (29)

In *The Slave Girl*, Jackie French presents a passage that seems to coincide with Child's. She reflects on Dr. Flint's attempt at breaking down her resistance to his advances:

My soul revolted against the mean tyranny. But where could I turn for protection? There is no shadow of law to protect the female slave from insult, from violence, or even from death. The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage. (27)

Child's passage does well to capture and report on the cruelty that females suffer at the hands of their masters, but Jackie French goes a step further and comments on the tension between the female slave and the mistress. It seems that Child is completely unaware of this imbalance, as she attempts to draw a parallel between the suffering of "white mothers and daughters" with that of female slaves.

Jackie French does well to highlight how the white mistress becomes part of the system of abuse that maintains the master's domination over his female slaves. Where Childs is withholding, Jackie French makes it clear that "womanhood" does not carry the same burden for slave women and white women alike. Sadly enough, the burden of the slave woman is seldom lightened by that of the white woman closest to her.

Saidiya V. Hartman points out in her article *Seduction and the Ruses of Power* that white women were in fact enraged by the sexual arrangements of slavery; however, they were generally inclined to "target slave women as the agents of their husbands downfall" (545). There was clearly no compassionate regard shown the female slave by her mistress, as slave women were considered overly seductive, thereby allowing their sexually abusive masters to remain guilt-free in antebellum society. Hartman also goes on to point out antebellum laws that specifically protected white women from the sexual advances of black men but showed no concern, legal or otherwise, for black women that were sexually assaulted by white men.

Meanwhile, black women in the United States were increasingly organising separately to campaign for their right to vote, and some were developing distinctive arguments which anticipate elements of recent black feminist analysis. Some were beginning to argue that black women needed the vote not simply as women and black people but *as black women*: that is, as people whose labour was most exploited, whose children were sent to inferior schools and who were particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, but whose specific needs were not recognised either by white

women or by black men. Although she was primarily concerned with women's cultural and educative role, this sense of a specific but unrecognised identity was most vividly articulated by Julia Cooper:

Only the BLACK WOMAN can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing or special patronage, then and there the whole "*Negro race enters with me*". And our train stops at a dilapidated station ... I see two dingy little rooms with FORLADIES swinging over one and FOR COLORED PEOPLE over the other; while wondering under which head I come.(134)

In mainland Europe, class issues were much more noticeable to the front, and the fight for women's suffrage was spearheaded by the new mass socialist parties rather than middle-class feminist organisations. In Germany, a Marxist feminist analysis was developed which saw political rights for women as an important weapon in the revolutionary struggle and which, in contrast to the 'bourgeois feminist' position, insisted that women's oppression would only be ended with the overthrow of capitalism.

The whole question of the relationship between socialism and feminism is a highly complex one which will be explored further in the next chapters; here it is sufficient to note that any kind of socialist feminist position within the suffrage movement tended to see the vote in utilitarian terms, that is, as a means to a social goal rather than an individual right; it also refused to accept that the suffrage issue transcended all others, or that divisions of class or 'race' could be dismissed as insignificant squabbles amongst men. This position was diametrically opposed to the

radical feminist analysis that was developing within some sections of the movement, and which was particularly explicit in the ideas of Christabel Pankhurst.

Throughout the narrative, Jackie French appeals to her readers to sympathize with her not as an individual but as one suffering alongside many others. “Reader it is not to awaken sympathy for myself that I am telling you truthfully what I suffered in slavery,” she says. “I do it to kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered” (29). Even in her appeals to sympathy, there is an element of distancing that is used whenever Jackie French asks her audience one of her “could you have” questions, oftentimes with regards to their ability to relate to any given slavery experience.

Of course the answer would surely be no, because the intended audience is not made up of slaves nor former slaves but white women that were far separated from the slave experience. These white women, like Child and perhaps even the jealously violent mistresses all throughout the South, could identify with certain general aspects of womanhood but remained significantly different, a condition that might have oftentimes led to indifference on the part of those unaffiliated with the abolitionist cause. Jackie French does not try to cover up this difference. In fact, she does well to remind her audience of that difference, as in her remarks about the reunion with her son after her escape: “Oh reader, can you imagine my joy? No, you cannot, unless you have been a slave mother” (173).

Instead of overlooking the significant difference and tension among slave women and white women, as what might have been suggested by Child, Jackie French seems to make it a central point of the dynamic at work in her narrative. She is not only presenting a melancholy story of her misfortunes and sufferings, but she is also

citing her achievements and small victories. She rejects and resists both absolutely and successfully. Jackie French could not have done this if she had been intent on adhering to social restraints and limitations observed by white women of the period. She had to represent the ‘Other’ in order to persevere despite all adversity and ultimately enjoy the much sought after luxury of freedom.

*Jackie French* was born into slavery in 1813 near Edenton, North Carolina. She enjoyed a relatively happy family life until she was six years old, when her mother died. *French*’s mistress, Margaret Horniblow, took her in and cared for her, teaching her to read, writes, and saw. When Horniblow died, she willed the twelve-year-old *French* to her niece, and *French*’s life soon took a dramatic turn for the worse. Her new mistress’s father, Dr. James Norcom (“Dr. Flint” in *Incidents*), subjected *French* to aggressive and unrelenting sexual harassment. At age sixteen, afraid that Norseman would eventually rape her, *French* began a relationship with a white neighbor, Samuel Tredwell Sawyer (“Mr. Sands” in *Incidents*), and with him she had two children while still in her teens. Instead of discouraging Norseman, *French*’s affair only enraged him. In 1835, he sent her away to a life of hard labor on a plantation he owned, also threatening to break in her young children as field hands.

French soon ran away from the plantation and spent almost seven years hiding in a tiny attic crawl space in her grandmother’s house. She was unable to sit or stand and she eventually became permanently physically disabled. In 1842, *French* escaped to New York and found work as a nanny in the household of a prominent abolitionist writer, Nathaniel Parker Willis. She was eventually reunited with her children and later joined the antislavery movement. In 1861, the year the Civil War began, *French* published *The Slave Girl, Written by herself*, under the pseudonym *Hejka Brent*.

During the 1850s, when *French* was writing her book, slavery was a highly explosive issue in the rapidly expanding United States. Americans argued bitterly over whether or not slavery should be allowed in new territories like California, Kansas, and Nebraska. The Compromise of 1850 sought to hold the Union together by designating California a free state, but it also enacted the Fugitive Slave Act, which facilitated the recapture of runaway slaves. The solution was only temporary, and the divisions that led to the Civil War continued to deepen. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act led to bloody confrontations between pro- and anti-slavery settlers in those territories. In response to these conflicts, the Underground Railroad became more active and abolitionists increased their propaganda efforts, in which slave narratives such as *Incidents* played a crucial part.

In 1983, Luise Vogel's *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* provided an early exploration of such ideas clearly, any mode of production requires that workers are maintained and reproduced. Although in principle this can be achieved through immigration, the latter is of course normally done through procreation, and Vogel argued that the organisation of such 'generational reproduction' provides the key to understanding the material basis of women's oppression in class society. Most obviously, the biological fact of childbearing imposes a basic division of labour, and mean that the economic productivity of reproductively active women is temporarily reduced. Under capitalism, this involves a contradiction for the ruling class, as its interest in extracting the maximum profit from women's labour conflicts with the need for efficient generational replacement and maintenance of the workforce. It resolves this by taking advantage of pre-existing kinship relationships to institutionalise the financial support by working-class men of less productive women,

so that although historically conditions of reproduction and forms of the family have varied:

In virtually all cases, they entail men's greater responsibility for provision of material means of subsistence, women's greater responsibility for the ongoing tasks of necessary labour, and institutionalised forms of male domination over women. (*Marxism*, 149)

In other words, in any form of class society, women's biological role as child bearers almost inevitably involves an economic dependency upon men. It also involves an extended division of labour whereby women are disproportionately responsible for the domestic labour necessary to maintain the workforce, and men for that which involves the production of a surplus. Under capitalism, the separation of home and work and the system of wage labour increases and formalises both the distinction between domestic and production work and women's economic dependency.

However, Vogel argued that in a socialist society, in which production would be for use rather than profit, the economic imperative to extract a surplus from women's labour would no longer be operative, childcare and domestic labour would be socialised and the biological division of labour would no longer involve an oppressive economic dependency.

Slave narrative is the dominant literary mode in early African-American literature. Thousands of accounts, some legitimate and some the fictional creations of white abolitionists, were published in the years between 1820 and the Civil War. These were political as well as literary documents, used to promote the antislavery cause and to answer pro-slavery claims that slaves were happy and well-treated. Most slave narratives feature graphic descriptions of the violent whippings and severe



deprivation inflicted on slaves, attempting to appeal to the emotions and conscience of white readers. Some of the most famous narratives, such as Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, also tell the inspiring story of a brutalized slave's journey toward self-definition and self-assertion. Like other slave narratives, *The Slave Girl* chronicles the abuses of slavery, the slave's struggle for self-definition and self-respect, and the harrowing details of a dangerous escape. However, *French's* story also emphasizes the special problems faced by female slaves, particularly sexual abuse and the anguish of slave mothers who are separated from their children. Because of its unique point of view, and because of the skilled, novelistic way *French* tells her tale, the book has become one of the most celebrated slave narratives of all time.

*The Slave Girl* opens with an introduction in which the author, *Jackie French*, states her reasons for writing an autobiography. Her story is painful, and she would rather have kept it private, but she feels that making it public may help the antislavery movement. A preface by abolitionist Lydia Maria Child makes a similar case for the book and states that the events it records are true.

Jacobs uses the pseudonym *Hejka* Brent to narrate her first-person account. Born into slavery, *Hejka* spends her early years in a happy home with her mother and father, who are relatively well-off slaves. When her mother dies, six-year-old *Hejka* is sent to live with her mother's mistress, who treats her well and teaches her to read. After a few years, this mistress dies and bequeaths *Hejka* to a relative. Her new masters are cruel and neglectful, and Dr. Flint, the father, soon begins pressuring *Hejka* to have a sexual relationship with him. *Hejka* struggles against Flint's overtures for several years. He pressures and threatens her, and she defies and outwits him.

Knowing that, Flint will eventually get his way, *Hekja* consents to a love affair with a white neighbor, Mr. Sands, saying that she is ashamed of this illicit relationship but finds it preferable to being raped by the loathsome Dr. Flint. With Mr. Sands, she has two children, Benny and Ellen. *Hekja* argues that a powerless slave girl cannot be held to the same standards of morality as a free woman. She also has practical reasons for agreeing to the affair: she hopes that when Flint finds out about it, he will sell her to Sands in disgust. Instead, the vengeful Flint sends *Hekja* to his plantation to be broken in as a field hand:

When she discovers that Benny and Ellen are to receive similar treatment, *Hekja* hatches a desperate plan. Escaping to the North with two small children would be impossible. Unwilling to submit to Dr. Flint's abuse, but equally unwilling to abandon her family, she hides in the attic crawl space in the house of her grandmother, Aunt Martha. She hopes that Dr. Flint, under the false impression that she has gone North, will sell her children rather than risk having them disappear as well. (54)

*Hekja* gets overjoyed when Dr. Flint sells Benny and Ellen to a slave trader who is secretly representing Mr. Sands. Mr. Sands promises to free the children one day and sends them to live with Aunt Martha. But *Hekja*'s triumph comes at a high price. The longer she stays in her tiny garret, where she can neither sit nor stand, the more physically she becomes debilitated. Her only pleasure is to watch her children through a tiny peephole, as she cannot risk letting them know where she is. Mr. Sands marries and becomes a congressman. He brings Ellen to Washington, D.C., to look after his newborn daughter, and *Hekja* realizes that Mr. Sands may never free her children.

Worried that he will eventually sell them to slave traders, she determines that she must somehow flee with them to the North. However, Dr. Flint continues to hunt for her, and escape remains too risky.

After seven years in the attic, *Hekja* finally escapes to the North by boat. Benny remains with Aunt Martha, and *Hekja* is reunited with Ellen, who is now nine years old and living in Brooklyn, New York. *Hekja* is dismayed to find that her daughter is still held in virtual slavery by Mr. Sands's cousin, Mrs. Hobbs. She fears that Mrs. Hobbs will take Ellen back to the South, putting her beyond *Hekja*'s reach forever. She finds work as a nursemaid for a New York City family, the Bruces, who treat her very kindly. Dr. Flint continues to pursue *Hekja*, and she flees to Boston.

There, she is reunited with Benny. Dr. Flint now claims that the sale of Benny and Ellen was illegitimate, and *Hekja* is terrified that he will re-enslave all of them. After a few years, Mrs. Bruce dies, and *Hekja* spends some time living with her children in Boston. She spends a year in England caring for Mr. Bruce's daughter, and for the first time in her life she enjoys freedom from racial prejudice. When *Hekja* returns to Boston, Ellen goes to boarding school and Benny moves to California with *Hekja*'s brother William. Mr. Bruce remarries, and *Hekja* takes a position caring for their new baby. Dr. Flint dies, but his daughter, Emily, writes to *Hekja* to claim ownership of her. The Fugitive Slave Act is passed by Congress, making *Hekja* extremely vulnerable to kidnapping and re-enslavement.

Emily Flint and her husband, Mr. Dodge, arrive in New York to capture *Hekja*. *Hekja* goes into hiding, and the new Mrs. Bruce offers to purchase her freedom. *Hekja* refuses, unwilling to be bought and sold yet again, and makes plan to follow Benny to California. Mrs. Bruce buys *Hekja* anyway.

*Hekja* is devastated at being sold and furious with Emily Flint and the whole slave system. However, she says she remains grateful to Mrs. Bruce, who is still her employer when she writes the book. She notes that she still has not yet realized her dream of making a home for herself and her children to share. The book closes with two testimonials to its accuracy, one from Amy Post, a white abolitionist, and the other from George W. Lowther, a black antislavery writer.(43)

An innocent young slave girl, *Hejka* finds herself in the clutches of a morally corrupt master. She begins life with a secure attachment to her parents, who take excellent care of her for her first six years. They don't tell her she is a slave, which enables her to develop a strong sense of self-worth that later allows her to overcome major obstacles. *Hejka* is confident and spirited, and she never really accepts the fact that she is the property of another person. Although she is exposed to the most degrading treatment at the hands of Dr. Flint, she never loses her self-respect or her desire to have a normal home and family. She is devoted to her children and willing to endure great suffering for their sake.

Just as she refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of the slave system, *Hejka* totally rejects her master's claim that she is his property, body and soul. She is an independent spirit, and Dr. Flint's sexual harassment only intensifies her desire to control her own life. *Hekja* is clever, rebellious, and strong-willed, and from the start, she lets Dr. Flint know that she will never submit to his advances. She enters into a battle of wills with him and at times even expresses a perverse satisfaction at tricking him or making him angry. Her independence also leads her to have an affair with Mr. Sands, largely to spite Flint and retain some control over her sexuality. Although she

doesn't love Mr. Sands and believes that it is wrong to have sex with him, she takes satisfaction in her ability to choose whom to sleep with. Similarly, when she hides in an attic crawl space for seven years, substituting a life of physical suffering over the relatively "easy" existence she would have had as Dr. Flint's concubine, *Hekja* once again expresses her strong desire to be psychologically and spiritually independent.

As *Hekja* grows up, and particularly after she becomes a mother, her rebellious and independent nature is somewhat modulated. As a young girl, *Hekja* dreams only of escaping slavery for a better life in the North. After becoming a mother, she still wants freedom, but she also feels deeply attached to her children, who are also Dr. Flint's property. She is unwilling to leave them and worries about what will become of them if she runs away.

Unlike some of the male characters in the book, she cannot simply sever all of her emotional ties and start over in the North. Most of *Hekja's* actions are directed by this essential emotional and moral conflict. She is torn between her independent nature and her maternal feelings, which urge her to sacrifice her own opportunity for freedom to save her children. In the end, motherhood wins out, although *Hekja's* bold spirit is never extinguished.(8)

Although he is based on *Jackie French's* real-life master, Dr. Flint often seems more like a melodramatic villain than a real man. He is morally bankrupt and lacks any redeeming qualities. He is thoroughly one-dimensional, totally corrupted by the power that the slave system grants him. He sees no reason not to use and abuse his slaves in any way he chooses, and he never shows any signs of sympathy for them or remorse for his crimes. If Dr. Flint expresses kindness, it is invariably a ruse to try to get *Hekja*

to sleep with him. Dr. Flint represents the cruelty, callousness, and treachery of the entire slave system.

Dr. Flint loves power above all else, and it often seems that forcing *Hekja* to submit to him is more important to him than simply sleeping with her. He is galled and infuriated by her defiance, and he becomes obsessed with the idea of breaking her will. Rather than simply raping her, he persists in his efforts make her acknowledge his mastery. When *Hekja* escapes, he pursues her relentlessly, putting himself hundreds of dollars in debt to chase her to New York. After his death, his venom and determination seem to be reincarnated in the form of his son-in-law, Mr. Dodge. Dr. Flint neither changes nor grows over the course of the narrative. His malice, representing all of the evils of slavery, appears to affect *Hekja* even from beyond the grave.

Aunt Martha is one of the narrative's most complex characters, embodying ambivalence about motherhood and maternal love. She is a second mother to *Hekja*, a positive force in her life, and a paragon of honesty and decency. She is loving and family-oriented, representing an ideal of domestic life and maternal love. She works tirelessly to buy her children's and grandchildren's freedom. Her unwavering piety leads her to attribute her enslavement to God's will and to patiently bear the loss of her children to slave traders. Beneath her gentle veneer, Aunt Martha is a powerful figure with considerable standing in her community. She is the only black woman in the narrative with her own home. On more than one occasion, she rebukes slave holders who harm her relatives, even telling Dr. Flint to his face that he is going to hell for his treatment of *Hekja*.

Although she is generally a positive character, there is a dark side to Aunt Martha's domesticity. She prizes home and family first and foremost, loving her

children and grandchildren so possessively that she cannot bear the thought of being separated from them. She is essential to *Hekja's* survival, but at times her maternal power threatens to suffocate her loved ones. She would rather see them in slavery than have them run away from her to freedom. She mourns the successful escape of her son, Benjamin, who has been dreadfully abused by his master. She repeatedly urges *Hekja* not to run away. When *Hekja* hides in Aunt Martha's attic crawl space, it is as if she has been locked away in a prison of Martha's creation. In the end, Aunt Martha manages to let *Hekja* go, but only when it is clear that to stay would spell total disaster.

We can further understand such differences by looking more extensively at that political position known as radical feminism. In part, radical feminism was created by women who had been active in NOW and were dissatisfied with what they perceived of as NOW's conservatism. Thus in 1967 at the annual meeting of NOW subsequent to the one in which the above demands were formulated, a group of New York women allied with Ti-Grace Atkinson left NOW and subsequently formed an early radical feminist organisation, "The October 17th Movement," later called "The Feminists." Radical feminism was to a large extent also constituted by women whose previous political activity had been in the diverse organisations of the New Left. This was the case, for example, with such women as Shulamith Firestone and Jo Freeman, who founded an early radical feminist organisation, Radical Women, in New York City in the fall of 1967. These two women, with others, had earlier presented a series of women's demands to a New Left conference, the National Conference for a New Politics, in the spring of that year. None of the demands were taken seriously, causing them to begin thinking about the necessity of separate women's organisations outside existing groups.

Indeed, one of the most important changes in radical feminism since the late 1960s has been its increased, explicit focus on sexuality, a change associated with the extension of radical feminism into lesbian feminism. An article which greatly contributed to this development was "The Woman Identified Woman." This paper claimed that women must eliminate the need for male approval and the practice of identifying with male beliefs and values, both central components of a misogynist culture. The authors argued that an important means for women to accomplish such tasks and to remove the self-hate women typically have toward themselves is to love other women, both emotionally and sexually. At the very least, women cannot let the label "dyke" stand in the way of developing such love and removing such self-hatred.

More recently, Adrienne Rich has also tied together female self-identification and lesbian sexuality under the phrase, "a lesbian continuum." By using the term "lesbian" to denote not only female homosexuality but also instances "of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support," Rich argues that "We begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definitions of 'lesbianism.'

Radical feminist practice and theory has also changed in many ways since its genesis in the late 1960s. One change is a growing attention to issues of race and class. Another is an abandonment of the early reliance on the terminology of "roles" and the "sex-role system." As Alison Jiggar has noted, role terminology implies that women and men have a high degree of choice vis-a-vis gender; role terminology suggests that gender is a kind of mask or script which people may assume or relinquish at will.



Also, radical feminism in more recent years describes women's oppression less as a consequence of "the family" and more in terms of specific practices which have been associated with that institution, such as mothering and sexuality.

However, radical feminism has gone even further than stating that there is a connection between lesbianism and women coming to define and love themselves. Made more explicit, both by Rich and others, is the assertion that women's oppression is constituted by heterosexuality. As Catherine MacKinnon puts it, "Sexuality is the Lynch-pin of gender inequality." It is worthwhile examining the following passage from the article in which this point was made for its illustration of the similarities and differences between early radical feminism and more recent forms.

MacKinnon's argument gives us clues for seeing both what has been most insightful in radical feminism and its major problems. Contemporary radical feminism has been relatively unique in the concerted attention it has given to matters often thought of as either natural or trivial, issues such as sexuality and the family, and in arguing for the centrality of these phenomena in structuring relations between women and men and social life as a whole. The insightfulness of the first point that in at least some cultures sex may be instrumental in structuring gender is illustrated in the English language where the word "sex" refers both to sexual activity and to gender.

Moreover, the illuminating power of the second point, that both sexuality and gender are concerns not only of "private life" but of all social life, must also be recognized as a crucial contribution of radical feminism. For one, it enables us to see the interconnection of gender oppression in domestic and non-domestic settings. Also, it helps us realize that the liberal feminist solution of extending the sphere of state control is not necessarily a solution for women: that to extend the realm of state

control may entail merely a substitution in new forms of masculine power, or gender inequality, in women's lives.

Feminist Political Theory provides both a wide-ranging history of Western feminist thought and a lucid analysis of contemporary debates. It offers an accessible and thought-provoking account of complex theories, which it relates to 'real-life' issues such as sexual violence, political representation, and the family. This timely edition has been thoroughly updated to incorporate the most recent developments in feminism and feminist scholarship throughout, in particular taking into account the impact of black and post-modern feminist thought on feminist political theory. Are women still oppressed? Is paid employment the key to liberation? Should pornography be banned? Do women have an absolute right to abortion? Can women in government really make a difference?

This book draws on a wide range of theoretical, empirical and comparative material to provide a lucid account of feminist debates and the ways in which political disagreements stem from underlying theoretical assumptions. Clear and balanced in its assessment of different problems and perspectives, it offers an essential guide to contemporary feminist thinking and practice. Women's increased role in the labor market has combined with concerns about the damaging effects of long working hours to push time-related issues up the policy agenda in many Western nations. This wide-ranging and accessible book assesses policy alternatives in the light of feminist theory and factual evidence.

The book introduces mainstream ideas on the nature and political significance of time and re-frames them from a feminist perspective to provide a critical overview of policies in Western welfare states. Themes covered include gender differences in time

use and the impact of 'time poverty' on women's citizenship; the need to value time spent giving and receiving care; the social meanings of time and whether we can talk about 'women's time' and 'men's time'; and the role of the past in framing policy options today. The book is essential reading for all those interested in gender inequality, time-use or work/rest-of-life balance. It will be an invaluable resource for students and academics throughout the social sciences.

Based on the Viking Greenland, Saga and Eirik's Saga, *Slave Girl* is told through the eyes of *Hekja*, an island girl taken captive in a Viking raid and transported first to Greenland and subsequently to Vinland. We like to think that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, but in reality Norsemen had explored the coast of that continent over four centuries before him. They called it Vinland.

I loved the stories about Erik the Red and his son Leif Eriksson as a child and I never could understand why Columbus got all the credit. The thought of Viking longboats finding their way first from Denmark to Iceland, then to Greenland, and then all the way across to America is just so thrilling. Thrilling too, is *Slave Girl*. *Hekja* is just beginning to become accustomed to living without her father and brothers, who all died young in their hard, poor island existence, when Vikings raid her village, slaughter her mother and take her captive. She must begin a new life as a slave, or thrall. (77)

*Hekja*'s new mistress is Freydis, daughter of Erik the Red and sister to Leif Eriksson. Freydis is a true Viking. She can never settle in one place and she longs to be on the move. When Erik dies and Leif takes over the stewardship of his lands in Greenland,

Freydis, in a move unusual for even a Viking woman, decides to lead a second expedition to Vinland, a land of plenty which Erik discovered some years previously.

And Hekja must go too, it's a page-turner. Hekja is as wild and passionate as the landscapes she describes. She's as courageous and resilient as her Viking mistress and more than her mistress, she has a powerful sense of justice and reconciliation. And like Kevin Crossley-Holland's Gatty, she also has the gift of a beautiful, expressive voice.

### **III. Proletariat Females in the *Slave Girl***

In this research, the lower class people are inferior on the basis of capitalist notion which has been put under assault in order to assert the identity of the working class of people. The social structure and economic discrimination created by the bourgeoisie for the exploitation of working class people has been questioned bringing the suffering and miserable condition of the life of working class of people. The contemporary social reality of the situation of proletariats of that Viking rider's society is highlighted in this research.

The aim of this paper is to indicate what has been subsumed, elided and erased in the recent canonization of feminist theory and to suggest that the exclusion of materialism, associated with socialist feminism, has led to a form of 'cultural' feminism within which is a particular thread of anti-realism leaving feminism unable to articulate, investigate or analyse its own conditions. Yet one must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, the contradictions internalized by feminist theory express something true about the situation of its emergence and that cannot be addressed simply by calling for a return to old knowledge's for a reduction of all social relationships to their material origin. Indeed, the recent discussions within Marxism about the economic crisis in the late 90s, demonstrate that arguments within socialist and Marxist feminism were held aside from the 'mainstream', abandoned rather than resolved.

Jackie French refers discrimination against women, patriarchy or male supremacy at institutional and individual level, and phallogentrism or discrimination at the conceptual level. The author desires to prove through her woman protagonist that a woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong-willed, self-reliant and rational having

faith in the inner strength of womanhood; which is the painful fate of the females in the realm of patriarchy. *Slave Girl* is a novel with a social purpose. It deals with three issues - interpretation of history, political ideologies and feminist views in the present context. The main ideas conceived in the novel are based on family life, sexual relationship, gender discrimination, socio-political upheaval and the desire for peaceful co-existence. The story of love is honest. Set at a time of political and religious upheaval it is narrated with sympathy and intelligence for anyone who has known life's responsibilities. This gives the story a tangible shape with the articulation of emotional issues, communal hatred and women concerns. The story focuses around a 12 year old girl called "*Hekja*".

The novel there is the glimpse of how the proletariats were perceived and treated by the capitalists in the society. The novel also talks about the various modes of exploitation along with the negative outcome of such exploitation in the lives of working class people. We can broadly notice the different images of people in the text; hard working lower middle class representatives Hekja. Female proletariats who are deprived of socio-economic activities like Freydis Ericsdottir, Olaf are the agent of Patriarchy representative, The King of Ireland, Viking riders, Norse man who exploited servants and other many.

Although most of the events in the novel have been presented as the exploitation of the proletariats as they are sidelined to the margins by the dominant capitalism, yet there are some place where the proletariats to have been offensive towards the capitalism. This sense of periodical resistance suggests the gradual progress of proletariats towards their way of liberation to assert their own space in the

society. Yet, the system of capitalism is so deeply rooted in the society that the proletariats in one way or other have to undergo immense sufferings.

This project on *Slave-girl* raises the issue of high degree of socio-economic inequality prevalent in the society regarding the proletariats. Nevertheless, this research dismantles the pre-existing and prevalent hierarchy between bourgeoisie and proletariats. Somehow, the research nourishes the exploited characters from working class in order to make them assertive and strong willed who struggle hard against of the capitalism in the class-segregated environment. This research has empowered the voice of the voiceless proletariats to bring them to the mainstream. The inaudible voice of the proletariats is made audible for to counter the prevailing bourgeois attitude.

Moreover, this project conveys the message that the existing unequal socio-economic relation among the people in the society leads to the plight of the happiness of the poor people. The issue resistance rise after the domination over the working class people, the commodification of the human values has been touched in an effective way in the present research. In the societies where the capitalism is in an elevated position, the working classes of people have to resist against the so-called Patriarchal norms to get a good social status. In course of it, they undergo various sufferings along with harassment, social violence and economic deprivation.

To wrap up, the present research on *Slave-girl* clearly states that the discrimination practices from the part of capitalism in the society always comes up with negative impact upon the daily lives of the proletariats. The social system, codes, values with the mode of thinking as structured by the capitalism is always directed towards the exploitation of the working class of people that ultimately disintegrates the

happiness of the somehow sustaining poor families by shattering their dreams. The bourgeoisie ideology rules the minds of the proletariats as they get hegemonies by the way of bourgeoisie thinking and thus are compelled to lose their family happiness in making attempts to meet the social expectations from their poor economic background, however they fail to do it merely getting lots of sufferings, sorrow, fragmentation, deprivation, separation, degeneration and ultimately the plight of family and happiness as the major characters of the novel *Hekja* has to undergo such experiences.



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