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SUBVERSION OF OPPRESSIVE AND MANIPULATIVE PATRIARCHAL DISCOURSE IN FAY WELDON'S *DARCY'S UTOPIA**

Şebnem DÜZGÜN**

Abstract

In *Darcy's Utopia* (1990), Fay Weldon envisages a utopian world, in which women are emancipated from the socio-economic and political oppression of the patriarchal society. The writer challenges male authority, and reveals the contradictions in the patriarchal system through manipulating patriarchal discourse, which supports the supremacy of men. The present study examines the impact of ideology and discourse on the regulation of the power relations between men and women through referring to the ideas of Foucault, and the second-wave feminists. It aims to show that Weldon subverts male ideology which naturalizes the superiority of men, and argues that power relations are not natural but they are ideologically constructed. The study concludes that the author believes that the oppression of women and their exploitation are ideological.

Keywords: *Fay Weldon, Darcy's Utopia, Women, Patriarchy, Oppression, Manipulation.*

FAY WELDON'IN *DARCY'NİN ÜTOPYASI'NDA* BASKICI VE SÖMÜRÜCÜ ATAERKİL SÖYLEMİN YIKILMASI

Özet

Darcy'nin Ütopyası'nda (1990), Fay Weldon, kadınların ataerkil toplumun sosyo-ekonomik ve siyasi baskısından kurtulduğu ütöpik bir dünya tasarlar. Yazar, erkek otoritesine karşı çıkar ve erkeklerin üstünlüğünü destekleyen ataerkil söylemi manipüle ederek ataerkil sistemdeki çelişkileri açığa vurur. Bu çalışma, Foucault ve ikinci dalga feministlerin fikirlerine atıfta bulunarak, ideoloji ve söylemin kadın-erkek arasındaki güç ilişkilerinin düzenlenmesi üzerindeki etkisini inceler. Weldon'ın erkeklerin üstünlüğünü doğallaştıran erkek ideolojisini yıktığını ve cinsiyetler arasındaki güç ilişkilerinin doğal olmadığını, ancak ideolojik olarak yapılandırıldığını savunduğunu göstermeyi amaçlar. Çalışma, yazarın kadınların baskılanmasının ve onların sömürülmesinin ideolojik olduğuna inandığı sonucuna varır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Fay Weldon, Darcy'nin Ütopyası, Kadınlar, Ataerkillik, Baskı, Sömürü.*

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Fay Weldon criticizes patriarchal discourse which subordinates the female sex in *Darcy's Utopia*. The writer argues that patriarchal ideology constructs women as mentally and physically inferior to men so as to justify male supremacy. However, the writer subverts patriarchal discourse through arguing that gender discrimination is ideologically constructed, and it is used as a means to deprive the female sex of the equal socio-economic and political rights with the male sex. Therefore, she portrays a utopian world where women are not subjugated or exploited as the inferior sex. The present study aims to examine the influence of patriarchal ideology on the domination of women in *Darcy's Utopia* through referring to the ideas of Foucault, and the second-wave feminists to show that Weldon challenges patriarchal discourse which naturalizes men's superiority.

Weldon (1931-) is posited among the writers who have been influenced by second wave feminists. Having been influenced by the teachings of second wave feminism, the writer regards patriarchy as "a system that exploits biological difference" to impose men's superiority and women's inferiority (Head, 2002: 96). She discusses women's subjugation through her heroines who are "trapped by domesticity," or "beset by adulterous or abusive husbands and needy, self-centred children" (Stade and Karbiener, 2009: 509-510). However, she also reveals "[the] righteous outrage" of women who are manipulated and dominated by men, and their "practical determination" to escape male hegemony (Head, 2002: 96). Although Weldon is counted among second wave writers, she "is especially wary of the unthinking or fanatical stance" (Head, 2002: 96). Her works have a feminist view in that she explores the unequal relations between male and female sexes, but she reveals "the limited concerns of white, middle-class women who dominated second wave feminism" (Bluemel, 2009: 115). For example, in *Big Women* (1997), Weldon is critical about "second-wave idealism in her portrait of a feminist press that lacks solidarity" (Franks, 2013: 16). She criticizes the disintegration among women also in *Darcy's Utopia*, in which female characters who have adopted patriarchal discourse which favours purity, submissiveness, and loyalty in women ostracize those who deviate from the ideal female image. The author argues in many of her novels that "what disrupts women's loyalties to one another is men" since women who want to gain the favour of men try to subjugate and discriminate their female rivals (Rubenstein, 2005: 61). However, her attitude towards feminism has changed throughout her career according to the socio-political climate. While her early novels published in the 1960s were attacked by the feminists since they "tended to place the blame for the situations of trapped, desperate women firmly on their own shoulders," her fictions written in the 1980s, like *Praxis, The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, "began to portray women in powerful roles who attempt to satisfy themselves by manipulating patriarchal institutions" (Stade and Karbiener, 2009: 510). On the other hand, her more recent works, including *What Makes Women Happy* (2006) and *The Spa Decameron* (2007), "are often less concerned with women's oppression and more with their abuses of power" (Russell, 2011: 381).

Darcy's Utopia is about the utopian scheme of Eleanor Darcy, a woman who wants to reconstruct the patriarchal social structure based on the superiority of the upper-class, Christian white men so as to establish a more democratic society in which the inferior groups, including women, the poor, and the black, are emancipated from socio-economic, and political domination. Criticizing the conventional gender roles attributed to women, Weldon subverts patriarchal discourse which constructs females as meek, obedient, and domestic creatures by arguing that female gender roles are not innate but they are assigned by patriarchy. The improvements in women's socio-economic, and political rights in twentieth-century England made the traditional gender roles more flexible, but still "[m]en were identified with reason, women with emotion; men were associated with action, women with passivity; and ... men exercised domination, while women experienced submission" (Zweigner-Bargielowska, 2014: 8-9). Women's domestic roles as house workers, and "[the] rules for living within the walls of the private home" are also "dictated by societal and cultural constraints" (Adolph, 2016: 37). Foucault argues that gender is constructed since "the law that distinguished the sexes" is produced by the dominant patriarchal culture (1978: 38). Butler also claims that gender identity is imposed as it is "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1990: 33). Similarly, Kate Millett maintains that the disparity between the male and the female is not natural but it is "arbitrary" since "the mutually exclusive, contradictory, and polar qualities of the categories 'masculine' and 'feminine'" are imposed by patriarchy (2000: 32).

Following Foucault, Butler and Millett, Weldon asserts that it is men who produce the ideal image women as demure, submissive, and "very plain" (1990: 47). In *Darcy's Utopia*, Rhoda, Eleanor's grandmother and stepmother, is a conventional woman who submits to the will of her husband. She follows the words of Ken, her husband, since she thinks that "he's right, as usual" (Weldon, 1990: 60). However, the writer does not regard her submissiveness as natural but she argues that she has to obey Ken since she depends on him for sustenance (Weldon, 1990: 60). Moreover, the author claims that women's role as child carers is enforced by patriarchal discourse. Eleanor argues that men manipulate women's ability of procreation so as to charge them with raising children: "[A] woman, by virtue of giving birth to a succession of children, is then landed with the task of bringing them up" (Weldon, 1990: 47). As she believes that child rearing is a task manipulated by men to restrict women's freedom, she rejects being a mother: "I don't have children, which makes it easier. To have these hostages to

fortune wipes the smile from many a woman's face" (Weldon, 1990: 136). Therefore, she advises Belinda about sparing time for herself rather than being restrained by motherhood: "If you'd stop breastfeeding,' said Eleanor, 'you might get a little intellectual rigour back, not to mention your figure, and be more help" (Weldon, 1990: 167). Eleanor also resents the fact that Prune, her friend, cannot move from the domestic sphere to gain her economic and social freedom as she has domestic works to do, and "lots of babies" to care for (Weldon, 1990: 128). Therefore, Weldon argues that domesticity and motherhood are imposed on women, like Prune, who are given no chance but to "[s]pent life trying to have babies" (1990: 203).

The author asserts that women who deviate from the traditional moral and gender roles are denounced by patriarchal society. Wendy, Eleanor's mother, is a free-willed woman who does not pay attention to social conventions that reproach "living with a man and not being married to him" (Weldon, 1990: 30). She has an extramarital affair with Ken, a local musician, and has a baby daughter as a single mother. However, her free-will is not appreciated by Ken, who resents the fact that Wendy is "too independent for [her] own good" since she delivered the baby without his knowledge and presence, and named the baby herself without "even consult[ing]" him (Weldon, 1990: 30, 31). Rhoda, Wendy's mother, acts as the mouthpiece of the patriarchal discourse because she condemns her daughter for "being so bossy," which is a male quality (Weldon, 1990: 32). Eleanor, like her mother, challenges the oppressive patriarchal discourse because she believes that the construction of women as domestic, pure, and compliant beings is man-made. In her early years, Apricot, renamed as Eleanor, distinguishes herself as an unconventional girl who is intelligent and assertive, and disinterested about love affairs or acquiring feminine abilities: "Apricot's [crimes] were to spend too much time on homework, not to have a boyfriend, not play an instrument, talk too much and be too big for her boots" (Weldon, 1990: 59). Dealing with public affairs, like economy and politics, Eleanor declines to "describe [herself] as having a maternal nature," which is imposed by patriarchal discourse to restrict women to the domestic sphere (Weldon, 1990: 70). In this way, Weldon subverts the patriarchal discourse which attributes feminine qualities, like meekness, chastity and obedience, to women.

The writer claims that women who defy patriarchal ideology which reduces women to obedient and domestic beings are exposed to social and moral sanctions. Refusing to have a child, Eleanor is denounced as "disgraced, childless, alone, sprawled and wriggled" (Weldon, 1990: 43). She points to the fact that since she deviates from the maternal, domestic female image created by patriarchy, she is regarded as "a bad woman, a selfish woman, the kind who chooses to stay childless" (Weldon, 1990: 67). Regarding the maternal role of women as restricting, she envisions a utopian world where procreation is controlled: "Of all matters in Darcy's Utopia only procreation will be subject to rules and regulations. It will be a most serious matter. You cannot have women popping new people out of themselves just at random, when and where they want" (Weldon, 1990: 115). Moreover, she states that she would prefer to "have a lover than a baby any day," because while having a husband and a child constrain women to patriarchal houses, having a lover does not burden women with any maternal or wifely responsibilities (Weldon, 1990: 163). Having left her husband and children to live with her lover in a hotel room, Valerie also thinks that women should be emancipated from domestic roles to be free from men's subjugation: "*Room service had brought breakfast, and the mail. Valerie sat up in bed, Hugo still asleep beside her, and read the transcript. What bliss, she thought, what paradise, thus to live. Someone else to cook and clean, and bring the food*" (Weldon, 1990: 171; italics in original). However, she is banished from her marital house, and obliged by her husband to "live forever in the Holiday Inn" due to the fact that she has challenged the conventional moral and gender laws by having an extramarital affair with Hugo (Weldon, 1990: 154). Accordingly, the author argues that women's liberation from patriarchal domination is based on the reconstruction of conventional gender roles.

Weldon asserts that the image of the femme fatale is imposed by male-dominated society which denounces women who defy patriarchal ideology that constitutes men as the powerful. The femme fatale, who is the counterpart of "the idealized domestic woman," is a stereotypical female image that appears frequently in mid-Victorian fiction, and it is used as a means to stigmatize "[the] cunning," and "[the] unconventional" women (Hedgecock, 2008: xv). Presently, the term stands for "manipulative, dangerously attractive women" who are "unconscious of their allure or reluctant to acknowledge its destructive powers" (Braun, 2012: 2). Foucault asserts that as deviation is considered to be a challenge to "the established powers," including the Church, and the family, the deviants are punished by "these punishing powers" (1973: 225). Since Eleanor deviates from the traditional, domestic female image, she is stigmatized as a femme fatale who has a manipulative power over men. Unlike a conventional, obedient wife who submits to her husband's will, Eleanor tries to exploit and dominate men. She subjugates Bernard, her first husband, whom she converts from Catholicism to Marxism through using her sexual allure. However, she leaves him for a wealthy and famous academic to have a higher social position. Although her real motif is her ambition for money and status, she makes pretexts to be divorced from him: "She said to Bernard ... he hadn't married her properly, only at a civil ceremony which he hadn't really acknowledged at the time, and out of pity, not love, and now she had found someone she really loved,

who really loved her, whose interests coincided with hers, and so forth” (Weldon, 1990: 163). Since Eleanor is self-interested, unlike a traditional, selfless woman, she is not interested in Bernard’s suffering caused due to her wish to be separated from him: “Bernard wept. ... The old [Catholic] Bernard would not have behaved so: the moral high ground would automatically have been his. He was in some way denatured, and by no doing of hers” (Weldon, 1990: 164). The fact that it is a woman who dominates a man, and makes him suffer challenges patriarchal ideology which supports male supremacy.

Although she is known for her exploitative power over men in her intimate circle, Eleanor gains public recognition as the femme fatale through her affair with Julian Darcy. She is accused of having manipulated Julian to carry out her utopian plan about the construction of a-monetary economy. Eleanor claims that Darcy’s Utopia which is based on “[the] scheme to reshape the economy” has been designed by Julian, but Hugo Vansitart, who has an interview with Eleanor, claims that “[a] great many of Darcy’s ideas came from Eleanor” since Julian was “obviously very much under her thumb” (Weldon, 1990: 212). As her influence on Darcy is realized, she is stigmatized in public as the femme fatale who has forced Julian to manipulate the public funds: “I had a bad time at the hands of male journalists during Julian’s trial and in the period leading up to it: some residual paranoia sticks. They look for a femme fatale, a Mata Hari of world finance, a seductress” (Weldon, 1990: 47). Since she has led her husband astray by exploiting his love, Eleanor is associated with Mata Hari, a femme fatale who was appointed by Germany as a spy during World War I “to betray France for little reason other than pure evil” (White 83). Julian also feels himself betrayed by his wife who has revealed in an interview the fact that “[h]e’s quite nervy,” and “[h]e was hospitalized for depression when he was twenty-one” (Weldon, 1990: 215-216). He argues that she has not only challenged his patriarchal authority but also has damaged his reputation and social status: “‘They’ll blame me [for the failure of non-monetary economy],’ said Julian. ‘I know they will. ... I’ll be the fall guy. ... I should never have left Georgina,’ said Julian. ‘This is my punishment. In my own house I am not believed’” (Weldon, 1990: 217-218). Accordingly, Weldon argues that Eleanor is ostracized as the femme fatale both by the public and her husband as she poses a threat to the conventional gender relationships based on the superiority of men.

The author states that patriarchal discourse that attributes domestic qualities to the female sex also creates two different spheres for men and women, who are associated respectively with the public and the private. British women in the twentieth century enjoyed socio-economic and political rights which were denied to their predecessors. In the mid-nineteenth century, women were disqualified from the patriarchal, public sphere defined by power, money, and politics on the pretext that they are naturally inclined to take care of their children, and to manage household affairs (Simpson, 2005: 51). Although women had more opportunities to exist in the male-dominated world in the late twentieth century, the separate sphere ideology was still dominant. Men continued to be regarded as “provider,” though they started to help women with household jobs, and females persisted to “take primary responsibility for childcare and domestic duties- regardless of employment status” (Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 2014: 12). Weldon reverses patriarchal discourse that associates the domestic with females and the public with males. Valerie, who plays the roles of a wife and a working woman, claims that the public sphere is more liberating for women since it is an area where females have a chance to be saved from such tiring domestic duties as child-care, and the management of house: “It is easier to please an employer than a family: a liberation to have a job description, a joy to be free of the burden of peace-keeping. Mediating in the home is like trying to knead a piece of dough the size of a house” (Weldon, 1990: 21). Moreover, Valerie criticizes patriarchal discourse which expects women to “keep their work life and their love life apart” (Weldon, 1990: 25). She maintains that the separation between “professional life,” which is related with reason, and “personal life,” which is related with emotions, prevents women from merging their intellect with their private feelings so as to produce more imaginative and original works.

The author argues that men restrict women’s freedom through confining females to domestic sphere. Valerie explains that “[the] peaceful organized and unpassionate family life” with Lou, her husband, has restricted her creativity (Weldon, 1990: 26). However, the edge of [her] writing” is “sharpen[ed] when she leaves Lou (Weldon, 1990: 25-26). As she has a chance to mix “lust” with reason in her relationship with Hugo, she becomes more creative (Weldon, 1990: 25). Moreover, Valerie and Hugo deconstruct the conventional discrimination between the private and the public by moving from their marital homes to a hotel room where they both have their love affair, and work on the interview with Eleanor Darcy. The abolishment of the distinction between the spheres creates a larger space for Valerie to act in as she conducts her personal and professional affairs together without feeling the anxiety about confusing her private and public duties: “I had always assumed that journalists—all professional people, in fact—should keep their work life and their love life apart ... I was wrong. ... I loved [Hugo], I worked, I thought, I felt, and there was no separating any of them out, or wanting to” (Weldon, 1990: 25, 26). Therefore, the writer asserts that the separation of the spheres should be abandoned to emancipate women from male oppression that forces females not to confuse their public and private roles.

Weldon also subverts the separate sphere ideology which creates different writing areas for the male and female sexes. She criticizes the fact that while women are supposed to write on the domestic and the private, men are expected to deal with the public, and the professional. The disparity between the writing concerns of men and women is observed in Valerie's and Hugo's writings. The two are assigned with having an interview with Eleanor Darcy, but while Valerie is "more concerned with the human angle," Hugo "deal[s] with the political and economic background" (Weldon, 1990: 201). As a female journalist, Valerie is supposed to deal with Eleanor's domestic relations revolving around love, procreation, and the supernatural. The fact that Valerie agrees to be the writer of the domestic life of Eleanor shows her willingness to accept that it is women's role to deal with the private: "He [Hugo] was no doubt doing his pieces on the Bridport Scandal and the phenomena of Darcian Economics: I had been commissioned by my magazine to do a serialized biography of Eleanor Darcy herself" (Weldon, 1990: 14). Valerie, is so careful about the public/private division that she refuses to talk with Belinda, Eleanor's friend, about economy, which is a public issue: "You must talk to my friend Hugo Vansitart about that [economy]," I said. 'I'd very much appreciate your views on the supernatural.'" (Weldon, 1990: 200, 201). As Valerie thinks that economy is a suitable area for men, and the supernatural for women, she cannot pose a radical challenge against patriarchy which reserves the public sphere for men. Eleanor, on the other hand, openly criticizes gender-based public/private division. She accuses Hugo of being a sexist for preferring to talk about economy than love:

A: ... I have not yet finished with love. Hyper-inflationary monetarism will come in due course.

Q: But love is the proper province of women's magazines, Mrs Darcy, surely?

A: Do you think so? If you think that, you will most certainly have to have your male consciousness raised! (Weldon, 1990: 10)

Eleanor also criticizes Hugo for being disinterested in her utopian scheme about child-bearing, which is associated with the private sphere: "In Darcy's Utopia the paradox of procreation is dealt with very simply. But I think you're still much too stiff and male and professional: I will talk about that with Valerie" (Weldon, 1990: 70). Showing that women are restricted due to being confined to the domestic sphere, the author denounces patriarchal ideology which creates male monopoly on public and professional domains.

Weldon states that women are not only restricted by conventional gender roles, or the separate sphere ideology but they are also subordinated through patriarchal discourse that regards females as mentally and bodily inferior. Foucault claims that the dominant social groups create their own discourses to subjugate the inferior, and impose their own truths: "I am supposing that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (1972: 216). Believing that women are equal to men in terms of mental strength, Weldon contends in *Darcy's Utopia* that women's alleged mental inferiority is imposed by the dominant patriarchal discourse that imposes men's mental supremacy. From her early years, Eleanor is exposed to misogynist patriarchal discourse. Ken, her father, is a conventional working-class man who devalues the intellectual capacity of females: "Ken said all women were the same, they were all gullible" (Weldon, 1990: 181). He argues that Rhoda, Eleanor's grandmother and his late wife, was an irrational woman, and he blames her for his economic failure because he thinks that "if Rhoda hadn't spent all his savings on a quack faith healer he wouldn't be in this state now" (Weldon, 1990: 181). Ken also regards women as emotionally and mentally unreliable beings, and he degrades Eleanor as an "unstable" person like Wendy, her mother (Weldon, 1990: 180). Julian Darcy, Eleanor's academic husband, has also low opinion about women's mental capacity, and he just considers them to be physical creatures that are mentally inferior to men. Therefore, he does not treat Eleanor as his equal in terms of intellectual strength but he just regards her as "a body" that is "young and supple and glamorous" while he considers himself to be "a clever, competent and organizing head" (Weldon, 1990: 191). In this way, he gives voice to patriarchal discourse that associates the mind with men and the body with women.

The writer subverts patriarchal ideology that supports men's intellectual supremacy by arguing that women's mental inferiority is not natural but it is produced by patriarchal discourse. She maintains that as men want to be mentally superior to women, they do not appreciate "intelligence in a woman" (Weldon, 1990: 23). Brenda, Belinda, Eleanor, formerly Apricot, are clever young women who became "scholarship girls, in a school where the others paid," and "[t]heir names went up on a list on the school board as being entitled to free lunches" (Weldon, 1990: 61). While Belinda is known for her mental capacity to know "most of Keats by heart, and large chunks of Shelley," Apricot is distinguished as a brilliant student who "came top of everything" (Weldon, 1990: 61). Although her father and husband do not value her intellectual strength, Eleanor Darcy is an intelligent woman, who has a "vigorous mind" that gives her the mental power to "bring down a government" (Weldon,

1990: 24). She proves herself to be a successful student “[in the] sixth form doing her A levels,” and she studies social sciences and economics at college (Weldon, 1990: 58). Suffering from gender discrimination, Eleanor argues that women’s mental inferiority is produced by patriarchal discourse, and it is imposed on people at an early age. She asserts that children who are brought up in patriarchal houses where the mother is despised by the father tend to regard all women as inferior beings when they reach maturity: “[W]hy the myth of female inferiority is so prevalent throughout the world—it being the direct experience of so many children in so many households that Daddy knows best and Mummy’s a fool” (Weldon, 1990: 114). However, Eleanor fights against patriarchal ideology that constitutes women as ignorant creatures. As a part of her plan to construct “the world of the future,” where women are not discriminated due to their gender, she delivers a speech at the Bridport Women’s Institute, and she claims that housewives are not actually “idiots” (Weldon, 1990: 102). Revealing women’s mental strength, Weldon challenges patriarchal discourse which degrades females as intellectually inferior creatures.

Weldon argues that patriarchal discourse deliberately devalues women’s intellectual works and activities to subordinate the female sex to the male sex. Valerie, who is a journalist working for a women’s magazine, criticizes the fact that the public has low opinion about the intellectual value of women’s magazines. She indicates that female journalists are not ignorant but they are “intelligent enough” to write about economy and politics, but it is public expectation which forces them to be “more concerned with matters of human interest than anything particularly intellectual” (Weldon, 1990: 13). To justify her intelligence, she says that she has worked for the *New Statesman* or the *Economist*, two “quality newspapers” in which “the mind is interesting, the body is not” (Weldon, 1990: 67). Therefore, she denounces the general opinion which devalues the mental capacity of female journalists: “Because I am currently working for *Aura* does not mean I’m an idiot” (Weldon, 1990: 22). Although she condemns people who are “insulting to women’s magazines,” she herself cannot transgress the discourse of patriarchy that constitutes women’s intellectual inferiority (Weldon, 1990: 15). Valerie is attracted to Hugo Vansitart, a famous male journalist, but as she feels mentally inferior to him, she is anxious about being rejected: “He [Hugo] is one of our leading political journalists. When I saw his name on the place card I thought, Oh dear, he’ll be bored by me. He’s much too clever for me” (Weldon, 1990: 13). As she works for *Aura*, a women’s magazine, she is afraid of the fact that Hugo will “hold [her] magazine against [her]” (Weldon, 1990: 13). Her underestimation of her intellectual capacity shows that her thoughts about gender relations have been shaped by patriarchal ideology defending men’s mental supremacy. Accordingly, Weldon points to the role of patriarchal discourse, which underestimates female mental capacity, in imposing women’s intellectual inferiority.

The author maintains that women are also subordinated physically in male-dominated society. Foucault asserts that the dominant struggles to control and shape the bodies of the dominated to have supremacy over them. He argues that within this strategy of domination, the body of the inferior is placed into “a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (1995: 138). Weldon claims that patriarchal discourse constructs the female body as the inferior, the docile, and the obedient to give men the opportunity to have supremacy over women. Valerie states that male physicians, who have the opportunity to examine woman’s body, “enjoy the most extraordinary regard in our society ... as knowing, honest, trustworthy, benign and caring folk” (Weldon, 1990: 142). However, she asserts that male doctors actually exploit their medical power to control and scrutinize the female body mainly for their “passion” for dominating women rather than finding ways of medical treatment to deal with women’s health problems (Weldon, 1990: 142, 143). She also challenges male domination over the female body by claiming that male physician’s professional knowledge about the female body is in fact insufficient since “mammary examination,” which is “fomented and encouraged by male doctors,” has proven to be ineffective, and it “has saved almost no lives at all over the past few years” (Weldon, 1990: 143). Showing that male doctors’ attempt to control the female body cannot be justified on medical ground, Weldon deconstructs medical discourse which is manipulated by patriarchy to give men the right to examine and dominate women’s bodies.

The writer argues that religious ideology is also abused by patriarchy to dominate the female body. Foucault asserts that the body is a site of power where the superior tries to dominate the inferior through imposing on the body “constraints, prohibitions or obligations” (1995: 136). He maintains that the dominant controls the body of the subordinate through manipulating “its elements, its gestures, its behaviour” (1995: 138). Weldon claims that men, as the superior sex, exploit religious discourse to subjugate the female body and to manipulate it for procreation. Catholic discourse constructs the female body as a means of reproduction, and forces women to procreate through arguing that “God initially made us multiply” (Weldon, 1990: 70). Since procreation is regarded as God’s will, women who use contraception are blamed for “stand[ing] between God and his purpose” (Weldon, 1990: 68). Moreover, sex which is associated with lust is considered to be “sinful,” therefore women are not supposed to have sex “unless for the procreation of children” (Weldon, 1990: 75, 64). Muslim discourse also restricts sexuality to reproduction, and justifies woman’s role as a child-bearer through arguing that “[a] woman without children might as well not be born” since “[i]t was to have children that Allah

put her on this earth” (Weldon, 1990: 122). Moreover, religious discourse asserts that women should preserve their virginity till marriage, and as “[s]ex before marriage is a sin” they should not have their bodies contaminated by extramarital sexual intercourse (Weldon, 1990: 64). The restriction of female sexuality, on the other hand, is justified on moral grounds. It is claimed that focusing on the body and bodily affairs prevent human beings from improving their moral behaviours: “The more you pay attention to the body, the less attention you’ve got left to pay the soul” (Weldon, 1990: 75). Condemning carnal sex, patriarchal religious discourse manipulates women’s bodies for procreation.

As religious ideology argues for the chastity and purity of the female body, women who fail to protect their bodies against sexual vices, like adultery, are punished. Nerina, a Muslim woman, criticizes Eleanor, whose body has been corrupted by her adulterous relationship with Julian Darcy. She claims that Eleanor would be tortured for challenging religious discourse which expects woman to be faithful and chaste: “Besides not being a proper wife to Bernard, you are also an adulteress. In some countries in the world you would be stoned to death” (Weldon, 1990: 130). Stoning of the bodies of disobedient women not only shows men’s desire to control and tame females, but also women’s helplessness against patriarchal oppression. On the other hand, the importance attached to virginity and chastity in male-dominated societies is related with men’s aim to prevent women from asserting their independence, and their autonomy over their bodies. Although Muslim discourse condemns sex out of wedlock, Nerina has a sexual affair before marriage, thus she faces “[the] trouble for not being a virgin” (Weldon, 1990: 177). Brenda, Eleanor’s friend, argues that Nerina has no other chance than to restore her virginity through “spells,” or “cosmetic surgery” to get “married in a Muslim ceremony to her brother’s best friend” (Weldon, 1990: 176). The fact that Nerina has to fit her body in the moral standards assessed by Muslim discourse shows her fear about being ostracized as a sexual pervert whose body has been contaminated by lust. Accordingly, Weldon maintains that patriarchal religious discourse allows the female body to be subjugated by men to restrict women’s sexual freedom and their control over their bodies.

The writer challenges Muslim discourse which controls female sexuality and induces them to become a-sexual subjects through forcing them to cover their bodies. Foucault claims that confinement is used by the dominant as a means to make people “bound to Reason,” and “to the rules of morality” (1973: 64). He contends that women who were indulged in extramarital affairs were put into correction houses where they were punished severely for defying moral codes (1973: 208). Weldon criticizes the fact that the Muslim discourse forces the female body to be confined in black robes which stand for patriarchal borders restricting women’s freedom. Nerina has to cover her body when she marries a Muslim man who is conservative about female sexuality: “Presently Nerina came down, in black robes and nose shield, and with only her eyes showing. Her face was plumper than before: her figure could scarcely be observed” (Weldon, 1990: 206). The unattractive, non-feminine clothes worn by Nerina are imposed by patriarchy that wants women to conceal the form of their bodies so as to control their sexuality. Patriarchal discourse denies women’s sexual power since it gives females the advantage to dominate men. Therefore, Eleanor, who displays her femininity through her clothing is condemned by Sharif, Nerina’s husband: “She [Eleanor] was beneath him [Sharif]—it showed in his expression: naked-faced, naked-armed, green-eyed and indecorous female that she was” (Weldon, 1990: 206). Eleanor, on the other hand, feels a strong attraction towards Sharif, but she reckons that she would be punished for her inability to suppress her sexual feelings: “She [Eleanor] dreamt of Sharif ... He beat her for her wickedness, and made her shroud herself in black robes as punishment” (Weldon, 1990: 215). While Eleanor’s physical punishment is related with man’s desire to conquer and dominate women’s bodies, the act of making her cover her body is associated with man’s will to mark the female body as a corrupt entity and to reject its sexual energy. Showing that the covering of the female body is a strategy of men to deny woman’s sexuality, and to subordinate and disempower the female sex, Weldon challenges Muslim discourse which justifies the male control on the female body on religious and moral grounds.

Weldon produces a counter discourse that challenges the religious and social discourses which ostracize and oppress the female body. Valerie claims that marital sex imposed by moral and religious discourses is a means to keep woman’s body under the domination of man. Therefore, she rejects allowing her body and mind to be restrained by conjugal bounds, and seeks for carnal pleasure out of wedlock: “[A] woman needs the excitement of a lover from time to time: ... the reincarnation of the carnal self in a body which gets, over the years, far too controlled by spirit and mind. The customary sex of the marriage bed does so little to stop the mind working” (Weldon, 1990: 54). As she believes that the body submits to reason and morality in matrimonial relations, she regards transgressing marital sphere as liberating. Her extramarital affair with Hugo makes her feel more emancipated since their relations are not regulated by the strict moral or religious rules. Valerie states that Hugo does not try to dominate her or her body, but they live on equal grounds as a single entity: “My body is his, his is mine: one flesh” (Weldon, 1990: 143). Valerie states that she and Hugo achieve a relation based on unity and equality since they deviate from oppressive patriarchal ideology that encourages the domination and manipulation of woman’s body: “Together, we exist. Separately, we are nothing” (Weldon, 1990: 144).

Accordingly, the writer maintains that the conventional body politics based on the subjugation of the female body should be deconstructed to grant women an equal subject position within society.

The author asserts that the domineering and exploitative patriarchal ideology uses social institutions like marriage and education to control women. Kate Millett argues that women, who are deprived of socio-economic freedom, are drawn into marriage market, a social institution which is patriarchal in structure: “[Women’s] chattel status continues in their loss of name, their obligation to adopt the husband’s domicile, and the general legal assumption that marriage involves an exchange of the female’s domestic service and (sexual) consortium in return for financial support” (2000: 34-35). Weldon also argues that men exploit marriage institution to domesticate women as docile, dependent, and submissive beings. As an educated, working woman, Valerie resents the fact that she is treated like a child by her husband who wants her to obey his rules: “Bath from ten forty-five to eleven; teeth for five timed minutes, lights out by eleven fifteen. Love from eleven twenty to forty on Tuesdays and Fridays should there be no concerts on either of those nights: otherwise do without” (Weldon, 1990: 144). Protesting the fact that women are subjugated by their husbands, she claims that women’s domestic role as a wife is restrictive: “[A woman has to] spend twenty minutes every morning getting up and down from her chair, fetching fresh coffee, making more toast, answering the phone, removing the cat from the table, irritating that same husband every time she does so, because he likes peace while he eats” (Weldon, 1990: 157). In this way, Valerie attacks patriarchal discourse which regards women as powerless domestic creatures whose main task is to serve and please their husbands.

On the other hand, the Marxist group, which includes Eleanor and Bernard, assert that marriage is “a symbol of bourgeois oppression” since it is based on bourgeois ideology which supports the superiority of bread-winner husbands over unpaid wives (Weldon, 1990: 97). Jed, a Marxist, asserts that his wife Prune is a victim of the patriarchal marriage institution which reduces women to childbearing, domestic creatures: “‘She [Prune] only gets pregnant so we can’t have sex ... But I can’t just ditch her, can I? Where would she go? What would she do? Poor Prune ... When I married her,’ said Jed, ‘she was a lovely, lively Prunella ... Marriage is a fearful institution’” (Weldon, 1990: 204). Eleanor, like Prune, is oppressed by patriarchal ideology that dictates women to yield to their husbands. Although she is a clever and ambitious woman, her “peculiarly bright and individual life flame ... los[es] its incandescence” when she is married to Bernard, who is “‘difficult’, with his passions, his principles, his politics and policies” (Weldon, 1990: 145). Her second marriage to Julian Darcy, a man from the upper class, is also oppressive since Julian does not regard her as his social or economic equal but as a conventional woman whose job is to deal with such domestic affairs as arranging “graduation dinners,” “garden parties,” “teas,” and “concert suppers” (Weldon, 1990: 178). Accordingly, the writer argues that women are oppressed through patriarchal marriage which legitimates male domination.

Having been restricted by domineering husbands who believe in men’s authority, Eleanor considers marriage to be “a kind of old-fashioned scale” in which “the fors and againts [have] somehow to be kept in balance” (Weldon, 1990: 109). She says that in her utopian world marriage will be approved as a means of procreation, but it will be “beset around with difficulties and obstacles and deep seriousness” to prevent it from being abused as a means of oppression (Weldon, 1990: 115). Eleanor maintains that in patriarchal society marriage is enforced due to economic and social reasons: “Couples stay together for any number of reasons other than happiness: questions of money, children, accommodation or idleness, depression, habit, fears above all: fear of what the neighbours will say, fear of loss of status” (Weldon, 1990: 84). Therefore, she defies patriarchal discourse which encourages marriage that is based on male dominance by arguing that in her utopian community instead of marriage “[I]vings together will happen in abundance” (Weldon, 1990: 115). Since she is against male dominance, she claims that the ideal type of marriage is “a marriage of true minds” in which the couples love and respect one another (Weldon, 1990: 168). Having been influenced by Eleanor’s challenging ideas about marriage, Valerie revises her ideas about marital and gender relations, and she determines to challenge the authority of her husband who condemns her for having a lover: “‘If you don’t come home at once, Valerie, I may not have you,’ said Lou and I said, ‘I’ll come home when I’m good and ready,’ which shook him and shook me” (Weldon, 1990: 223). In this way, Weldon contends that the inferior socio-economic position of women is not natural, but it is imposed by patriarchal ideology that gives men the privilege to control and subordinate their wives.

Education is another control mechanism abused by patriarchy. Although women did not have full access to higher education in the nineteenth century, women’s educational rights were improved in the early twentieth century since they were “finally awarded degrees at Oxford in 1920 and at Cambridge in 1921” (Burke, 2012: 16). However, these universities were still “patriarchal in structure,” and “the idea of women being granted equality of access to these institutions, let alone being eligible for senior powerful positions within their portals, was barely imaginable” (Dyhouse, 2006: x). Moreover, women’s higher education was not favoured since females who had college education were considered to be “a danger to the men” who regarded women’s intellectual equality as a threat to male supremacy (Mirza, 2009: 116). Foucault claims that power authorities that are “charged with saying what counts as true,” use education as a means to impose their notion of truth, and to regulate the power

relations between the dominant and the dominated (1978: 131). Following Foucault, Weldon states that men monopolize the right to receive higher education to prevent women from being equal with themselves in terms of socio-economic power.

In *Darcy's Utopia*, Eleanor's friends Brenda and Belinda have an opportunity to receive a college education thanks to the educational rights provided for women in the twentieth century. Higher education enables them to be "away from home," and to move "into a preferable social and intellectual environment" (Weldon, 1990: 63). As college education liberates females socially and intellectually, women's higher education is not appreciated in patriarchal society where women are regarded as submissive and inferior to men. Mary Parkin, a conventional-minded woman, thinks that females who receive university education deviate from the ideal image of a woman who is supposed to be selfless, unassertive, and subordinate to men mentally and economically. Therefore, she resents the fact that her daughters decrease their opportunity to marry by wanting to receive a college education: "[My daughters will] never find husbands,' complained Mary Parkin, 'if they've too much knowledge in them. It's unsettling for a girl'" (Weldon, 1990: 79). Mrs Khalid, a Muslim woman, also believes that education, which provides socio-economic power, corrupts women and therefore she does not appreciate the fact that Nerina, her daughter, goes to university: "'Since she [my daughter] started at the poly she's been very difficult,' said Mrs Khalid. 'I'm not sure about education for girls'" (Weldon, 1990: 125). As Nerina challenges patriarchal ideology which constitutes women as mentally inferior, she is forced to give up her college education, and to marry a Muslim man who is chosen by her brother. As a man criticizing women's oppression and subordination, Bernard resents the fact that Nerina, who is an intelligent student, is victimised and disempowered by patriarchal society that domesticates women as dependent wives and mothers: "Academia lost a very promising student in Nerina ... She's de-energized. Married, covered in black, with a nose mask and pregnant" (Weldon, 1990: 205). Accordingly, the author reveals the fact that patriarchal discourse disapproves women's participation in higher education to preserve the conventional power relations based on men's superiority.

Since she believes that education is manipulated as a means of power by patriarchal ideology, Weldon argues that women should receive the same education as men to have equal socio-economic power with the opposite sex. The writer asserts that while women who go to university have an opportunity to be removed from the oppressing domestic sphere, those who are not provided with higher education have "to stay cosily at home and be married off to someone suitable" (1990: 63). As a woman who has not received the necessary education to have a high-paid job, Prune claims that she cannot dare to be separated from her husband on whom she depends for sustenance: "One day he'll leave me ... Then what will I do? ... I never got my degree; I'm not trained for anything; I can't do anything" (Weldon, 1990: 202). Unlike Prune, Eleanor rejects being domesticated by Bernard, her first husband, therefore she decides to "tak[e] her degree in the social sciences," and to move from the domestic to the public sphere where she has an opportunity to cultivate her mind, and to earn her own money (Weldon, 1990: 98). Once she starts to go to college, Eleanor becomes more liberated since she gives up devoting her whole time to Bernard, and dedicates herself to reading "more books," and writing "some more essays," and "pass[ing] some exams" (Weldon, 1990: 100). She is also "enrolled as an undergraduate to do a degree course in economics" to be a social equal of her second husband Julian, who is a famous economist (Weldon, 1990: 177). Claiming that patriarchal discourse abuses educational power to oppress the female sex, Weldon argues that women can assert their social and economic independence if they are granted equal educational opportunities.

Criticizing the oppression of women, Weldon argues that women, who are constituted as sexually, socially, and economically inferior by patriarchal discourse, are controlled by men, who are regarded as superior. She claims that patriarchal ideology abuses such social institutions as religion, education, and marriage to subjugate women mentally and physically. As such, the author argues that the subordination of females is not natural but it is an ideological policy to foster patriarchal authority. As Weldon is critical of patriarchal discourse that gives men the right to dominate and manipulate women, she envisions a social structure where women are not abused or subjugated due to their sexual identities.

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