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## A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the Concept of ‘Patriarchy’ in Tomlin’s *Behind Closed Doors*

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### Abstract

Patriarchy refers to the system of male domination over women in society. The man in a patriarchal setup looks at women as contingent beings who gain their meaning and value only in relation to men. The power that men wield over women flows from the patriarchy, which legalizes all forms of oppression and exploitation. The current study scrutinizes Jenny Tomlin’s (2005) memoir *Behind Closed Doors* by implementing a feminist critical discourse analysis perspective. Walby’s (1990) six structures are used to investigate the issue of patriarchy by relating them to specific feminist ideologies. The close analysis of Tomlin’s memoir denotes that the whole text revolves around three main ideologies: *gender inequality*, *objectification*, and *stereotyping*. These three ideologies have been found spreading in the six investigated structures, with objectification through sexuality and violence as the leitmotif in the whole narrative. This result proves that Tomlin’s story is a demonstration of the dark face of patriarchy. Feminist critical discourse analysis discloses the ways patriarchal structures (with their manifested ideologies) are encoded in the text so that women and readers, in general, can avoid, resist, and/or modify.



### About the Journal

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## 1. Introduction

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) is one of the theoretical frameworks that are concerned with unequal gendered power relations and forms of empowerment in texts. It tries to examine “how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered social practices” (Lazar, 2005, p. 10). Following the same tenets of Critical Discourse Analysis, FCDA is steadfast in its belief in transformation. It adheres to the view that things should not be the way they currently are; therefore, feminists should work to uphold a feminist critical viewpoint that may illustrate how oppressive and repressive gender is as a categorization that permeates most social behaviors (Lazar, 2005, p. 10).

The power wielded by men over women flows from the system of patriarchy. This system dehumanizes women by pressurizing them to accept male supremacy and to accept their segregation with open arms (Raslan, 2019, p. 2). Patriarchy compels men to believe that women are “a sexed being” that has no identity outside the oppressive power of men. While man is the essential subject, woman is the inessential other (Beauvoir, 2010, p. 25). The current study scrutinizes Jenny Tomlin’s (2005) memoir *Behind Closed Doors* by implementing an FCDA perspective to demystify the main patriarchal structures that are spreading throughout the text. Walby’s (1990) six structures are used to investigate the issue of patriarchy by relating them to specific feminist ideologies. The study attempts to trace the six structures (with their manifested ideologies) as practiced on the female characters, with a special focus on the author.

The main questions that the paper tries to answer are: (1) what ideologies are imbued within the proposed structures? (2) Which ideology (within which structures) is the most common throughout the employed text? (3) Are the investigated structures patriarchal or matriarchal (in support of men or women)?

The memoir’s title, *Behind Closed Doors*, triggers one’s thinking that there are so many secrets kept behind the doors. Tomlin, in her story’s introduction, maintained that “*this is the story that no one ever saw. The story of what went on behind closed doors*” (Tomlin, 2005, p. 2). A qualitative method is used in the present study to expose the secrets presented by the author. The study hypothesizes that the author is suffering from the unjust treatment exercised on her by her patriarch. Thinking of the structures within the story, it is thought that all the structures are patriarchal, with violence as the most common type. The integration of the FCDA approach with Walby’s (1990) patriarchal structures is expected to give a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the feminist ideologies spreading throughout the narrative under investigation.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Tomlin’s Behind Closed Doors

Jenny Tomlin (born in 1956) is an English writer who has written different novels about women and their suffering. She is the mother of the actress Martine McCutcheon, who has a great role in encouraging her mother to write her childhood story. Tomlin decided to write her memoir *Behind Closed Doors* (BCD, henceforth) in 2005 to narrate her childhood on all its faces: the good, the bad, and the ugly, to show how she grew up in a house where no one was safe (Goodreads, n.d.). Born in one of five children, Jenny (the author) endured her father’s violent beatings, humiliations, and sexual abuse. The whole family suffered from their father’s evil acts. The mother was a submissive victim of the father’s physical violence. The house was never clean, and they had truly little to eat. The father faked whatever disability he could to avoid having to work. This shows the traumatic upbringing that the author passed through; however, they (the female characters) did not surrender and went on surviving happily (Goodreads, n.d.).

The book consists of 14 chapters and is considered a memoir since the writer focused on her childhood period, starting her first chapter with the age of 4 and ending the last chapter with the age

of 16, in which she started to feel the optimism of youth that enabled her to set herself free from “*the nightmare of childhood*” (BCD, p. 263). The main leitmotif within the story is the squalor, terror, and abuse that the characters faced throughout their childhood. However, despite being under the thumb of her patriarch, Jenny tried to champion her emancipation from her father’s control and dominance by challenging all the oppression and exploitation she faced throughout her childhood. In plain words, the writer changed her life story from being a story of (father’s) abuse and (mother’s) neglect to a defiant story of triumph. This is witnessed when the writer ended her narrative with a chapter entitled “triumph”. That is, triumph against all the odds that the writer and her siblings passed through. The current study tries to look at the interrelationships of patriarchy and ideology in BCD and how the patriarch has exercised his power and control through different structures.

## 2.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminist approaches in women’s studies owe a great deal of their impetus and views to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and despite the fact that many feminists have utilized many of CDA principles and tenets, they have not explicitly flagged the feminist perspective within CDA approach until the publication of Michelle Lazar’s book *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse* in 2005. Lazar, in this book, maintained that FCDA “brings together, for the first time, an international collection of studies at the nexus of CDA and feminist scholarship” (Lazar, 2005, p.1). FCDA focuses on investigating how societal gender relations are established and reinforced through language use. In this regard, it differs from descriptive discourse analysis in that it highlights issues of female gender marginalization, manipulation, exploitation, and inequities in domains such as education, media, literature, culture, and politics (Adesina and Jegede, 2019, p. 76). CDA is a critical approach to discourse analysis that attempts to unmask the power relations that are embedded, often concealed, in the text of all communicative events to expose the workings of how language use positions those it addresses by subordinating, excluding, or even colluding with the assumed readers of such texts (Janks, 1998, p. 198). It studies the way language use encodes and enacts ideologies leading to social power abuse, dominance, and inequality. Moreover, CDA sees discourse as “socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258). That is, discourse exists in a dialectic with social situations and relations, both reflecting and reinforcing social structures.

Grounded in CDA and inspired by its social emancipatory goals, FCDA appeared to unveil all forms of social inequality and injustice with the aim of changing the existing conditions of gender relations. It takes an overtly political stance that tries to make the unjust gendered forms visible to the public. FCDA helps to change or overthrow the assumptions in discourse that allocate and withhold access to power on the basis of existing systems of hierarchy, such as patriarchy (Mohammed, n.d.). It looks at language as an ideological instrument for the categorization and classification of things that happen in the world. That is, it tries to demystify the ideological gender structure that divides people into men and women based on the hierarchical relation of domination and subordination, respectively (Lazar, 2005, p. 7). Ideology is a main concept within FCDA; it refers to the beliefs and attitudes held by an individual or a social group. The ideology constructed by a text has the effect of including certain social groups and excluding others. One’s social identity is often reaffirmed by the groups they belong to (Robinson and Robinson, 2003, p. 18). Moreover, examining ideology within a text can expose how power relations are reflected in language use, such as how certain groups are marginalized or privileged through discursive practices, and how representations of these groups (groups promoting differences in gender, class, ethnicity, etc.) contribute to the perpetuation or challenge of existing power structures (Weiss, and Wodak, 2007 Cited in Saeed, 2024). For example, a text promoting a patriarchal ideology would seek to include those belonging to the group (men and powerful entities) while excluding all other groups (women and powerless entities) (Robinson and Robinson, 2003, p. 18). The ideologies found in the text under study will be revealed through examining the patriarchal structures proposed by Walby (1990).

### 2.3 Walby's Patriarchal Structures

In her book (1990) *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby, 1990, p. 20). She proposes six structures and maintains that the interrelationships between them create different forms of patriarchy. The first structure is the *paid employment* in the workplace, which describes patriarchal relations on the job and refers to women being engaged in less paid work than men. The inequality in this structure ranges from the absolute exclusion of women from paid work to the low-paying occupations and part-time work (Walby, 1990, p. 59). The second structure is the *household production*, which refers to the domestic environment where the housewife and her contribution in running the home are undervalued and belittled. Under patriarchal production relations, women carry out household activities for their husbands' advantages and thus, husbands are constituted as the expropriating class and housewives as the direct producers (Walby, 1990, p. 11). The third structure is *culture*, which is concerned with the cultural norms that dictate feminine and masculine identities. Culture is defined as a collection of actions, ideas, and values that are practiced by a society to regulate and stereotype specific ways of behaving (Saady, 2021, p. 219). Gender stereotypes evolve to support the view that each gender can develop characteristics congruent with the assigned roles: women are mainly housewives while men are breadwinners (Best and Williams, 2001, p. 198).

The fourth structure, *sexuality*, refers to the way people experience and express themselves sexually. It includes a person's sexual or emotional attraction to another person and the behavior that may result from this attraction (Rawat, 2014, p. 44). The fifth structure is that of *violence*, which is again a form of man's ill-treatment that he meted out to women as a consequence of the belief in women's inferiority and a means of their subjugation (Walby, 1990, p. 128). The last and sixth structure is *the state*. It refers to the “specific set of social institutions” (Walby, 1990, p. 150), which has been systematically structured in a way that renders it as patriarchal. The state is patriarchal in its support of the male-dominated, patriarchal interests. Simply put, it is patriarchal by choosing not to intervene or being slow in intervening in cases of injustice against women (Rawat, 2014, p. 44). In the analysis of the current text, similar structures will be gathered within whatever ideology that manifests all of them. This will be considered in the methodology part.

### 3. Previous Studies

Numerous research studies have been carried out to examine men's oppressive practices against women in different genres. However, focusing only on those that implemented FCDA as a tool to examine these practices, one can still find a myriad of studies. FCDA is a promising field that attracted many researchers to adopt in their studies so as to unveil the feminist issues used in whatever data those researchers want to examine. In a research paper titled “Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the Language Use and Display in Whitening Cosmetic Product Advertisements”, Mendrofa (2020) viewed three advertisements to see how language might represent social and cultural viewpoints. The study claimed that cosmetic products have changed women's perspective toward the standard of beauty. After analyzing the selected advertisements through adopting an FCDA approach, the study concluded that women are no longer appreciated because of their ability and skill, but due to their physical appearances only. Moreover, the study elaborated that the language used in advertisements has the power to change people, especially women's way of thinking. As a recommendation, the study suggested raising women's awareness about the deluding nature of the advertisement's language. Women should not be affected by such language so that they can accept themselves for who they are. Moreover, Gender stereotypes of what looks beautiful and perfect for women should be dismissed eventually.

“A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the Tropes of (Sexually) Objectified and/or Oppressed Men in Selected Contemporary African Prose Works” is another study by Allagbé, Alou, and Chinade (2021) that looked at three African novels written by three feminist authors to examine the

phenomenon of (sexually) oppressed male characters. Drawing on FCDA for theoretical underpinnings, systemic functional linguistics for grammatical tools, and the qualitative research method, the study challenged the view that holds that only the female body or gender can be sexually objectified and/or oppressed in a patriarchal setting. The analysis of the three novels revealed that the three writers of the investigated prose deliberately use language to represent the tropes of sexually objectified and/or oppressed men in their prose works because they intend to challenge the established social order in social life and establish a certain balance in the representation of gender or/and power relations in African literature.

Noor, Khattak, and Khan (2023) carried out a third study called “The Representation of Women: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Drama”. Forty dialogues from different episodes of the Pakistani drama “*Ou Rangreza*” were selected at random by these researchers. Following a FCDA perspective, the study investigated four feminist ideologies: self-reliance, male chauvinism, the concept of patriarchy, and underestimating women. The results showed that the drama was based on two main ideologies: the liberal feminist ideology and the patriarchal structured ideologies. The play’s theme reflected societal taboos that repress women and entrench male dominance. The results showed that the language of the examined text was being used to practice the distribution of power and the formation of beliefs, the domination of male characters, and the subjection of female characters.

In sum, research spanning feminist issues through an FCDA lens is varied. The approach has been used as a tool to uncover women’s ideologies. Within the above-mentioned studies, it seems clear that Allagbé, Alou, and Chinade’s (2021) study is similar to the present one in that both investigated the fiction genre. However, the current study uses the FCDA lens by examining Walby’s (1990) patriarchal structures and linking them to their relevant ideologies, hence expecting a more detailed and clearer overview of the issue of patriarchy.

#### **4. Methodology**

This paper employs a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate Tomlin’s (2005) narrative, focusing on how women are situated within patriarchy as an oppressive system that constrains their emancipation and freedom. The perceived inferiority of women underpins patriarchal structures, which systematically undermine or erase the sacrifices and achievements of female characters. A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) is applied to the text to uncover and examine the feminist ideologies embedded within the narrative. The qualitative descriptive approach is particularly suitable for this study because it emphasizes contextual interpretation, rich description, and conceptual clarity, rather than quantification, allowing for an in-depth exploration of both overt and subtle mechanisms of oppression.

The data for this study consist of the textual content of Tomlin’s narrative, with particular attention to passages that reflect gender dynamics, power relations, and social structures. Data collection involved close reading and thematic coding of these passages to identify patterns that illustrate patriarchal influence and feminist resistance. The analytical process follows FCDA principles, examining linguistic choices, narrative structures, and character representation to reveal how gendered ideologies are constructed, maintained, and challenged within the text. By combining systematic textual analysis with FCDA, the study ensures that both structural patterns and ideological nuances are thoroughly explored, providing a rigorous framework for understanding the feminist perspectives embedded in the narrative.

##### **4.1 Analysis of Tomlin’s Narrative**

A close reading of Tomlin’s narrative reveals that the main leitmotif of the whole story revolves around the main issues of abuse, neglect, and oppression. The researcher relates three spreading ideologies to Walby’s (1990) six patriarchal structures as exhibited in the text. Accordingly, it is

found that the three structures of *the workplace*, *the household*, and *the state* constitute oppressive platforms to manifest the ideology of gender inequality. The structures of *sexuality* and *violence* are good manifestation for the ideology of objectification, whereas *culture* is used as a good display for the gender stereotyping ideology. To further explain the structures, excerpts from the text itself are provided; some will be explained in the analysis, while others that are somewhat lengthy will be provided in block quotes.

#### 4.1.1 Workplace, Household, and State as Manifestations of Gender Inequality

The ideology of gender inequality refers to the social phenomenon in which people face discrimination, fewer opportunities, and oppression due to their gender (Soken-Huberty, n.d.). This has been exhibited in the current narrative in Walby's three structures: 'workplace, household, and the state'. As for the workplace, Walby (1990) focused on the paid employment in which women get low wages and take the major burden of the work while men constitute the majority in the paid workforce (Walby, 1990, p. 33). Considering the workplace as a platform of gender inequality, the analysis takes a more general meaning in which low payment is only one factor. In the narrative, the author portrayed women's oppression in the workplace by their employers through *sexual harassment*. This has been witnessed when the author's mother worked for a disabled woman whose husband assaulted his employee sexually, "*the man she was cleaning for gave her money for sex, on top of the cleaning*" (249). The real patriarch here is the workplace employer who exploits and uses his own employees to satisfy his own desires and whims. What has been encountered in the text is the appearance of what can be called 'home employer', that is, a patriarch who exploits his workers (family) at home for his own benefit. This exploitation has been embodied in the *obligatory work participation*. That is, the husband obliged his wife to work outside the house, even if reluctantly. This kind of employer looked at his wife as an employee who should bring him money to satisfy his needs and demands.

He ordered her out of the house and told her not to come back until she had some money...Time after time, he would scream at her to find some money and push her out of the front door. She would come back hours later, worn out, with a ten-bob note in her hand (p. 18).

The father was a cuckold who was not only accepting illegal sexual acts from the side of his wife, but he was also pushing and obliging her to do so for the sake of money. "*Sometimes men would come to see her. Dad ignored them and stayed in the living room*" (p. 18). The father was the main reason behind the mother's destruction: "*Dad encouraged Mum to have sex with other men for money*" (p. 144).

Moving to the household as another platform for gender inequality, one can see how the author's household was *a kind of mess and squalor*. The duties that were supposed to be carried out by a caring mother to keep the house clean and comfortable were always left unattended, and the house was always dirty and untidy.

Mum was a hopeless housekeeper. She could not cook, so the food she made always tasted awful, and she had no idea how to manage on a small budget. She barely ever did any cleaning or laundry, and she seldom washed herself or any of us (p. 18)

The mother was always doing what was in favor of her husband, even if it was to the detriment of her children. The ideology that a good woman is the one who cares about her family and children has taken a different meaning in the current text. The cult of womanhood as being obedient, loyal, and committed to the chores allotted to them has been devoted mainly for the benefit of the father at the expense of the children. The *mother's neglect* had a really bad effect on the kids as they

began to notice that their mother was never a source of support to them. “*Her whole life was spent trying to keep Dad happy. Her job was to keep us out of the way and get Dad whatever he wanted*” (p. 18). The author was always thinking that “*mum cared for us, in her own way, but dad was always her priority*” (p. 25). The manifest failure of the mother to offer her children all kinds of help and protection was a real reason behind all the mess, abuse, and violence that the kids got from their patriarch.

The last structure that is thought to constitute an oppressive platform for women is the state. This structure can be traced through the appearance of different institutions within the narrative. Starting with the family as a *domestic support*, one can sense this when the mother was beaten aggressively by a violent husband and sought help and protection from her parents, maintaining “*What did yer call me? I’ve got two parents*” (p. 3). The other family support came from the children themselves, who found that instead of being protected by their mother, she needed their help and assistance. The children were always confronting and stopping the father whenever he beat his wife violently, “*stop it! stop it! leave her alone! get off her! [Laurence] throw himself at dad in a desperate attempt to protect mum*” (p. 4). They were always trying to help and assist their mother, but always in vain due to their small age as well as their father’s vicious attacks. “*We would go and stand close to her, anxiously putting out a hand to touch her arm or saying: Don’t cry, Mum*” (p. 5). Moving to the *neighbors* as outside support, one can see how they wanted to interfere and stop the father from wronging his family, but they couldn’t. They could do nothing but watch, tut-tut, and comment about what was happening to the Ponting family. The neighbors began to notice that “*Ronald Ponting beat his wife Lilian up almost every day*” (p. 9). Instead of offering support and protection, the neighbors began to find entertainment in the mess in which the Ponting family was living. They thought that “*Who needs a telly with the Pontings living here? They are all the entertainment we need*” (p. 10). This shows the disastrous kind of life this family was leading and how none of the surroundings were of any help to them. Looking at *the police* and other institutions as more official ones to support the family members, one can see they were of less help than other institutions.

Sometimes we were so frightened we would sneak out of the house and run up the road to the phone box and call the police...Once I tried to stop one of them and tell him what was going on, but he told me to shut up and turned back to talk to Dad. Kids were simply not listened to in those days. Even though we were the ones who had called the police, they always ignored us as though we were completely irrelevant (p. 103)

This shows the helpless support that the police offered to the kids, as they were not listened to. The passive act from the side of the official institutions, choosing not to intervene and to listen only to adults (not to the oppressed), empowered the father to continue to wrong and oppress his family members, “*the last thing he wanted was child protection officers*” (p.15). The power wielded by Ronald, the father, against his family flows from the system that legalizes for him all forms of oppression, humiliation, and abuse.

All the mentioned practices within the oppressive platforms are real signs of women’s exploitation and segregation. Gender discrimination helps in the establishment of patriarchy. The workplace, the household, and the state are all patriarchal in the sense that male abuse against women is systematically condoned and legitimized. In the workplace, employers are the real possessors of their employees. In the household, the husband is expropriating his roles, and the mother is always submitting and obeying. The state is always refusing to intervene against any oppression. The different state sectors were unsupportive of the oppressed. The only thing they do is to watch, reproach the oppressed, and retreat silently. To add insult to injury, instead of condemning and

stopping the unfair acts that are practiced by the patriarch, the state centralizes these acts and makes them part of its ideology.

#### 4.1.2 Sexuality and Violence as Manifestations of Objectification

The ideology of objectification refers to the act of seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, as an object (Papadaki, 2024). It is a component of dehumanization, which is the act of disavowing others' humanity and treating them like inanimate things and objects. It may range on a continuum with the idea that women are nothing more than sexual bodies at one end and the idea that being objectified and dehumanized is associated with experiencing violence on the other end (Davidson and Gervais, 2015, p. 345). Following this continuum, the two structures of sexuality and violence are examined.

Sexuality in the sense of sexual orientation is seen as a major site of male domination over women. In the text under investigation, sexuality has taken on a very repugnant meaning. It has been portrayed in most of the sexual scenes as a nasty and filthy concept of attack, abuse, and mistreatment. Starting with the parents' relation, one can feel the oppressive way with which the father treated his wife, "*think yer can say no, do yer? I'm yer husband, and I've got my rights*" (p. 3). And whenever she asked for help, the mother is confronted with the father's violent acts: "*Mum, stark naked, screaming, 'Help me, Jen'. Before I could move, Dad appeared, also naked, and, grabbing Mum by the hair, dragged her back into their room where the screams continued*" (p. 186). These scenes emphasized the idea that a woman (*unable to say 'no'*) is a mere possession in her man's hands. The idea collaborates with the objectification view that men celebrate their sexual influence on the female body as proof of their subjugation of women (Al-Zubeidi and Fathi, 2015:6).

Although there was a strong rebellion against having a (sexual) relation with the husband (*mum did not want*), the man coerced his wife into doing so. Something that has been referred to as *marital rape*, which refers to forcing or manipulating the other partner into unwanted sexual intercourse. Engaging in such an act without the other partner's consent is considered an act of sexual abuse (Silva, 2021). In the text, most of the scenes of father-mother sexual relations can be described as an abusive assault. Ronald Ponting looked at Lilian as a sexual body that can be subjugated through sex, and this is the core meaning of objectification (looking at women as 'sexed beings'). The sexual abuse was not only exercised against the mother, but it also extended to the female daughters. "*Dad's 'games' started to go further. He would order us into his bedroom in the mornings*" (p. 62). Under the disguise of being games, the father went on harassing his daughters: "*at home Dad was more interested in us girls because he could use us for sex*" (p.90). Thus, from an early age, the father began to abuse his daughters sexually. He called them into his bedroom, claiming that he "*wanted a 'cuddle', with the same funny look on his face he always had when we played his games. Then he would take me in under the bedcovers*" (p. 63). The father was an evil paedophile who 'used' his own daughters to satisfy his sexual desires. The author has been greatly impacted by this type of maltreatment from her vicious parent. She began to dread the word 'abuse' as she claimed that "*there had been times in the past when I had felt I had 'Abuse me' tattooed on my forehead*" (p. 210). Worse than that, she became traumatized against having any normal relation with any man, Jenny explained, "*As a result, the legacy of Dad's abuse, which made it hard for me to allow someone that close to me*" (p. 250). The father's abuse was not the only abuse that the writer faced; she was also abused by other male characters throughout her life. One abuser was the seller at the Hoxton market.

He would often invite me into the back room when I went there, but he had the same look on his face as Dad did when he was about to force me to do horrible things with him, and I always hurried away, telling him I had to get home (p. 85)

Another man was the factory-site caretaker, whom she trusted and treated as a friend but sadly discovered that he was just like other men.

George had come a little too close and was asking me whether I had a boyfriend. The look on his face reminded me of Dad - and then he tried to put an arm round me. The next moment, he grabbed my face in his hands and tried to kiss me, full on (p. 135)

What is clear from the excerpts above is the father's influence on the author. In whatever sexual abuse she was confronted with, she remembered her father. These sexual harassments affected the author to the extent that she began to doubt all men: "*Were all men like this, or was it just me who made them want to hurt me?*" (p. 136). Something that declares men's brutality and immorality. Considering 'rape' as a form of objectification, one can see it within the text when an old man wanted to rape Jenny after being sold to him by her father at her uncle's wedding, but the attempt failed because of the nanny's appearance.

Dad told the other man to get started and said he would watch the door... he started to tug the crotch of my knickers to one side... Petrified, I could hear him undoing his flies (p. 171)

The other mention was in the scene of pornography when there was a mutual exchange between the daughters of Ronald and Ronnie, his friend. The scene showed the brutal and sinful acts of the parents who were making pornographic films out of raping their daughter. Ronnie's daughter was a child who had been abused and corrupted because she had no understanding of the atrocity that was being committed against her. That child accepted being raped by an old man happily, and this is an evident indication of men's wicked acts against women, even if against little (female) children.

I was greeted by the horrific sight of his (Ronnie's) daughter, bent over the arm of the pink sofa with my naked father behind her, a leer on his face, panting and gasping as he raped her (p. 156)

Jenny, on the other hand, refused to be raped and confronted the rapist. She maintained that she would never allow them to treat her as a commodity: "*I was never going to let them do that to me*" (p. 156). An indication that the writer refused to surrender to her father's practices. She discovered that the only solution for her emancipation was through standing against the iniquitous system that her father put in place, and according to which he ruled his family.

Moving to the other manifestation of objectification, one can find violence. This has come in different forms, starting with beating and physical attacks and ending with gaze and wolf whistles (Walby, 1990, p. 128). Physical attacks prevailed throughout the text and were exercised against all family members

We could see the bruises and cuts on her [mother] body, and there was often blood on the corner of her mouth or oozing from the cut on her face (p. 5).

He would use his hand, his belt, his shoe, or anything within reach. Beatings were part of everyday life, and none of us had any chance of fending him off (p. 14).

The beating was exercised against the children without being aware of the reason.

Dad beat us almost as often as he beat Mum. He would swear at us, lash out, or kick us for no reason other than that he felt like it (p. 14).

The children got used to beating as Jenny maintained, “this *scene [of beating]* was the same every morning. It was the way we started our day, and to us it was normal” (p. 5). Living in a house permeated by the objectification ideology in which women are treated as things rather than people and are beaten severely, the children began to notice the filthy life they were living in: “Home meant beatings, hunger and fear. Home meant dad” (p. 44). Home was a portrait of the father, who was a representation of all bad features, in which beatings, hunger, filth, squalor, fear, and insecurity were the real identity of the patriarch. Most of the physical attacks have been accompanied by verbal violence in which the father swore, cursed, and humiliated his ‘belongings’. Throughout the narrative, readers can witness the number of vulgar expressions used by the father against his family (see 4.1.3 below). There was no mention of the father without witnessing a swear or cursing word.

Our dad never opened his mouth without using a string of swear words. He only ever spoke to us in snarls, and most of the time he did not use our names anyway- we would be ‘you little cunts’ (p. 19)

This kind of abuse had a devastating impact on the narrator. In the attempted rape scene, the nanny appeared, and the father’s scheme was ruined. The nanny described Jenny as a ‘disgrace’, Jenny said, “If she had punched me, it could not have hurt more” (p. 172). claiming that physical abuse is less harmful than being described as a disgrace. Another form of violence can be witnessed in *child sexual abuse*, which is the main issue in the whole text; one can find it in three different scenes. The first and the most painful was the abuse of the father against his own daughters.

I spent my days in terror, dreading the next time Dad would bark out my name and order me to ‘Fucking get in here and shut the door’ (p. 122) [*abusing the elder daughter, Jenny*]

Dad decided Kim was old enough to play his games too. I was his favourite - he preferred my blonde hair and blue eyes to Kim’s dark looks. But that did not stop him. Kim was hauled into his bed for early morning ‘cuddles’ too (p. 79) [*abusing the middle daughter, Kim*]

The abuse of the little daughter, Carole, was a turning point in the family’s life. After realizing what their father was doing to them, Jenny and Kim decided to stand against their father, as they were afraid that his abuse would eventually extend to their nine-year-old sister.

Carole came out of our parents’ room, flustered and crying. Behind her was Dad, tucking his shirt into his trousers (p. 246) [*abusing the little daughter*]

After discovering that the father was abusing Carole, Kim decided to call the police. “Kim went to the phone box and dialed 999; I think my dad’s been abusing my nine-year-old sister” (p. 246). This brave decision has put the father in jail to be judged. Although the state (see 5.1.1 above) was not of great help in this issue; however, fear and fright should not silence women from asking for their rights. Another mention of child sexual abuse was when the brother of Jenny’s friend, Sandra, was abusing his own sister, who was less than 10 years old.

I could make out the outline of someone on top of Sandra in her bed. Horrified, I realised that someone was molesting her... after a few minutes, the man got up, did up his clothes and crept out of the room. Not before I recognised him, though - it was Sandra’s older brother. She was crying quietly in her bed. I reached out my hand tentatively towards her. ‘It happens to me too, I told her (p. 169)

The above excerpt showed that girls were inflicted with (sexual) abuse from their close acquaintances. The writer mentioned this example as she found that the abusive sexual acts were not limited only to her own family: “*knowing that these awful things happened in other families made me feel a little less alone*” (p. 170). Another form of abuse, which is considered a precursor to sexual harassment, is the issue of *wolf whistles*. The writer mentioned it when she portrayed the scene of the man who was following her while she was walking to her auntie’s house; he used to follow, whistle and call her whenever she came that road: “*I saw the figure of a man. I was sure he was following me... a minute later I heard him shout, Blondie, turn around*” (p. 207). Although a wolf whistle, which is “a whistle with a rising and falling pitch, directed towards someone to express sexual attraction or admiration” (Longman, n.d.), is considered a mild form of abuse, it is still considered a form of sexual harassment in itself (Beynon, 2012). This idea has been validated in the text when the writer mentioned that her pursuer began to ask her to turn to find out that he was “*exposing himself to [her] ... with a sickly grin on his face*” (p. 207)

All these acts of sexuality and violence are an exposition of patriarchal objectification of women. Ronald Ponting was a man who controlled his family in the sense of exploitation. Sexuality, in its brutal sense, finds that women are being reduced into a sexual body owned and entertained by men, the way he likes. Violence has been presented in the text in various forms and permutations, and it curtails women’s full social emancipation. Male domination, through violence against women, is considered to be part of the patriarchal system through which women are controlled, degraded, and suppressed. It is clear from the above analysis that these two structures are so common throughout the story. Not one chapter has been written without mentioning these two structures.

#### 4.1.3 Culture as Manifestation of Gender Stereotyping

The ideology of gender stereotyping refers to a generalized view about the roles that ought to be performed by women and men in a specific culture (ORCHR, 2014). In the current text, culture is depicted as being patriarchal in the sense that everything is being done for the benefit of men. Men are always stereotyped as being powerful, dominant, and rational, while women are stereotyped as being powerless, submissive, and irrational. There are many stereotyping incidents presented in Tomlin’s BCD. Starting with the father, one can feel the superior role he played throughout the narrative. He has been described as a *monster* (p. 94), *big man* (p. 99), *ruler* (p. 100), *vicious bully* (p. 124), *abusive man* (p. 268), as well as *king of the castle* (p. 27). These descriptions allude to how men are stereotyped as being powerful and dominant, who are always looking at others as being their property and slaves. On the other side of the scale, one can find the mother and the children. The father called the mother by using different descriptions as *bastard* (p. 3), *fucking cow* (p. 3), *useless mare* (p. 3), *sappy fucker*, (p. 102). The children were usually called *little cunt* (pp. 4, 19, 56, 104), *little thing* (p. 70), *little fuckers* (pp. 109, 113). This name-calling process is an indication of stereotyping the woman and the children as being submissive and useless objects whose status is reduced to mere things and objects (see 4.1.2 section above).

Another example of stereotyping is portrayed in the issue of ‘girls’ value and worth’. This issue has taken on a paradoxical meaning throughout the text. That is, when evaluated from the side of a morally corrupt patriarch, girls are precious and worth a lot. In contrast to their male siblings, one can profit from them by abusing and exploiting them for one’s own personal desires, as the author maintained when she found that her father was less interested in her brother and only interested in girls:

Dad was always less interested in him than in Kim and me. Boys were just a nuisance as far as he was concerned; at least girls had their uses (p. 27)

The other side of benefiting from one's girls is considering them as a commodity within a buying-selling process. The author remembered when her father wanted to sell her to his friend in the pornography scene; however, his attempt failed:

Dad was furious: he would have made good money out of me. Despite all his sordid interference, he had never had intercourse with me, and this meant I was worth a lot of money (p. 157)

On the other side of the scale, girls are worthless and disgraceful. This has been expressed by the nanny who called Jenny a 'disgrace' when she found her locked in a room with a man who was about to rape her. "*Nanny simply said harshly to me, You get tidy and sort out your hair: you're a disgrace*" (p. 171). Instead of assisting her and protecting her from a cuckold villain father, the nanny felt stigma from the girl. This explained the view that 'benefit' is the decisive criterion according to which girls are to be evaluated.

Although this section introduces some evidence of stereotyping throughout the narrative, other types can be manifested in other structures. Giving all power and authority to the father has become devastatingly monolithic, encompassing all the ways in which women are abused and unfairly treated. Culture, understood as a set of beliefs and stereotypes that regulate people's behavior, is related to other social practices and structures. That is, we can find this structure enmeshed in all other structures. Walby (1990, p. 91) maintained that "it is inappropriate to theorize ideology outside the material relations in which it is embedded". In sum, the view that culture is patriarchal is absorbed in all the other proposed structures too.

## 5. Results and Discussion

In alignment with other feminist studies which try to expose how women have been enforced into a status of inferiority and how they have been oppressed by men who have always treated them as the other with reference to the essential man (Sayers, 1990, p. 220), the current study demystified the different tools that have been used to portray women as being weak, submissive and powerless. The language used, the scenes portrayed, and the memories recalled show the amount of oppression and torture the writer experienced. She suffered all kinds of humiliations and assault mainly by her patriarch, represented in the father. This result confirms the first hypothesis of the present study. Using a FCDA perspective, one can relate the ideologies of gender inequality, objectification, and gender stereotyping with Walby's (1990) six patriarchal structures. In the investigated text, women have been oppressed, suppressed, and repressed.

The gender inequality ideology is prevailing in the three structures of the workplace, the household, and the state. Women in these platforms have been denied any free will that may allow them an essence that can transcend their eminence into existence. The *workplace* was a place for women's exploitation, and in the current text, it took a new direction in which the woman was used and exploited by obliging her to work and bring money, even if from adultery and pornography. The *family life* was again exploitative, marked by an abnormal dynamic where most roles were improperly assigned among the characters: there was an abusive father, an unsupportive mother, and lost children. The different social and cultural institutions represented by *the state* exhibited the oppressive side of patriarchy by centralizing and legitimizing patriarchal acts.

The ideology of objectification has been exhibited in the structures of *sexuality* and *violence* in which women have been "dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 249). These two structures were the most prevalent structures throughout the text. They usually came together, and the whole theme of the story depended on them. This result confirms the first part of the second hypothesis in the sense that all structures proved to be patriarchal (and nothing was matriarchal); however, the second part of this hypothesis has been partly confirmed since not only violence has been found prevailing, but also sexuality in its filthiest sense.

*Culture*, with its stereotypical ideology, was found to be patriarchal, as in most of its forms, it exhibited man's power and authority over women. The ideological cultural practices were all for the benefit of men. Investigating the spreading ideologies within the patriarchal structures through the FCDA lens was found to be a good tool to redress gender inequalities and stop women's objectification and stereotyping so as to create a world in which one gender does not set the standard of human value. Changing the mindset of the people is something that can take a lot of effort and passion. Many interpret the resistance as a struggle for power, which exacerbates the challenges the resistance as a whole is meant to face from powerful individuals. But assuming the initiative and revealing the means and causes of the oppressed's suffering is a crucial step towards liberation and emancipation (Sherwani and Dizayi, 2019, p. 1278). FCDA tries to expose all kinds of oppression exercised against women so as to refuse and stop them. This emancipation was felt by the author when she was set free from her father (after his death), maintaining "I felt free, I felt elated" (BCD, p. 264). A feeling that every woman should feel by seeking to change and end all aspects of oppression, as well as by refusing patriarchy and considering it as a system that exerts forces to subjugate and undermine women.

## 6. Conclusion

Using FCDA as an approach to investigate gender inequality and patriarchal structures can widen the understanding of gendered discourses in women's fiction. The investigated text is imbued with patriarchal structures, and in all of them, the ideology of male domination and hegemony has been spreading. Using FCDA as a tool to examine Tomlin's text proves to be expedient as the analysis unravels all the patriarchal structures and demystifies all kinds of oppression exposed throughout the text. This can, in turn, raise women's awareness about gender inequality and how the patriarchal system wrongs them so that they can find ways to get rid of any injustice. In the analyzed text, all the investigated structures proved to be patriarchal; therefore, patriarchy wins as women in the story failed to reject and stand against it. Although the writer offered many solutions in the text itself to stop male oppression and to refuse patriarchy (running away, standing against the patriarch, accusing him to the authority, asking for divorce, freeing oneself from man's prison and control), she could not get any response or solution for these. Hence, she wrote this story to protect those who may encounter similar situations. FCDA within the current study tries to disclose the ways patriarchal structures and processes are encoded in the text so that women and readers, in general, can avoid, change, and/or modify them.

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## خویندنه وهیهکی گوتاری رهخهیی فیمینست بۆ چه مکی پیاوسالاری له پشت ده رگا داخراوه کانی توملیندا

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### پوخته

پیاوسالاری ئاماژهیه بۆ سیستهمی زالبوونی پیاو بهسه ر ژنان له کومه لگادا. پیاو له چوارچێوهی پیاوسالاریدا وهک بوونه وهریکی وابهسته کراو سهیری ژنان دهکات که ته نیا له پێوهندی لهگه ل پیاواندا مانا و بههای خویان به دهست دههینن. ئه و دهسه لاتهی که پیاو بهسه ر ژندا بهکاریده هینیت له پیاوسالارییه وه سه رچاوه دهگریت که هه موو جو ره کانی سته م و ئیستغلا لکردن به یاسایی دهکات. ئه م توێژینه وهیه به دیدگابه کی خویندنه وهی گوتاری رهخهیی فیمینست له بیره وه رییه کانی جینی توملین (2005) له پشت ده رگا داخراوه کانه وه ده کۆلیته وه. له م توێژینه وهیه دا شه ش پیکهاته ی والبی (1990) به کار ده های نریت بۆ لیکۆلینه وه له پرسی پیاوسالاری به په یوه سته کردنیان به ئایدۆلوژیا تابه ته کانی فیمینست. لیکۆلینه وهی وردی بیره وه رییه که ی توملین ئه وه ده رده خات که ته واوی ده قه که به ده وری سی ئایدۆلوژیای سه ره کیدا ده سو رپته وه ئه وانیش نایه کسانی جینده ری و به بابه تیکردن و کونه په رستی. ئه م سی ئایدۆلوژیایه له شه ش پیکهاته ی لیکۆلینه وه کرا ودا له ته واوی گیرانه وه که دا ره نگیدا وه ته وه و به بابه تیکرا وون له ریگه ی سیکس شوالتی و توندوتیژی وه. ئه نجامی توێژینه وه که ئه وه مان بۆ ده رده خات که چیرۆکی توملین ده رخری رو و خساری تاریکی پیاوسالارییه. خویندنه وهی گوتاری رهخهیی فیمینست ئه و ریگایانه ئاشکرا دهکات که پیکهاته پیاوسالارییه کان (به ئایدۆلوژیا ده رکه و تو وه کانیانه وه) له ده قه که دا کو د ده کرین بۆ ئه وهی ژنان و خوینه ران، به گشتی، بتوانن خویان به دوور بگرن، به ره نگاری بینه وه و/یان ده سته کاری بکه ن.

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## تحلیل نقدي نسوي لمفهوم الذکورية في قصة توملن

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### المخلص

الذکورية تعود الى تسلط الرجل على المرأة في المجتمع. في مثل هكذا تكوين ذکوري ينظر الرجل للمرأة على انها كائن اعتمادي يخصل على معناه وقيمه فقط من خلال علاقته بالرجل. ان السلطة التي يتمتع بها الرجل عن المرأة تتبع من نظام الذکورية الذي يشرع كل اشكال الظلم والاستغلال. تتمغن الدراسة الحالية في مذكرات جني توملن (2005) وراء الابواب المغلقة وذلك باستخدام منظور التحليل النقدي النسوي للنصوص. تراكيب والبي (1990) الستة استخدمت للكشف عن مفهوم الذکورية من خلال ربطها بايدولوجيات نسوية معينة. ان التحليل الدقيق لسيرة توملن الذاتية يشير الى ان كل النص يدور حول ثلاث ايدولوجيات اساسية وهي: عدم المساواة، تجسيد بالاشياء والنمطية. ان هذه الايدولوجيات الثلاث وجدت منتشرة في التراكيب الستة المتحصنة مع التجسيد بالاشياء خلال الجنس والعنف كاکثر نوعين مهمين في كل النص. يوضح هذا الاستنتاج بأن قصة توملن هي عرض للوجه الاسود للذکورية. أن التحليل النقدي النسوي للنصوص يعرض الطرق التي من خلالها تفهم التراكيب الذکورية مع ايدولوجياتها الواضحة ويترتب على ذلك ان تقوم النساء والقراء بشكل عام على تجنبها، مقاومتها، و/او تعديلها

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** خلف الابواب المغلقة، التحليل النقدي النسوي للنصوص، تراكيب ذکورية، ايدولوجيا