

## **OPPRESSION IN ANNE BRONTE'S *AGNES GREY***

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**Abstract:** This study aims to demonstrate the presence of oppression in *Agnes Gray* by Anne Bronte. Compiled using qualitative research methods, namely research methods that present data and the results are presented in the form of words in the form of quotations. In addition, to examine how oppression in this novel is conducted research using objective approach theory. An objective approach is an approach that makes the literary work itself a single object by ignoring external factors that influence it. Using the aforementioned methodology, the findings of this study demonstrate that the oppression shown in Anne Bronte's *Agnes Gray* alludes to a variety of oppressions, including brutality, exploitation, marginalization, helplessness, and cultural imperialism. Realizing the shortcomings in this study, the researcher hopes that further research that has the same research object will be even better. And with this research it is hoped that attitudes that refer to acts of oppression can become an important reference for us.

**Keyword:** *oppression, governess, and objective.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

As a social phenomenon, oppression can affect people at all social levels. Particularly to someone or a group that lacks influence. People are consistently exposed to political, economic, cultural, or social degradation because they belong to a certain social group, which is the most prevalent kind of oppression. This is a result of beliefs of superiority and inferiority being represented by hierarchical structures of domination and subordination (Charlton, 1998).

In other words, when someone limits or denies another individual their full human potential, oppression has taken place. Oppression can come from a few people's

choices or actions that create deeply rooted, indisputable standards, behaviors, and symbols.

There are many different perspectives on oppression. According to Young, oppression refers to the actions of the dominant group. Domination, whether by one group or numerous, has a connection to oppression. To conquer another group or individuals, the dominance group triumphs (Young, 1990).

Oppression is the practice of severely restricting a certain institution, group, or person. Typically, oppressed groups are subject to statutory or informal restrictions imposed by a government or political organization in power in order to exploit them and make them less competitive with other social groups. The person or group that has more authority devalues, takes advantage of, and denies privileges to the oppressed person or group (Barker, 2003).

According to Rigby (2002), oppression is the persistent psychological or physical repression or oppression of someone with less power by a more powerful individual or group of individuals.

Many literary works that raise oppression as the content of its discussion. One of them is the novel *Agnes Grey*. English author Anne Bronte was a well-known member of the Bronte literary family. She is most known for penning the renowned 19th-century books "*Agnes Grey*" and "*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*," which both addressed the sexism and low position of women in Victorian England.

*Agnes Grey* is a classic novel written in the 18th century. This novel tells about Agnes Grey. She is a young girl who has to work as a nursery governess (special teacher) because her family has economic problems. This novel also shows the difficulty of being a caregiver at that time and the social conditions of that era. Much of it is based on Anne's own experience as a nanny for five years. It deals with the problem of oppression and abuse of caregivers, and of women in general in Victorian England.

In the Victorian era, governess life became one part of community life. Governess is a profession that is usually done by women who are entrusted with nurturing, educating and looking after children, especially in private homes. Governess services are usually required in America and Europe. Most of the governess come from poor families. As

governess, they usually live together in their employer's house. Even though they live with their employer's family, they are not considered part of that family. Even in doing his job as a governess, they only get a small salary.

Literature can be used in the educational setting as a tool for language learning. Novels containing numerous passages that can aid students in language acquisition are an example of literature that has evolved into a tool for language instruction (Bataha, Moge, and Lolowang, 2008).

Another definition is that literature is a reflection of human existence, whether in public or in private. Every social issue is typically reflected in literary works including poems, novels, plays, and short stories (Sabudu, 2014). Anne Bronte was aware of the pressing issues confronting women at the time. It tells the story of nannies, or women who train and teach children in their own homes. Because it is based in part on the author's personal experience, the story appears to be very natural.

### **Objective Approach**

The researcher in this study will take an objective approach to problem analysis. This is due to the fact that the objective approach is thought to be suitable for studying literary works since it treats the literary work as a single object of study without taking into account any other influences. The objective approach is a type of analysis that exclusively focuses on the novel itself as an object and the interplay between its internal sections of the elements, according to Sabudu in *The Reflection of Loyalty in Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man the Sea* (Sabudu 2020).

In *The Mirror and The Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, M.H. Abrams noted the following: The objective approach sees a literary work by ignoring external elements as a reference, examining literary works as independent objects composed of interrelated internal parts, resulting in an assessment based on the intrinsic criteria of the literary work (Abrams 1958). In other words, the objective approach is a method of analyzing literary works by emphasizing the internal elements of the literary work as the object of analysis.

## Review of Oppression

One or more other social categories are oppressed in respect to each privileged social group. The term "oppression" refers to social forces that have a tendency to hold people back, restrain them, and stop them from living fulfilling lives. Oppression has a tendency to slam doors of opportunity shut, just as privilege tends to open them. 2000, Johnson.

(Deutsch, 2006) defines oppression as a persistent, pervasive, and systemic feeling of injustice. It doesn't have to be anything extreme that involves the law (like slavery, apartheid, or the denial of the right to vote) or violence (like in despotic nations). Oppression according to Rigby (2002) is as repeated suppression or oppression, psychologically or physically against someone who has less power by a stronger person or group of people.

In other words, *oppression* occurs when someone lessens or denies another person their entire human potential. Oppression can come from a few people's choices or actions that create deeply rooted, indisputable standards, behaviors, and symbols. There are many different perspectives on oppression. According to Young, oppression refers to the actions of the dominant group.

### Oppression Type

There are five sorts of oppression, according to Iris Marion Young (1990): violence, exploitation, marginalization, impotence, and cultural imperialism.

#### 1. Violence

Violence is probably the most overt and obvious form of oppression. A persistent fear of random, unprovoked attacks on their person or property grips certain people. Without necessarily having a rationale, these attacks try to hurt, humiliate, or entirely destroy the target.

## **2. Exploitation**

Exploitation is the act of using another person's labor for financial advantage without compensating that person fairly. Workers at sweatshops are taken advantage of. Despite getting paid for their work and toil, they do not earn a fair wage given the amount of revenue they bring in to the company.

## **3. Marginalization**

Marginalization is the process of relegating a group of individuals to a lower social standing, the periphery, or the edge of society. In the end, it is a discriminatory procedure. Marginalization can frequently be worse than exploitation because society has decided that it cannot or will not use these people even for labor.

## **4. Powerlessness**

Marx's notion of socialism has a connection to the concept of powerlessness: some people "have" power while others "have-not." The powerful exert control on the underdogs, who are positioned to obey orders but infrequently have the power to do so. Some of the underlying injustices connected to being powerless include the inability to reach one's potential, the lack of decision-making authority, and receiving disrespectful treatment as a result of the lower status.

## **5. Culture Imperialism**

Cultural imperialism involves establishing the culture of the prevailing class as the norm. A society's dominant groups have influence over how its members interpret and communicate. As a result, those societies' viewpoints are the most widely held and reflect their knowledge, values, goals, and achievements.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was prepared using qualitative research methods. This is because the data and results from this research described in the form of words not numbers. According to Bodgan and Biklein in (Tampi, Mamentu, and Liando 2018) stated that:

“Qualitative research is a descriptive research method. where the data is gathered in the form of words or images rather than statistics.

The data's source was divided into two groups by the researcher. Essays about literature should use two different categories of evidence, and secondary sources are any information or viewpoints that are not found in the original text. Therefore, the researcher use Agnes Grey's novel as the main source and for secondary sources, the researcher takes from books, articles, journals, and other relevant internet. (Robert and Jacobs, 1986).

After collecting data from several sources, researchers will analyze the data. At this stage there are several steps that researchers will use. First, the researcher reads the novel *Agnes Grey* by Anne Bronte repeatedly with the aim of getting a better understanding of the storyline in the novel. After understanding the storyline in the novel, the researcher chooses the most interesting part in the novel which can be used as a research topic.

After finding a topic, the researcher then begins to develop the research background and also the problems related to the topic. As reference material in research, researchers have looked for previous research that can help researchers understand the research topic. Likewise, with theory and information related to research topics. The approach that will be used by researchers in this study is a sociological approach.

The final step that the researcher took was to answer the questions in the formulation of the problem based on theory and facts from the information that had been collected and would make conclusions at the end of the discussion.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Oppression revealed in the novel Agnes Grey***

As a novel with a strong theme of oppression against Agnes, Agnes Grey describes many incidents of oppression in her story. In the book, the main character himself goes through this persecution. Using the objective approach method, the researcher discovers that Anne Bronte's novel *Agnes Grey* expresses the following forms of oppression:

## **1. Violence**

Violence is the primary means of oppression in Agnes Grey's book. Violence is the most blatant and obvious example of oppression. Members of some groups are aware that they must always be on guard against random, unprovoked attacks on their people or property. Even if the only goal of these attacks is to harm, degrade, or destroy the target, they must nonetheless have a function.

The first to hire is the Bloomfield family. In particular, Agnes has been worried about Master Tom, the oldest child. The task of getting him to obey the order is really challenging. He rejects the idea of being ruled. He enjoys ruling people, particularly his sisters and his governess Agnes, on the other hand. The worst aspect is that he takes great pleasure in intimidating others into doing what he wants.

"Master Tom, not satisfied with refusing to be dominated, must necessarily establish up as a ruler, and exhibited a determination to keep not only his sisters, but even his governess in check, by brutal manual and pedal applications" (Bronte, 1877, page 34).

This demonstrates how Agnes is oppressed by Tom's cruelty. Agnes does not, however, merely allow Tom to do whatever he pleases, especially to abuse her.

"Even in self defense I made the decision not to strike him. I had no choice but to flip him over and hold his hands and feet during his most ferocious fits of wrath until the rage faded slightly. (Bronte, page 34, 1877).

From the excerpt, the author can infer that Agnes doesn't just put up with Tom's attitude. She makes an effort to protect herself from his aggression but yet using techniques that don't injure him.

## **2. Powerlessness**

Throughout the book, Agnes also experiences impotence as a type of oppression. Marx's theory of socialism has something to do with people having power and others lacking it. The powerful caste holds the helpless under control

by positioning them to take orders and infrequently providing them themselves. There are several fundamental injustices associated with being powerless, such as challenges to one's capacity growth, a lack of decision-making power, and being treated disrespectfully due to inferior status.

Children's misbehavior is not the only issue Agnes needs to deal with. She also has to deal with her parents. Mr. and Mrs. Bloomfield regularly blame Agnes for the behavior of their kids. One such incident is Tom, Mary, and Fanny darting out of the classroom and into the garden, where they scream and yell with delight and dive around in the snow. Agnes has tried unsuccessfully to capture them and bring them inside.

Suddenly, Agnes hears a voice yelling behind her in a harsh, piercing voice. Currently, Mr. Bloomfield is shouting. His anger is directed on Agnes. He is incensed by his children's immoral actions while they play in the snow outside. Agnes tells that she has tried to get them inside but they won't heed her pleas.

He drew nearer and exclaimed, "But I INSIST upon their being got in!" while looking really irate.

I said, moving back, "Then, sir, you must call them yourself, if you like, because they won't listen to me.

"Get in with you, you dirty brats, or I'll horsewhip you all," he roared, and the children promptly complied.

"They arrive at the first word, as you can see there! When YOU talk, yes".  
(Bronte, 1877, page 47,)

The author of this remark assumes that Agnes is also subjected to parental repression. Agnes, whom Mr. Bloomfield believes to be the least responsible of his children, has angered him. Because she has sought to exert influence over them, Agnes does not allow her boss to treat her unfairly. She continues to be compelled by Mr. Bloomfield to let his kids in. Agnes balked about doing it. She feels as though her efforts are sufficient. She is even daring enough to beg Mr. Bloomfield to do the task himself. She fights to assert her dominance.



By refusing to accept injustice constantly and fiercely demanding her employer, she fights to demonstrate that she is not helpless. Although though she is only the governess for the Bloomfield family, she has the authority to either deny or order.

### **3. Exploitation**

Agnes faces exploitation in the *Agnes Gray* novel in addition to violence and helplessness as a kind of oppression. Exploitation is the practice of employing human labor for financial gain without paying a fair wage. Workers at sweatshops are taken advantage of. Despite being paid for their work, they do not receive a fair wage given the amount of revenue they bring in to the company.

From Agnes' statement, the harsh treatment in utilizing Agnes' assistance may be seen.

"I was permitted to travel home around Christmas, although my vacation barely lasted a fortnight" (Bronte, 1877, page 43).

Agnes's comment is seen by the author as a hint of displeasure with her brief vacation. How much she laments the loss of her vacations, "How intensely I had longed for my holidays, how greatly I was disappointed at their curtailment" (Bronte, 1877, page 43).

She doesn't have enough time for a break from her employer, as indicated by this. Alternatively, Agnes is employed.

### **4. Marginalization**

Marginalization is another sort of oppression that appears in Anne Bronte's book *Agnes Gray*. Marginalization is the process of relegating a group of people to a lower social standing or to the periphery or edge of society. In the end, this is a discriminatory procedure. Marginalization can occasionally be worse than exploitation because society has decided they cannot or will not use these people even for labor.

She has worked for the Bloomfield family for less than a year before being fired, but this does not cause her to give up. She reapplies to work as a governess for the Murray family. Although things are a little better here, she still frequently receives abusive treatment. The hardest part is that she is not valued in this family. When Agnes reveals that she is lonely since she is confined to her employer's home and has no opportunity to interact freely with the neighbors, the marginalization of Agnes is evident.

"the solitary monotony of my present life: because I was alone. I never saw a creature to whom I could open my heart or openly express my thoughts in the hopes of finding sympathy or even understanding, with the exception of my few periods of respite at home: never one. (Page 125 of Bronte, 1877).

It is obvious from the aforementioned sentence that Agnes leads a solitary life as a governess. She doesn't have any other friends to share things with or a friend to openly discuss things with because she can't do so with her employers. She has been cast off from society.

Agnes makes an effort to improve the situation though. She does not constantly allow herself to be vulnerable ostracized.

According to Bronte (1877, page 111), "and thus I made a few acquaintances among the cottagers; and occasionally, I went to see them on my own account." This excerpt shows that Agnes tries to interact with the surrounding society. Until she succeeds to make a friend with, Poor Nancy Brown, with whom I couldn't have even a single genuine social interaction or whose talk didn't improve, enlighten, or make me happier than before (Bronte, 1877, page 125). Agnes Grey's struggle leads to her final victory over the capitalist system and the freedom she so desperately desired.

She and her mother constructed a school for themselves in order to avoid having to work for others. This gives them the power to do whatever they please with themselves.

## CONCLUSION AND SUDDESTION

The researcher describes how Agnes Grey is oppressed in Anne Bronte's novel *Agnes Grey* based on the topic in the preceding chapter. In analyzing the problem, the researcher used library research methods and was compiled using qualitative research methods. In addition, researchers also use a sociological approach.

As a result, the researcher finds that there are several forms of oppression against *Agnes Grey* in the novel. The first is violence, the violence that befell Agnes, which was carried out by her employer by doing everything possible to traumatize her. Apart from violence, there is also oppression in the form of powerlessness, where Agnes is considered irresponsible in carrying out her work as a governess. Apart from violence and powerlessness, there is also oppression and exploitation, which means that Agnes is not given enough time to rest. The last form of oppression contained in *Agnes Grey's* novel is marginalization. When Agnes reveals that she is lonely since she is confined to her employer's home and is unable to interact freely with those around her, this marginalization of Agnes is evident.

Finally, this section is a suggestion. Aware of the shortcomings in this study, the researcher suggests to further researchers who make the same novel as the object of research or have the same topic as this research, namely about oppression, can have a more complete and thorough analysis. Analysis from another point of view, such as feminism, is also very compatible with the theme in *Agnes Grey*, which describes a lot of women's power. The existence of further researchers who can complete this research is highly expected by the researcher. Due to the existing shortcomings, constructive criticism and suggestions are highly expected.

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