

The Construction of Women's Resilience in the Novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail: A Radical Feminist Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received : 20/01/2026 Revised : 07/02/2026 Accepted : 07/02/2026 Published : 25/02/2026</p> <p>*Corresponding Author: Name : Fairuz Isnain Salsabila Phone/WA : +6287866972031</p>	<p>This study discusses the resilience of female characters in the novel <i>Wasym Al-Tha'ir</i> by Dunya Mikhail based on Kate Millett's radical feminist perspective. The novel depicts the experiences of Yazidi women in Iraq who suffer slavery, rape, and sexual exploitation within an extreme patriarchal system. This study aims to identify the forms of resilience demonstrated by female characters in facing oppression in the novel. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using reading and note-taking techniques. The primary data source is the novel <i>Wasym Al-Tha'ir</i> by Dunya Mikhail, while secondary data consist of journals and books related to Kate Millett's radical feminism theory. The analysis focuses on four elements of radical feminism proposed by Kate Millett, namely ideological, sociological, psychological, and coercive elements. The findings indicate that the resilience of Yazidi women is reflected ideologically through resistance to patriarchal norms and symbolic oppression, sociologically through solidarity and emotional support among women, psychologically through emotional and spiritual endurance and the maintenance of self-esteem, and coercively through resistance to forced domination and bodily control.</p>
<p>Keyword</p>	<p>Female characters; Kate Millett; Radical Feminism; Toughness; <i>Wasym Al-Tha'ir</i> Novel</p>

Introduction

Discussing female characters in literature is an intriguing topic for scholarly analysis. In many narratives, women are often portrayed as supporting characters who play insignificant roles within both the family and society. Such representations are considered unbalanced, as women should be able to perform roles equal to those of men, who are granted freedom in decision-making and are treated fairly (Damayanti et al., 2024). With the widespread

occurrence of this phenomenon today, many women experience injustice, and their bodily rights are violated by men at will. Nevertheless, most women choose patience and acceptance of various forms of oppression under male authority. Consequently, this issue has become an important subject related to the resilience of female characters in confronting the patriarchal system, which has become deeply rooted in society. This issue is closely related to radical feminism, which argues that patriarchy is the primary cause of women's oppression. Radical feminism clearly articulates demands for equality between women and men (Qasim, 2022).

The study of radical feminism in literary works has significant implications for real life, as it frequently reveals restrictions imposed on women, such as the belief that men possess greater abilities than women. Reproductive work is considered appropriate only for women, while productive work is deemed suitable exclusively for men (Al Bahy & Tjahjono, 2022). This perspective reinforces the image of women as weak, dependent, and incapable of surpassing men. Despite the development of gender stereotypes in contemporary society, many people continue to view women as inferior compared to men, who are perceived as strong and superior (Rokhmah & Suryanto, 2022). For this reason, many oppose stereotyping, which categorizes certain groups or genders and rarely benefits women (Ariaseli & Puspita, 2021). These conditions have led to numerous efforts to fight for women's rights, such as the feminist movement, which has rapidly evolved from the first wave to subsequent waves. From a radical feminist perspective, the struggle and resilience of women in achieving equality with men are viewed as extremely challenging (Arifudin & Susanto, 2020).

One Arabic novel that reveals the resilience of female characters is *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, which portrays Iraqi women who experience oppression, rape, and being sold as commodities—practices that have become common within their community. The issue of female resilience in this novel is compelling to analyze using radical feminist theory, which seeks to raise awareness that women deserve justice and have the right to make decisions freely, just as men do. This theory rejects the patriarchal system that views women as weak beings. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the data presented in *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail regarding how female characters demonstrate resilience in the face of oppression and the resulting positive and negative impacts. The researcher also seeks to transform societal mindsets toward women under patriarchy, encouraging the recognition of women as strong individuals equal to men in rights and freedom to determine their lives without male intervention.

According to radical feminists, patriarchy is the fundamental cause of women's oppression. Kate Millett is regarded as one of the most influential figures in radical feminism (Riyanti et al., 2023). Millett argues that women must firmly declare that they possess the same capacities as men. Women should speak openly about their experiences and problems, including

sexual violence, domestic violence, and child-rearing responsibilities (Ariaseli & Puspita, 2021). Millett identifies eight elements in her theory: ideological, biological, social, psychological, class-based, economic and educational, coercive, and anthropological elements (Tyas, 2021).

Previous studies have examined radical feminist theory from various perspectives, including social aspects (Eteng et al., 2023), sexual politics (Sari & Wiyatmi, 2021), poetry collections (Qasim, 2022), novels (Ariaseli & Puspita, 2021; Ode et al., 2023; Tyas, 2021; Riyanti et al., 2023; Tarigan & Hayati, 2023; Bashir et al., 2022; Farhan, 2023), films (Al Bahy & Tjahjono, 2022; Pane & Kasprabowo, 2022; Kumaran & Alexander, 2022), and short stories (Bista, 2022; Shah et al., 2023). Radical feminism has also been explored theoretically, meaning that many scholars have examined Kate Millett's radical feminist theory itself (Damayanti et al., 2024; Rahman & Syam, 2021; Arlilianda et al., 2024; Nanil et al., 2022; Aminah & Yulistianti, 2022; Safithri & Ash Shiddiqi, 2022). Additionally, *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, in its English version *Wasym Al-Tha'ir*, has been analyzed using critical discourse analysis (Ansari & Naghdeali, 2024) and psychological approaches (Parsaeipour & Naghdeali, 2024; Al-Dory, 2024).

Based on the previous studies, this research demonstrates both similarities and differences. The similarities lie in discussions of radical feminism in literary works (Qasim, 2022; Ariaseli & Puspita, 2021; Ode et al., 2023; Tyas, 2021; Riyanti et al., 2023; Tarigan & Hayati, 2023; Bashir et al., 2022; Farhan, 2023; Al Bahy & Tjahjono, 2022; Pane & Kasprabowo, 2022; Kumaran & Alexander, 2022; Bista, 2022; Shah et al., 2023) and in studies that examine radical feminism through Kate Millett's perspective (Damayanti et al., 2024; Rahman & Syam, 2021; Arlilianda et al., 2024; Nanil et al., 2022; Aminah & Yulistianti, 2022; Safithri & Ash Shiddiqi, 2022). Similarities are also found in the analysis of *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* (Parsaeipour & Naghdeali, 2024; Al-Dory, 2024; Ansari & Naghdeali, 2024). However, this study differs from previous research in that it does not focus on radical feminism solely from social or sexual political perspectives (Eteng et al., 2023; Sari & Wiyatmi, 2021). Instead, this research positions radical feminism within *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by emphasizing the resilience of female characters in their lived experiences. Consequently, this study offers nuanced and distinctive insights that have not been sufficiently explored in earlier research. The purpose of this study is to reveal the forms of resilience displayed by female characters and the impacts of such resilience on their lives in *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, using Kate Millett's radical feminist theory.

Literature Review

Radical feminism views the patriarchal system as being formed through power, domination, hierarchy, and competition. However, this system is considered irreformable and therefore must be fundamentally transformed. Radical feminism focuses on sex, gender, and

reproduction as central sites for developing feminist thought (Tong, 2010). Kate Millett is a feminist writer who emerged in the 1970s. Her feminist perspective developed during the second wave of feminism, which took place between 1963 and 1975. She expressed her feminist views through various articles and books. Kate Millett is recognized as a prominent figure in radical feminism. This is evidenced by her explicit demand for gender equality between women and men. According to her, women must firmly assert that they possess abilities equal to those of men. Women should also speak out to amplify women's lived experiences and life struggles, with particular attention to issues of reproduction, the neutralization of sexual violence, domesticity, and child-rearing (Nanil et al., 2022).

Millett's feminist perspective illustrates that patriarchal social systems have oppressed women, ranging from the most basic forms of oppression to multiple layers of oppression, such as racism, which significantly intersect with patriarchal domination. In her book *Sexual Politics* (1970), Millett argues that sex is political, because the relationship between men and women represents a paradigm for all power relations. She states that "social caste precedes all forms of inequality; race, politics, and economics will continue to exist as long as the acceptance of male supremacy as a birthright is not eliminated, since all systems of oppression persist through logical and emotional mandates within fundamental human conditions." Because male dominance in both public and private spheres forms the basis of patriarchy, this domination must be dismantled if women are to uphold their freedom.

According to Millett, patriarchal ideology glorifies biological differences between women and men and ensures that women are always positioned beneath men due to their subordinate or feminine roles. Meanwhile, men are consistently associated with dominant and masculine roles, which grant them power. This ideology is deeply rooted, enabling men to maintain control over women they oppress in various forms. These constraints exist everywhere and consistently justify the subordination of women to male authority. As a result, many women internalize feelings of inferiority and submit to male dominance. Kate Millett outlines eight key concepts in her theory: (1) Biological, (2) Ideological, (3) Sociological, (4) Psychological, (5) Class, (6) Economy and Education, (7) Coercion, and (8) Anthropological (myths and beliefs). However, in analyzing this novel, the focus is limited to Kate Millett's theories of coercion and psychological aspects (Tyas, 2021). The researcher analyzes the data using Kate Millett's radical feminist theory, which highlights patriarchal power relations within society. This study examines only four of the eight elements in Kate Millett's radical feminist theory. The elements analyzed include ideological, sociological, psychological, and coercion (violent) aspects.

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach aims to describe and present research findings in the form of narrative explanations using words rather than numerical data. Descriptive methods are applied to portray situations and behaviors depicted in the literary work. The data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data are obtained directly from the main text used as the object of analysis, namely the Arabic novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, published by Dar Al-Rafidain in 2020. Secondary data are used to support the primary data and include relevant books and scholarly articles related to the research topic. These sources comprise Kate Millett's radical feminist theory as presented in *Sexual Politics* (Millett, 1970), literary criticism books, and journal articles related to radical feminist studies.

The data collection techniques employed in this study are reading and note-taking. The researcher carefully reads the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the text and records narrative quotations related to the experiences of female characters, including both oppression and resilience. Data analysis is conducted interactively and concurrently with the data collection process (Sugiyono, 2017). The data analysis procedures follow the stages proposed by Sugihastuti and Suharto (2016), which include determining the text as the object of study, focusing the analysis on female characters in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, collecting narrative quotations that reveal women's experiences, and analyzing the data using a feminist literary criticism approach.

Result and Discussion

This research analyzes the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail using Kate Millett's radical feminist theory. The novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* portrays the lives of Yazidi women who are traded, oppressed, and subjected to inhumane treatment. Therefore, this study aims to elaborate on the resilience of female characters in their lives based on the perspective of Kate Millett's radical feminism.

In the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir*, viewed through the perspective of Kate Millett's radical feminism, four elements are identified from the eight elements proposed in Kate Millett's radical feminist theory. These elements are ideology, sociology, psychology, and coercion. The following table presents the forms of resilience demonstrated by female characters under oppression in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail.

Table 1. Forms of Resilience under Oppression in the Novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir*

<i>Radical Feminist Element</i>	<i>Resilience in the Face of Oppression</i>
Ideological	Patriarcal norms among Yazidi Woman Resistance to symbolic domination
Sociological	Solidarity among women Yazidi Woman

Psychological	Emotional support amid social pressure Emotional and inner resilience
Coercion	Maintaining self-worth Resistance to coercion Symbolization of coercive domination over the body

The Ideological Element in Yazidi Feminism

From the ideological element, it appears that the condition of sexual politics has been legitimized through the recognition of the idea of male superiority, in which men are regarded as superior while women are positioned as inferior. Kate Millett points out that gender stereotypes are employed to legitimize this inequality, thereby reinforcing the existing hierarchical structure between men and women (Ode et al., 2023). Within Millett's feminist theory, ideology emphasizes the importance of patriarchal symbols and norms as instruments of domination. The ideological element, as reflected in the resilience of female characters in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, manifests in two main forms: patriarchal norms and resistance to symbolic domination, as explained below.

Patriarcal Norms among Yazidi Women

Ideological domination in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail is manifested through a system of values and cultural symbols that portray women as objects treated as commodities (Rokhmah & Suryanto, 2022). This domination is reflected in the transformation of educational institutions (schools) into spaces for the trafficking of women, which distorts the true function of education as a means of liberation. As a result, women are treated as the property of men, who may take and sell them at will, as illustrated below:

هيلين لم تسمع في حياتها عن سوق لبيع النساء ولو لم تره بعينها لما صدقت بوجوده في أي زمان ومكان. ومما زاد من استغرابها أن بنى السوق هي مدرسة. إسمها «زهور الموصل» كما هو مدون على لافتتها الأمامية وهي تشبه تماماً مدرستها الابتدائية التي كانت قد درست فيها مع أخيها التوأم آزاد. (Mikhail, 2020, p. 8)

"Helen had never in her life heard of a market for selling women, and had she not seen it with her own eyes, she would never have believed that such a place could exist in any time or place. What further deepened her astonishment was that the market building was a school. Its name was 'Flowers of Mosul,' as written on the sign at its front, and it looked exactly like the elementary school she had once attended with her twin brother, Azad"

In this excerpt, it is evident that Helen had never heard throughout her life of the existence of a market for selling women. Had she not witnessed it with her own eyes, she would not have believed that such a thing could exist in any time or place. What further intensified her astonishment was the fact that the building used as this market was none other than a school. Its name was "*Zuhur Al-Mawsil*," as written on the signboard at the front, and it closely resembled the elementary school where she once studied with her twin sister, Azad. For Helen,

school was a place of learning where she spent her time with her sister, and its outward appearance suggested an educational institution. However, this school known as "*Al-Mawsil*" was not a real school; rather, it was a place used for the trafficking and sale of slaves.

The image of women's resilience is reflected in Helen's character through her rejection of this unjust reality. Although Helen directly witnessed an auction for the sale of women, she remained firmly aware that such practices were unacceptable. Her sense of shock and disbelief indicates that she did not internalize this extreme patriarchal system as something normal. She continued to hold a clear understanding that women possess rights that must be upheld, including the right to education, rather than being sold as slaves (Mikhail, 2020).

The novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail illustrates how an extreme patriarchal system abolishes women's right to education and reduces them to objects in human trafficking auctions. From the perspective of Kate Millett's radical feminism, patriarchal ideology plays a significant role in constructing a social system that oppresses women. The school, which should function as a space for intellectual liberation, is transformed into a site for the sale of women. The use of a school building as a place for trafficking highlights how extreme patriarchy nullifies women's rights to education and freedom. This scene exemplifies how women are excluded from education and instead treated as instruments under unjust domination. Extreme patriarchy erases the fundamental function of education and replaces it with a system aimed at controlling and exploiting women (Aminah & Yulistianti, 2022).

Resistance to Symbolic Domination among Yazidi Women

Furthermore, patriarchal ideological symbolism reveals that women lose their right to determine marriage, as the system recognizes only male authority. The relevant data regarding this issue are presented as follows:

كان أعضاء التنظيم قد أخذوا من الأسيرات كل حاجياتهن يضمنها خواتم الزواج الذهبية،
 لكن خاتم زواج هيلين لم يكن خاتماً، كان وشم طائر . (Mikhail, 2020, p. 7)
 "The members of the organization had taken all the captives' belongings, including
 their gold wedding rings; however, Helen's wedding ring was not a ring—it was a bird
 tattoo."

The excerpt above illustrates that Helen refuses to allow her identity to be erased by the system. Although Helen may have lost her ring, the *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail on her finger becomes a symbol that she still retains a part of herself that the system cannot take away. The *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* is not merely an image; rather, it represents freedom and hope that cannot be easily erased. Helen continues to strive to preserve her identity, despite the ruling system's attempts to erase it and replace it with a number. Helen's number is 27; therefore, at first she did not realize that this was her assigned number, which also functioned as a commercial identifier for the sale of her body. This clearly shows that women, as in Helen's case, have lost

their rights to marriage. Justice is not granted to them, and they are forced to submit to a ruling system that should not operate in such a manner (Mikhail, 2020).

In this excerpt, women lose not only their bodily freedom but also their right to marriage and the symbols of their identity. Helen does not possess a wedding ring; instead, the *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* on her finger becomes a symbol of freedom that distinguishes her from other women who are treated as property through forced marriage. From the perspective of radical feminism as articulated by Kate Millett, patriarchal systems employ ideology to control women, including in matters of marriage and personal identity. Within this system, Helen is identified solely by the number "27," which reflects how the system erases women's identities and reduces them to beings who can be bought and sold (Nanil et al., 2022).

The findings of this study indicate that the ideological dimension reflected in the three sets of data represents the ideological domination of a patriarchal system that regulates norms and roles related to women without their participation or consent. The first and second data sets reveal a patriarchal system that violates norms and values, while the third data set demonstrates the erasure of women's identities without consent in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail.

The Sociological Element in Yazidi Feminism

From the sociological perspective of a patriarchal society, men are regarded as leaders. Men's rights as leaders originate in the private sphere, including parent-child relationships and marital relations between husbands and wives. As noted by Millett, the fundamental institution of patriarchy is the family. The family serves as a link between men and women within broader gender relations, namely in the public sphere. This structure leads men to perceive women as subjects who may be treated according to their position as a subordinate group under male authority (Millett, 1970).

The sociological element of female resilience in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail is manifested in two forms: solidarity among women and emotional support amid social pressure. The following discussion elaborates on the data related to women's solidarity and emotional support under social pressure in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail.

Solidarity among Yazidi Women

One prominent form of solidarity among women appears when the captives help one another endure violence, attempt to protect each other from their aggressors, or even engage in collective acts of resistance, such as spitting at the guards. These moments represent a turning point that demonstrates women's refusal to fully submit to the oppressive system and highlights their strong social resilience. The women create a small community within suffering, and this community becomes a source of strength and support. This solidarity emerges in

response to a social structure that fails to provide a safe space for women to protect themselves. Accordingly, the researcher identifies a form of women's resilience manifested through solidarity among women in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, as illustrated below.

كن ١٢٠ امرأة تقريباً محشورات في قاعة تلك المدرسة في الموصل. بإمكان الداخل إلى القاعة أن يعرف أي النساء منهن اغتصبت أكثر من غيرها من خلال عدد الرصاص على جسدها. بعضهن يحاولن الاحتياء خلف بعضهن الآخر ولكن الحراس لا تفوتهن أية واحدة. (Mikhail, 2020, p. 9)

"Approximately 120 women were crammed into the hall of that school in Mosul. Anyone entering the hall could tell which women had been raped more than others by the number of bullet wounds on their bodies. Some of them tried to hide behind one another, but the guards did not miss a single one."

In this quoted passage, approximately one hundred and twenty women were crowded inside a school hall in Mosul. By observing their bodies, it was possible to distinguish those who had been raped more frequently than others based on the number of bruises visible on their bodies. Some women attempted to hide behind others, yet the guards did not leave a single woman untouched. Despite being subjected to rape and torture, the women in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail did not cease searching for ways to survive. The attempts by some women to hide behind others indicate that they still possessed a survival instinct and a desire for protection. They did not completely surrender, even though the system placed them in extremely brutal conditions. Helen and the other women demonstrate their resilience by striving to protect one another and continuing to endure within this horrific situation. Despite the efforts of the extreme patriarchal system to break them, the women maintained a spirit of solidarity and a will to survive.

In the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, manifestations of social injustice are evident in the way women are treated as sexual objects within a system that grants them no protection or rights. Patriarchy is not merely a form of individual domination but a social system that collectively supports the oppression of women. This excerpt illustrates how an extreme social system transforms women into instruments of collective sexual exploitation. From the perspective of Kate Millett's radical feminism, patriarchy not only positions men in dominant roles but also constructs social structures that reinforce violence against women. This system leads men to perceive women as a subordinate group that must be controlled and subjected to their authority (Farhan, 2023).

In this passage, enslaved women are forced to accept sexual violence as part of the social system that oppresses them. When they resist by spitting, they are immediately punished through brutal beatings, demonstrating that this system does not tolerate any form of resistance from women. From the perspective of Kate Millett's radical feminism, the patriarchal system maintains its power through violence against women. Social injustice in the novel is revealed

through the enslavement of women and the coercion that forces them to accept violence as an integral part of an extreme patriarchal system. The solidarity among women in this novel demonstrates that even under the harshest oppressive conditions, women are still capable of finding ways to resist and defend their dignity (Bahardur, 2023).

Emotional Support amid Social Pressure among Yazidi Women

Emotional support is also manifested when women communicate nonverbally through gazes, embraces, or tears. Under conditions in which their voices are structurally silenced, emotional expressions become a form of communication and empathy that strengthens bonds among women. This reflects that even when social structures exert pressure and isolate them, female characters remain capable of building networks of emotional safety that enhance their resilience. Therefore, the researcher identifies data related to emotional support amid social pressure as one form of women's resilience in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, as presented below.

كان يشير إلى هيلين بيد، وباليدين الأخرى يحمل صندوقاً من الورق المقوى معنأً بهواتف الأسيرات صرحت به امينه أتركها» وبالكاد سمع صوتها ففي تلك اللحظة كانت الهواتف النقالة ترنّ كلها في الصندوق رسأً عالياً قادماً من الأهالي القلبيين لأن بداءاتهم بلا جواب.
(Mikhail, 2020, p. 7)

"He pointed at Helen with one hand, while with the other he held a cardboard box filled with the captives' mobile phones. Amina cried out, 'Leave her,' but her voice was barely heard. At that moment, all the mobile phones inside the box were ringing loudly, calls coming from anxious families whose calls went unanswered."

In this passage, Aminah pointed at Helen with one hand, while holding a cardboard box containing the prisoners' mobile phones in the other. Despite her weakened condition, Aminah attempted to defend Helen by saying, "Just leave her alone." Although her voice was barely audible, she made an effort to protect Helen and offer support in this difficult situation. Mutual support among women remains present even under the harshest conditions of oppression (Mikhail, 2020).

In this context, the novel illustrates that Helen was on the verge of being sold by the guards; however, her friend Aminah did not want any harm to befall her and ordered the guards to leave the room. From the perspective of Kate Millett's radical feminism, the extreme patriarchal system constructs a structure that not only controls women's bodies but also isolates them from their families and communities. This system ensures that enslaved women have no means of escape or access to social support. Social injustice in the novel is revealed through the severing of communication between women and their families, which leaves them in a state of complete helplessness within the system of enslavement. Nevertheless, women's resilience is manifested through forms of mutual support among women and through the hope that continues to live in the hearts of their families who strive to find them (Nanil et al., 2022).

The results of this study represent the social form of four data points that illustrate the condition of women who remain resilient under social pressure. The fourth and fifth data show realistic forms of solidarity among women through verbal assistance to one another. Meanwhile, the sixth and seventh data demonstrate the presence of emotional support among women despite social pressure, conveyed through non-verbal means such as glances, embraces, and tears, as depicted in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail.

The Psychological Element in Yazidi Feminism

The aspects are clearly described in the form of psychological impacts on both male and female genders. The entrenchment of patriarchal ideology is shown to be fundamental. Ultimately, roles, status, and emotions constitute a system of values with endless psychological ramifications that disproportionately affect one gender. It can be concluded that patriarchy is a powerful psychological weapon capable of imposing restrictions and influencing the psyche directly or indirectly on the affected party—namely, women (Bahardur, 2023).

Emotional and Spiritual Resilience of Yazidi Women

The resilience of the female characters in this novel serves as evidence that resistance against patriarchy is not always physical or overt. In many cases, strength lies in the ability to remain sane, conscious, and compassionate amid destruction, which constitutes the strongest and deepest form of resistance by women against a system that seeks to silence them and erase their existence. In *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, female characters do not only face sexual and physical exploitation but are also subjected to psychological pressure and profound trauma as a result of continuous violence. Nevertheless, under such harsh conditions, they demonstrate resilience through their emotional and psychological flexibility, which becomes an invisible weapon in their struggle (Al-Dory, 2024). The researchers found several data that reflect this phenomenon, as follows.

من خلال النظرات التي يتبادلتها أثناء اعتصابهن يتحدثن بعيونهن، ويتفاهمن من خلال الدموع. مرة في أثناء اعتصاب جماعي في وضوح النهار. صرحت أسيرة بهم كفى تقبلون واحداً يفعل هكذا بأمهاتكم وأخواتكم؟ ضربها أحدهم على الفور بالحائط حتى انهارت. (Mikhail, 2020, p. 11-12)

"Through the glances they exchanged during their hunger strikes, they spoke with their eyes and understood one another through tears. Once, during a collective hunger strike in broad daylight, one of the captives cried out, 'Enough—would you accept someone doing this to your mothers and sisters?' One of them immediately slammed her against the wall until she collapsed."

In this data excerpt, one of the female captives dared to speak out and confront a man who intended to rape the women, saying, *"Enough! Would you allow someone to violate your mothers and sisters?"* Despite being aware of the consequences of such defiance, her resistance resulted in immediate violence, as one of the guards threw her against the wall, causing her to

lose consciousness. Her courageous act prompted the other women to express their emotions through tears, indicating that emotional bonds among them still existed. The occurrence of mass rape in broad daylight demonstrates that women were treated purely as bodies, stripped of their right to self-defense and personal dignity. This scene reveals that the women in *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail were not entirely submissive; rather, they retained sufficient awareness to question and reject injustice.

Radical feminism, as articulated by Kate Millett, highlights how patriarchal systems employ sexuality as a tool of social and psychological control over women. Patriarchy instills fear in women, discouraging them from voicing resistance due to the brutal consequences they may face if they challenge the system. In this excerpt, women are deprived of autonomy over their bodies and subjected to collective sexual violence, which not only inflicts physical suffering but also severely damages their psychological well-being. Such experiences clearly result in profound psychological consequences for the female individual (Parsaeipour & Naghdeali, 2024).

Within the framework of radical feminism, this illustrates how the patriarchal system oppresses women not only physically but also through memory and deep emotional wounds. Helen's resilience lies in her awareness of this suffering and her decision to continue living while embracing her pain. In radical feminist theory, this condition represents a form of internalized oppression that becomes embedded in the female psyche through systematic domination and violence.

Preservation of Self-Dignity among Yazidi Women

From the perspective of Kate Millett's radical feminism, an extreme patriarchal system does not merely deprive women of their physical freedom, but also destroys their dignity as human beings. The psychological oppression experienced by women in *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail is manifested through sexual violence, the treatment of women as commodities, and the erasure of their identities. Nevertheless, amid this systematic process of dehumanization, the female characters continue to strive to preserve their dignity as human beings who possess self-respect and consciousness (Tarigan & Hayati, 2023). Based on this perspective, the researcher identified several data related to the preservation of women's dignity.

لم تصدق عينها حينما لمحت صديقة طفولتها الأعز أمانة هناك في الجهة الأخرى من القاعة.
وأمانة كذلك فتحت فمها غير مصدقة. لكن لم يدم عناقهما الدامع سوى توان إذ جاء
صوته الهادر معلناً ٢٧ مباعه. (Mikhail, 2020, p. 7)

"She could not believe her eyes when she caught sight of her dearest childhood friend, Amina, there on the other side of the hall. Amina, too, stood with her mouth open in disbelief. But their tearful embrace lasted only a few moments, as his booming voice rang out, announcing: "Twenty-seven sold."

In this excerpt, it is evident that Helen could not believe her eyes when she saw her childhood friend, Amina, at the end of the corridor. Amina opened her mouth in shock, yet their tearful embrace lasted only a brief moment, as a loud voice announced that number 27 had been sold. Although short, their embrace demonstrates their emotional endurance and shows that they had not completely lost their humanity. The psychological trauma is reflected in their astonishment and disbelief upon meeting each other in the midst of enslavement. In this system, the names Helen and Amina no longer hold any meaning; numbers are used instead of names in the auction of women, illustrating how women have entirely lost their identities as individuals. Helen is no longer called by her name, but by the number "27," indicating that she has been reduced to a commodity to be bought and sold. The extreme patriarchal system has not only stripped them of their physical freedom, but also of their existence, rights, and dignity as human beings (Mikhail, 2020).

Kate Millett's radical feminism highlights how the patriarchal system constructs male dominance that oppresses women not only physically, but also psychologically. In this excerpt, Helen experiences profound emotional trauma when she sees her childhood friend Amina in the same condition—enslaved and commodified. The feelings of disbelief and shock upon seeing Amina reveal the extent of the psychological destruction caused by this system of slavery. Their meeting lasts only briefly before they are separated once again, demonstrating that this system destroys not only women's bodies and social relationships, but also their emotional well-being (Arifuddin & Susanto, 2020).

The findings of this study indicate psychological forms represented in five data points that describe the condition of imprisoned women suffering from psychological trauma inflicted upon themselves. Data eight, nine, and ten reveal forms of emotional and internal resilience, showing that women experience not only physical violence but also deep inner suffering. Furthermore, data eleven and twelve demonstrate efforts to preserve self-respect against a patriarchal system that strips women of their physical freedom and dignity or self-respect as women in the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail.

The Coercive Element in Yazidi Feminism

In *Sexual Politics*, Millett states that the patriarchal system should not be understood solely as being maintained through coercion. In fact, the ideal patriarchal system relies heavily on widespread consent, which is deeply entrenched and broadly applied within social humanity (Millett, 1970). Millett views women within this system as occupying a class-like position that is sustained either through coercion or ideological indoctrination. This coercion forces women to

remain “in their place,” including forms of enforced cruelty such as veiling, rape, sadism, or what Millett refers to as deviant heterosexuality (Sari & Wiyatmi, 2021).

Resistance against Coercion among Yazidi Women

In Kate Millett’s radical feminist theory, patriarchal authority is often enforced through coercive means: direct force, physical violence, and control over women’s bodies. The novel *Wasym Al-Tha’ir* by Dunya Mikhail vividly portrays how Yazidi women are forced into marriage, sold as commodities, and even compelled to wear revealing clothing to attract buyers. However, amid this coercion, subtle yet persistent forms of resistance emerge, demonstrating that women continue to possess the will to resist and to maintain autonomy over their bodies and identities. Therefore, the researchers identified the following data.

وقالت هذه وثيقة زواجك سيأتي زوجك بعد قليل. أعادت هيلين الورقة من دون أن تنظر إليها وقالت: أنا متزوجة أصلاً. أبو تحسين اشترك أونلاين وهو في الطريق إلى هنا قالت المرأة.
(Mikhail, 2020, p. 9)

‘This is your marriage document. Your husband will arrive shortly.’ Helen returned the paper without even looking at it and said, ‘I am already married.’ ‘Abu Tahseen has subscribed online and is on his way here,’ the woman said.”

The data illustrate the form of coercion imposed on Helen. She is forced to marry another man, even though she already has a husband. From that moment, Helen realizes that she will be sold to someone else. Inevitably, she has no choice but to submit to whatever is done to her.

In ancient times in Iraq, women were treated extremely harshly. They were compelled to do things against their will. The novel *Wasym Al-Tha’ir* by Dunya Mikhail portrays a female character named Helen who is forced into marriage with a man she does not want. Helen already has a husband and a child, but they are separated when terrorists arrive in Iraq. As a result, Helen is taken to a place where women are sold and become captives of their so-called masters. The women there have no option but to surrender to what is done to them, as they are completely deprived of dignity and agency (Bista, 2022).

Symbolization of Resistance against Bodily Domination among Yazidi Women

The symbolism of resistance against bodily domination is powerfully manifested in the scene where Helen removes her black veil and throws it into the river after successfully escaping. She says that perhaps the water will carry it back to her, a statement laden with deep meaning: she has decided to leave behind the oppressive system along with the symbols that surrounded her body and controlled it. This act is not merely symbolic but also political, as it signifies that her body no longer belongs to the system or to men, but solely to herself.

استغرقت هيلين من التناقض الكبير في الملابس التي يفرضها عليهن أعضاء التنظيم. ففي البداية عليهن أن يرتدين النقاب الأسود الذي لا تظهر منه سوى العيون، وبعد ذلك عليهن

ارتداء ملابس خلاقية لتصويرهن وعرضهن للبيع. طلب المصور من هيلين أن تمسح
دموعها قبل أن يلتقط الصورة. (Mikhail, 2020, pp. 8-9)
"Helen was struck by the stark contradiction in the clothing imposed on them by the
members of the organization. At first, they were required to wear the black niqab that
revealed nothing but the eyes; afterward, they were forced to wear revealing clothes in
order to be photographed and displayed for sale. The photographer asked Helen to
wipe away her tears before taking the picture."

In these data, coercion against women is clearly evident. The organization in Iraq known as ISIS forced women to wear the niqab that exposes only the eyes. Later, the women were compelled to change their clothing into revealing outfits so that they could be displayed, photographed, and sold (Mikhail, 2020).

This statement emphasizes the role of the ISIS organization in Iraq, which was active during that period. The group enforced the practice of obliging women to wear the niqab that revealed only their eyes. This custom was imposed by ISIS, forcing women to accept these regulations against their will. In certain situations, women were required to change into revealing clothing to be sold, which further intensified the oppression faced by women in Iraq, leaving them with no option but submission. In the novel *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, there is an implicit call for awareness regarding the preservation of women's dignity and the rejection of their humiliation. Women should occupy a position equal to that of men (Eteng et al., 2023).

The findings of this research represent forms of coercion reflected through three sets of data describing the condition of enslaved women who are subjected to a patriarchal system often enforced through coercive methods, such as direct coercion, physical violence, and control over women's bodies. The thirteenth and fourteenth data illustrate forms of resistance against direct coercion, in which Yazidi women are forced into marriage, sold as commodities, and even compelled to wear revealing clothing to attract buyers. Subsequently, the fourteenth data symbolize the rejection of bodily control, reflecting resistance against the symbols imposed upon and used to dominate women's bodies, such as clothing and the niqab forced upon them in Dunya Mikhail's *Wasym Al-Tha'ir*.

Conclusion

The resilience of female characters in *Wasym Al-Tha'ir* by Dunya Mikhail, when examined through Kate Millett's radical feminist perspective, is manifested in four interconnected dimensions: ideological, social, psychological, and coercive. Ideologically, Yazidi women demonstrate resilience by confronting patriarchal norms and resisting oppressive symbols imposed on their bodies and identities. Socially, their resilience is reflected in solidarity and emotional support among women under severe social pressure. Psychologically, resilience

appears through emotional and spiritual endurance as well as efforts to maintain self-respect and dignity. In the coercive dimension, resistance emerges in response to forced control and domination over the female body, including symbolic acts that reject patriarchal authority.

However, this study is limited to identifying and analyzing the forms of women's resilience as represented in the narrative structure of the novel. It does not explore in depth the broader consequences or long-term impacts of such resilience on the characters' personal transformation, social positioning, or future trajectories. Therefore, future research may extend this inquiry by examining the effects of women's resilience on character development and life outcomes within the text. Moreover, similar analytical frameworks could be applied to other literary works from diverse cultural and geopolitical contexts in order to compare patterns of women's resilience and broaden the scope of radical feminist literary criticism. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that women's resilience in literary texts is not merely a thematic element, but a critical site where power, gender ideology, and resistance are continuously negotiated within patriarchal structures.

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