

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates the introduction of the study. This chapter provides the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of the study. All sub-chapters of the introduction of this study are needed as a basis to this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The issue of women's resistance has been a recurring theme in literary studies, as literature functions as a mirror of social and cultural struggles. Simone de Beauvoir (De Beauvoir, 2010, p. 283), famously stated that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", emphasizing that femininity itself is socially and historically constructed. In patriarchal cultures, women are often positioned as "the Other," defined only in relation to male authority (2010). This structure of positioning opens the space for resistance, when women strive to assert their agency within systems that deny their autonomy.

Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia* (2022) situates this discourse in Alexandria during the early fifth century, a period of conflict between pagan philosophy and the rising power of Christianity. Hypatia, the central figure, is portrayed as a philosopher and teacher, a woman with intellectual and moral authority in a male-dominated society. Kingsley noted that, unlike many of her contemporaries, Hypatia embodied "rigid and ascetic virtue" as part of the Neoplatonist school (Kingsley, 2022). These virtues positioned her as a symbol of resistance against both religious dogmatism and gender marginalization. As Mills (2020) explains that Kingsley's representation of Hypatia cannot be separated from the Victorian cultural context, in which ancient female figures were often reconstructed to address shifting gender roles in the nineteenth century. Mills further argues that the novel reflects Victorian debates about women's education and intellectual authority, particularly the anxieties surrounding changing gender norms at the fin de siècle (Mills, 2020, p. 240). This means that Hypatia's resistance not only

reflects her ancient setting but also mirrors Victorian anxieties about changing gender norms. In addition, Minardi (2011), emphasizes that Hypatia's position also reflects the relatively wide opportunities available to women in Alexandria, where many women owned businesses, held property, and had access to education, thereby reinforcing her image as a figure who boldly challenged patriarchal structures (Minardi, 2011, pp. 1–3). Further highlights that Hypatia “emerges in fifth-century texts as a virtuous pagan philosopher caught in the streets and murdered by a crowd of monks, with St. Cyril, bishop of Alexandria at the time, to blame” (Morrison, 2020, p. 1). This description underscores not only the political hostility she faced but also the symbolic weight of her body and intellect, as later generations alternated between portraying her as a martyr, a witch, or a feminist icon.

The social setting of the novel underscores structural inequalities. The Roman Empire and the Church were engaged in a struggle for ideological dominance, where “the wealthier citizens of every province” aligned with imperial power, while the masses were often “enslaved” or pacified through spectacles (Kingsley, 2022, p. 12). In this environment, women like Hypatia not only confronted gender-based discrimination but also became targets of political and religious hostility. Morrison (2020) explains that Hypatia's legacy was continually reinterpreted across centuries, becoming “a determined and inspired figure that worked to serve the public and those she was closest to the way she believed a Platonic philosopher should” (Morrison, 2020, p. 2). This demonstrates that Hypatia's resistance is not only located in her historical moment but also in the way cultural memory re-fashioned her as a symbol of opposition to orthodoxy.

To examine Hypatia's struggle, this study employs James C. Scott's theory of resistance, which distinguishes between overt defiance and subtle, disguised forms of opposition. Scott argues that “every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a ‘hidden transcript’ that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant” (Scott, 1990). Hypatia's lectures, her rational defense of Neoplatonism, and her refusal to convert can be interpreted as both public and hidden transcripts of resistance.

As a supporting framework, this study also incorporates Fred L. Pincus' theory of discrimination. Pincus emphasizes that discrimination is not only an individual bias but also a structural problem embedded in institutions. He explains that "dominant and subordinate groups" emerge in social systems, where the dominant group justifies its privilege through ideology and culture, while the subordinate group experiences oppression and exclusion (Pincus, 2011, p. 23). In Kingsley's novel, Hypatia embodies the subordinate position: as a woman and as a pagan intellectual, she is marginalized by the dominant Christian patriarchy.

The intersection of resistance and discrimination is crucial. Hypatia's persecution cannot be fully understood without acknowledging both her gender and her philosophical stance. Pincus points out that discrimination often arises from the intersection of class, gender, and belief, producing compounded marginalization (Pincus, 2011, p. 27). Hypatia's murder, narrated in the closing chapters of the novel, reveals how structural discrimination legitimized violence against her, marking her not only as a woman but as an ideological threat.

Hypatia's tragic end in Kingsley's narrative illustrates how discrimination functions both at the ideological and structural levels. As Pincus explains, discrimination is sustained by "culture, attitudes, and ideology" that reinforce the legitimacy of dominant groups while justifying the subordination of others (Pincus, 2011, p. 30). Hypatia was subjected to this form of discrimination because her gender and her philosophical commitment contradicted the Christian orthodoxy of her time. Thus, she became both symbolically and materially excluded from protection, unlike Orestes, the male governor, who was shielded by his position of power.

Scott's framework helps us see how resistance persists even under the shadow of domination. He states that subordinates may not always challenge power openly but often "create and defend a social space in which offstage dissent to the official transcript of power relations may be voiced" (Scott, 1990, p. 11). In Kingsley's portrayal, Hypatia's intellectual gatherings, her lectures, and her influence over students such as Synesius are examples of these "hidden transcripts," spaces where alternative worldviews could flourish despite the dominance of Christianity.

At the same time, Hypatia also engaged in forms of public resistance. Her refusal to adopt Christian dogma and her persistence in teaching Neoplatonism exemplify what Scott identifies as the “rare moments of political electricity” when the hidden transcript is spoken openly “in the teeth of power” (Scott, 1990). These acts made her not only an intellectual dissenter but also a political symbol whose very existence threatened the authority of Cyril and his faction.

The significance of Hypatia’s resistance is also evident in how Kingsley constructs her as a figure of rationality, tolerance, and virtue in contrast to the fanaticism of her opponents. The novel describes Alexandria as a city torn between diverse cultures and religions, where “the universal fusion of races, languages, and customs” produced both intellectual ferment and social unrest (Kingsley, 2022, p. 35). In this fragmented society, Hypatia represents an attempt to uphold philosophical reason and pluralism against authoritarian control.

Therefore, this research aims to explore how Hypatia’s resistance is represented in Kingsley’s *Hypatia* using Scott’s theory, while also examining how Pincus’ concept of discrimination helps contextualize the challenges she faced. This approach expands the discussion beyond a simple feminist reading, offering an intersectional analysis that situates Hypatia within broader structures of domination and inequality.

There are several previous studies that relate to this study based on data and theory. The first previous study is by Mills (2020), entitled *Charles Kingsley’s Hypatia, Visual Culture and Late-Victorian Gender Politics*. This study explores how Kingsley’s *Hypatia* reflects Victorian gender politics, focusing on visual culture and the “New Woman” discourse. The study highlights Hypatia’s dual role as both a resistant intellectual figure and a symbol shaped by patriarchal anxieties.

The second previous study is by Morrison (2020), entitled *Objectification, Orientalism, and Orthodoxy: Hypatia in Modern Centuries*. This study discusses how Hypatia has been reinterpreted through patriarchal and orientalist discourses, showing her as both objectified and resistant. The findings reveal how cultural narratives silence Hypatia but also memorialize her as a symbol of defiance.

The third previous study is by Macaulay (2022), entitled *Alexandria was No Longer Troubled by Philosophers*. This thesis investigates Hypatia’s life and

death and her symbolic role in Alexandrian philosophy. It finds that Hypatia's intellectual position and tragic end reflect a form of cultural resistance against patriarchal religious power.

The fourth previous study is by Aziimatussa'adah (2024), entitled *Resistance Against Traditional Gender Roles by Sansa Stark*. This study analyzes female resistance in *Game of Thrones* using James Scott's theory of resistance and Judith Butler's gender performativity. The findings show that Sansa Stark resists patriarchal norms both through hidden acts of survival and overt strategies of empowerment.

The fifth previous study is by Vath (2025), entitled *Unearthing the Hidden Transcript in Greta Gerwig's Little Women (2019)*. This study applies James Scott's hidden and public transcript theory to analyze how women's resistance is expressed in *Little Women*. The findings reveal that solidarity and subtle resistance enable female characters to gain agency in patriarchal settings.

The sixth previous study is by Syafitri and Takenova (2025), entitled *Narratives of Resistance: Women's Defiance Against Gender Oppression in Bonnie Garmus' Lessons in Chemistry*. This study employs Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism and James Scott's resistance theory. The findings show that Elizabeth Zott resists patriarchy through her scientific career and personal acts of independence, representing both open and hidden resistance.

The seventh previous study is by Collins (1999), entitled *Duality in the Writing of Thomas Carlyle and Charles Kingsley*. This thesis discusses themes of gender, spirituality, and authority in Kingsley's works including *Hypatia*. The results indicate that Hypatia's struggles highlight conflicts between male and female authority, reflecting resistance to patriarchal domination.

There are several differences between previous studies and this study. First, the previous studies by Mills (2020), Morrison (2020), Macaulay (2022), and Collins (1999) analyzed Kingsley's *Hypatia* but used cultural, feminist, or historical theories rather than James Scott's framework. Meanwhile, this study focuses on *Hypatia* by directly applying James Scott's theory of resistance. Second, the studies by Aziimatussa'adah (2024), Vath (2025), and Syafitri & Takenova (2025), employed James Scott's theory but analyzed different texts such

as *Game of Thrones*, *Little Women*, and *Lessons in Chemistry*. In contrast, this study uniquely combines Scott's theory with Kingsley's *Hypatia* to analyze female resistance. Therefore, this research is necessary to provide a focused analysis that highlights how women's resistance is expressed in Kingsley's novel, distinguishing it from previous studies.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background study above, the writer frames the problems of this study as follow:

1. How is female resistance represented in Charles Kingsley's novel *Hypatia*?
2. How does discrimination affect female resistance in Charles Kingsley's novel *Hypatia*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

From the research problems, the purposes of this study are:

1. To identify and analyze the representations of female resistance in *Hypatia* by Charles Kingsley through James C. Scott's theory of resistance.
2. To examine how discrimination, as explained by Fred L. Pincus, influences *Hypatia*'s strategies of resistance in the novel.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Hopefully, the results of this study can provide some benefits to readers both theoretically and practically regarding the theory of women's resistance, especially literary studies that refer to women and the conditions that occur in them. Theoretically, this research contributes to the body of knowledge in literary studies by applying James C. Scott's resistance theory and Fred L. Pincus' discrimination theory to the analysis of a classical English novel. While previous studies have widely applied Scott's framework to explore forms of resistance, few have combined it with Pincus' sociological insights into discrimination. Thus, this study expands the interdisciplinary dialogue between literature, sociology, and feminist criticism. Practically, the study provides a new perspective for students, researchers, and educators in analyzing female characters in literature. *Hypatia*'s story can be used as a case study in courses on gender studies, resistance theory, and cultural diversity. It also offers insights into how narratives of the past reflect

ongoing struggles against domination, making it relevant for contemporary discussions on women's rights, religious tolerance, and social justice.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is the application of two theoretical frameworks, namely James C. Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* and Fred L. Pincus's concept of discrimination in *Understanding Diversity*. Scott's theory of resistance is employed to analyze how female in *Hypatia* construct "hidden transcripts" as subtle or disguised forms of opposition against dominant power structures, while Pincus's framework on discrimination provides insights into the manifestations of unequal treatment faced by women, both on individual and structural levels. These two theories complement each other in explaining how resistance emerges not only as a reaction to visible domination but also as a response to systemic patterns of inequality.

The limitation of this study is the focus on utterances of characters and author narration in the novel *Hypatia* by Charles Kingsley (2022).