

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Research

The idea of gender inequality has always been a big issue of human rights. In the nineteenth-century, women lived in different spheres or circumstances that separate them from men. And in fact, there were only a few women who are able to get good education or to pursue their career.

However, at the beginning of the nineteenth-century women have begun to fight for their rights until now. In today's society, we are able to see women getting their rights to vote, or to pursue their career, but in fact gender equality has not achieved yet.

In September 2014, United Nation Women Goodwill Ambassador, Emma Watson made her speech about gender equality, she said "No country in the world can yet say that they achieved gender equality" (Watson). The idea of gender equality is to give women their full potential in every aspect of life, being equal without any gender boundaries.

However, Emma Watson speech has captured the issue of women's struggle, not only from Emma, the writer also found the women's struggle is interpreted by different perspective, Michelle Obama in her speech during her visit in Argentina said "As I got older, I found that men would whistle at me as I walked down the street, as

if my body were their property, as if I were an object to be commented on instead of a full human being with thoughts and feelings of my own” (Obama). The sexual objectifications towards women have taken it to be a morally problematic phenomenon. Charvet states that “the causes of distinction in the behavior of women are a proof that the society sees women as sexual beings rather than as human beings” (5).

Another new perspective, there are several brands battling the gender stereotypes towards women. First, *Pantene*¹ has made a campaign about different labels between men and women in the workplace. The advertisement shows that the guy who lead is called a boss, but the woman who lead is called a bossy one. When a male gives a speech, he is persuasive, but for female, she is pushy. A father who works late is considered as a dedicated figure, but if it’s a mother then she is selfish. The stereotypes that women will be less feminine if they do men’s job and it will put different labels towards them.

Second, a brand named *Always*² has made a social experiment called *Like a Girl* to see the impact of using *like a girl* as an insult. This experiment asked diverse group of girls and adult women and men and asked them to run, throw, fight like a girl. The result comes up with adult women and men who tend to limit their running, or throw like a girl as an insult, however the small girls are running as fast as they can. This refers to the social stereotype of women, which has affected women’s confidence as

¹ Hair care products, Pantene Philippines *Labels against women* 2014 campaign

² Feminine hygiene products, Always *Like a Girl* 2014 campaign

they grow up. From perspectives above, the writer concludes that women's struggle is an important issue nowadays.

Therefore, the discourse of women's struggle can be seen in a form of a text, novel, magazine, and etcetera. The idea will be accepted by various people from different background and interpreted in different perspective. A text can be influenced by the social condition that becomes the reason of writing the text itself. A literary work could have meanings used by the author to create a certain social perspective. One of literary works that raises the issue of women's struggle is Kate Chopin's fictions.

Kate Chopin generally used irony and satire in her works to describe about what happened to the society and her perspective about women as seen in her famous novel *The Awakening* (1899).

At the time *The Awakening* was published, it gained lots of harsh criticism because it talks about a woman who finds the need to escape from marriage because she feels that she is just unhappy and looks for independence. Elaine Showalter notes that *The Awakening* talks about feminist movement and would be the most popular feminist literary text in the second wave.

Besides writing two novels, Kate Chopin is also known for her short stories that raise the issue of women's struggle, it is frequently noted for its attention to the gender inequality and women's struggle. The world of her fictions is populated with female characters whose hidden desire and patriarchal environment lead them to struggle against patriarchy, being criticized for this emphasis on oppression and

women's struggle a seemingly inappropriate subject for a female writer to explore, Chopin has nonetheless clung to her idea about women's oppression and struggle below the surface of patriarchal society. Most frequently in Chopin's fiction, male characters are the cause of physical or emotional oppression and struggle upon females.

However, in 1890s the collection of her short stories originally appeared largely in some of America's prestigious magazines such as *Vogue*, Harper's *Young People*, *The Century*, and etcetera, a number of the works presents female protagonist who is the victim of gender inequality. Chopin concentrates heavily on the women's struggle in her creation of her female characters.

This research will analyze Kate Chopin's selected short stories: First, is "Désirée's Baby" was published by *Vogue* magazine on January, 14, 1893 about a marriage conflict due to racial issue, Second "A Respectable Woman" that also published by *Vogue* on 1894, third is "Her Letters" that published by *Vogue* on 1895, and forth, "A Pair of Silk Stockings" published by *Vogue* on 1897. These four short stories have similarities in talking about women's struggle; all four women characters of each short story face the stereotype that women portrayed as inferior while man as superior.

There are several reasons for choosing the topic. First, the writer finds similarities between these four works which talk about the issue of women and show the struggle of women live in patriarchal society. Second, the writer assumes that Kate Chopin's works reflect that patriarchy is both oppressive and retrogressive for women in

society. Third, the writer argues that these works reflect patriarchal society in mid- to late nineteenth century of America.

Therefore, the writer proposes to conduct her research entitled *Women's Struggle against Patriarchal society in four of Kate Chopin's Selected Short stories*.

1.2 The Identification of the Problem

“Désirée’s Baby”, “A Respectable Woman”, “Her Letters”, and “A Pair of Silk Stockings” deal with the oppression of women that live in the patriarchal society. The struggle can be shown from the oppression that affected women. The prejudice that experienced by women which pushed women to struggle against it.

The writer found women’s struggles in the stories include marriage system where women struggling with their identity as wife, education system where women struggling with the equality in education system, economy where women struggling with their economic condition, politics where women struggling with their rights and psychology where women struggling with their psychological aspect.

1.3 The Scope of The Research

The research is limited to four of Kate Chopin’s selected short stories “Désirée’s Baby”, “A Respectable Woman”, “Her Letters”, and “A Pair of Silk Stockings” that can represent the issue of women’s struggle in mid- to late nineteenth century in America. However, in this research, the writer limits the struggle into three:

1. Women’s struggle in Politics
2. Women’s struggle in Economy
3. Women’s struggle in Marriage

The writer will focus on the issues of the struggles happened in the text, and the writer will analyze the author's criticism towards patriarchy in her works.

1.4 Research Questions

There are questions which need to be answered in this research:

1. How do the four selected short stories represent the issues of women's struggle in the stories?
2. Why does Chopin criticize the patriarchal society through her works?

1.5 The Objective of the Research

This research will examine women's struggle against patriarchal society in the four short stories. In brief, this research will:

1. Analyze the Issues of women's struggle that is expressed in the stories
2. Analyze Kate Chopin's criticism of women's struggle against patriarchal society.

1.6 The Review of Related Studies

In applying the Feminist criticism it is important to know the female character development and the patriarchy situation on the period of time when the story was written to become the object of the research. There are a lot of feminist researches has done especially to criticize the patriarchal society that can be found in a work, especially the works of Kate Chopin. A comparison between these five studies, Dewi Rigen Sulistini (2014) focuses on the main female character struggle on pursuing women's emancipation in Gilman's *What Diantha did*. Xuemei Wan (2009) focuses on Chopin's view of death and freedom in her short story, LiminBai (2014) discusses

the death of Edna and self-identity, Abbasi P (2012) argues about the male socio-culture on Kate Chopin's novel, Smt C. Neelima (2016) about women's place in patriarchal society. The researchers give us a clear framework of patriarchy and another perspective of Kate Chopin's works.

In these five reviews, they generally talk about feminist movement and its relation to men dominance. For example, Sulistini argues that the women's economic marginalization is the main problem of women's struggle, but she only focuses on women's struggle towards economic aspect without considering another influential aspect in life.

Xuemei Wan analyzes that the death of the heroine character is the effect of the psychological aspect and that she belongs to her inner world and fantasies. He does not analyze the psychological aspect deeper, especially from the story line, his research more focuses on the relation between the story and Chinese character. In his research, he relates the character to the story of ZuangZi that has the similarities with the fiction.

If Xuemei discusses the psychological development of women, Abassi argues that the idea of female defeat in Kate Chopin's novel has been ignored. However the writer finds that the research does not evaluate the status of women in the novel and its relation to the social construction of the author itself, it only focuses on the character freedom that reflected in death.

While Limin Bai also discusses Edna character and she argues about the death of Edna is the punishment nor an escape, but a triumph. Three of them discuss the death

and struggle for freedom on Chopin's work but no further and deeper analysis about the character itself and the author they mostly just focuses on one aspect of life.

Neelima discusses women behavior in standards patriarchal society. She argues that the subjugation of women starts within the family from one generation to another. She argues that cruel treatment of society always put women for victimization. The writer finds these reviews are really helpful for the writer to get the deeper understanding.

In this research, the writer will discuss different aspect by exploring more on the author patriarchal criticism and the women's struggle of each main female character, especially how the women's struggle were built in the story and its relation to the author background, the writer will also analyze the relation between the author, characters, and women's struggle against patriarchy in Politics, Economy, and Marriage system.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

In order to conduct this research, the writer will apply feminist criticism. Feminism is the reflection of women's movement to achieve gender equality in every aspect of life and feminist literary criticism as written in Gill Plain and Susan Seller's *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism* is focused on "women's writing, women writing about women writing, women and men writing about women's minds, bodies, art and ideas" (2), the writer uses feminist criticism because this research will focus on women's struggle especially in specific fields such as Politics, Economy, and marriage system, and according to Louis Tyson in her book *Critical Theory Today*

that “Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces and undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women” (100).

The concept of women’s struggle as cited from Porter on Beasley’s *What is Feminism? An Introduction to Feminist Theory* that defines “Feminism as a perspective that seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities, and the injustice because women suffer from sexual discrimination. This perspective also called as women’s struggle”(27).

To analyze the data, the writer uses Gynocriticism by Elaine Showalter to focus the analysis to the author. In her essay *Toward a Feminist Poetics*, she divides feminist criticism into two: ‘women as reader’ and ‘women as writer’, the writer will use ‘women as writer’ or called as Gynocriticism to analyze this data. In her essay she states that gynocriticism refers to women as the producer of textual meaning, she explains that the aim of gynocriticism is to construct female framework to analyze women’s literature and to develop its writing based on female experience and free from male writing models, theories, and male literary history and focus on female culture.

According to Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, there are four types of Gynocriticism, “ The feminist critic, in other words, should attend to historical, anthropological, psychological, and sociological aspects of female text; in short, it would seem, to everything but the text as signifying process” (76). She also states that from Showalter’s “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness”

she gives four models in gynocriticism; biological approach, language approach, psychoanalytic approach, and cultural approach (77). The writer focuses on cultural approach because this research deal with how the society influence Kate Chopin's shape of writing and by using Gynocriticism the writer tries to reveal Kate Chopin's criticism towards the patriarchal society that is reflected in her works.

In this research, the writer will analyze the patriarchal society that is reflected in the stories According to Virginia Woolf's (1929) who states that the patriarchal society prevents women from realizing their creativity and potential. And the concept of patriarchy family is explained by Christine Delphy and Diana Leonard (1992) that men get the benefit by exploiting women in the family, that family is structured while men are dominated and women and children are subordinated.

To support the analysis, the writer will apply Patriarchal Binary Thought by Helene Cixous, in her essay *Sorties* (1975) she claims that there are binary oppositions of man and woman in patriarchal society. As reflected from Lois Tyson's *Critical Theory Today* that,

“Helene Cixous argues that language reveals what she calls patriarchal binary thought, which might be defined as seeing the world in terms of polar opposites, one of which is considered superior to the other... as head/heart, father/mother, culture/nature, intelligible/palpable, sun/moon, activity/passivity.” (100).

He also added that by constructed this binary, Cixous wants to show that women always be on the right side which refers to the side of patriarchy that shows women as

inferior (100). By using this binary the writer will examine Kate Chopin's works to discover the women's position in the patriarchal society that described in each work.

1.8 The Method of The Research

In collecting data for this research, the writer will use Library research methods; do a deep close reading with the primary source data which taken from Kate Chopin's four of selected short stories: "Désirée's Baby", "A Respectable Woman", "Her Letters", and "A Pair of Silk Stockings" And the secondary are supporting data about the related issues of women, patriarchy, Kate Chopin's life from the collection of books, journals, articles, essays, and other relevant sources that able to find by browse on the internet.

In analyzing the data, the writer reads, understands, and analyzes the primary source data using Cixous's *Patriarchal binary* to find women's position in the patriarchal society in the stories, after that the writer will relate the data to patriarchal society in mid- to late nineteenth century America as well to the life of Kate Chopin, the writer will focus the analysis on women's struggle and use Gynocriticism to guide the analysis to find Kate Chopin's thought or criticism of patriarchal society that is reflected in four of her selected short stories. This research is going to be a qualitative research. The writer describes the data descriptively.

By using descriptive analysis, the writer will report the analysis descriptively about Women's struggle against patriarchy in Kate Chopin's four selected short stories "Désirée's Baby", "A Respectable Woman", "Her Letters", and "A Pair of Silk Stocking"