

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The term “*woman*” is used to refer to “*female adult*”, or “*an adult female human being*”. “*Women*”, the plural form of “*woman*”, refers to female adult as group; woman collectively or in general (Encarta Dictionary, 2006). It has long been known that since the early time, women were raised to hold the same principles in their mind: to grow and be a housewife. Thus, grandmother taught her daughter how to do house chores, how to raise a child, and to obey the husband. The doctrine passed from generations to generations with no self-awareness that women have the right to speak up and do things they like outside the husband’s constraint. If we trace back into history, the cultures of women’s role were almost the same in every country: born to be a housewife.

In China for example, there are a lot of different meanings and ways to write a Chinese word (Croll 114). Each line or scratch can make a different meaning. The Chinese word “wife” represents a woman holding a duster and “a married woman” shows a woman with a broom. We can assume that a wife is the one who does the cleaning and, in fact, performs all the household chores. In ancient China women were to be obedient in three situations and posses four virtues. A woman is expected to obey their father before marriage, their husband during married life and their sons in widowhood. Meanwhile, the four virtues

consist of *integrity, pleasant appearance, propriety in speech* and *be a skilled needlewoman*. Even in this modern era, there are still some Chinese families holding on tight to their culture. A wife must obey and respect her husband and his family. She must bear a son for the sake of the family's name and follow the other family tradition. The Chinese family believes in patriarchy system. Men are the ruler, leader, and superior of the house, whereas women are the inferior. Difficult tasks are meant to be done by men who are believed to be physically stronger, more intelligent and reliable than women, who are judged as weak, less intelligent, and thus, less reliable (Croll 114-115).

Prior to the 19th century, there still had been a maintained assumption that women were weaker and oppressed compared to men. Women were expected to remain obedient to husbands and fathers. Middle and upper class women generally stayed at home, took care of children and ran the household. There were lower-class women who worked outside home, but they were usually poorly-paid domestic servants or laborers in factories and mills. At that very era, it would be such a weird thing to imagine a woman who works outside the home or a woman earning living for the family. There was no such "career woman" at all.

It was because of the freedom struggles and feminine rallies in the early 19th century that such condition started to change. In *United States (History)*, it is stated that various means were used by the women's movement to end discrimination, just like what the civil rights movement struggled for (Microsoft Encarta, 2006). Pressure groups were created by activists, confrontation tactics

like sit-ins and marches were adopted, and media attention was tried to be captured. Johnson also notes that, “By the end of the 1960s, feminists had created an energetic campaign that called both for legal equity and for the restructuring of gender roles and social institutions”. Since then, the society began to hear the voices of women, who demanded their rights, respect, and freedom. The women’s struggles have resulted in their freedom to speak, vote, and work. As we can see, now women are free to go to work, attain education in whatever field they desire. Above all, women are now provided with equal opportunities and privileges, things which were once only available to the men (Tyson 97).

Equality is the major issue of the movement for women’s rights (Tyson 97). Popularly known as “*feminism*” (the term used to describe the establishment of equal right, opportunity, and protection for women), the discourse involves various movements, theories, and philosophies concerning gender difference. Feminism advocates equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. This movement has altered predominant perspectives in a wide range of areas within Western society, ranging from culture to law. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's legal rights (rights of contract, property rights, voting rights), for women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy, for abortion rights, and for reproductive rights (including access to contraception and quality prenatal care), for protection from domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape for workplace rights, including maternity leave and equal pay, and against other forms of discrimination.

The history of feminism can be divided into three waves: (1) The first wave feminism (happened in United Kingdom and United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, with the focus on gaining political power for women to legally vote in all states); (2) the second wave feminism (focusing on the ending of discrimination suffered by women, during the early 1960s until the late 1980s); and (3) the third wave feminism (extending from the 1990s to the present). These feminist movements were the fundamentals of feminist theory, a prominent theory manifested in a variety of disciplines such as feminist geography, feminist history and feminist literary criticism (Ruth 452).

Liberal feminism belongs to the second wave feminism focusing on the equal rights for women. From 1960s until the late 1980s, the feminist activists of this era (especially in the United States) had been making struggle to bring the women into the awareness of their roles in various walks of life. Among the writers during Liberal Feminism era or the second wave feminism was Joan Holden. Graduated from Reed College and the University of California at Berkeley, this mother of two daughters was an active participant and the writer of the play in Mime Troupe. The Mime Troupe was a Paris-trained mime, who by 1958 had taken up residence in San Francisco. This group toured the city's parks with its radical political messages. After her graduation, Joan sought her inspiration in the Left Bank cafes of Paris. Upon her return to this country, she took a job as a school teacher and joined the antiwar movement in 1960's. Seven years later, the Mime Troupe needed a play about Vietnam and Holden offered her adaptation of Goldoni's 18th century comedy *L'Amant Militaire*. Collective

creation became the dominant production and a drama entitled *The Independent Female* was one of the first plays to be performed by the Mime Troupe. Holden rewrote the play to bring it more in line with the relatively positive minded ideology of the Bay Area Feminist Council. *The Independent Female* is the play of a cultural phenomenon, being one of the few early feminist works written in a popular form and one of even fewer comedies to come out of the Woman's Movement at all.

The issues of *The Independent Female* provide a hilarious commentary on the attitudes that provoked the second-wave feminism of the 20th century. *The Independent Female* is a high-energy comedy about confrontation in feminist struggle in facing the Corporate whose power and greediness prevent them from giving the appropriate wage for the woman labors which is equal to their contribution. The story begins with the engagement of Gloria Pennybank and John Heartright. John and Gloria's mother (Matilda Pennybank) are worried of Gloria's plan to keep working at the Corporate Life after getting married. When both John and Matilda insist her to choose marriage and become a full-time wife and mother who stay at home instead of dedicating some of her time in her own career, Gloria finds herself drawn to Sarah Bullitt, a co-worker with a plan for female empowerment in her mind. In this drama, Gloria is depicted as the ingénue, John the hyper-masculine hero, and Sarah the traditional villain lurking in the shadows. Gloria loves her job as a secretary for a large corporation, and is upset when John tells her to quit from her job and stay at home instead. Gloria might have been happy to let her man take charge of her life if it were not for the

fascinating women's liberation ideas of Sarah Bullitt. Sarah, who had just been fired for her rebelliousness, convinces Gloria to help her rally the women in the company to go on strike and demand their rights for equal work and equal pay. The company where Gloria, John, and Sarah work together consists of a large majority of women. After several confusing times of consideration, the innocent Gloria comes up with her support on Sarah's ideas.

Gloria's mother, Matilda, who has been witnessing Gloria's change with much distress, shows John her daughter's plans and he goes to stop her. He meets them in the office of Walter, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, just when they are beginning negotiations. The climax happens in this drama part; Sarah and Gloria as the woman's representation in the office keep insisting on being given their rights in the workplace, while John and Walter as the symbol of patriarchy (in the family and in the workplace) have to "straight these things up". They face each other as if they were enemies. Tragedy happens when John can no longer stand Sarah's fierce critics and argumentation and shoot her till death.

The Independent Female becomes interesting to be taken into analysis for it talks about women's movement as an everlasting debate until the present moment. Feminism is an attractive issue to be discussed for it has always been a dilemmatic problem in society. The shallow image of a woman from opposite gender determines the role and functions of a woman for woman is restrained with the norms, culture, and habit of submit to man. How women are treated and the reason behind such treatments (usually rooting from men's perspectives of women) is challenging to be examined and analyzed. *The Independent Female*

depicts the condition and situation which is full of high-tensed conflicts. The reader can see how insisting Matilda Pennybank (Gloria's mother) is in convincing her daughter to just stay at home as a housewife once she is married to John. Matilda does that based on her own trauma of 'failing' her own marriage (with Walter) for she had once done what Gloria is doing now: choosing career and demanding the independence. She wants Gloria to have a happy family unlike her, thus ensure her to just forget and leave her own desire to have career, in the name of love to John as her future husband and dedication towards family.

The complexities in the drama apparently cause significant changes in Gloria. The tension happened between Gloria and her fiancé, mother, Sarah and her struggle in the work place give account on her shift of paradigm. By elaborating the characters, the conflicts they face and how they deal with them, it is expected that the gender issues brought by *The Independent Female* can be clearly described and understood.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

In analyzing the gender issues in *The Independent Female* and how they bring Gloria as the main character into gender-based conflicts, the writer formulates three research questions to be elaborated, as the following:

1. What are the gender issues raised in *The Independent Female*?
2. How do the gender-based issues in the drama develop and bring into conflicts on Gloria?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to answer the research questions as mentioned in the statement of the problems. By using both the intrinsic (characterization, plot, and setting) as well as the extrinsic approach (Feminism theory), this study tries:

1. To find the gender issues in *The Independent Female*.
2. To explain how the gender-based issues in the drama develop and bring into conflicts on Gloria.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This thesis will examine the gender issues in *The Independent Female* and how the gender-based issues trigger some conflicts on Gloria, the main character of the drama. It is not quite easy for Gloria as a young, innocent woman to cope with both internal and external conflicts in her life which root from the patriarchal culture maintained in the society. The shift of Gloria's paradigm results in the way she sees the things around her as well as in the way she makes up her decision. Generally, this study is supposed to enrich knowledge about gender issues and feminist movement in the United States in the era of 1970s.

The study is also conducted to give contribution to the study of literature in English Department of Airlangga University. Up until this study is being written, there has not been any study on feminism using *The Independent Female* play. Accordingly, the writer hopes that this study could enrich the way of applying feminism theory (by employing more than what the written text

presents) as the basis of analysis as well as knocks the readers' awareness on such issues.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

The analysis of this study will be focused on the gender issues in *The Independent Female* as the portrayal of patriarchal culture and gender bias during the era of 1970s in the United States. The study will take into account the main character's identification, the setting, and the moving of the plot. Yet, the drama's text remains the main source of analysis. Therefore, other aspects outside the research object are not considered the subject of discussion in this study.

Scope and limitation will also be applied in theoretical framework. Some additional sources and information might be used as long as they show significant correlation with the drama and they will only be used to support some aspects of the analysis. The drama will be analyzed by applying feminism approach.

1.6. Theoretical Background

In order to identify the gender issues and elaborate the conflicts arose as the impacts of gender-based issues in *The Independent Female*, this study will use feminism approach. The major importance lies on the text itself, yet the feminism theory is used as an approach for the issues raised within the drama have strong correlation with the feminist movement during the era of second wave feminism in the United States of America.

Feminism is a discourse that involves various movements, theories, and philosophies concerning the issue of gender difference, advocate equality for women, and campaign for women's rights and interests. The belief that men are superior to woman was strongly maintained at that time. Patriarchal culture, as feminism have observed, has been used to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power. In other words: to keep women powerless. The culture was so deep-rooting that it caused the women to see themselves as the “object” and not part of the “subject” in the society. According to Lois Tyson (84), feminism patriarchy is thus, by definition, sexist, meaning that it promoted the belief that women are innately inferior to men.

1.7. Method of the Study

Qualitative research method will be used in analyzing Joan Holden’s *The Independent Female*. In obtaining a good finding through qualitative research, there are several steps to do: (1) formulating answerable and researchable research questions, (2) applying theoretical framework to the drama text, (3) finding methods, (4) collecting data, and (5) merging the data to become an organized analysis.

Main source of the analysis is the drama text itself. However, to obtain best understanding of the literary text, non-literary texts related to the drama might be useful. For that reason, some library researches have been conducted to collect any information about the text, the theories, and other supporting sources.

The data for this study was not only taken from printed sources, but also from online sources.

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Discrimination	: The act of discriminating, distinguishing, or noting and marking differences
Equality	: Rights, treatment, quantity, or value equal to all others in a specific group
Feminism	: Political, cultural, and economic movements aimed at establishing greater rights and legal protections for women
Gender	: Somebody's sex; the sex of a person or organism, or of a whole category of people or organisms.
Independent	: Not influenced or controlled by others in matters of opinion, conduct, etc
Issues	: Subject of concern; main subject, or the central or most important topic in a discussion or debate.
Patriarchy	: A social system which men are regarded as the authority within the family and society, and in which power and possessions are passed on from father to son (Encarta Dictionary, 2006)