

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This chapter is about the theoretical explanation on the concept and other materials that are applicable for this study. The discussion of this study is mainly about the society's judgment towards a woman character, and her responses. Feminism is the theory that is used to do research about women and according to the writer, the theory will be appropriate for her study. The feminist activity started in 1550-1700 during the early Modern era. "Early Modern feminist activity aimed at challenging the prevalent social view that women are weak and irrational creatures who should be controlled by men" (Jenainati and Groves 9). Feminism is a women movement in their trying to escape from the influence of patriarchy. "Feminism describes both the broad movement that has campaigned against the political and social inequalities between men and women and the school of academic criticism that takes gender inequality as its objects of the study" (Baldwin et al. 120). Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism in her book entitled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* believes that the unfair image of the women has been built by the patriarchy. The theory is used to analyze the depiction of a woman in the novel of *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* who has a right to decide any decision on her life, without being scared to be underestimated by patriarchal society.

The writer chooses the theory of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism because in fact, the women's problem concerning discrimination from men cannot be wholly terminated until this day. Beside a few women who are successful in achieving the equal position with men, there are still others who cannot reach that. As Wollstonecraft pointed out that women's problems in marriage, relationship with men, and motherhood are some of the problems that still occur until today. So, the theory about women's rights according to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* is the theory that can be applied even though the theory is produced in the 19th century.

2.1.1 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system working in the society that builds "women, in particular, are rendered weak and watched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion" (Wollstonecraft 1). Wollstonecraft believed that women are treated unfairly that is based on wrong conclusion that seem true built by patriarchal system. It is believed nature that men are masculine while women are feminine. Feminine refers to several behaviors which are close to tenderness, full of feeling, and emotional while masculine refers to behaviors which are known as strong, brave, and logical. "I have sighed when obliged to confess that either Nature has made a great difference between man and man..." (Wollstonecraft 1). It seems that patriarchy has named it as nature in building differences between men and women. Nature has been believed as the reason behind all the differences between men and women and according to

Wollstonecraft, she disagreed with the statement that men and women are naturally different.

“Patriarchal refers to power relations in which women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men” (Jenainati and Groves 4). Patriarchy has the concept that women are inferior to men and it has become one of the most influential ideologies that is used in the world, which is believed to belong to men and its concepts have been applied in many sectors. In their book entitled *Introducing Feminism*, Cathia Jenainati and Judy Groves show how patriarchy has existed since the 4th century BC by stating the Thucydides’s statement. “It is a great glory in a woman to show no more weakness than is natural to her sex, and not be talked of, either for good or evil by men” (Jenainati and Groves 5). It shows how since Thucydides’s period, 450-400 BC, women have been considered as the weak human beings because of their physical nature. “Early thinking about the difference between women and men was based on essentialist ideas about gender which maintained that women’s and men’s differences are a result of biology” (Jenainati and Groves 5). “Essentialism sees men as able to think logically, abstractly, and analytically, while women are mainly emotional, compassionate and nurturing creatures” (Jenainati and Groves 6). Patriarchy has been followed by almost all people in this world either consciously or not. “Patriarchy, like carbon monoxide, is insidious because it is colorless, odorless, and invisible. The human body does not detect the presence of carbon monoxide: it interprets the gas as oxygen” (O’Connor and Drury 6).

According to Wollstonecraft, women are treated unfairly. As one of the sexes exists on this earth, women get so many disadvantages because they are subordinated by the men, moreover by the society.

The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity. (Wollstonecraft 1)

Patriarchy builds a concept of women that they all have to be someone useful for the society around her life. As seen from the citation above, women are like flowers when they are pressed to be as beautiful as they can even though they will fade even die later on. They also have to be ready to be forgotten or discarded whenever men or people around them felt they have enough of them. In this study, the patriarchy is shown through the judgment of the woman character whose name is Elizabeth McKenna. She is a woman viewed by the patriarchal society related to the women's traditional gender roles.

2.1.2 Traditional Gender Roles

Woman traditional gender roles believe that women must deal with motherhood and housewife. "*Traditional gender roles* cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (Tyson 85). Patriarchal traditional gender roles have

become the benchmark of the human beings especially women. According to the roles, patriarchal builds two opposite sides of women. There are only two identities of women which are built by patriarchy, the good ones and the bad ones. A woman is called good “if she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchal rules, she’s a “good girl”; if she doesn’t, she’s a “bad girl”” (Tyson 89).

Louis Tyson in his *Critical Theory Today* gives some examples how patriarchy works in the society’s lives. Those examples are how some fairy tales symbolize the patriarchy’s role. There are three fairy tales Tyson chooses as the example, those are *Cinderella*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and also *Sleeping Beauty*. Through those three fairy tales, Tyson shows how women in those fairy tales are claimed as good and are described as the main character of the tales in their characters as a gentle, submissive, virginal, and angelic while the antagonist ones are the women that are described as violent, aggressive, worldly, and monstrous.

2.1.3 Women’s Rights

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her book of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in responding to the pamphlet published by [Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord's](#) 1791 in which it was the report to the French [National Assembly](#). She disagreed with his view that women can only get domestic education. “I call upon you, therefore, now to weigh what I have advanced respecting the rights of woman and national education” (Wollstonecraft 7). She

believes that women should have the same education access as well as men. Even though women are believed as the ones who have to stay at home and raise their children and take care of their husbands, they need to be educated mothers and wives. "... when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women ...” (Wollstonecraft 9). Women have rights as well as men to be educated and to be able to choose and reach for their happiness.

Consequently the perfection of our nature and capability of happiness must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively. (Wollstonecraft 13)

That shows how a woman should be taught in a great degree to get understanding about happiness. Women, as well as men, should be guided to get and not be separated from men in order to get understanding about happiness. For example, patriarchy claims that woman will be happy if she can be a good housewife for her family and man will be happy if he can reach a great success for being a businessman.

I say unsound; for to assert that a state of nature is preferable to civilisation, in all its possible perfection, is, in other words, to arraign supreme wisdom; and the paradoxical exclamation, that God has made all things right, and that error has been introduced by the creature, whom He

formed, knowing what He formed, is as unphilosophical as impious.
(Wollstonecraft 15)

Every woman has the right to do anything she wants without being underestimated by patriarchal society. Wollstonecraft believes that actually women and men are the same mankind. She believes that God has created them as equal. She believes differences between men and women are not natural but are made by someone or a group.

If the inferiorities of women to men are built by something called as nature, their virtues must be the same in quality, but if it is not, virtue may be a relative idea, so as the consequences, women and men's conduct should be founded on the same principles and they have the same aim.
(Wollstonecraft 28)

Wollstonecraft shows that there is no reason in telling that men and women are naturally different in which men are superior to women. Because in fact, women and men have different view that shows how they are treated differently that causes the differences among them.

Mary Wollstonecraft's feminist criticism in this thesis is used to analyze the woman main character in *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society* written by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows. It is used to find out how patriarchal plays its role through Elizabeth McKenna. The woman character is Elizabeth McKenna, the main character in the novel. She is described as both good, an angel, and bad, a monster, based on the society's judgment. According to the patriarchy, that is there are only two kinds of women. The first that is called

good women are those who follow the patriarchal rules and the others are monster when they break the patriarchal rules.

Elizabeth McKenna plays an important role to the Guernsey Islanders, especially for to ones who join the Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society. Elizabeth McKenna's character is built through the other characters' point of view. The novel contains letters written by them who explain about their thoughts towards Elizabeth McKenna. It can be seen clearly that Elizabeth McKenna is a woman whose life is surrounded by the patriarchal society who completely build the character as what she is.

Hereinafter, the theory of Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism is suitable here to explain about Elizabeth McKenna's deeds in her life. As a human being, Elizabeth McKenna has her right to do anything she wants. Her behaviors show that a woman should not always follow the patriarchal rules to get good judgment from the patriarchal society. "But, whether she be loved or neglected, her first wish should be to make herself respectable, and not to rely for all her happiness on a being subject to like infirmities with herself" (Wollstonecraft 30). Actually, it will not be a matter for women whether their deeds will be loved or ignored. In one hand, Elizabeth can be considered as an angel because of her deeds since they agree with the patriarchy system, but she is also viewed as a monster when she does not follow the rules. Elizabeth has her own way of thinking and does what she thinks she must do. She is not a woman who totally follows the patriarchal rules, she fights hard to gain her happiness.

2.2 Review of Related Studies

The writer of the study could not find works on the novel *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, but she gets works that are similar in the theory and the woman character. The first study is written by Martina Jilková, a student of Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University, Czech Republic, for her Bachelor's Diploma Thesis entitled *Emerging Feminism in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë*. She uses Mary Wollstonecraft's theory *A Vindication of the Women Rights* to analyze the Brontë's novels, *Jane Eyre*, *Villette* and *The Professor*. Martina discusses about the position of the women in the Victorian era represented through those three novels.

There are some women characters in those novels in which every of them has her own limitations and ways in struggling for a better position. According to Mary Wollstonecraft's in *A Vindication of the Women Rights*, these women can be regarded as feminists. Jane Eyre is one because she rejects to be a mistress of a rich man, her employer, Mr. Rochester. She decides to leave him even though she loves him. Deep down she does not want to leave him. She also rejects the marriage proposal from "her newly-found cousin" (Jilková 26) because she does not love him. Although she knows her rejecting his proposal may break John and her friendship, but she is not worry about that. She is a woman who does not follow her feeling easily. She can control her own feeling by herself.

Frances in *The Professor* "represents a strong personality and an early feminist as well. She also has to undergo distress and gain experience to become independent in the end" (Jilková 38). Frances is a woman who at the beginning of

the story is told as indecisive and dependent woman, but then she successfully becomes a self-reliance, independent when making her decisions. And Lucy in *Villette* is a woman who does not have good physical appearance. She explicitly rejects Ginevra Fanshawe's marriage proposal even though he strictly says that Lucy will not get other men who is interested in her except himself. That is because of Lucy's plain appearance. Lucy thinks that physical beauty is not the only aspect to assess a woman. She improves and develops herself by learning many new things. She learns German and takes a course of regular reading of the driest and thickest books in the library so she can be a very good partner for her husband, the man whom she wants to marry with. The difference between Jílková's and this study is in what way the women live their lives. The three women in Jílková's study choose to be independent women and they are all courageous in reaching their own happiness. In the beginning of the story, they are dependent, submissive, and weak women, but in the end, they change their behaviors by being independent and courageous women. While in this study, the writer shows that Elizabeth McKenna is a whole woman, a woman who is not limited by stereotypical gender views, who lives her life by concerning to reach her own happiness.

Actually there some other studies who have similar topic with this study, but the writer chooses only one of them, which is the closest one. The study is the undergraduate thesis by Airlangga University students in the English Department, Faculty of Humanities. It is written by Reza Rizky Azizah, which is entitled *Complex Oppression towards Sanikem as Depicted in Toer's "Earth of*

Mankind". In that analysis, Azizah applied the theory of postcolonial-feminism in order to prove the oppression the Javanese women during the Dutch colonialism. As Javanese women in that era, they get two kinds of oppressions. First, they are colonized by the Javanese feudalism and the second is they are oppressed by the Dutch colonialism. The character analyzed is Sanikem or Nyai Ontosoroh. She symbolizes the woman's position in that era. The study aims to find out the relation between the Dutch colonialism and the Javanese feudalism towards the oppression Sanikem gets and to find out whether Sanikem is aware and struggles against the oppression or not.

The study found that the character of Sanikem is one of the Javanese women who are oppressed by both of the Javanese feudalism and the Dutch colonialism. The relation between those two is when her father chooses to give Sanikem to the Dutch to be his *nyai* because he wants to get a higher position in his career. Sanikem is aware of the oppression the Javanese women get even though she is unsuccessful in struggling to break her father's ambition. She chooses to cut her relationship with her both parents because she thinks they are not good parents. She can be an economically independent woman then by saving some of the money her master gives and she has her own grocery shop. Although she loses her money after her master's death, she struggles to get it back. She does not succeed, but she is able to prove by being a strong woman and never lets any of her daughters get the same oppression she has. The differences between this study and Azizah's study is the theory used. But, the ideas of the woman character are almost the same about the women's oppression. Elizabeth McKenna is

oppressed by Germans and society while Sanikem is oppressed by Dutch and Javanese feudalism. Both of them are the women who do not follow it wholly.