

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Theoretical Framework**

This chapter introduces the approach or theoretical framework used in the analysis: Feminism approach. The theory of Existentialist Feminism by Simone de Beauvoir is expected to support the analysis and enable a thorough understanding on the subject matter of the novel.

##### **2.1.1. Feminism**

The word “feminist” was invented by French socialist, Charles Fourier. He imagined a new woman who would both change and be changed by a society based on association and mutuality. At the beginning, feminism is a part of social sciences, not yet a part of literature studies. However, during 1960s it has developed and feminism has later been defined in various ways. All of them contain a set of beliefs, value, and attitudes centered on the attempt to make women and men as equal human beings.

In English, the word ‘feminist’ appeared for the first time to describe a woman who campaign in order to have the rights to vote in 1890’s (Humm 175). However, the society generally noticed a major resurgence of feminist activity in 1850’s. This era was perhaps the most important decade of the nineteenth century for women (Gamble 22). During that time, women’s movements seek to change marriage law, control their own property and obtain jobs and education. The

behaviors of woman as feminist are the contrary to the society's ideal image of lady-like behaviors (Hunter 1983).

Further, the women's movements also entail a philosophical questioning of traditional values and ideas regarding women. It challenges women to examine their intellectual and emotional capacities, to male-female relationship. Feminists are also described as the people who know and understand about oppression towards woman in all aspect of life. These people recognize that woman also have differences and equalities compared to men (Humm 75). Anyone who fights for the equality between man and woman, who care of woman's subordinate position, and anyone who are trying to eliminate the oppression toward woman, could be called "*feminist*". It means that feminist issues appear because a woman felt that she had been treated unequally because of her gender.

Ruth (1980) stated that feminists do not accept the cultural images of women as a weak character but they affirm their capacities as the strong image. As a result, if we try to explore the role of women during that century, we are supposed to consider the nineteenth century as the evolution of feminism (Gorsky 1). By the end of nineteenth century, major reforms for women had been accomplished but the term feminist and feminism had only just begun to be used.

Basically, feminism values woman. The feminists activists emphasizes that women are human beings. Therefore, they should be valued for who they are, not for what they can produce, and not for how much they can please others trough their appearances or their services. Women are important, and only when women themselves are aware of this fact can they show to others their

worthiness. Further, they will have the confidence to speak up their opinions. Only when they do such, can they become independent beings.

### 2.1.2. Existentialist Feminism

The most prominent figure in Existentialist Feminism is Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). She is popular with her big work such as *The Second Sex*, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, *The Prime of Life*, *The Force for Circumstance*, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sarte*, *The Mandarins*, *The Coming of Age* and some others works. As Lisa Appignanesi explained in her book about Beauvoir, “*Simone de Beauvoir, herself, was hardly immune to change and grew into the women’s movement with age. A solidarity which hadn’t been there in her brilliant analysis of the second sex now became part of her life. But during her lifetime, her image never altogether regained its early perfection, particularly for women in America and Britain*” (Appignanesi 3).

De Beauvoir viewed that the matters on women oppression were begun with the burden of reproduction in women’s body. Shulamith Firestone in her book, *The Dialectic of Sex*, also stated that the burden of reproduction carried by women as well as the responsibility to raise children have resulted in women’s lower bargaining position toward men. The questioned matters were because of the advancement of technology that overcomes the difference between men and women. The gender difference cannot be seen only from biological side but also from cultural side. It was Simone de Beauvoir who initiated the question “What is woman?”. According to de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, people only regard woman as *Tota mulier in utero*, which means “Woman is womb” (Beauvoir, 13).

This question obviously remarks the difference between men and women. From the explanation on biological data, Simone de Beauvoir tried to explain how difficult it is for woman to be who she really is; how it later becomes what is called as “*The Other*”. The matters of *the Other* begins as women start to believe that she needs to be protected because of her “weakness” (weak body). She begins to think that she cannot live without a man, furthermore if she is sure that she is part of man (created from a man’s rib). Therefore, she is defined based on man’s opinion and not vice versa. Woman seeks reference from man and she asks for man’s admission. Here, man becomes the absolute subject, while woman becomes merely the object, or “The Other” (Nicholson 13, in Arivia 272-273).

According to Feminist Thought (Rosemary Tong 244), Simone De Beauvoir believed woman’s identity as the other is derived partly from her biology—especially her reproductive capacity—and partly from her socially imposed child-rearing responsibilities. De Beauvoir did not view woman’s body as woman’s friend, but as fundamentally alienating instead, meaning that woman’s body appears as an energy drain leaving women too tired to participate in the kind of creative activity men enjoy. Following Jean-Paul Sartre, de Beauvoir stressed that human beings are cast in a *pour-soi–en-soi* dialectic. *Pour-soi* (being-for-itself ) entails being a self, consciously aware of the possibilities for self-creation that the future presents; *en-soi* (being-in-itself ) entails being the other, a thing without a future and therefore without any possibilities for transformation.

Simone de Beauvoir described that by the thought that human proposes to himself as a lack being whom he realizes. By rooting himself from the world,

human makes himself exist in the world, and the world exist in him. Beauvoir stated that human wants to be the landscape where he performs his contemplation. He wants this sky, the clear water that thinks within him; it can be him that they express within the body and the bones, and yet he still has distance with them. His contemplation is like a journey to happiness. It might become very strange for him, somewhat forbidden, but it makes him happy in his efforts to have what he could not have. Human being experiences it as a victory, instead of a lost. It means that human being in his efforts to become God, He makes Himself exist as a human, and if He is satisfied with His existence, He can make peace with Himself. The modus of human being is His lack, however, His lack is also his existence (Arivia 274).

The human's freedom in existentialism is part of the ultimatum in reaching existence. According to existentialism, human beings are essentially born free. Freedom—according to Sartre—is not “*a thing or a quality naturally attached to a thing*” (Arivia 275). Freedom may exist from human's ambiguous reality which is called as “existence”, by doing the transition from nature to morality, which is reaching the real freedom. Existentialism sees the prevailing situation not to be enforced within the subject's awareness and that the subject is not passive to accept it. The sources of decision in performing the revolution or not, or by joining the communist party or not, does not come from the outer sources but from within, instead. Existentialism keeps imposing that the freedom is still there, and the matter is how “*to will oneself free*” by giving positive and concrete meaning. If human want to save their existence, he therefore has to defend and keep defending his freedom. In the end, existentialism will claim that

freedom is supposed to exist because with it, human can take decision based on their own choices, both the choices to be oppressed or not, to be exploited or not, etc (Arivia 285).

In *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir exposes several matters about women in their various problems. At “The Lesbian” part, she stated that, “The truth is that homosexuality is no more perversion deliberately indulged in that it is a curse of fate. It is an attitude *chosen in certain situation*—that is, at once motivated and freely adopted... Like all human behavior, homosexuality leads to make-believe, disequilibrium, frustration, lies, or, on the contrary, it becomes the source of rewarding experiences, in accordance with its manner of expression in actual living—whether in bad faith, laziness, and falsity, or in lucidity, generosity and freedom” (Beauvoir 413). Beside the part of Lesbian, she also explained about “The Married Woman”. There she wrote that, “The young wife very seldom admits her feelings to herself with such sincerity. To love her husband and to be happy is a duty she owes to herself and to society; it is what her family expects of her; or if her parents have opposed her marriage, it is a way of showing how wrong they were” (448). The thought of married life and the tragedies in it also explained in The Married Woman part, which says, “No one dreams of denying the tragedies and the shabby imperfections of married life; but defenders of marriage find support in the idea that conflict arises from the ill will of individuals, not from the institution itself... She became the very type of the matron, losing ‘that flame of life which had once been her charm’ ” (Beauvoir 454). De Beauvoir described many things about married woman. In this part, she also explained about how a woman can feel succeed if she can become a true

companion for her husband. Beauvoir stated: “In certain privileged cases, the wife may succeed in becoming her husband’s true companion, discussing his projects, giving him counsel, collaborating in his works. But she is lulled in illusion if she expects in this way to accomplish work she can call her own, for he remains alone the free and responsible agent. She must love him if she is to find joy in his service; otherwise she will find only vexation, because she will feel herself robbed of the fruit of efforts” (Beauvoir 459).

In other part about “Independent Woman”, de Beauvoir also explained that, “The woman who achieves virile independence has the great privilege of carrying on her sexual life with individuals who are themselves autonomous and effective in action, who—as a rule—will not play parasitic role in her life, who will not enchain her through their weakness and the exigency of their needs” (654). De Beauvoir’s theory on Existentialist Feminism is regarded as proper thought in understanding the problem statements raised in the analysis of *The Hours* written by Michael Cunningham. It is because in *The Hours*, the major female characters (Virginia, Laura, and Clarissa) choose the “freedom” in the end of the story, to decide their own choices in life and to take those decisions by using the ways they really want.

## **2.2. Related Studies**

This subchapter discusses the related studies that are used as reference as well as comparison in the analysis and the result of the study. There are three theses that brought up similar topics and approaches with this study. The first thesis was written by Yuri Puspa Fitria from Airlangga University Surabaya

(1999) entitled “Vision of Life of Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus Smith in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*”. Her thesis discusses about the way the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* see life and how their thinking pattern is related with their life. Both characters came from different background and their point of views about life are very contradict. The thesis analyzes the problem by using biographical and psychological approach. It attempts to give a deeper insight to human’s mind as well as solution for their problems in life.

The second thesis was written by Dytta Maharani from Petra Christian University Surabaya (2004). The title of her thesis is “A Study of Clarissa’s Change of Sex Preference From a Heterosexual Person into Lesbian in Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours*”. She analyzed about Clarissa Vaughan who changes her sex preference from a heterosexual person into lesbian. It discusses the factors (external and internal) that influence Clarissa to change her sex preference. Maharani used the theory of characterization and the theory of conflict. As the supporting theory, she used the concept of lesbian lifestyle. Her thesis attempts to give further understanding that being lesbian does not only come naturally. It is something “given”, but “created” instead. However, past experience can also influence some people to change a sex preference.

The third thesis was written by Dinda Nata Melia from Airlangga University Surabaya (2010). It is entitled “The Analysis of Gender Issues in Joan Holden’s *The Independent Female*”. She examines the gender issues in a drama entitled *The Independent Female* and how the gender-based issues trigger some conflict in the main character’s life. Melia used Feminism approach to analyze the problems.



The differences between this study and the three previous studies is that in this study, the point to be analyzed is the problematic issues faced by the three major female characters in *The Hours* and how they negotiate with the problems. The problems were analyzed by using the theory of Existentialist Feminism proposed by Simone de Beauvoir. The problem statement and the theory used to approach the problems conducted in Maharani's thesis (2004) are different from this study, even though she also used the same novel to be analyzed, which is *The Hours*. On the other hand, Fitria (1999) discussed about Virginia Woolf's novel entitled *Mrs. Dalloway*. This thesis was chosen to be one of the related studies because Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* cannot be separated from Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. It is especially due to the fact that Cunningham as the author of *The Hours* wrote his novel as if he were re-telling the story in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Therefore, the analysis on *Mrs. Dalloway* might give useful comprehension in understanding the context of *The Hours*. On the other hand, the thesis written by Dinda Nata Melia analyzes Joan Holden's (a feminist) work by using Feminism theory. The theory as well as the issues discussed in Melia's thesis (2010) are similar with the ones discussed in this study, which is about women and feminism. What differentiates between these theses is that Melia used Feminism theory in its basic or general concept, while this study is using the theory of Existentialist Feminism proposed by Simone de Beauvoir as the main theoretical framework.