

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

People generally identify women with anything that signifies beauty, elegance, or grace. Many literary texts often portray women as the persons who have to be respected, protected and loved. Reasonably, this portrayal of women should have made them accepted in their society. However, in reality this is not always the case. There are still many cases of gender discrimination. Unfortunately, this discrimination of gender usually occurs on women and makes them suffer.

The issue of gender is always on debate in the society. Since the early life of human being, gender differences have already been a part of the history of human's life. Gender becomes the term used to differentiate between man and woman, especially their role in society. As there are still many cases of gender discrimination in the society, unconsciously people often consider women as belonging to subordinate gender. Therefore, women are considered to have different characteristics from men that make them weaker and less than men. They are also considered as the subordinate gender who has to live under man.

In reading the three works of Guy de Maupassant (*A Good Match*, *The Baroness* and *Useless Beauty*), there are some interesting things that can be found. They take female as the main character who becomes the major of this discussion. Actually, it is a common thing because Maupassant gives a great portion of female character in most of his writings. What makes they are special is that they

also use the male character as the supporting character compared with female related with the system in society. The system in the society they inhabit is the system which differentiates among men and women, male and female through their position either in society or within their family. In terms of differences, women are considered as the second gender after man. In other words, men are considered more acceptable in the society compared to women. Men are described as having the strength to control women. Naturally, men — either physically or psychologically — are considered more powerful than women; thus, it makes them dub as the first gender. Meanwhile, women (as portrayed in those literary texts) have to face the reality and accept the faith as the ones who have weaknesses and less power than men. As a result, women have to accept their label as the second gender.

The term “second gender” which is appointed to women signifies that their position is lower than that of men. Men and women are not only considered different in biological sense, but also in many other aspects. For women, to be normal means that they must be feminine, while for men, they must be masculine. The term masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as matter of form, as on legal paper (de Beauvoir 23). However, those two sexes are not or still can not be said equal at all. Men represent human being in general and are indicated as positive or neutral, whereas women are indicated as negative and only limited to certain criteria. As a result, these differences cause women to suffer more than men, and even some women become a kind of “victim” in the society.

Furthermore, women are not only considered as the second gender in the society, but also in the family. In most family life, women have to be responsible for household duties and caring for children, while men have to work outside the home to fulfill their family's need. Although both men and women have their own responsibilities in the family, there is a crucial difference between them. While men work and earned money for family's need, women work at home without getting any payment. It is difficult for women to change that rule because the society justifies that a good woman is a woman (or wife if she has married) who agrees with that rule. Women's and men's roles will not really change unless family institution also changes. However, it is not really clear in what order and in what direction family life will be transformed (Giele 139).

Women's position within family also becomes the interesting issue to be analyzed because in some marriages, there still a patriarchy system which places woman as the subordinate gender. This system says that women are placed under man and cannot become the domination. They have to live inside the home, take the responsibility in doing household duties, care children and produce a baby. Living in the state of motherhood affects women losing their freedom because they are only allowed to work in domestic sphere. On the other hand, men are allowed to work outside the home and being paid. Therefore, because women cannot earn money, they have to depend financially to their husband to support their foods, clothes and any others daily needs. As the impact of financial dependence, women are forced to obey their husband, being submissive and live under their husband's power.

Furthermore, the writer chooses three of Guy de Maupassant's three short stories, which are *A Good Match*, *The Baroness* and *Useless Beauty*, as the selected works in this study because they show how women are oppressed and struggle against the dominant power of man or the society in order to climb their way up to secure a position in the upper class. It is interesting to be analyzed because commonly, in some cases in society, women are considered as less powerful than man, but in one of the story, *Useless Beauty*, the woman can gain her freedom from her husband. Even in some cases, the discrimination or the gender differences among men and women still exist today. This differentiation becomes the rules in society and it creates the patriarchy which places women as the subordinate gender and therefore they live under man's power.

More specific, gender differentiation which appears in society may come as the result of economic cases. In capitalist class society, although sexism is rather ignored rather than classism, the issue of women's discrimination still exists because of the effect of the system itself. Patriarchy as the effect of capitalist class system in society is the issue that will be analyzed in this study through the Guy de Maupassant's three short stories.

The author of those three short stories that will be analyzed is Guy de Maupassant. Henry René Albert Guy de Maupassant was born on August 5, 1850 in Normandy. His father was a womanizer, so that it became the reason for his mother, Laure Le Poittevin to live separately from his father. Maupassant in early life had to live with his mother and his brother, Hervé. Fortunately, they lived in wealthy condition, which means that they lived in prosperity. They lived at

Étretat, in the Villa des Verguis placed between the sea and the luxuriant countryside. In the age of 19, Maupassant joined to be student of law at the Sorbonne, but soon, at the age of 20 he was being the volunteer in the army during Franco-Prussian war. He produced many writings (he published six novels, 300 short stories, three travel books, and one volume of verse) that are still very popular. He was also awarded the best France author in 1899 for his short stories, "The Necklace". Here are some examples of his writings: *Boule de Suif* (1880), *La Maison de Tellier* (1881), *Mademoiselle Fifi* (1883), *Une Vie* (1883), *Miss Harriet* (1884), *The Necklace* (1884), *Le Rosier de Madame Husson* (1888), *Pierre et Jean* (1888), *Nootre Coeur* (1890), *The Baroness*, *The Jewel of M. Lantin*, *Mother Savage*, etc (Aviv).

Maupassant's short stories that will be the focus of this study are *A Good Match*, *The Baroness* and *Useless Beauty*. *A Good Match* tells about the life of Angelica, a beautiful woman who has been dreaming of becoming a member of the upper class. She has a man who loves her so much. Unfortunately, he is not a rich man or the member of the upper class, and therefore, Angelica leaves him. In the end of the story, she is married to a bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, *The Baroness* portrays the struggle of a woman and her daughter who actually come from the lower class. They do not want to accept that condition, so that they try hard to be accepted as a part of the upper class. Fortunately, they have a brilliant idea to make them survive in holding their position in the upper class. The last story is *Useless Beauty*, which tells about the life of Countess de Mascaret (Gabrielle)

who suffers greatly because of her marriage. She has to live under her husband's power that makes her life under the pressure and control of her husband.

Those stories show that society plays an important role in determining one's social status based on gender. Unfortunately, in that society, women have to suffer and live in oppression because of the differences between men and women. Moreover, the system believes that a woman is man's property. Therefore, in those three stories, those women try to solve their problems that are resulted from the oppression.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

Based on the background of study above, the writer is interested in analyzing some problems as follows:

- a. How do the oppressions of women occur on the three female characters in the stories?
- b. How do those three women make an effort to become members of the upper class as a result of the oppression?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- a. To examine how the oppressions work on the female characters in Maupassant's short stories
- b. To learn more about the effort of those three women to become members of the upper class as a result of the oppression

1.4. Significance of the Study

The writer hopes that through this study readers will gain a better knowledge to understand such phenomenon that occurs as the result of gender discrimination. Through the portrayal of Angelica, Mme Samoris, and Gabrielle, hopefully the readers will have awareness that actually there are still many cases of gender discrimination that marginalizes woman. Women's oppression or anything that considers women as the second gender is not because of people's wish, but it is because of the structure in the society. Most of things in the society, including opportunities, wishes, and interests are shaped by the mode of production that characterizes the society they inhabit.

This study is expected to guide us to understand that women in those three short stories are not only portrayed as submissive, but in their own ways they also try to solve their problems. Women that are portrayed unequal with men, especially in the story of *Useless Beauty*, actually hold an important role in their society. Although they are considered as the second gender, it can not be denied that these women also give a contribution in producing or shaping the social structure. Furthermore, the writer hopes that this study can be useful in the study of literature, especially the one that focuses on Maupassant's works and Marxist feminism.

1.5. Scope and Limitation

This study only concerns with the discussion of women's portrayal and their struggle in their society under the justification of "the second gender" that is appointed to them. The writer only focuses on these women because in those three

short stories to be discussed, women are portrayed as a strong character. Furthermore, this study is focused on examining the oppression as the result of the system in the society they inhabit that has caused the effort of those women. Here, as this study is limited to the discussion that only focuses on the main female characters of the stories, it is aimed to make the study not too wide-ranging.

The characters that would be discussed are limited only to the main female character in each of the three short stories. However, the writer also uses a few discussion about the non-female character, such as Angelica's lover, Gabrielle's husband, and the society where the three main female characters inhabit. It is purposed to support the position of woman in family and society. In *A Good Match*, the writer will discuss about Angelica, a woman who has a strong desire to hold a place in the upper class. Here, the oppression which is suffered by Angelica becomes the focus. Such oppression also becomes the focus in the second short story, *The Baroness*. Mme. Samoris, who has a brilliant mind to survive in the upper class, finally can be accepted by the society itself. In the last story, *Useless Beauty*, women's oppression is shown through Gabrielle, the main character. Gabrielle has to lose her opportunity and interest in seeing the world because of her husband's power. Therefore, she tries to find her own way to fight against her condition. All in all, the writer considers the oppression of women as the scope of this study.

1.6. Theoretical Background

In this study, the writer chooses Marxist Feminism literary criticism as the main tool for analysis. The choice of the theory is based on the topic that

would be discussed. Since the main female characters in those three short stories are portrayed as women who struggle hard to fight against man's power in order to be the members of the upper class in a capitalist society, the writer believes that Marxist Feminism is the most appropriate literary criticism that will be used to analyze this study.

Marxist Feminism is a literary criticism that focuses on woman's struggle in facing gender discrimination in the society considering women as the subordinate gender. Therefore, Marxist Feminism (as the branch of feminism study) distinguishes between the words "sex" and "gender" related with the society. For Marxist Feminists, the concept of social class is considered to be more important than the concept of patriarchy since the latter is seen as a form of ideology that stems from class exploitation (Tong 140). This literary criticism also believes that patriarchy is not the main source of the woman's oppression, and takes the capitalist system as the main source. The relationship between patriarchy and capitalist system is that patriarchy comes as the result of capitalist system in society (141).

Like Socialist Feminists, Marxist Feminists see capitalism as a major factor in women oppression, as well as in the oppression of other minority groups. However, unlike Socialist Feminists, Marxist feminists believe that the fundamental factor of women oppression is "classism" not "sexism". In contrast, Socialist Feminists state that the main factor is the difficult relationship between capitalism and patriarchy (Tong 140). Other factors include male dominance, racism, and imperialism. However, because women's work (within and outside of

the home) is not valued as that of their male counterparts, women are forced to remain dependent upon males. For example, although a woman who is both a wife and a mother works 20 hours a day within her home, she is not given any payment for it, and therefore, she is unable to gain an equal status with her husband (Habib 527).

Specifically, the writer uses two theories in analyzing this study. Firstly, it is the theory of Karl Marx about class division which believes that the material or economic condition influences the human life. It is also stated that the main source of women's oppression, exploitation and discrimination is a capitalist class relationship (534). Secondly, Delphy and Leonard's theory of women's exploitation states that marriage is one of the roots of women's oppression based on Marx's theory (Bubbeck 69). Those theories support each other in finding the answer to the problems.

In a capitalist society, alienation usually occurs as the effect suffered by the proletarians. According to Robert Heilbroner, we are alienated when we think that our life is meaningless. He also states that alienation is the experience which creates fragmented feeling and this kind of feeling appears strong in capitalist system (Tong 146). Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* believes that patriarchal culture shapes our mind that men are considered a positive side, while women or feminists are in the negative side, unimportant, abnormal or "the other". Women are defined and differentiated based on the pattern, while men are not. Therefore, women are only unimportant and absolutely "the other" (Selden 125).

It is also stated in Marxist Feminism that in order to understand why women are oppressed while men are not, it is important to analyze the relationship between women's job and the personal image of women. Marxist Feminism provides an answer to the problem of women's poverty, which is "the destruction of class distinctions" (Selden 126). This refers to our biological essence as male and female, and the word "gender" which refers to our cultural programming as masculine and feminine. In short, sex is a category created by nature, while gender is constructed by society.

1.7. Method of the Study

This study is a textual research by using descriptive qualitative method that presents the analysis in description form. The main works to be analyzed in this research are three short stories from Guy de Maupassant, which are *A Good Match*, *The Baroness* and *Useless Beauty*. The writer applies library research in the purpose of collecting data. Articles, books, journals or any other printed and online materials are used as references to support this study.

The steps in analyzing this study are shown as follow:

1. Choosing the text that will be analyzed: in this case, the three short stories written by Guy de Maupassant, which are *A Good Match*, *The Baroness*, and *Useless Beauty*
2. Conducting close-reading
 - a. Reading the three short stories
 - b. Reading any other references (printed or online) related to Marxist Feminism.

3. Analyzing the object and related it to the theory of Karl Max on class division and also the theory of Delphy on the Exploitation of Women as Wives
4. Drawing conclusion

1.8. Definition of Key Terms

Some technical words contained in this study can be listed as follows:

- a. Social Structure : the pattern in the society that makes the division of classes in the society
- b. Effort : a great act to face difficulties and violence in order to reach something
- c. Oppression : the treating of a cruel and unfair way, especially by not giving the same freedom
- d. Patriarchy :social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line; *broadly* : control by men of a disproportionately large share of power
(<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patriarchy>)
- e. Capitalist Society : a form of society in which the economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined

by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.

(<http://www.merriam>

webster.com/dictionary/patriarchy)

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

