

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Background .

Feminism argues that women are oppressed or dominated by men and that the structural arrangements that initiate, support, and legitimate that systematic oppression constitutes patriarchy (Farganis 15). Feminists do not deny that men and women are fully different in their biological sense. However, they do not agree that biological differences, such as physical size, shape and body chemistry, make men naturally superior (Tyson 84). In short, the difference between men and women lies only in the biological sense, in which men has penis, while women has vagina.

Feminism itself has some branches such as Marxist feminism, Liberal feminism, Radical feminism, Socialist feminist, and any other feminist literary criticism. Through this study, the writer focuses on Marxist feminism because this branch of feminism is the most appropriate literary criticism used for the analysis.

2.1.1. Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminism as a branch of feminism distinguishes societies by their forms of productivity and characterizes the history of any society in terms of changes in production. It believes that women's oppression is the fundamental form of oppression. It also states that women are not oppressed by men or by sexism, but by capitalism itself.

Marxist feminism itself combines two literary criticisms: Marxism and Feminism. For Marxism, getting and keeping economic power is the motive behind all social and political activities, including education, philosophy, religion, government, the arts, science, technology, the media, and so on. Thus, economics is the base on which the superstructure of social/political/ideological realities is built (Tyson 54).

A central concern of Marxist feminism, therefore, has been to determine the ways in which the institution of the family and women's domestic labor are structured by, and 'reproduce' the sexual division of labor (Humm 87). Women are usually associated with domestics sphere and not allowed to come into the public sphere. Women's job is only to do housework, such as cleaning the house, caring for baby, serving and satisfying the husband and so on, without getting any payment. In contrast, men work outside the home (in the public sphere) to earn money and fulfill the family's needs. Thus, this kind of differentiation becomes the main interest of Marxist feminist literary criticism (Selden 126).

Marxist Feminism is closely related to capitalism and patriarchy that is shaped by the society. In our society, the sexual division of labor is rather hierarchical, with men on top and women at the bottom. There is also a belief that private property leads to economic inequality and negative social relation between men and women. Hartmann argues that before capitalism, a patriarchal system was established in which men controlled the labor of women and children in the family, and that in so doing men learned the techniques of hierarchical organization and control (100). Therefore, the power of men to maintain and

control the hierarchy has a huge impact on the status of women, either in the family or the society.

Furthermore, in the sense of class and oppression, Marxist feminism would not deny that there is often real conflict between the sexes, just as there is conflict of union against union or miner against miner (Storkey 76). Because capital controls the relationship between the owner and the owned, we are made to compete with one another. The competition itself appears as the way for people to reach the position as the owner, not the owned. The reason why people want to be the owner is because the owner is the one who can control and has the right to maintain the owned. On the other hand, living as the oppressed and the subordinate, one must depend on and be controlled by the owner; thus one has no right to determine one's own life.

Marxist feminists want to create the new world that can give freedom for women to be an integrated person, not fragmented person, and also become the person who can present their selves not as men's property. In her seminal text *Woman's Oppression Today* (1980), Michele Barrett suggests that:

“The object of Marxist feminism must be to “identify the operation of gender relations” as they relate to the “processes of production and reproduction understood by historical materialism.” Marxist feminism must “explore the relations between the organization of sexuality, domestic production . . . and historical changes in the mode of production and systems of appropriation and exploitation.”

Such an approach will stress the relations between capitalism and the oppression of women (Habib 693).”

Barrett focuses on three concepts that have been central to Marxist feminism, which are patriarchy, reproduction and ideology. Those three concepts have a strong relationship with each other and are considered the basic units in the society that become the fundamental reasons behind the presence of women’s oppression.

Women’s oppression has a close relationship with women’s exploitation because when women are oppressed, they are also being exploited by the bourgeoisie. The exploitation follows the oppression which comes as the result of capitalist class in society. The exploitation of women occurs in three types; housework, child care and caring work. Those three things consist of the following activities:

1. Housework

Housework which is done by the wives includes the cleaning and the tidying of the household unit (washing, sweeping the house, and ironing the clothes). The preparation of meals and the work related to it such as washing and cleaning up (Bubbeck 24).

2. Child care

Child care consists basically in looking after children and attending to their needs whenever required. This work changes substantially with the age of children: most time is required for infants, a more or less twenty-

four-hours job involving continuous availability for feeding, nursing and playing (Bubbeck 25).

2. Caring work

Caring work involves looking after members of the household if required by sickness, physical and mental ability. It also involves looking after elderly relatives, which can be a twenty-four-hour job depending on their needs and their infirmity, and the meeting of the emotional needs of all members of the family (25).

Furthermore, the source of women's exploitation within the family according to Hartmann's argument is the patriarchal system which states that men's control over women's labor power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality (Hartmann 14). Hartmann also states that there are three crucial elements of patriarchy in society; heterosexual marriage, female childrearing and housework, and women's economic dependence of men. These three elements are fundamental in the forming of patriarchy that need to be examined in capitalism. As the result of patriarchy, women should be subordinate and oppressed. The family, moreover, represents a specific mode of women's oppression. When a woman is not married, she is her father's property. When she is married, she is owned by her husband.

2.1.2. Karl Marx Theory on Class Division

Specifically, the writer applies the thought of Karl Marx about class division in capitalist society. Karl Marx is a famous thinker who states that capitalist class

and class division is the fundamental source of woman's oppression. Marx's thought can be approached in terms of philosophical, economic, and political strata. As a philosopher, Marx's development has its roots in his early life. Born into a Jewish family where his father had imbibed Enlightenment rationalist principles, Marx was exposed to the ideas of Voltaire, Lessing, and Racine. He studied law at the University of Bonn and then Berlin. But much of his time was spent in literary composition and for a while he was enamored of the Romanticism then in vogue. attempts systematically to seek the structural causes behind what he saw as a system of capitalist exploitation and degradation, and to offer solution in the spheres of economic and politics (Habib 527). Marx's main objection to capitalism was that one particular class owned the means of economic production: "the bourgeoisie.....has centralized means of production, and has concentrated property in a few hands (539)". It is also stated that 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.

According to Marx, capitalist class relationships are the root cause of female oppression, exploitation and discrimination. Men are considered into exploitative relationship concerning work and they carry this consideration over into the home and their relationships with women. "Women are not a "sex class" because the only thing they have in common is their sex – an upper class woman, for example, has little if nothing in common with a working class woman (Habib 690)".

From a Marxist perspective, differences in socioeconomic class divide people in ways that are much more significant than differences in religion, race,

ethnicity, or gender. For the real battle lines are drawn, to put the matter simply, between the “haves” and the “have-nots,” between the bourgeoisie—those who control the world’s natural, economic, and human resources—and the proletariat, the majority of the global population who live in substandard conditions and who have always performed the manual labor—the mining, the factory work, the ditch digging, the railroad building—that fills the coffers of the rich (Tyson 54).

Clearly, members of the underclass and the lower class are economically oppressed: they suffer the ills of economic privation, are hardest hit by economic recessions, and have limited means of improving their lot. In sharp contrast, members of the upper class and “aristocracy” are economically privileged: they enjoy luxurious lifestyles, are least affected by economic recessions, and have a great deal of financial security (55). This quotation shows a huge difference among the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Those two sides are different because of their economic status in society. The bourgeoisie own a lot of money, luxurious lifestyle while the proletariat has not those things.

The correlative of this is the oppression and exploitation of the working classes: “In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, developed; a class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity.”(Clarke 2). From that point of view, it can be seen that the bourgeoisie has the role to control and maintain the production and the property. The property includes material, commodity, labor, and any other

property owned by bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the proletariat who become the property and owned by the bourgeoisie has no power to control their selves and therefore they sell themselves as the commodity if they want to alive.

Marx also suggests that the bourgeoisie must necessarily give a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country; that raw material is drawn from the remotest zones; that demand for new products ever increases; that the bourgeoisie “compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production.” (3). From Marxist point of view, the class-structure is primary, and gender differences are secondary, which means that men and women are being historically differentiated by their relationship to the means of production. To put this in another way, the class-structure (i.e. the unequal distribution of wealth) is also a gender-inflected hierarchy, inequality between the sexes being ultimately reducible to economic inequality. This results in a sexual division of labor in which women either are not allowed to work at all (outside of the home, of course) or are confined to certain menial, poorly remunerated tasks in the public sphere. To eliminate the oppression of women, therefore, one must change the economic structure.

2.1.3. Delphy Theory on the Exploitation of Women as Wives

The theory introduced by Christine Delphy in the early 1970s develops a specific conception of exploitation, based on Marx’s general concepts of exploitation, but is aimed specifically at elucidating women’s exploitation by men (Bubeck 83). Delphy main claim is that men (rather than capitalists) oppress women in the family by benefiting from women’s unpaid work in the home. The

family is a representation of specific mode of production with its own characteristic relations of production (84). Briefly, Delphy argues that the fundamental source of women's oppression is the marital status in the family. Within the family, women have to perform unpaid work and often consume substantially less than men. Furthermore, their disadvantage position in the family causes them become the oppressed and subordinated.

Delphy illustrates and supports her theory by reference to several studies covering different social sectors that include French farming households (the original subject of Delphy's research), several studies of English working-class life, as well as a study of wives of men in very diverse, but mostly middle and upper middle-class occupational brackets, such as doctors, businessmen, academics, police, shopkeepers, lawyers, diplomats (87). Her theory of women's exploitation thus consists of two key claims. She claims that: (1) men qua husbands exploit women qua wives; and (2) it is the specific relations of production women enter—the husband's appropriation of his wife's labor power—which determine their exploitation (Bubbeck 92).

Through her thought, Delphy also uses the term 'class' to refer to the division between men and women. This term is also used to examine the two groups (the dominant and the dominated) by a relationship of their existence in the society. It implies that each group cannot be separated from each other because they are bound together in the relationship of domination; nor can they even be considered together but independently of this relationship (Delphy 17). The concept of class is the ideal concepts for analyzing the social explanation and

oppression. It is started from the idea of social construction in the society and examines its implications. Furthermore, classes are constituted before coming into relation with one another, but it is their relationship which constitutes them.

Briefly, Delphy argues that there are two problems about women's exploitation as the result of marital relationship between men and women. The first problem is that, given that most of women's unpaid work is not in any way part of the market economy, it is not clear how it can be measured. Secondly, there is so much variation in women's burdens and benefits that any generalization is at least problematic (Bubbeck 95-96)

The family, according to Delphy, is the major source of women's exploitation and oppression. Within family, women have to perform unpaid work and often consume less than men. Therefore, in some cases, the disadvantage position of women in the family also determines their marital position and option outside the family in the labor market. As the result of that patriarchy, women lose twice from being oppressed and exploited in their homes (Delphy 87). Wives that are characterized as the unpaid labor in the family are exploited by their husband because of the economic dependence.

2.2. Related Studies

There are some studies conducted in literary field that are closely related to the discussion of Guy de Maupassant's works, especially *A Good Match*, *The Baroness*, and *Useless Beauty*. The difference between this study and the previous ones lies on the concern of discussion. This study concerns with the issue of

women's oppression in the capitalist society as examined with Marxist feminist literary criticism. It also focuses on how the main female characters in Maupassant's stories can be oppressed and how these women struggle to reach their dreams to become members of the upper class. There are three studies that will be compared with this study: (1) Jana Verhoven (University of Melbourne) in her thesis *Femme-caissiere and martresse: the Image of the Frenchwomen in the Finde-Siecle Cross Cultural Debate*; (2) F. Parkins in his journal article titled *Guy de Maupassant: Useless Beauty*; and (3) Alicia Greg in *Maupassant Pornographe*.

2.2.1. The Portrayal of Women

Jana Verhoven examines the representations of gender for three important groups of image: the girl, the wife and the fallen women. She tries to show how women are represented through the image of Gabrielle, the female main character. She uses Feminism theory in her study. She also focuses on the discussion of women's position in marital status. It is similar with the study conducted by F. Parkins who discusses the life of Gabrielle in her family scope. Parkins tries to examine the structure in Gabrielle's family that has placed Gabrielle as the suffering woman. Meanwhile, Alicia Greg in her study uses the word "*pornographe*" as the title because she wants to show the readers that women, especially in most of Guy de Maupassant's stories, reflect the beauty of their body.

From the three related studies above, it can be seen that this study is different in a way that it not only examines women's oppression, but it also

discusses the effort and struggle of the main female characters of each stories. The effort comes as a result of the oppression and exploitation suffered by these women. The writer also divides the three main female characters based on their marital status, whether single or married. The purpose of that division is to deepen the analysis and discussion. At the end of analysis, this study attempts to find similar aspects from the three short stories.

2.2.2. Theory

The theory used in the three previous studies mentioned is feminist literary criticism in a general. These studies mostly analyze the texts by examining the different roles between men and women, male and female. It is assumed that the role division is the cause of women's suffering. Meanwhile in this study, the writer applies Marxist feminist literary criticism as the main theory. Marxist feminism, as the branch of feminism literary criticism, is used with the aim of making the analysis more detailed.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS

