

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Women just like all men in the world are all human beings. They have been created by God and then exist and live as all human beings do. They have been given bones, skin, head, brain, hair, eyes and hearts which also have been given to every human being in this world; both men and women. They have been formed and then been born from a place which every human being born and even, they are exactly delivered through the same organ. However, somehow, they are still treated as different human beings, as “the other”.

Based on history, women have been treated as the evil side of men since centuries ago. Even Apollo in the ancient times of Athena has put an argument which supports the discrimination which said that “the mother is no parent to her child” (Selden and Widdowson, 1993: 203). From the statement, it can be shown how a mother will become “no one” after she delivers her baby to the world, and this condition will of course damage the position of women in society, especially in her family. Despite the fact that she herself who is carrying the baby all alone in her body and always takes care of the pregnancy, but still, the society’s attitude arises to the public and “kills” the women’s existence.

The statement above goes further from time to time. As quoted in Selden and Widdowson, Aristotle, for example, as a student of Plato once declares that

“the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities.” This major belief has been widely accepted by the society as a common ideology which supports the men in ruling the world. This ideology is then called as patriarchy. This notion of ideology has put women in a critical side (as the bad side of the men) and also positioned all women in a complex condition. Moreover, this ideology of patriarchy also has created a cage of norms for women which is now called as “patrilineal system” (male-rule system). This system of patriarchy which typically has put all men as the head of family will of course give a disadvantaged position for women in the society and in the family. Unfortunately, this patriarchal ideology has been planted in every human’s mind, both men and women, since centuries ago and it keeps adopted by the society from generation to generation. Thus, it seems very “natural” for everyone in the society to put patriarchy as a holy law which must be accepted and is forbidden for everyone to criticize.

In sum, patriarchy as an ideology has created a world in which women are always inferior to men. Before the word of feminism appeared in 1890s, women had been unconsciously put under the control of men and only few of them were capable to fight this ideology in order to gain their own rights as human beings. This ideology of patriarchy has affected women’s existence by, for example, ignoring their voice and pressing their creativity. Here, women are always regarded only as the other objects that complete all qualities of being a man, as it has been stated that female sexuality is shaped by “penis envy” (Freud in Selden and Widdowson, 1993: 204). This statement not only supports patriarchy as major-believed ideology but also strongly points out on the issue of a greater core

of patriarchy: biological essentialism, male's notion of laws and norms, and patriarchal gender system which produces the notions of women as "the insignificant ones."

In attacking women, besides using legal institutions in the society, such as family, schools and churches, the patriarchal ideology and its system of patrilineal also use some popular media that exist within the society. They use newspaper, magazine, television, books, science, and also literary works. In newspapers and magazines for example, women have been pictured as the objects to fulfill men's sexual desire and as objects that can be used to feed men's needs. This can be seen in their contents of commercials, especially in the contents of adult magazine. In line with newspaper and magazine, television and other mass media have also been supporting to portray women as the objects to be exploited and explored. Unfortunately, this phenomenon has been seen as a normal condition which no one cares about it. Moreover, the same case also happens in literature.

Although literature has been regarded as the reflection of the real society and has huge impacts to the civilization, it also has huge roles in spreading the issues of patriarchal ideology. This issue can clearly be seen in a popular literary work such as *Cinderella*. For centuries, *Cinderella* has put women and their femininity in a bad side of the story: as an evil mother who tries to eradicate her step-daughter or as a weak young girl Cinderella who is waiting for a magical fairy to save her or even as a helpless girl who is longing for the arrival of a good prince to give her eternal happiness. These three pictures of women are consistently reborn from generation to generation and planted unconsciously

inside women's mind as a "natural" characterization for women within a society. However, the vast spreading of the men's dominated power all over the world and in all fields mentioned above did not stop the other movement to arise, particularly the movement of women to unify and then together fight against the patriarchal ideology and its system of male-rules. This movement then is called as feminism.

Feminism refers to "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (Hooks, 2000: 1). Further, this movement also points out on the primary goal that is to achieve the equality between women and men in all fields of living world. This movement actually had arisen in British society since centuries ago, but it is in 1792 that the movement was well exposed with the publishing of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. However, in fact, it was in the progressive era in the early 1900s that feminism vastly began to grow and show their power to the world. In its very first appearance, feminism was basically concerned with the issues of gender differences, advocates equality for women, and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Although its focus develops from era to era, but those three basics are the main focuses of feminist movement.

In line with feminism in the real world, which fights against the men-constructed world and its patrilineal system, the struggle also happens in other fields, such as in literature. The feminists understand that they should spread the fights in all other fields, especially the media of literature. Literature as a product of creative thinking and creative writing has a huge impact on the society,

especially in modern society. They always praise highly on the ideas and the production of literary works as well as the writers themselves. However, some elements in literary works are not always true according to the real life and they need to be evaluated and reevaluated, especially here the elements that have strong correlation to women's issues. Therefore, here, it has been a duty for feminism and its feminist literary theory along with all women to fight male's ideology of patriarchy in all fields, both in the real world and in literature.

Literature which is originally regarded as a holy work in ancient era has changed widely time to time (the contents, the values and the subjects as well). Now, literature can be defined as a work of artists as a media to express their feeling about some condition that happen in the real world. Those various conditions that occur sometimes disturb their heart and their mind which finally encourage them to write any kinds of literary works. Through literature, some artists try to give some opinions to the society and/or even criticize them related to some issues that bother their feelings. Moreover, there must be strong ideologies that consciously or unconsciously planted into the literary works produced by male or even female writers. Indeed, in this assumptions that feminism will finally work on the literary works (to question, to evaluate and to re-evaluate). Those phenomena also occur in some plays as the products of literature, especially in the play of Henrik Ibsen entitled *Hedda Gabler*.

Hedda Gabler was first published in 1890 and was first premiered in 1891 in theater of Munich, Germany. By writing *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen tells the readers about a female character who tries hard to live her life with the surroundings and

to pursue her own goal of life. Hedda Gabler is the main female character of the play. She has been pictured as a strong aristocratic woman who has a great desire of power and over male's world. She is shown as a character that tends to manipulate the other characters and control them so that they will become what she wants them to be. However, although she has been done everything she can, such as controlling her own husband, manipulating other's death, and blocking other's struggles to gain success, the fate still fails her in gaining it (goal of life). In this play, the fate gives her a hard work in order to fight the ideology within the society and this hard-work leads her to her own grave as she finally commits suicide by shooting herself.

Although the fate fails Hedda in order to pursue her goal of life, it can be seen clearly that Hedda has given strong struggles in the play. *Hedda Gabler* has presented a successful main female character that is pictured as a strong-will and free-will woman which rarely exists in any literary works at the time. This play also gives a new picture of female's struggles within a literary work in fighting over male's world and in pursuing her goal of life which rarely existed in 1800's in the correlation to the subordination of women in a society. In other words, it can be concluded that although Ibsen does not regard himself as a feminist and put himself as vis-à-vis feminism position, Ibsen still has a strong care for women's issues. The value of Ibsen's feminism can be seen in some characters of his play, such as Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House* (1879), Lona Hessel in *The Pillars of Society* (1877), Petra Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People* (1882), and Rebecca

West in *Rosmersholm* (1886). Finally, Ibsen's supports on feminism issues can be seen in *Hedda Gabler*'s main female character: Hedda Gabler.

Although having a tragic ending, Hedda Gabler has been pictured as a unique female character (in her personality, her desire in life and her attitudes towards the others and towards the life itself). She has acted as a strong and powerful woman within male-ruled world. Although she ends up in a different condition and goal, she has played a character which is worth-investigated and represented strong ideology as female character. Apart from the fact that the author is a man and her failure in fighting over male's world and its ideology, the main female character of *Hedda Gabler* has shown significant struggles as female character in fighting over male-dominated world and its ideology of patriarchy. Finally, as a conclusion it can be assumed that Hedda Gabler is worthy to be investigated as the representation of female characters showing the values of feminism.

B. Research Focus

Literature cannot be separated from feminism when it has correlation to women as the readers, the writers and even as the characters. As it has been stated before, feminists have been questioning the notion of female characters in literature and then evaluate it to get the perfect perception on female character's characterization. Their job does not only fight against the patriarchy as an ideology in the real world, but also how the female characters in every canon

literature can be shown as the real woman, who fights against patriarchal ideology within the literary works, especially the canon ones.

However, the same case also happens in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. The main female character of Hedda Gabler has given a strong example of how women fighting over male-ruled world and its ideology of patriarchy. With these notions on feminism, it is radical feminism approach that will become the main standing theory in analyzing the theme of this paper. Radical feminism and its two main principles (radical-libertarian and radical-cultural) have given some notions on patriarchy as an ideology and have given some ways to fight over it.

Departing from radical feminism's notions on patriarchy as an ideology and on some ways to fight over patriarchy and then relating it to Ibsen's main female character, Hedda Gabler, the research problems are formulated as follows.

1. What kinds of struggle are committed by Hedda Gabler in fighting over patriarchal ideology as reflected in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*?
2. What kinds of obstacle are faced by Hedda Gabler in fighting over patriarchal ideology as reflected in the play?

C. Research Objectives

Based on the background and the research focus above, there are only two main objectives of this research. They are as follows.

1. to investigate the kinds of struggle committed by Hedda Gabler in fighting over patriarchal ideology as reflected in the play, and
2. to investigate the kinds of obstacle faced by Hedda Gabler in fighting over patriarchal ideology as reflected in the play.

D. Research Significance

According to the background, the focus, and the objectives of the research above, there are three main significances of this study. The first is hopefully this study could give more understanding to the readers (female and male), especially while they read the play related to feminism movements. The second significance is that hopefully this study could give more understanding to the readers who want to investigate the issues on the literary works which may contain a unique female character that commonly does not exist based on the era and the society.

The third significance is that hopefully this study could give some objective points of view towards the female character's characterization in the play and in the real world, especially based on the points of view of radical feminism approach. And as the last addition, hopefully this study could give some notions on how feminist power can be found, evaluated and analyzed in some female characters in literary works.