

**HEDDA'S STRUGGLES IN FIGHTING PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY AS  
REFLECTED IN IBSEN'S *HEDDA GABLER*  
(RADICAL FEMINISM ANALYSIS)**

**A THESIS**

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

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 above 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." This ideology of patriarchy has attacked women in all fields within society. It has attacked women in legal institution, such as family, schools and religious group, as well as popular institution, such as mass media and literature.

Based on the background above, the theme of this research is a study on Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* based on the Radical Feminism approach. There are two objectives of this study. The first objective is to investigate the kinds of struggle committed by Hedda Gabler in fighting over patriarchal ideology as reflected in the play. The second objective is to investigate the kinds of obstacle faced by Hedda Gabler in fighting over the ideology.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Radical Feminism**

#### **a. Radical-Libertarian Feminism**

Radical-libertarian feminists rejected patriarchal society's assumption there is a necessary connection between one's sex (male or female) and one's gender (masculine or feminine). Instead they claim that

gender is separable from sex and that patriarchal society uses rigid gender roles to keep women passive and men active.

According to radical-liberal feminist Rubin (in Tong, 2009), the sex/gender system is a “set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity.” So, for example, patriarchal society uses certain facts about male and female biology, such as chromosomes, anatomy and hormones, as the basis for constructing a set of masculine and feminine gender identities and behaviors that serve to empower men (men as active) and disempower women (women as passive). In the process of accomplishing this task, patriarchal society convinces itself its cultural constructions are somehow “natural” and therefore that people’s “normality” depends on their ability to display whatever gender identities and behaviors are culturally linked with their biological sex.

Based on the realization above, radical-libertarian feminists claimed the way for women to dispel men’s wrongful power over women is for both sexes first to recognize women are no more destined to be passive than men are destined to be active, and then to develop whatever combination of feminine and masculine traits best reflects their individually unique personalities. This notion of a way to eliminate patriarchy is then called as being androgyny.

Becoming androgynous persons gives a meaning that persons, especially here women, should embody both (good) masculine and (good) feminine characteristics or, more controversially, any potpourri of masculine and feminine characteristics, good or bad, that strikes their fancy. In sum, it is by embodying both masculine traits and feminine traits above (become androgynous women) will finally women can eliminate patriarchy’s sex/gender system.

According to Ferguson (in Tong, 2009), radical-libertarian feminists’ views on sexuality are as follows.

- 1) Heterosexual as well as other sexual practices are characterized by repression. The norms of patriarchal bourgeois sexuality repress the sexual desires and pleasures of everyone by stigmatizing sexual minorities, thereby keeping the majority “pure” and under control.
- 2) Feminists should repudiate any theoretical analyses, legal restrictions, or moral judgements that stigmatize sexual minorities and thus restrict the freedom of all.
- 3) As feminists we should reclaim control over female sexuality by demanding the right to practice whatever gives us pleasure and satisfaction.
- 4) The ideal sexual relationship is between fully consenting, equal partners who negotiate to maximize one another’s sexual pleasure and satisfaction by any means they choose.

From the statements above, it is clear that radical-libertarian feminists challenged theories of sexuality that separated supposedly good, normal, legitimate, healthy sexual practices from supposedly bad, abnormal, illegitimate, unhealthy sexual practices. These feminists urged women to experiment with different kinds of sex and not to confine themselves to a limited range of sexual experiences.

According to radical-libertarian feminist Ann Oakley, biological motherhood is a myth based on the threefold belief that “all women need to be mothers, all mothers need their children, all children need their mothers.” These three beliefs, still according to Oakley, are the most oppressive feature of the myth of biological motherhood. Further, she noted that this belief contains three assumptions unnecessarily tying women to children:

- 1) that children’s mothering needs are best met by their biological mother,
- 2) that children, especially young children, need the care of their biological mothers much more than the care of anyone else, including their biological fathers, and

3) that children need one nurturant caretaker (preferably the biological mother), not many.

Finally, as Oakley saw it, each of these three assumptions (in support of the assertion children need their mothers) is false. In her estimation, being biological mother is not a natural need of women any more than being reared by one's biological mother is a natural need of children. Therefore, she concluded biological motherhood is a social construction, a myth with an oppressive purpose.

### **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is qualitative study with content analysis method. The object of the study is the struggle of radical feminism ideology to fight patriarchal ideology in Ibsen's play *Hedda Gabler*. The data of the study are words, sentences and dialogues found in the play. The data analysis was conducted using radical feminism approach and other information which have close relationship to the issue of the objectives of this study. In order to get credibility and validity of the findings, the researcher applied triangulation and discussion technique. Further, in order to gain transferability, the researcher provided descriptive data as clear and efficient as possible within the form of data table. The researcher also reread the play to get dependability and consulted her research findings to his thesis consultants to achieve the conformability.

### **D. FINDINGS**

#### **1. Hedda's Struggles in Fighting Over Patriarchal Ideology**

Women had become the minority party which has always been humiliated within their own community as well as outside of it. They had been abandoned by men by taking their strength to move and to think and by planting their ideology of patriarchy within all fields in the world which widely accepted as an unbreakable law. However, in 1790, with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*,

women began to realize their position within society and their ultimate goal of life as their basic rights. Since then, women have been fighting male's world and its patriarchal ideology that have been continuously planted within the real world and within literary works as well. They fight it by creating their own ideology which finally becomes mass movement which is now called as "feminism".

Here, the researcher uses the principles of radical feminism approach as the main theory in analyzing Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* to the correlation of patriarchal ideology that exists inside the play. Radical feminism, as a branch of feminism, gives some points of view regarding to the struggles of a female characters within a literary work in fighting over patriarchy as an ideology. It also gives some ways which can be done by any women in order to fight male's world and its patriarchal ideology.

Radical feminism gives two sub-branches used as the main points of view which help the researcher to analyze Hedda Gabler's struggles in fighting over patriarchal ideology which are reflected in the play. These two sub-branches of radical feminism approach are radical-libertarian and radical-cultural. Although they have a contradictory point of views, especially to the correlation of the issue above, it cannot be ignored that they have helped women in fighting male's ideology of patriarchy in the society. However, based on the data of the study, the researcher finds three kinds of struggle committed by Hedda Gabler in fighting patriarchal ideology within the play. These three kinds of Hedda's struggle are derived from radical-libertarian feminists' notions on how to fight patriarchal ideology. They are (1) being "androgyny", (2) freely experimenting with her sexuality, and (3) rejecting biological motherhood.

## 2. The Obstacles Hedda Faced in Fighting Over Patriarchal Ideology

Although radical feminism and one of its principle has given three major ways to fight patriarchal ideology, Hedda still cannot freely escape from the system, instead she choose to commit suicide as the final way to

fight patriarchy. Hedda's decision to commit suicide does not come in an instant. It comes from a long process of realization towards her surroundings and towards her own condition.

Patriarchy as an ideology has become major enemy for every woman in the world, especially here for Hedda Gabler. It has become the duty for every woman to fight this patriarchal ideology. It has become the major goal of women's movement to "disturb the complacent certainties of such patriarchal culture." However, women's struggles in fighting patriarchal ideology within the society are not easy task. Patriarchy, which originally has been born before feminism, has a stronger root than the second one.

In line with the phenomena above, in Ibsen's play, Hedda Gabler also faces some obstacles that block her struggles in fighting patriarchal ideology. Unfortunately, the obstacles she faced also come from patriarchy itself with its principles towards women. Based on the data of the study and comparing to the understanding of patriarchy as an ideology, there are three kinds of obstacles faced by Hedda in her struggles. They are (1) gender discrimination, (2) sexual oppression, and (3) biological motherhood.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

There are two major important points as the results of the analysis. The first result is there are three kinds of struggle committed by Hedda as a female character here. They are (1) being an androgynous person, (2) freely experimenting with her own sexuality, and (3) rejecting biological motherhood. Meanwhile, the second result is there are three major obstacles faced by Hedda here, which unfortunately comes from the patriarchal ideology itself. The three obstacles are (1) gender discrimination, (2) sexual oppression, and (3) biological motherhood. In sum, although the strength of male's world and its ideology of patriarchy seems stronger than any other enemy for every woman, it is undeniable duty for women to give their best struggle to fight it. The results of the struggle are not the main points, what is more important is the struggle itself.

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