

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Emancipation movement, gender equality and the fight for women's rights issues has always been an interesting discussion. Those issues appeared because of the awareness, interaction, and information flows that make women increasingly critical of what happened to them. Nowadays, women have the same rights and position with men in their social environment. Women now won the freedom to take part in life. They have the same opportunity with their opposite sex to get the better education and to choose the type of job suited for them. Married women may combine their household responsibilities with the work outside the home.

However, there is part of society that considered women as the second citizen. Many women are still oppressed and do not get their rights in all fields. Married women can be a wife and mother only. They have to agree with their husband's decision although the decision violated their rights as women and human. In this case, male is dominated the structure and social arrangements that cause the oppression of women. It can be said as a patriarchy system.

Patriarchy is a social system in which the father or eldest male is head of the household, having authority over women and children. Patriarchy also refers to a system of government by males, and to the dominance of men in social or cultural systems. It may also include title being traced through the male line.

Therefore, some people do not agree with this opinion. They called as feminists who fight for women's human right. Their ideology is feminism, the movement to end the oppression of women, to uphold human rights, justice and gender equality, both in the field of social policy and education. Feminists concern themselves with women inferior position in society and with discrimination encountered by women.

In the early nineteenth century, American women have very limited rights in the economic, political, and social fields. In the economic field, women are very dependent on men. Before getting married, owned property controlled by their father and brother, and after married it become their husband's property. Most of the jobs closed to women. If women are given the opportunity to work, they receive lower wages than the wages given to men. In the political field, women dominated by men (Djajanegara 1995, p. 21). Marriage Law forbade women to acquire rights over their children after divorce (Stanton 1972, p. 79). In the social field, women must obey to their husbands, and not given the opportunity to obtain higher education or to run a particular profession.

Then, in the end of nineteenth century, the role women began to change dramatically. Feminism began to occur. This was the beginning of a new world for women. Women began to realize that they may have opportunities outside the home, and they could have a place in the world as well as men, such as getting a better education, working and support themselves without the help from men. They are not only being housewives only, that stay in the home with their children and doing home jobs such as cooking and cleaning. They wanted to be accepted in

their society and get out into the world. As told by Chafe, “in general, the consensus has been that women achieved a substantial amount of the economic equality which the feminists had sought and in the process experienced a new degree of freedom from the restrictions which had formerly bound them” (Chafe 1972, p. 48-50).

There are so many popular novels represent the images of women, and *The Awakening* is one of the examples. *The Awakening* first published in 1899. It set in New Orleans and the Southern Louisiana coast at the end of the nineteenth century, the plot centers around Edna Pontellier and her struggle to resolve her increasingly unorthodox views on femininity and motherhood with the existing social attitudes of the turn-of-the-century South. It is one of the earliest American novels focuses on women's issues without arrogance.

The Awakening is not only seen as a landmark work of early feminism. It is also one of the most important novels written by Kate Chopin, an American woman who is now considered by some to have been a forerunner of feminist authors of the 19th century. Kate Chopin showed her readers the truth about life as she saw it, to write truthfully about the lives of women and men in the nineteenth century she herself knew. In many of her works, Chopin was able to transcend the label of "realism" and portray women who hunted sexual and spiritual freedom while tied up in the restrictive society of the nineteenth-century south. She fought the ideal of the place of southern women by challenging stereotypes or offering her characters social and sexual freedoms (<http://www.academon.com/Research->

Paper-Kate-Chopin-Early-Feminist-Writer/113954 retrieved on April 11th 2010 at 18:15 pm).

For those reasons, the writer decides to use *The Awakening* novel as a corpus to do the study about the images of women in America, specifically in New Orleans in the 19th century.

There are so many previous studies about the images of women done by some students of English Literature Study Program (ELSP) of English Department of State University of Jakarta. For example, the study done by Yuli Hasnidanur entitled “Women’s Subordination in *The Color Purple* Novel” that have a purpose to reveal women’s subordination portrayed in *The Color Purple* novel by using the theory of Mies that explains women’s subordination deals with patriarchy system, women’s role based on sexes and violence against women. The other study done by Sarah Isyaturrodiah entitled “Feminist and Traditional Traits in the Movie *North Country*” which analyzed the representation of feminist traditional traits based on the two women characters in that movie.

There’s also a study analyzed *The Awakening* novel done by Olivia Irawan from Petra Christian University entitled “Edna’s Rebellion against Patriarchal System as Seen in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*”. Although the novel is the same, but the purposes of analyzing the novel are different. On Olivia’s study, she analyzed the reason behind the main female character’s rebellion toward the traditional rules that the society holds and the way Edna faces her oppressive marriage. She uses a cultural approach focusing on feminism.

Whereas, this study focuses on analyzing the images of three women main characters based on the traditional and feminist traits from Bardwick and Douvan as cited from Soenardjati Djajanegara's book entitled *Citra Wanita dalam Lima Novel Terbaik Sinclair Lewis dan Gerakan Wanita di Amerika*. Although the writer cited the theory used by Djajanegara, but the corpus is different. Also, this study adds which kinds of feminism of the main character.

Then, in this study, the writer will analyze the images of women in the novel *The Awakening* through the plot and the dialogues in the novel that indicate the traditional and feminist traits. This study will give the addition of those previous studies.

1.2. The Research Question

How are the images of women portrayed in the novel *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin?

1.3. The Objective of the Study

The objective of the present study is to analyze the images of women portrayed in the novel *The Awakening*.

1.4. The Limitation of the Study

The main data of this study are taken from the plot and dialogues of the three women main characters. Furthermore, the dialogues of the male characters are used for the supporting data on the analysis.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

The result of the study is expected to provide the information to the writers and viewers who want to gain in depth knowledge about feminism. The findings may give an understanding to the viewers about feminism itself that aims to end the discrimination against women. Furthermore, it will be significance for those who want to do study about feminism in other literary works.