

**STRUGGLE OF WOMAN IN  
KATE CHOPIN'S "THE AWAKENING"**



**A THESIS**

Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Sciences of Hasanuddin University in Partial Fulfillment of  
Requirement to Obtain Sarjana Degree in English

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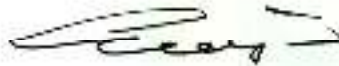
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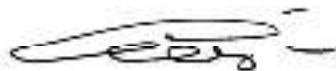
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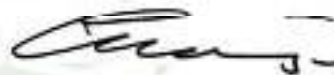
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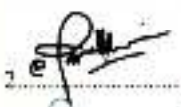
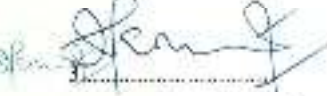
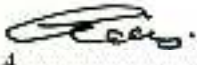
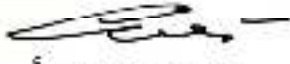

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Today, January 2021, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by **AYUNI FIRDA** (No. F21113503) entitled, **STRUGGLE OF WOMAN IN KATE CHOPIN'S "THE AWAKENING"** submitted in fulfillment of one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S) Degree at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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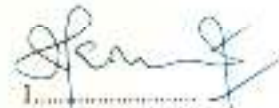
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(Ayuni Firda)

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The writers admits, it was not easy to finish this thesis. There are a lot of obstacles the writer gets in completing this thesis and so many people involved to help and provide moral support and priceless experiences directly and indirectly. With all due respect and honor, the writer expresses her deep thankful appreciation to:

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May all the help that the writer received from everyone be repaid by God in the future. Additionally, may this thesis be accepted as the writer’s dedication to inspire and create a better perspective for society. Amen. Overall, the writer do believe that this is not a real finish line of her study but it is a fascinating start for a new adventure.

Makassar, 18 Desember 2020

The Writer



## **ABSTRACT**

AYUNI FIRDA. Struggle of Woman in Kate Chopin's "*The Awakening*", (supervised by Dr. Abidin Pammu, M.A.Dipl.TESOL and Mrs. Rezky Ramadhani, S.S, M.Litt).

This research aims to reveal the struggle of woman in the works of Kate Chopin's "*The Awakening*" through the characterization of Edna Pontellier towards Feminism within Feminist Literary Criticism Theory. Moreover, this research's purpose is to elaborate on the point of patriarchal ideology in this novel, especially to explore the material forms of social, economic and political discrimination of women.

The data is collected from Kate Chopin's "*The Awakening*". This study used qualitative research with content analysis method with the basis of Literary Criticism Theory.

The result of this research shows that Kate Chopin's "*The Awakening*" as a literary work had portrayed the woman struggle against patriarchy as seen in the characterization of Edna Pontellier. Edna worked hard from being an oppressed house-wife to an independent woman. At the end, she left her marriage and took her own life in the process of seeking her true self.

Keywords: Feminist Literary Criticism, Feminism, Novel, Kate Chopin

## ABSTRAK

AYUNI FIRDA. *Struggle of Woman in Kate Chopin's "The Awakening"*, (dibimbing oleh Dr. Abidin Pammu, M.A.Dipl, TESOL, dan Rezky Ramadhani, S.S, M.Litt).

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap perjuangan perempuan dalam novel *The Awakening* karya Kate Chopin melalui karakterisasi pada Edna Pontellier melalui Feminisme dalam Teori Kritik Sastra Feminis. Selain itu, tujuan dari penelitian ini ialah untuk menguraikan secara rinci mengenai ideology patriarki dalam novel ini, terkhusus untuk mengeksplor bentuk fisik dalam masyarakat, ekonomi, dan diskriminasi terhadap perempuan.

Data dikumpulkan dari novel *The Awakening* oleh Kate Chopin. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian secara kualitatif dengan metode konten analisis dengan berdasar kepada Teori Kritik Sastra Feminis.

Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa novel *The Awakening* oleh Kate Chopin sebagai karya sastra yang menggambarkan perjuangan perempuan melawan patriarki sebagaimana yang terlihat dalam karakter Edna Pontellier. Edna telah bekerja keras dari menjadi ibu rumah tangga yang tertekan menjadi seorang perempuan yang merdeka. Pada akhirnya, ia memilih meninggalkan kehidupan pernikahannya dan melakukan bunuh diri dalam proses sedang mencari jati dirinya yang sebenarnya.

Kata Kunci: Kritik Sastra Feminis, Feminisme, Novel, Kate Chopin.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of The Study

Nowadays, society has positioned men higher than women. In addition, the impact of the inaccuracy in interpreting religious texts by men has influenced in shaping understanding of the status of women in the household. Society views women as the property of men and claims that women's role in society is for producing baby and served men in the household and do domestic chores. Women have been participated for their own subordination because they have been psychologically shaped for the idea of their own inferiority that called patriarchy. It is a system that allows men to dominate women in every social relation.

A society system is needed to take control every single action of human being. The system like patriarchy or matriarchy has very important roles to make everything in the society become under control and to create a harmony among people. The system, for example the patriarchy, should be created for the good but in the progress this system cannot accommodate all of people's desire especially women's. That makes the role of the male becomes the primary in the society and they hold authority over women, children, and property.

In fact, that system only produces the dictatorship because the male's authority is so broad and further it creates the injustice, discrimination, and inequality toward female. In the majority of homes, the man is the figure who financially supports a family while the woman stays home and cares for the children. Women's roles become meaningless in the family and society as they do not have any authority to make a decision since everything is determined by the men.

The position of a woman in patriarchy system is one of the biggest problems in marriage life nowadays. Husband is meant to work outside the house without concerning their children and household problem, while woman is expected to stay at home in order to take care of her children and the household.

From the statement above we can see that patriarchy put women in disadvantages situation. People who are not satisfied with this situation try to break the system that makes women become subordinate. They believe that women must constantly fight for their rights and sometimes they struggle just to survive without the power and under domination of men. To accomplish their goal they make a movement which is called feminism, feminism argues that women should have the equal right as men have. One of the efforts is using literary work; they have prompted rediscovery and reevaluating of a number of women writers to have access to all of point of view (Walker, 1979: 60).

Concerning feminism, nowadays many authors wrote the novel about women struggle. The researcher inserts some of the feminist ideas in novel to criticize the unequal treatment that women get from society. The imaginative ways that writers use in depicting women's live can make people aware and concern about the problem that has been faced by women.

Kate Chopin, the American author portrays this condition in her work *The Awakening*. In Chopin's *The Awakening*, the major issue of the of the novel is about discrimination and oppression upon women. This novel worth to study since this novel labeled as one of feminist fiction's example in the era where patriarchy has its part society system. In this novel, Kate Chopin points out the patriarchy culture in the Creole community which become the background of the story of this novel.

This novel tells about Edna Pontellier's personal awakening. She is a married woman who is unhappy with her husband, her children, and where her life is headed. She is

bored with the inane chatter around her and wants something more in her life. Edna represents the struggle of a woman who has a dream to find the independence in her life. The main conflict in Chopin's *The Awakening* is a woman's needs to have the right to express herself and live freely versus the expectations of Creole society, which is strongly influenced by patriarchy system, and its narrow definitions for what a woman should and should not do. She has an affair and decides to choose her own freedom. Edna exercises her rights as an individual. In her self-discovery to find for the person she is trapped inside herself and also inside the confines of society's rules and regulations where women are concerned. She refuses to have sexual relations with her husband. She also attempts to express herself creatively through painting and writing. Rather than stay in her present life, she decides to commit suicide by swimming out into the ocean.

The novel has been received as a feminist text and although this literary work has a distinguished reputation all over the world, this phenomenon is still needed to be discussed to show that women also have the same opportunity in their lives.

In this study the researcher interested to review struggles of the main character in *The Awakening* through feminist literary criticism against the inequality of social class and gender discrimination resulted in the oppressions experienced by Edna Pontellier in her marriage life. Kate Chopin tries to express her criticisms of the patriarchy culture in South America. Chopin noticed that the marriage agency was treating wife as property and imprison the wife's life. Effort to escape all such restraints, Chopin offers death as an absolute freedom for the main character of this novel, Edna Pontellier.

It shows that a woman is less powerful than a man both in public and private area. A woman does not have the same right either in a public or private sphere. It takes a man's domination or exploitation which is called as a patriarchy system. In this context, a wife is used by her husband as a tool to work for the sake of his business. A husband tends to

demand his wife to give all of her love, time and affection to their children, while husband does not, it proves that there is no equal role in the family. That is the reason why a woman experiencing such an oppression during marriage life.

Furthermore, her husband treats her based on his class which does not fit Edna at all. She is only given some money and wealth by the upper class husband rather than his time, love and affection and she is considered as one of his valuable things to be kept, not a lover to be loved.

### **B. Scope of the Problem**

Marry Wollstonecraft is one of the feminists who is concerned with the equal rights between men and women. As an enlightenment feminist, Wollstonecraft (in Whelehan, 1995:29-30) declares that women also possess the innate capacity for reason, and should, therefore, be granted equal citizenships. She believes if women are given the opportunity to realize their full potential, they could achieve full equality with men. Thus, her idea about the same opportunity among men and women in the society will become the focus of the research because that idea has correlation in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* where the protagonist wants to get equal opportunity in her life.

In Chopin's *The Awakening*, the major issue of the of the novel is about discrimination and oppression upon women. To limit the problem, the research only focuses on the struggle of a woman used by Edna characters in *The Awakening* novel.

### **C. Research Question**

Based on the background of the analysis above, the researcher formulates two questions as follows:



1. What are the kinds of woman struggle in *The Awakening* novel?
2. How the inequality of social class and gender discrimination result in oppressions experienced by Edna in her marriage life?

#### **D. Objective of Writing**

There are two main goals to achieve through this research:

1. To know the kind of woman struggles in the novel.
2. To reveal the form of Edna's oppressions caused by the inequality of social status and gender discrimination done by Edna's husband and the upper class Creole Society in her marriage life.

#### **E. Significance of The Study**

Academically, this research provides information about feminist literary criticism. The main interest of this theory is to explore the point of patriarchal ideology in literature, especially to explore the material forms of social, economic and political discrimination of women.

There are some significance in writing this thesis. The first significance of the analysis is to make the researcher understand about literary works especially of Kate Chopin's works.

Second, the researcher wants to convey some lessons about the feminist literary criticism from this novel through the character, so that we as readers can find some lessons about the feminist literary criticism as the way in correctly our life. Practically, the research supposed to be a reference for the next similar research, yet who will decide to use the same approach in the analysis.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. Previous Studies

A study needs some relevant researches in order to support the implementation of the further research. Some data can be obtained from the relevant or nearing with the research conducted previously. The first is Struggle of Woman in Angela Morrison's *Sing Me to Sleep* Novel (The Analysis of Feminism) by Eka Serli Sudarni (2017). In this writing, the researcher only focused on the struggle of a woman used by Beth characters in the novel *Sing Me to Sleep*. The author analyzed the kinds of women's struggle using Luh Ketut Suryani's theory and how main character struggles to get her love using Alwisol's theory in the novel *Sing Me to Sleep*.

The second is an analysis about Catherine Struggle to be Free from Oppression in Earnest Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms" by Muhammad Wizari Yusuf (2016). In this writing, the researcher only discussed about Catherine Barkley struggle against oppression and sexual abuse that happened to the main character through Young's perspective.

The third is an analysis about a woman's struggle against patriarchy in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening; A Feminist Perspective* by Dona Windasari Septiana (2015). In this writing, the researcher tries to find the reaction of Edna Pontellier as a woman who lives in patriarchal society. It is also to see the thought and the reaction of Edna toward her husband, which finally symbolizes her rebellion against patriarchy. The researcher tries to show that Edna characteristic and her husband reflect the patriarchal society. Then the researcher also tries to show the reaction of Edna toward her husband's oppression which reflects the women's struggle against patriarchy.

Different from previous studies, the researcher in this thesis tries to analyze the idea of feminism-that is a woman's struggle revealed by only focuses to woman major character in *The Awakening*.

## **B. Theoretical Description**

### **1. Character and Characterization**

Character and characterization have a relationship which cannot be separated. In the story, it must have a character and characterization to support what the story tells about. According to Gill (1995, p. 127), "A character is someone in a literary work who has some sort of identity, an identity which is made up by appearance, conversation, action, name and (possibly) thoughts going on in the head."

Character in fiction are divided in some type, the first, in significance role in developing story there are main character and peripheral character. Main character is a main person that appears in almost all scenes in the whole story, he or she always be told sides of her or his life, but peripheral character is supporting character for main character, they just exist when have correlation with main character.

The second type, in appearance function character, there are protagonist and antagonist characters. Protagonist character is like hero, this character usually we like because he or she shows sympathy and our looking. Antagonist character is causes from conflict happen.

The third is about static and dynamic character. A static character is one who changes little. A dynamic character, on the contrary, is one who is modified by action and experiences. In other word, a static character remains the same throughout the work, it is a character that has one private quality, while a dynamic character changes in the course of the work and gives expression of any personality, living and identity. Usually strong characters are rounded and dynamic, they exhibit the full range of

human emotions and reactions to people and events. They have histories and more than one possible future. They have hope and fears.

The last is based on reflection of the character, there are typical character and neutral character. Typical character is character that often appears in working quality of nationality and seldom appears with showing personality condition. Neutral characters is character that always exist for the story.

To make the characters come alive and become real. The researcher uses method called characterization. Characterization means that researcher present and reveal character, by direct description to showing the character in action by the presentation of the other characters that help define each other.

Characterization is the creation of these imaginary persons, so that they exist for the reader as real within the limits of the fiction and have ability to characterize the people of one's imagination successfully is a primary attribute of a good novelist, dramatist, or short story writer (Holman, 200).

There are two types of characterization, direct characterization and indirect characterization. Direct characterization refers to what speaker or narrator directly says or thinks about character, the reader is told what character is like. Indirect characterization refers to what the character says or does. The reader than infers what the character is all about, the reader who is obligated to figure out what the character is like.

By knowing about character and characterization widely, it helps to make easy to analyze Edna Pontellier as a main character in the story. This research focuses on woman character named Edna Pontellier so it will help to get more knowledge about her.

## 2. Patriarchy System

When talking about social system, people should not forget about patriarchy. "Patriarchy" derives from the Greek πατριαρχία (patriarkhia), literally means "rule of fathers" from πατριάρχης (patriarkhēs), "father" or "chief of a race, patriarch." Based on Encyclopædia Britannica (1984: 800), the word patriarchy means:

a hypothetical society system based on the absolute authority of the father or an elderly male over the family group. Sometimes patriarchy also includes in its meaning patria poterta, the system in which power to govern members of even extended family rested in the hands of father and his kin.

Similarly, the meaning of patriarchy is a system of social structures where men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Women and men live together in the condition where they ruled to be in a different position. Men in higher position; they are the ruler and women in the lower one because they are the follower (Walby, 1990, 20).

Patriarchy is a long history of injustice in the social status between men and women. Unfortunately, this society put women lower than men in every aspects of life. According to Abeda Sultana Patriarchy is the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development. Despite differences in levels of domination the broad principles remain the same, i.e. men are in control. The nature of this control may differ. So it is necessary to understand the system, which order to work for women's development in a systematic way. In the modern world where women go ahead by their merit, patriarchy there creates obstacles for women to go forward in society. Because patriarchal secondary status of women. Patriarchal society gives absolute priority to men and to some extent limits women's human rights also. Patriarchy refers to the male domination both in public and private spheres.

It shows that a woman is less powerful than a man both in public and private area. A woman does not have the same right either in a public or private sphere. It takes a man's domination or exploitation which is called as a patriarchy system. The position of a woman in patriarchy system is one of the biggest problems in a marriage life nowadays. Husband is meant to work outside the house without concerning their children and household problem, while woman is expected to stay at home in order to take care of her children and the household.

In patriarchy, a marriage women with children will becomes the person who have to take care of the children and household. While the father claims that a wife must follow all his commands and stay at home to look after the children.

The experts have no doubts; they are unanimous in their statement that only the mother and no one else, should take care of her child. No other question is answered so definitely and plainly. The mother is the person to look after her child. (Hoffnung, 1984: 124)

In an unfair world, women are only seen as more object that placed in the house in order to do the household work. Things done by men outside the house are for money. That's why the whole family depends on husband for the living. The role of women in a family is so big and it is quite different from men.

### **3. Feminism**

Feminism was born early 20th century, were pioneered by Virginia Woolf in her book *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Feminism appears as the protest to the system of society which has created a false idea about women since a long time ago. It is known that women's status and position in the society are very low Etymologically derived from the

word feminist femme (woman), means that women who aim to fight for the rights of women as a social class.

Garda Lerner (in Bhasin, 1993: 33) states that feminism is a women's struggle against patriarchy and for equality. Beasley (1999: 27) in his book entitled *What is Feminism?: An Introduction to Feminist Theory* wrote some definitions of feminism from some scholars such as Porter, who defines feminist as a perspective that seeks to eliminate the subordinate, oppression, inequality, and injustice women suffer because of sex.

Feminism is concepts, studies, and social movement that aim to change the subordinate status of women in society that prioritizes the male perspective. Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male; the men have treated women as inferior people. Power is exerted by men directly or indirectly in civil and domestic life. Women are powerless so feminists want to change that condition to gain the equality with a movement that is called feminism. Lexically, feminism is a kind movement that struggles for a full equality between women and men in all the aspects of life.

In traditional society, women were considered as a weak intellectually creature. This concept has used as social construction in society. Based on this, society divided into two parts: private and public world. The private world means that women should stay at home, they were not allow to learn and to work, the society claimed that women has their nature aptitude such as sewing, nursing and painting.

Women have to face discrimination and should move on a better life. However, women already realize that those false ideas make them become discriminated. To fight against the discrimination they need to create a women's movement to change the perspective of women on the people and to get equal right for women in the field of law, economy, and society.



In order to get the opportunity to become equal, women rebel against men as their oppressor and the wrong perspective in society. Women have to face discrimination and should move on a better life. However, women already realize that those false ideas make them become discriminated. To fight against the discrimination they need to create a women`s movement to change the perspective of women on the people and to get equal right for women in the field of law, economy, and society. Women become more aware of herself and her society. The rebellion itself happens through a process. Humm once stated that struggle against patriarchy started after women becomes conscious of themselves and criticizing their symbolic misinterpretations in society (Humm, 1994, 3).

Women who rebel become the defenses as it called by Tyson. The defenses will keep themselves from becoming conscious of the experiences where they have been repressed (Tyson, 2011: 83). The struggle against patriarchy begins as the voice of women is found, so by becoming conscious women found the chance and used the chance to speak against injustice. The rebellion has its purpose. It is for women to be recognized by the society, to rebel against injustice, to get the dignity and to change their social status.

#### **4. Feminist Literary Criticism**

Feminism does not appear without a process; it has developed from time to time. Although many people think that feminism was formed in the 1970s, in fact there have been three successive —waves of feminism, starting from the 19th centuries and continuing to the modern day (Whelehan, 1995: 2). Clearly, feminism gives a massive influence in the history.

Although much has changed in the process, feminists, regardless of which wave they claim to belong to, still fight for the equality of women everywhere. The impact of this movement can also be felt in the field of literature. Women began to realize that in the

works literature there is an imbalance regarding the view of human in the characters. This is eventually led to what is called Feminist Literary Criticism.

In history, Feminist Literary Criticism arises to go against misogyny (negative attitudes toward women) in various kinds of source that describes women as inferior or lesser creatures. Feminist literary criticism is a type of literary criticism, which was developed in the late 1960s, focusing on the roles of women in literature. As the direct product of the women's movement, the main interest of this theory is to explore the extent of patriarchal ideology in literature, namely to explore the material forms of social, economic and political discrimination of women. It happens because most of the literary works, which are mostly written by men, portray women as inferior and oppressed.

Traditionally, feminist literary criticism has sought to examine old texts within literary canon through a new lens. Specific goals of feminist criticism include both the development and discovery female tradition of writing, and rediscovering of old texts, while also interpreting symbolism of women's writing so that it will not be lost or ignored by the male point of view and resisting sexism inherent in the majority of mainstream literature. These goals, along with the intention to analyze women writers and their writings from a female perspective, and increase awareness of the sexual politics of language and style were developed by Lisa Tuttle in the 1980s, and have since been adopted by a majority of feminist critics.

The history of feminist literary criticism is extensive, from classic works of nineteenth-century women authors such as George Eliot and Margaret Fuller to cutting-edge theoretical work in women's studies and gender studies by "third-wave" authors. Before the 1970s—in the first and second waves of feminism—feminist literary criticism was concerned with women's authorship and the representation of women's condition within literature; in particular the depiction of fictional female characters. In addition,

feminist literary criticism is concerned with the exclusion of women from the literary canon, with theorists such as Lois Tyson suggesting that this is because the views of women authors are often not considered to be universal ones.

Feminist literary criticism aims to reinterpret literature from a female point of view. This is accomplished in several ways. Some feminist critics seek to interpret the works of male authors, with particular attention to women characters, in order to explore the moral, political and social restrictions women authors that have been previously overlooked by male critics. The objective of feminist literary criticism is to give a critical response towards the opinion manifested in literary works which is given by its culture. Thus, it is questioning the relationship between text, power, and sexuality reveals in text.

On the ideological level, the reader seeks to learn not to accept the hegemonic perspective of the male and refuses to be co-opted by gender-biased criticism. Gender is largely a cultural construct, as are the stereotypes that go along with it: that the male is active, dominating and rational, whereas the female is passive, submissive and emotional.