

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses about several points including background of the study, the research question, the objective of the study, the significances of the study that cover theoretical and practical significances and the scope and limitation of the study. The further explanations are as follows:

1.1 Background of the Study

Gender issue is a common problem that is often encountered from time to time. Generally, this gender problem occurs because there is an inequality in rights, roles and domination of power between men and women. One of the reasons is because of the patriarchal culture that is still developing in society. This patriarchal culture shapes gender stereotypes and other related issues. This stereotype places men as the highest role holders in society. On the other hand, the position of women is considered lower than men. Based on these stereotypes, two categories of gender stereotypes are formed, namely: masculinity (male stereotypes) and femininity (female stereotypes). (Arizah, 2020). The assumptions based on these two gender categories refer to the differences in the biological characteristics of men and women in order to strengthen the power and authority of men and weaken the role and position of women in society. Makama (2013) says that “Also this culture of patriarchy is a very strong determinant of male dominance over female” (p. 116). A similar opinion also came from Mila Arizah (2020). She says that “In societies throughout the world, men are often regarded as superior and women as inferior” (p. 509). It is not uncommon for us to find women getting oppression and lack of freedom in living her life as human beings. Until now, this form of gender inequality is still often encountered in society.

To break the assumption that women’s position is lower than men, feminism occurs which aims to uplift and restore women’s rights and gender equality. Until now, many feminists are actively voicing women’s rights. They voiced this through various media, one of them is through literary works. Because, according to Yulianesta’s argument in her article, she says that “literary work basically a

reflection or depiction of its era, and every era has its problem and various tendencies” (Yulianesta, 2014, p. 189). Many writers express their ideas through their works. According to research, literary works are able to become a medium for writers to be able to communicate, convey their ideas, and also can influence the mindset of readers. As Arizah’s opinion in her article, she says that “Through literature, the mindset of a person or group of people can be affected, because literature is culture, while one element of culture is as a value.” (Arizah, 2020, p. 509). One of the writers who is actively writing about feminism and power of women is Charlotte Perkins Gilman. She is a feminist and writer who actively writes literary works such as short stories, books, and poetry. Mostly, her works are about the study of gender between men and women, feminism and gender inequality that still prevails in society.

One of her popular literary works is entitled “*The Yellow Wallpaper*” that first published in The New England Magazine, in January 1892. The work is a biography that tells about her personal experience when experiencing postpartum psychosis after giving birth to her child. Even though her husband is a physician who given her a treatment, however it does not cure her illness and instead make it worse until depression caused by many restraints she had received from her husband. Therefore, she tries very hard to regain her freedom and recover from her illness.

Besides the story of “*The Yellow Wallpaper*”, there are also six other popular short stories from Gilman’s work, namely “*Three Thanksgivings*” in November 1909; “*The Cottagette*” in August 1910; “*Turned*” in September 1911; “*Making a Change*” in December 1911; “*If I were a Man*” in July 1914 and “*Mr. Peeble’s Heart*” in September 1914. The seven popular short stories have the same theme, namely about the relationship between men and women in their married life that have several struggles faced by the female main characters in the stories, however they are able to show their power. Therefore, the seven short stories by Charlotte Perkins Gilman then recorded as a collection of short stories entitled *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories*. This book was first published in 1997 by Dover Publications, Inc. in New York. The book shows that she focuses on the

women's struggle shown by female main characters in the stories in dealing with issue of gender inequality, where women are often discriminated against and expected to fulfill the role of a perfect wife and mother. Through the story, Gilman also presents the toxic effects of gender inequality on the relationship between a husband and a wife. Through the female main characters in the stories, Gilman wants to show that women are not as weak as has been labeled in patriarchal culture.

Based on the seven short stories presented in *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories*, the writer decided to choose five of the seven short stories to be used as data sources in this study. The short stories chosen are "*The Yellow Wallpaper*"; "*Three Thanksgivings*" that tells about a struggle of a widow named Mrs. Morrison who through many trials and hard work to keep her house and her decision. She has to work hard to pay for the cost of maintaining the house so she has to borrow money from Mr. Butts and forced to marry him as payment. However, she can prove that woman like her can solve their problems by herself; "*The Cottagette*" that tells about a woman named Malda who loves a man named Ford. However, she hesitates to marry because of the bad things after marriage. Until finally, Malda's worries are broken by the Ford's statement that after their marriage, she must not to cook for him and she is not to give up her artistic soul when the get married; "*Turned*" that tells about a woman named Mrs. Morroner, a clever woman with Ph.D. degree, who finds her husband cheating on her with another woman, named Gerta. However, she can respond tactfully and intelligently. She considers that Gerta only the victim of her husband. She cares and defends Gerta as a fellow woman; and "*Making a Change*" which almost similar to the story of "*The Yellow Wallpaper*", where a mother named Julia, who struggle from her postpartum depression and confined by the statements that a new mother should be like this and like that until she is depressed and think to do suicide. Thankfully, her mother-in-law helps her and Julia manages to get out of her postpartum depression.

The stories of *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories* are able to attract the interest of readers, especially for gender equality activists and feminists because of the embodiment of feminism behavior and women's struggle shown by female main characters that highlighted in it. Even though the seven short stories in the

Gilman's book have the same theme namely about women's struggle in fighting for equality, but the writer finds more information about the women's struggle in the five short stories entitled "*The Yellow Wallpaper*", "*Three Thanksgiving*", "*The Cottagette*", "*Turned*" and "*Making a Change*" than the other two short stories entitled "*If I were a Man*" and "*Mr. Peeble's Heart*". Therefore, the writer is interested in choosing five of seven short stories in *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories* as a source of data in this study.

The related issues of gender problems in Gilman's popular short stories have been discussed in several thesis and journal articles with different topics. As seen in Maitun's thesis (Maitun, 2018) entitled "*The Wife's Depression in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper*", Hardiyanti's thesis (Hardiyanti, 2018) entitled "*The Characters' Conflict In Gilman's Selected Stories*" and Budianto's thesis (Budianto, 2008) entitled "*The Symbols in 'The Yellow Wallpaper' that Represent Gilman's Messages for Women in Patriarchal Society*". Besides the three thesis above, there are also several journal articles that use Gilman short stories as the source of data, such as the article by Irmayani, Sabaruddin and Melati (Irmayanti, sabaruddin & Melati 2021) entitled "*Ideology In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Short Story 'The Yellow Wallpaper' By Using Genetic Structuralism Approach*", and an article by Romlah, Kuncara and Muhajir (Romlah, Kuncara & Muhajir, 2019) entitled "*Deconstruction Perspective Toward The Characters In Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper Short Story*".

According to several thesis and journal articles above, the writer finds the differences between the previous studies with this study. First, this study uses five of the seven popular short stories by Charlotte Perkins Gilman collected in the book entitled *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories* as source of data. The second difference is even though this study uses the same source of data as the previous studies above, but this study has a different research topic. This study focuses on the study about women's struggle in maintaining equality and rights towards men. While, every previous study examines different topics, but does not discuss about women's struggle in the stories. Then, the third difference is the theory used in the study. This study focusses to analyze from gender study point of view, especially

in feminism approach. Therefore, the theory used to answer the research question of this study is a feminism theory. While, the previous studies use different theory, such as historical criticism theory, structuralism and conflict theory, feminist criticism theory and deconstruction theory.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study above, the focuses of this study are translated into the following questions:

1. How do the female main characters struggle for equality in the stories?
2. How do the male characters respond to the female main characters' struggle in the stories?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the women's struggle shown by the female main characters in Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories*.
2. To elaborate the respond of the male characters to the female main characters' struggle in the stories.

1.4 The Significances of the Study

The results of this study are expected to be useful both practically and theoretically.

- a. Theoretically, the results obtained from this study are to support the feminism theory, especially the feminism theory by John Stuart Mill which is written in his book entitled "*The Subjection of Women (1869)*". Therefore, this study is expected to be able to contribute in the study of gender studies, in particular about feminism and women's struggle in breaking the forms of patriarchal culture between man and woman that occur in a literary work.
- b. Practically, the results of this study can be used by the general public, researchers and academicians as reference for the future research on the problem of gender studies, especially feminism and women's struggle for equality in literary work.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focuses on analyze the form of representation of women's struggle shown by the female main characters in Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Stories*, also how the male characters in the stories respond to the female main characters' struggle in it. The writer will analyze the stories of Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* by using liberal feminism theory by John Stuart Mill based on his book entitled "*The Subjection of Women (1869)*".