CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This chapter describes the theories used to analyse the problems stated in chapter one from Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening*, with a particular emphasis of Edna Pontellier, the main character. The discussion is divided into two parts: intrinsic and the analytical framework. For the intrinsic elements, the writer uses theories from experts such as Holman, Wellek and Warren, and Johnson and Arp. For the analytical framework, the writer utilizes Betty Friedan's Liberal Feminism theory.

2.1.1 Intrinsic Elements

Intrinsic elements are the basic parts that make up a literary work, such as its theme, plot, characters, characterization, conflict, and setting. The intrinsic element focuses on analysing these internal parts rather than outside factors like the author's life or history. Wellek and Warren state that a piece of literature should be studied as its own complete system. This study focuses on the intrinsic elements of character and characterization, conflicts, and settings (1977:139).

2.1.1.1 Character and Characterization

Holman states, a character is an individual who appears in a literary work, characters are the lifeblood of narrative fiction, the imagined persons who inhabit the story's world. They are the agents of action and the focal points of the reader's engagement. He defines a character as, "Most often used to refer to a person in a

story, character is also a term applied to a literary form which flourished in England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Holman, 1972:90). While the term has historical roots in brief, typified sketches, in modern fiction it refers to the complex beings whose motivations, conflicts, and developments form the core of the narrative.

Characters in literature are often categorized by their importance to the plot, dividing them into major and minor types. The main (or major) character is the central figure highlighted in the narrative (Robert, 2012:160). In contrast, minor (or supporting) characters are used to help the main character and can offer additional points of view to develop the story (Schmidt, 2012:145).

However, a character does not simply exist on the page; they are brought to life through the deliberate art of characterization. Characterization is the process by which an author creates, presents, and reveals the personalities of these fictional individuals. The success of a narrative often hinges on the author's ability to "characterize the people of his imagination successfully" as it "is one of the primary attributes of a good novelist, dramatist, or short-story writer" (Holman, 1972:91). The methods employed in this process are varied and crucial to how a reader perceives and understands the figures within the story.

Holman outlines three fundamental methods of characterization available to an author. The first is through direct exposition, where the author, as an omniscient narrator, explicitly tells the reader about a character's traits. This method involves "the explicit presentation by the author of the character through direct exposition, either in an introductory block or more often piece-meal

throughout the work, illustrated by action" (Holman, 1972:91). This approach offers clarity and efficiency, directly guiding the reader's interpretation.

The second method is indirect method, often considered more dramatically effective, the presentation of the character through their actions and dialogue. This is "the presentation of the character in action, with little or no explicit comment by the author, in the expectation that the reader will be able to deduce the attributes of the actor from the actions" (Holman, 1972:91). This indirect method, or "showing," invites reader participation, requiring them to infer personality from behaviour, thus creating a more immersive experience.

The third method involves the representation of the character from within, revealing their inner life. This approach provides the deepest insight into a character's psychology by presenting their "thoughts and emotions... with the expectation that the reader will come to a clear understanding of the attributes of the character" (Holman, 1972:91).

2.1.1.2 Conflict

Conflict is a trigger of a story to happen, defined as a "clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills" (Johnson and Arp, 2017:77). This central struggle is what most profoundly reveals a character's true nature. It generates suspense, captures the reader's interest, and provides the essential forward momentum for the plot. A story without conflict would be a static portrait rather than a dynamic journey.

Conflict is typically categorized into several fundamental types. There are external conflicts, such as a struggle against another person (person-against-person) or a battle against outside forces like nature or society (person-against-

environment). There is also internal conflict, which is a turmoil within the character's own mind or soul (person-against-self) (Johnson & Arp, 2017:77). This internal struggle is often the most profound, as it dramatizes the complex moral and psychological choices that define a character. In many stories, the external conflict serves as a mirror or a catalyst for the internal one.

Moreover, Kenney divides conflict into two main types: internal and external. An internal conflict is a character's inner battle, perhaps with their own ambition or sense of duty, which helps them grow and become more complex. An external conflict is a problem from the outside world, like a natural disaster, societal rules, or a direct threat. Both of these conflicts work together to move the story forward by testing the character and showing who they really are (1966:19).

2.1.1.3 Setting

Johnson and Arp state, setting is the context in which a story unfolds. It refers to the overall location (place), historical period (time), and social conditions (social environment) that form the backdrop for the narrative. Far from being just a decorative element, setting is a powerful tool that serves several critical functions (2017:251).

First, setting is used to create a specific atmosphere or mood. As Johnson and Arp note, “Setting can be used to evoke a mood that prepares the reader for what is to come” (2017:251). A story set in a dark, decaying mansion, for example, will feel very different from one on a sunlit beach.

Second, setting can also act as a central force in the plot, such as an antagonist in a "person-against-environment" conflict. Furthermore, setting can be

used for psychological effect, where the “setting may be a projection of the state of mind of a character” (Johnson & Arp, 2017:252). For instance, a chaotic room might reflect a character's inner turmoil, just as an orderly landscape might suggest their desire for control.

According to Holmes, setting is one of the most important parts of a story. It's the physical or spiritual world where the story happens and includes three types: place, time, and social environment. He identifies; 'place' is the geographic location and scenery, 'time' is the period when the story occurs, shown by things like clothing, trends, and tools. The 'social environment' describes the larger context for the characters, like their religious, social, and moral conditions (1992:453). All these parts of the setting come together to build a detailed world that affects the plot and helps the reader understand the story better.

2.1.2 Liberal Feminism Theory

Liberal feminism, at its core, is a philosophy centered on achieving gender equality through legal and social reforms. It operates on the principle that women, as rational human beings, are entitled to the same rights and opportunities as men, a view rooted in the spirited crusade of early activists who fought for women's right to participate in the human evolution of society (Friedan, 1997:103). The focus is not on a radical overthrow of existing social structures, but rather on removing the discriminatory barriers that prevent women's full participation in the public sphere. As a philosophy, it champions individual merit, arguing that a person's sex should not be a determinant in what they can achieve, battling the

bias and systemic exclusion that historically denied women their human potential (Friedan, 1997:105).

The first wave of feminism in the 19th and early 20th centuries was largely driven by these ideals, with the campaign for suffrage being its most prominent goal; the belief was that once women had a political voice, they could enact the changes necessary to achieve equality in all other areas of life, from education to employment (Friedan, 1997:104). The struggle was not merely for political rights, but for a fundamental re-evaluation of a woman's place in society. As Friedan (1997:107) observes, the early feminists understood that they were compelled to secure these rights as a foundation before they could truly begin to experience life and affection as fully realized human beings. This sentiment captures the essence of liberal feminism: the attainment of individual autonomy is a prerequisite for a fulfilling life. The movement sought to provide women the opportunity to develop their inherent talents without obstruction (Fuller, cited in Friedan, 1963:106), powers that had long been suppressed by societal norms and expectations.

2.1.3 Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to a system in which men hold power and authority over women in both the private and public spheres. Betty Friedan expands on this by revealing how patriarchy is not only about formal power structures but also about cultural norms and expectations that limit women’s identity. She explains that women were taught to find fulfilment exclusively as wives and mothers, their lives reduced to domesticity while men defined themselves through work, achievement, and autonomy. Friedan states this limitation *the problem that has no*

name, a silent dissatisfaction felt by countless women who, despite having comfortable homes and families, felt trapped in roles that denied their individuality (1997:57).

This patriarchal structure was reinforced through education, media, and even science. Women were constantly told that their highest purpose was to embrace femininity through passivity, submission, and nurturing. As Friedan notes, "fulfilment as a woman had only one definition for American women after 1949—the housewife-mother" (1997:72).

Such narratives ensured that women internalized the belief that seeking independence or intellectual growth was unnatural, even selfish. In this way, patriarchy maintained its dominance not by coercion alone, but by reshaping women's desires and identities to align with male-centred ideals. Friedan also emphasizes that patriarchy confined women's growth and maturity, comparing it to a "youth serum" that kept them in a state of arrested development (1997:64).

Women were expected to "wait to be chosen" by a man rather than actively shape their futures. This condition highlights how patriarchy perpetuated dependency, ensuring that women remained economically, socially, and psychologically subordinate. By denying women the chance to pursue education, careers, or leadership, the system effectively silenced half of humanity's potential.

Moreover, patriarchy operates by shaping cultural images of femininity that glorify self-sacrifice and domesticity while portraying women who pursue independence as neurotic or unfeminine. Friedan mentions that "the only commitment for women was the fulfilment of their own femininity…through

sexual passivity, male domination, and maternal love" (1997:83). This reveals how patriarchy not only restricted women's opportunities but also constructed the very meaning of womanhood to serve male authority.

In conclusion, Friedan's liberal feminism theory shows that patriarchy is not merely a political or legal system but a deeply entrenched cultural order. It dictates the roles women can occupy, the aspirations they can pursue, and even how they perceive themselves. The consequence is a cycle of inequality where women's struggles for liberation are often dismissed as personal dissatisfaction rather than systemic oppression. Breaking free from patriarchy, therefore, requires women to recognize that their unspoken discontent is not an individual failure but a collective condition shaped by a patriarchal society.

By applying liberal feminism theory by Betty Friedan, particularly about patriarchy, this research situates Edna's experience as a narrative of individual emancipation against patriarchy.

2.1.4 The Four Causal Mechanisms of Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, and social privilege (Friedan, 1997:57). While Friedan does not rigidly categorize patriarchy into a formal typology, this study constructs an analytical scheme based on her critiques. To operationalize the analysis of Edna's restrictions, this research categorizes patriarchal control into four primary causal mechanisms derived from Friedan's work (1997):

2.1.4.1 Cultural Ideological Production: The Myth of Femininity

This structure of male dominance has historically relied on rigid distinctions between masculinity and femininity, often positioning the former as superior. In patriarchal cultures, masculinity is often considered superior to femininity, and cultural discourse continues to reinforce this dichotomy. Historically, particularly in the Victorian era, femininity was strictly defined through domestic roles.

The dominant societal belief that a woman's ultimate fulfilment is achieved exclusively through marriage, motherhood, and homemaking. Friedan termed this the *feminine mystique*, a cultural ideology that portrays women who pursue independence as unnatural or unfeminine (Friedan, 1997:43-44), limits women's roles to domesticity and emotional labour, positing that "the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfilment of their own femininity" (1997 70).

2.1.4.2 Economic Control and Dependency

Patriarchy maintains women's economic dependence on men by systematically restricting their access to education, careers, and financial independence. This economic subservience reinforces male dominance. In the 19th century, this was starkly evident, as an early feminist text quoted by Friedan states: "He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her" (1997:108).

2.1.4.3 Institutional Channeling (Reinforcement)

Institutions, such as social customs, marriage laws, the medical establishment, schools, media, religion, and the family are primary agents in upholding and promoting traditional gender roles. Channel women into subordinate roles and dismiss their grievances as personal or psychological failures rather than systemic issues. In 19th-century America, religion was a particularly powerful force, with clergymen “waving Bibles and quoting from the Scriptures” to reinforce the notion that women's subordination was divinely ordained (Friedan, 1997:110).

2.1.4.4 Psychologization (Psychological Conditioning)

From an early age, girls are socialized to aspire to marriage and motherhood. This psychological conditioning ensures that women silence their own ambitions and accept domesticity as their innate destiny (Friedan, 1997:72). This process encourages the internalization of submissive and dependent roles, which in turn stifles personal ambitions and the development of a unique identity outside of relational roles. Friedan describes this conditioning: “All they had to do was devote their lives from earliest girlhood to finding a husband and bearing children” (1997:44).

2.1.5 The Mechanisms of Resistance Against Patriarchy

To answer how the main character struggles against these patriarchal forces, it is necessary to establish the mechanism of resistance. According to Friedan (1997), the operationalization of women's resistance against patriarchy occurs through a two-step mechanism:. It begins with an internal recognition of

dissatisfaction and culminates in an external fight for identity and fulfilment (1997:44).

2.1.5.1 Internal Awakening (Confronting "The Problem That Has No Name")

The first stage of this struggle was internal, the mechanism begins internally. Resistance starts when a woman acknowledges a vague yet profound dissatisfaction with her prescribed domestic life a feeling Friedan calls *The Problem That Has No Name*. Acknowledging this internal crisis is the required first step toward emancipation (Friedan, 1997:44-57). Though Friedan identifies and names this phenomenon in the mid-20th century, she traced its roots to the historical confinement of women that began long before. It was the "strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered" that led them to inwardly question if the roles of wife and mother were truly "all?" (Friedan, 1997:44). The 19th-century struggle against patriarchy began when women started to give voice to this profound sense of emptiness and realized they were not alone in their discontent. This awakening was the first crucial step toward organized resistance.

2.1.5.2 External Action (Redefining Identity & Spatial Liberation)

The second stage, following the internal realization, resistance must operationalize through external actions. This involves actively dismantling the "forfeited self" by pursuing for a personal identity, education, meaningful work (such as art or a career), opportunities beyond the home, and reclaiming physical and spatial autonomy independent of male authority (Friedan, 1997:359-369). The early women's rights movement was a multifaceted struggle for a "new identity"

that would allow women to be recognized as full human beings. The feminists of the 19th century fought for tangible rights, educational access, property ownership, and, most famously, suffrage, all as means to a greater end: the right for women to define themselves by their own ambitions and potential, rather than solely by their relationship to men (Friedan, 1997:104).

2.2 Research Method

According to George, research methods consist of the systematic procedures that researchers use to gather, analyse, and interpret data. The purpose of these strategies is to address research questions and thereby develop a more profound understanding of the topic under investigation (2008:21). To better understand a topic, the writer gather data using various research methods. This thesis outlines two research methods: the research approach and the method of data collection.

2.2.1 Research Approach

This study employs feminist literary criticism as its main approach to analyze women's struggles against patriarchal structures in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*. Feminist literary criticism interrogates the ways literature represents, sustains, or challenges the power relations between men and women. As Guo explains, “liberal feminist literary criticism is a kind of literary criticism on the basis of feminist theory or the politics of feminism more precisely” (2019:453).

Fundamentally, a feminist approach in literature aims to expose women's oppression and highlight their fight for equality and personal autonomy (Yasa, 2012:37). By utilizing this lens, the writer focus on female characters' societal

roles, their relationships with male figures, and their aspirations for emancipation against male-dominated environments (Endraswara, 2003:146; Djajanegara, 2003:52).

In line with those principles stated above, this study specifically applies liberal feminist literary criticism. Betty Friedan's theory of liberal feminism serves as the primary analytical tool to systematically examine how the main character, Edna Pontellier, confronts the causal mechanisms of patriarchy and operationalizes her resistance.

2.2.2 Method of Data Collection

The study uses library research as the primary method of data collection. According to Mann, library research is “a methodical technique to obtaining, assessing, and successfully using data” (1993:248). This method allows the writer to focus on specific categories of inquiry, locate reliable academic materials, and integrate relevant interpretations of Chopin’s novel *The Awakening* with a feminist approach.

The data in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the novel *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, which provides based on the primary source of data, the data will be collected in the form of dialogues, monologues, phrases, descriptions, and quotations. The secondary data is gained from written physical and electronic sources, namely books, e-books, journal articles, and other publications on the internet. The secondary sources include as well as scholarly journals and theses that discuss liberal feminist literary theory, patriarchy, and Chopin’s works. Galvan, explains that primary sources are original

works or first-hand materials, while secondary sources are interpretations or analyses of those works (2017:3). Using both types of data ensures a comprehensive perspective in examining Edna's resistance against patriarchy.

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