CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Feminine Icons in Victorian Culture

In *Feminist Literary Studies*, Ruthven explains that women were indirectly trapped or tricked by some icons or symbols which are formed by the male culture and society. There are two major icons that symbolized most of women in Victorian era, "Romantic Lover" and "Motherhood". The icon of "Romantic Woman" worked in female society, especially in British, as a trap that influence women to ignore their education and careers, then to sacrifice their own expectation, freedom, and life in order to marry 'the right man' and live with him happily ever after. (1984, p.79)

The other is "Motherhood", which is also indirectly formed by the patriarchal needs of child, because the woman is the nurturer of the heir or the male progeny. Female is naturally destined to be the tool of procreation, and it creates a responsibility for women to bear and provide care to children. An ideal woman, in the Victorian patriarchal society, is then an unselfish lover, a good mother, and an angel in the house. The social and cultural demands of the "Ideal Female" indirectly force women to consequently devote their life to fulfill it and finally bring them into the oppressions and constraints by male society.

2.2. Feminist Movements and Various Views

By the time, feminist movements transform and grow into some diversity in its practices that differ and enable feminism to advance itself on several purposes at once. That diversity of feminism will be used as guide and base in analyzing the character's behavioral changes.

2.2.1. K. K. Ruthven's Viewpoints

2.2.1.1. Socio-feminism

Socio-feminism is one of several kinds of feminism theorized by Ruthven. This kind of feminism focuses its movements on how women could redefine their own roles, identities, and values in a society, especially in a male-dominated society. Their major movements are mostly expressed and actualized in literary works, in which they redefine, create, and prove who Female is.

"There is socio-feminism that interest in the roles assigned to women in our society prompt studies of the ways in which women are represented in literary texts 'images of women'." (*Ruthven, Feminist Literary Studies, 1984, p.19*). It is also clearly explained by Nickianne Moody in *Feminist Literary Theory*, that 'images of

women' is the stereotypes and concepts created by the society to the realities of women's lives and social changes, which sustains patriarchal images and values.

2.2.1.2. Semio-feminism

The other aspect of the feminist theory of Ruthven that will be used in this analysis is Semio-feminism. In Semio-feminism, female's movements focuses on how to identify and assign some specific code or symbol for women in order to determine and gain special place and status in a society, especially among male-dominated society. As described, "There is Semio-feminism that points on departure its semiotics. The science signs, and who study the signifying practices by means of which females are coded and classified as women in order to be assigned their social roles." (*Ruthven, Feminist Literary Studies, 1984, p.19*).

2.2.2. Elaine Showalter's Feminist Viewpoints

From Showalter viewpoints, it is found out that women in used to be imitators or followers than innovators, and to overcome their limitation from male tradition and society they had to struggle hard whether in their actions or in their writings. Women in their struggle should create and keep their values

and works original and independent from men's. That background became the base for Elaine Showalter in composing her works, A Literature of Their Own.

According to Showalter, women in creating their own new culture and literature should concerns their actions and works by self-consciousness, self-redefining, and self-expression. Female should have to realize their old weaknesses in male-domination and their new possessions of being freedom, and then figure out their own solving way, that's called self-consciousness. By then, female should identify and create their new identity, culture, and value which fit their possessions or dreams and free from patriarchal domination, that's called self-redefining. And finally, the self-expression of female itself is the essential role of women struggle. Women should try to actualize themselves in manner and value which reflect their new identity of female. (*Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, 2009, p.4&11*).

"If we want to define the ways in which 'female self-awareness' has expressed itself in the English novel, we need to see the woman novelist against the backdrop of the women of her time, as well as in relation to other writers in history." (*Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, 2009, p.7-8*). As described by Elaine Showalter, woman novelists play the important role and part of female movements in struggling their freedom and existence among the patriarchal society. They contribute much in female movements by applying new images, thoughts, and ideas of women towards their literary work. From their literary works, female imagination became not only just a reading but could inspire other women to rediscover and rebuild their new identity and history.

In *A Literature of Their Own*, Showalter divides women movement into three phases that represents each wave of the feminist movements, they are;

2.2.2.1. "Feminine" Phase (1840-1880)

During this phase, many women writers wrote in order to equalize their position in a male-dominated culture. Through their literary works, they are questioning and redefining their primary and new "Women's Culture" which is free from the masculine or patriarchal systems, hierarchies, and values. (*Showalter, A Literature of Their Own, 2009, p.12-13*).

Some other well-known writers in this phase, such as George Elliot, Curner Ellis and Action Bell, contributed their works to signal some awareness to female freedom in the male-dominated society. In their literary works, appear some "Super-Feminine" characters that were built to show women boundless energy and power among male-dominated society. This condition clearly indicates such self-awareness for the distinctness and liability of women's writings.

In this phase, women fight the cultural environment of male-centered society that determined which roles, activities, tastes, and behaviors that appropriate or not appropriate to the women's lives. The self-defined of women cultures appear more and more in result of culture force that determined and maintained by men-centered society.

As Showalter explains in *Women's Writing and Women's Culture*, in the new women's culture, women started to leave out their preceding history and culture of old life sphere, "Perfect Lady" or "Angel in the House", create and redefine their own objectives, point of view, activities, values, community, and awareness. In other words, the crucial movements of this phase are "Women's Rights" and "Women's Suffering" upon male power and dominance. *(2009, p.12).*

2.2.2.2. "Feminist" Phase (1880-1920)

Entering this phase, women writers used literature as tool to dramatize the power of women in fighting and struggling the ordeals of female's limitation. Literary work of Elizabeth Gaskell and Frances Trollope are the examples that pictures how female struggled against the unjust treatment and oppression in daily life. Most of women writers in this phase were contributive to present a generation of "New Women" or "New Feminism", that have power to reject and against male laws, rules, votes, and confrontations.

By this phase, women more widely spread their movement, fight for equal rights in all areas and aspects of their life, and undermined the patriarchal hegemony. The ideology of the "New Women" became stronger and the authority 'Male-Discourse' were tended to be undermined. In this time, the feminist stance was

identified with revolutionary, rebellious, heterogeneous, and open-minded behaviors.

2.2.2.3. "Female" Phase (On Going Since 1920)

In this phase, the female obsession was not just anymore about correcting, modifying, supplementing, revising, humanizing, and attacking the male-centered values and society. From this phase, women are more likely to reject both imitation and protest against the male domination and constraint, which kept them in dependency and slower their actual objectives. By this time, women began to expand and widen their movement by specifying their activities objectives.

Women in this phase, put more concern on analyzing literary works and cultures, especially those which deal with female society and life. Some thoughts and literary works of well-known writer such as Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Jane Austen are much contributive to this phase. Their works distinguished this phase in term of "Female Aesthetic", which clearly divides between literature of 'masculine' and 'feminine', annexes women's writings and works to special sphere, and redefines the original external and internal life experiences of women.

Moreover, along this phase, women are assured of their position, freedom, and independency in social life. They frankfully

express their self-identity and eliminate the old modeled identity. More women at this phase, also works through many aspects of life in order to inspire, empower, and contribute a better life standard for the other women.