



Perspective of Women between Two Cultures in France in the 18 Century and China in the 20 Century from the Queen's Confession by Vitoria Holt and the Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck.

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Abstract

The objective of this research was to study the perspective of women from the Queen's Confession by Vitoria Holt and the Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck. The analytical method from two novels, the history, patriarchy concept and feminism concepts were implemented in this investigation. Analysis was conducted using four conceptual frame works: the women's role, women's values, social disparity or inequality and other social factors. The results found that; 1) the concept of the women's role, especially, the political bargaining can be seen in The Queens's Confession, but in The Good Earth, the women were an exploitation tool for their family. In regard to being a follower; the two novels had similar ideas in the "arranged marriage". Moreover, in the genealogy aspect, the women of the two novels had the same status in order to produce heirs for the male's family and taking care of the family. 2) with the women's values aspect, it was obviously found in the Queen's Confession, especially the main characters were bullied regarding ethnic issues. But in the Chinese society under the concept of "the body under an orchestration", can be initiated from the women, who were suffering in a value of beauty such as foot binding. 3) In the concept of the social disparity; the women tyrannical by the social class and gender, can be found with the high and low social status of the woman. Also, in the concept of the women under the social pressure; the two novels had the same believes in the patriarchal concept. It is no great surprise that the man was also a big person of the family from the past until now. Lastly, 4) In the aspect of other elements of society that effect women; mainly in the moral and customary issues, it used to be a strong social frame to control the women of the two novels such as not being able to make decisions by herself, but only permitted women to function in the family role.

Introduction

The study of Eastern and Western literature that occurred in past times; centred on the beauty of

language, structure, themes, plots. The study of literature has changed to examine literature with the focus on the real human situation in various aspects. Because literature

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can consider the model of a human life that is reflex or illuminates the social phenomena at that specific time when the literature was published. (Teeradet, Ch.2021).

It can be said that literature is concerned with the context and environment at that specific time. (Robert, E. & Jacob, H. 1995) The social circumstances are directly running from the author's ideas, direct or indirect, in the presentation and trying to answer the question of why the story is happening. Therefore, the author is inspired to knit their story beyond the real situations or events that occur with someone or something. In this way of portraying literature, the character can be classified into a different direction as the round person or dynamic person that can be changed at any time.

The great duty of an author is to transfer the factual content and context of society through one or more characters in the story. The personality of the character is designed in various social movements by gender, nationality or several circumstances. Furthermore, the portray of the main character is not only concentrated on creating entertainment, but also an attempt to understand the behaviour of the human by the action of the protagonist.

Consequently, the character of the story has 2 levels as explained by Perrine, L. (1978) firstly, the person, who took an action in the story. Second, the person's attribute, both inside and outside, that is relevant to the behaviour of the character. In this case, the reader is invited to come inside as the observer in the character's feeling and sense of the action, dialogue, and body language.

The novel of Victoria Holt titled "The Queen's Confession" and Pearl S. Buck's novel "The Good Earth" can clearly reflect the woman's role in France's society of the 18th century and Chinese's society of the 20th century, respectively.

The two novels can present the factual world of the feudal system and the social attitude of women at that specific period. The novels portray the powerfully social rules that women had to follow, even if they did not agree or admire such rules. The article of Hunnicutt, G. (2009) titled "Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence Against Women: Resurrecting "Patriarchy" as a Theoretical Tool, revealed that the feminist scholars have produced abundant writings on violence against women, yet theory development has stagnated. The effort to construct a theory of patriarchy to explain violence against women was derailed by criticism. Hunnicutt addresses some of these criticisms, uncovers the

explanatory strengths of this concept, and lays foundations for a more fully developed theory of violence against women. The concept of patriarchy holds promise for theorizing violence against women, because it keeps the theoretical focus on dominance, gender, and power. It also anchors the problem of violence against women in social conditions, rather than individual attribute.

Based on Hunnicutt's reasoning, this study examined the question of what the hidden concept in *The Queen's Confession* and *The Good Earth*, particularly the perspective of women under the patriarchal concept at that time. Moreover, why it came to be the powerful instrument to control the people in any society. The patriarchal concept diminished the role and potential of women until the opportunity to present their capacity in society was achieved.

The two novels can be the representative work to answer the question about the perspective of women in France of the 18th century and in China in the 20th century. Currently, the feminism concept has seen rapid growth and has emerged in the lives of the young generation around the world. The feminism concept is not mentioned in the two novels, but it can be the conceptual framework for interpreting the perspective of women who suffered at that time.

Primarily, the *Queen's Confession* is based on the real-life situation of Queen Marie Antoinette. The miserable queen, who was sentenced to death by the French people. *The Good Earth* presents the character of O-Lan a Chinese women, who strongly believed in the patriarchal concept of Confucius and Taoism doctrine.

The novelty of the two novels can reflect an interesting perspective of women, who differed in the social status in France and China as well as relevant to the dominant status and role of women at that time. Furthermore, the two novels present and portray the factual notion of the highest and lowest rank of women in the feudal era that is currently not present in society of today.

Moreover, Victoria Holt offers the perspective that the destiny of the queen did not differ from the normal person at that time. Holt confirms that every woman was influenced by the social rule and norm in positive and negative of her own action and behaviour along with trying to answer the question of why women seemed to be the invisible person in that society.

Pearl S. Buck knitted her story of the fictional character of O-Lan from her own memory of living in China.. O-Lan's character is representative of Chinese

women in China of the 20th century, who's action are understood based on the teaching of Confucius or Taoism doctrine that was actively practiced at that time, even if the teaching of the doctrine has deteriorated over time.

The aim of this investigation intended to study the perspective of women through Queen Marie Antoinette and O-Lan by 4 concepts: 1) The concept of women's role in 18th and 20th centuries in the Western and Eastern part of the world, 2) The women's values, 3) The social disparity and 4) Other elements of society that effected women.

Objective

To study the perspective of women between two cultures from the Queen's Confession by Vitoria Holt and the Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck in the 4 conceptual frame works: the women's role, women's values, social disparity or inequality and other social factors.

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variables Dependent Variable

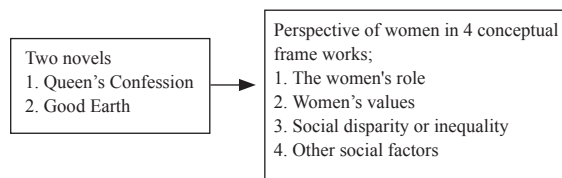


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The current study is qualitative research, that used the analytical method for the investigation of two novels that are concerned with the history, patriarchy and feminism concepts.

1. Population, Samples and Research Instrument

The research used purposive sampling of two novels as research instrument titled The Queen's Confession and The Good Earth.

2. Collection of Data

A) The researcher selected two female characters from each of the novels, who can be the finest example of the objective of this study. In the Queen's Confession the protagonist Queen Marie Antoinette, who is the highest ranked person of France and in the Good Earth the protagonist O-Lan, who is the lowest rank person of China at that time.

B) Data were collected from the study of various books and relevant documents concerned with the patriarchal concept, feminism, the history of France in the 18th century, especially King Louis XVI. In addition, the Chinese's tradition and culture under the Confucius and Taoism doctrine to compare the setting or events that occurred in both novels.

C) The content from the study of relevant articles for analysis can be divided into 2 groups; 1) the research based on the feminism and patriarchal concept in the literature in Thailand, China and India and 2) the research based on the feminism and patriarchal concept in the literature in Europe, America and Russia.

3. Data Analysis

The data analysis contained 3 steps ; 1) The reading for interpretation in person, time, place, tradition, and culture, 2) The selection of the data for presentation, that it's relevant to the research under the 4 concepts of analysis and 3) using the narrative method for presenting the data.

Results

The result of the study found:

1. The concept of the women's role in 4 categories appeared by the following explanation.

1.1 The political bargaining was found only in The Queens's Confession. This was due to every female in a European royal family in the 18th century was the representative of the country and had to make prosperity and a good political relationship with other countries such as getting married with another royal family or a marriage in the neighbouring countries. This arrangement was deliberate by their family, nobleman, lord or palace emissary, to control the balance of power. It was impossible for the royal female to avoid her great duty and she could not select a spouse of her own choice. In other words, the female in a royal family was tied to many factors within her family and the family needed her to provide certain roles.

In contrary, in The Good Earth, the Asian women was not a political tool as noted in the French's society of Queen Marie Antoinette period. However, the lower-class women such as O-Lan, who is portrayed as a slave of the Hwang Family was also a showpiece of wealth for the Hwang family. Undeniably, the female slave in Chinese's culture was a symbol of the highest-ranking person to show their status to Chinese society.

In conclusion, the woman in 18th century

of France and 20th century of China suffered from the social norm and culture causing deprivation of freedom. Additionally, gender today still has a big gap as noted in the historical novels, but differs in action. For example, in the article titled *Gender and Negotiation: Some Experimental Findings from an International Negotiation Simulation* of Mark, A. and College. (2009) noted that increasingly, scholars have taken note of the tendency for women to conceptualize issues such as security, peace, war, and the use of military force in different ways than their male counterparts. These divergent conceptualizations in turn affect the way women interact with the world around them and how decisions are made. Moreover, research across a variety of fields suggests that providing women a greater voice in international negotiations may bring a fresh outlook to dispute resolution. Using experimental data collected by the Global Ed Project, this article provides substantial support for hypotheses positing that females generate significantly different processes and outcomes in a negotiation context. These findings occur both in terms of female negotiation behaviour and the impact of females as negotiation facilitators/mediators.

1.2 The being as follower. The two novels have similar ideas regarding “an arranged marriage”. This idea was the normal folk way of life of the people at that period. The attitude and concept of selecting a spouse for the female were similar between the East and the West.

For the factor of the division of people to class status or categories, consequently the woman cannot decide to do anything by herself. The noble person was fearful of marriage to the lower status person. Because, of their belief in “pure blood” and disregard for “mixed blood”. (Richards, D. 1967; Jensen, D. L. 1976; Nanta, Ch, and Ni-On, S. 1982).

Coming back to the Queen’s Confession, the perspective of the protagonist as Queen Marie Antoinette was not different from another noble person in France. The marriage system by “an arranged marriage” was also managed at that time by her family. It became to be the “Social Value” of the novels period.

In the Good Earth, the “arranged marriage” was practiced in China from the past until the present. The noble person had an influence on this marriage system more than the lower-class person. Sometimes, it could happen to the slave such as O-Lan by her boss. It cannot deny that the patriarchal concept of Confucius and Taoism doctrine in China had a strong power over

the rights of the woman.

The life of the woman in both novels are held in the hand of their asserter or their boss such as the Queen Marie Antoinette of France and O-Lan the slave of China.

1.3 The genealogy; the women in both societies had the same status in order to produce heirs for the male’s family. The perspective of women in the position of the queen was very significant for Marie Antoinette in France, because the son was the person who would maintain her position, honour, and the throne. In the opposite, the low status women such as O-Lan had a duty to produce the son for her husband’s family, which followed the teaching of Confucius and Taoism doctrine.

1.4 The status of the mother. In both of the novels the two characters held the same role but differ in details. The perspective of women in the position of the mother as the caretaker differs based on the social status. Especially women, who were in the high rank of society such as Queen Marie Antoinette who never took care her of her own child. While in the Good Earth, O-Lan unconditionally practiced herself as a caretaker for her child. This study is relevant to the research of Songsomphanm, R. (2017) titled of *Perspective on Women in Russian Society from 1902-1972* in the Novel *Mother* by Maxim Gorky, the results found that the status and roles of women in Russian society correlated with the novel’s characters in terms of society and tradition. Advancing women’s status in the family, their contribution to social services, and heightened awareness of civil and political rights were all pertinent themes.

2. The women’s values are shown in the following details:

2.1 The French’s appraisal of the Austrian women’s value. It was obviously found in *The Queen’s Confession*, especially the main character who was bullied for her ethnic background. The discourse as “the Austria’s evil, the Austria’s prostitute, the foreign princess or the witch of Austria” made the greatly influenced Queen Marie Antoinette, who was never accepted by the French’s people. The source of the problem was due to the war between France and Austria or War of the Austrian Succession, so the French people were angry with the Austrian people.

2.2 The Chinese women in the concept of “the body under an orchestration”. Chinese women suffered due to the high value of beauty such as foot binding. Foot binding was the Chinese custom of

breaking and tightly binding the feet of young girls in order to change their shape and size. Feet altered by foot binding were known as lotus feet (three-inch golden lotus) and the shoes made for these feet were known as lotus shoe. (Wikipedia, 2021). In late imperial China, bound feet were considered as a status symbol or the representative of a lady of the court or the lady in the highest social rank and a mark of beauty or the Pretty Privilege. However, the foot binding was a painful practice that limited the mobility of women and resulted in lifelong disabilities. This tradition appeared in the 10th century China, and progressively became popular among the elite during the Song Dynasty. Finally, the foot binding eventually spread to lower social classes by the Qing Dynasty in the 1636-1912. The perspective of the social inequality about the foot binding of the Chinese's women appeared as the social value that also had influence to O-Lan. In the opposite, foot binding never appeared in France. Foot binding was based on Chinese's culture only from the Qing Dynasty between 1636-1912 century. Additionally, Sarah. A. Bendall, (2009) noted that corsets and hooped skirts of the 18th century in France, were considered by the philosopher Michel de Montaigne as garments of torture for women, who used them to become slender, reflecting their inherent vanity. Other men blamed women for deforming their own bodies and that of their children, for causing infertility or miscarriage, and even for hiding sexually transmitted infections. Yet, in the face of these criticisms, corsets and hooped skirts went from being elite garments worn by a few aristocrats in royal courts to common among many different classes of women in Europe. During the 17th and 18th centuries, women led the way in purchasing these garments and in dictating to their tailors what they wanted and why. Despite the demonstrated popularity of this clothing among women, many myths persist. Without physical or historical proof to interrogate whether these garments were as restricted or painful as they were made out to be, such myths are hard to overcome.

3. The social disparity

3.1 In the two novels, women were treated tyrannical by the social class and gender, it may differ based on the status of woman. The perspective of women in the social disparity in France in the 18th century is noted in the Queens' Confession. The status of the queen did not guarantee that Queen Marie Antoinette would be better than the lower social status women. This is seen by the social rumours about the

queen that rapidly spread around the country. The Queen was always thought of negatively by the French for being an Austrian national and then she was overthrown by her confidant.

In the Good Earth, the portrayal of the social disparity of women differed from the Queen's Confession, because the protagonist, O-Lan suffered from being the lowest person in the society, even though she was in a small community. It can be said that the status of women in the 18th century of France and in the 20th century in China was very important for the social disparity. In this case, it can be reconfirmed that even if you were the highest or the lowest person in the country you would be treated the same as Queen Marie Antoinette and O-Lan.

3.2 Women under the social pressure. In both novels the same belief in the patriarchy concept exist; the male was a big man of the family. In the Queen's Confession, the social pressure about women was not as harsh as in the Good Earth, because the female protagonist can do anything by her social status as a Queen, while O-lan was from the lower-class. The perspective of Queen Marie Antoinette by the French's people was as a "Fashion Icon". In this concept, the Queen tried to get rid of many problems by pretending to be a leader of the new French's fashion in the court. Finally, the new fashion ideas quickly spread around the country and led to the improvement of the feminism concept.

In the contrary, O-Lan in the good Earth could not do anything by herself, because the China's social system never denied the patriarchal concept. That is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in the roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. (Lerner, G. ,1986; Walby, S,1990; and Hunnicutt, G,2009).

4. The other elements of society that effect women

4.1 Moral and customary elements, these elements used to be a strong social frame to control the women. The concept of moral and customary are not obviously seen in two novels, but the author of the Queen's Confession tried to examine the behaviour of Queen Marie Antoinette about self-control of her behaviour. One of her big mistakes was adultery with Hans Axel Von Fersen, the Swedish's ambassador. This mistake was against the teaching of Christianity, Roman Catholic was practiced in household principle and in the folk way of life and was taken very seriously. The clear

evidence can be seen from the 23 letters, that was believed to be written by the Queen to her lover from June 28, 1791- August, 1792 (14 months). Moreover, 7 letters were written with a secret code. Lastly, the Queen's mistake led to overthrow of the throne of Louis King XVI. In the Good Earth, the female protagonist, O-Lan, strongly followed the norm and the folk way of life of Confucius and Tao from her birth until her death.

4.2 Social status included assignment of roles. It can be found with the women in the novels for example, the position of the queen was also a boss, but not with lower-class women. That can be seen by the letter of the Great Queen Maria Theresa of Austria, who always taught her daughter about the social status of the people and took the suitable manner on the title of the French's Queen. But her daughter never followed her teaching. Normally, in the Good Earth, the concept of the social status roles did not appear with O-Lan but can be found by the manner of the big wife of the Hwang's family in the manner of how she controlled her slave.

Discussion

The researcher discusses the result by 2 issues with the following explanations ;

1. A discussion about the 2 novels with the events that were relevant in the history at that time.

From the Queen's Confession, this event occurred in France's history about the King and the Queen who were overthrown by the French people. This revolution was a period of radical political and societal change in France that began with the Estates General of 1789 and ended with the formation of the French Consulate in November 1799. Many of its ideas, are considered fundamental principles of liberal democracy. (Baker, M. 1978)

The content of the novel related to the evidences of the history, but it cannot discovery in the novel. The French history referred to in the novel that caused problems are as follows;

1.1 The weakness of the King

King Louis XVI proclaims to be the King when he was only 20 years old, because his grandfather (King Louis XV) suddenly passed away with the smallpox virus (Variola). The king could not do anything by himself. Only 20 years old at the time, Louis XVI was immature and lacked self-confidence. While Louis XVI wanted to be a good king and help his subjects, he faced enormous debt and rising resentment towards a despotic monarchy. His failure to successfully address serious

fiscal problems led to most of his problems during his reign.

1.2 The political

The king and the central state did not have absolute power to control the Nobleman and Lords. Nobleman and Lords deprived the King's power and created rumours in order to produce hatred towards the royal family. As a result, the court became the target of popular anger, especially towards Queen Marie Antoinette, who was viewed as a spendthrift Austrian spy, and was blamed for the dismissal of 'progressive' ministers. For their opponents, Enlightenment ideas on equality and democracy provided an intellectual framework for dealing with these issues, while the American Revolution was seen as confirmation of their practical application.

Moreover, the root of the problem lay in the taxation system used to fund government expenditure. While often suggested the nobility and clergy were largely exempt from taxes, more recent work argues the tax burden was in fact shared more equally between the classes than previously understood but its assessment and collection were "a disaster".

1.3 Other factors

From the point of view of the French people towards the reign of King Louis XVI, they thought that The King concentrated on creating business only for his family and never did anything for the people. Mac Kay, P. J. (1983) commented about the revolution in France and concluded that the king obviously never did anything for his people, no direction, no hope, no power. The Queen took herself behind the king and she was to be the representative of the King or the real person to control the king. She appoints many ministers by herself. Her action creates hatred around the country as well as gossip and insults emerged towards the weakness or the stupid King that he was under the control and dominated by the Austrian's Queen or the foreign woman.

1.4 The Economic

France suffered from the crisis of the economic problem from King Louis XV and continued to the reign of King Louis XVI, The economic problem was due to the royal family budget and tax for luxurious consumables for the Queen. Moreover, Julie, M. (2018) urged that not only were the royal coffers depleted, but two decades of poor harvests, drought, cattle disease and skyrocketing bread prices had kindled unrest among peasants and the urban poor. Many expressed their desperation and resentment toward a regime that imposed

heavy taxes—yet failed to provide any relief—by rioting, looting and striking.

On the contrary, in the *Good Earth* did not present politics directly like the *Queen's Confession*, but it can be compared with the Chinese's History in the 20th century by many factors such as;

1.5 The Influences of the culture

Both male and female costumes and the way of life appeared in the novel, especially, Wang Lung's hair style, which was called "biànzi" or shaved head with pigtail. In this case the Cornell University (2020) noted that In the Manchu tradition, both men's and women's outerwear included a full-length robe with a jacket or a vest. Short coats and trousers were to be worn underneath the robes. Men often wore hats, no matter the season, and women wore a traditional headdress on formal occasions.

1.6 The believing of the patriarchal concept.

This is a social system in which men held primary power and predominate in roles of property and title was inherited by the male lineage. (Lerner, G. ,1986; Walby, S,1990; and Hunnicutt, G,2009). Moreover, the perspective of women at that time were concerned with Confucianism and Taoism beliefs from generation to generation as portrayed by the strong believing of O-Lan in her practice herself as the disciple.

1.7 The influences of the economy

In the Late Qing dynasty, China was faced with the starvation of the people. Grada, C. (2009) and Janku, A. (2001) pointed out that The Northern Chinese Famine of 1876–1879 occurred during the late Qing dynasty in China. It is usually referred to as Dīngwù Qìhuāng in China. A drought began in northern China during 1875, resulting in crop failures during the years succeeding. Finally, the Wang Ling's family moved to Southern China.

2. The Discussion of the Results of the two Novels

The perspective of women in the two novels were directly from the attitude and social perspective at that time. Especially, in past times, the reader only perceived and felt sorry about the bad destiny of the women protagonist's more than concerned with giving a helping hand. So, the new dimension of the perspective of women in the novel has absolutely changed.

Hence, the investigation should concern and investigate factors through the attitude or the social value at that time more than reading the novel for only recreational pleasure. It can be said that *The Queen's*

Confession and *The Good Earth* reflects the perspective of women under the social control in the 18th century in France and in the 20th century in China, that can be discussed by the following details as;

The dominant concept of women of two cultures were concerned about the absolute power of man, not only in the Eastern part of the world but also in the Western part. The patriarchal society in China from the past until now can be realized by the explanation of Shen, Y. (2011) as the Chinese society has been considered a typical patriarchal society. However, discussions on gender equality in today's China become mired in sharp conflict between diametrically opposed points of view. One view maintains that gender equality has already been realized in today's China, and that the status of females is already very high. The other view holds that the status of today's Chinese female is constantly declining, and that there is an urgent need to show concern about, and seek solutions to the problem of gender inequality.

According to the *Good Earth*, the perspective of the woman protagonist, O-Lan was also strongly directed to the patriarchal concept and Taoism and was happy with her daily life, even if some women are suffering from this concept from the past until now. Nevertheless, in the sense of the French' women where change happened after the revolution in 1799. Taru Spiegel, the expert historian about the woman in France; Taru, S. (2020) advised that French women were largely confined to the private sphere. Domestic duty and family obligation dictated their behaviour, and the public life was a man's domain.

However, the ideas of equality and rights that sparked the French Revolution captivated women from all backgrounds. The women were eager to voice their political opinions and grievances. While the intellectuals of the upper classes debated property rights and universal suffrage, the working classes took to the streets with their own frustrations such as finding affordable bread that is shown in the *Queen's Confession*.

Adherents of both short views of the two cultures between France and China were mentioned above, it can be proved that they were correct. Because, this discussion maintains that the origin of such debates rests on the fact or circumstances that the concepts of gender inequality and intergenerational inequality have been mixed with the concept of patriarchy.

Inevitably, it can be said that no detailed inquiries have been made on the changes in these two

dimensions of France and China from both novels. Aimed at this reason, only one aspect is seen while the other aspect is overlooked inside the two novels about the perspective of women under the control of the society. This research finds, by means of fieldwork in a Chinese's society in the 20th century and French's society in the 18th century.

But nowadays, it can be demonstrated that the empowerment of women does not come only from men solitary, but mainly from the elderly woman of their family who looked at France after the revolution. Hence, the next study into the mechanisms of patriarchy and social gender must be connected with analyses of intersecting factors such as gender and generation or the age.

Suggestion

1 The recommendation for using this research

1.1 This research can be used for the prototype to study the literature in the form of "the case study", by selecting only one topic that the researcher needs to study in depth.

1.2 This research can be used in the literature classroom context, especially in higher education. Because, the learner can develop their thinking skill and extend their study about the literature that connected with the political, history, society, community, economy and the personality of the characters.

1.3 This method of study can be developed into the integrated literature between the social contexts and the factual events that appear in the novel that the reader never knew. This method create new dimensions of literature research in the holistic form for the near future.

2. The recommendations for future research

2.1 Future study of the literature in comparative ideas of the reader, who differ in gender, age and culture with the literature in the 20th century and the 21st century, especially the perspective and the role of women in the short story or novel by the quantitative method.

2.2 Future study of the current novel or short story that intended to be shown about the personality and behaviour of the protagonist or the antagonist by the psychological theory that are relevant to the background of the person or the event that occurred.

2.3 Future study of the novel or short story both of the previous and the contemporary, that are concerned about the patriarchal concept to control the

woman. But, in opposite side, the patriarchal concept may be used as the value to society or as a method to maintain the society in contrast to the concept as a method to control women. This idea can help the new researcher grow their analytical skills with critical eyes.

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