

Women's Struggle against Patriarchy in "Fight Night" by Miriam Toews

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Abstract

Women's struggles are described in the novel Fight Night by Miriam Toews, a feminist study. This study describes the struggles of three women which are carried out by the main character in the novel Fight Night by Miriam Toews. The three main characters are Swiv, Elvira, and Moshie. This writing method uses qualitative methods. In the novel Fight Night by Miriam Toews. Swiv is a 9 years old boy who struggles to get an education and has to take care of his elderly grandmother and pregnant mother. Moshie is a mother from Swiv Moshie struggling to get equality in work. Elvira is a grandmother and a mother where she has to fight against illness and to still get eligibility in the midst of a Mennonite culture. Until finally Moshie goes with Swiv to meet his family, meeting with a family in a city. Moshie also ended up working at an acting company but instead he had to face acting violence because he was forced to dive while pregnant, and Swiv also got lessons from his grandmother after being expelled from school but she had to taking care of grandmother and mother. This study uses a qualitative approach to uncover problems and uses The Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir (1953). This study concludes that every woman can do all the work to survive without any gender differences. Such as gender inequality in career, desire, power, and regulating what jobs can be done. The writer identified the struggles faced by the main woman characters: become intellectuals, freedom to be herself, freedom to actualize themself.

Keywords: *feminism, Fight Night, patriarchy, woman's struggles, qualitative method*

A. Introduction

Miriam Toews stands as a celebrated figure in the world of literature, hailing from Steinbach, Canada. Her remarkable contributions to the literary realm have garnered widespread recognition, exemplified by her receipt of esteemed accolades such as the Scotiabank Giller and Governor General of Fiction awards. Born on May 21, 1964, Toews is the second daughter of Mennonite parents whose lineage traces back to Kleiner Gemeinde. Her academic pursuits led her to King's College University and the University of Manitoba. Beyond her literary endeavors, Toews embraces the role of a devoted mother, raising two daughters.

With an impressive repertoire of nine published books to her name, including notable works like "Women Talking" and "All My Got Sorrow," Miriam Toews continues to make significant

contributions to the literary landscape. Among her latest works, "Fight Night" stands out as a poignant exploration of the enduring struggles faced by women in contemporary society. Through its narrative, the novel delves into themes of injustice and women's subordination, offering poignant insights into the complexities of gender dynamics. However, amidst the portrayal of adversity, "Fight Night" also showcases the resilience and agency of women, illustrating how they can navigate and challenge societal norms through courage and knowledge. In essence, Miriam Toews' "Fight Night" emerges as a compelling reflection of the ongoing quest for gender equality and empowerment.

B. Method

In this article, qualitative research methods were employed by the author. Qualitative research encompasses various approaches such as case studies, life stories, biographies, and community studies, all of which prioritize description, persuasion, and narrative (Ardilah, 2014, p. 21). These methods share common characteristics, focusing on meaning, natural settings, diverse perspectives, and analytical modes. Drawing from theoretical frameworks, the author collected essential components required for analysis, including necessary analyses, references, and outlines. Additionally, comparisons were made with other theses, journals, or articles relevant to the analysis, facilitating a comprehensive understanding. For data collection, the study primarily relied on the novel "Fight Night" by Miriam Toews. Additional references were gathered from articles, books, theses, and journals accessed through the Universitas Pamulang library and reputable online sources. The data were extracted from the novel's dialogues, encompassing words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that depicted women's struggles against the patriarchal system. Various methods were employed for data collection. Firstly, the novel was meticulously read multiple times to grasp the story and its underlying issues. Secondly, statements containing pertinent issues from "Fight Night" were identified. Thirdly, the identified data were systematically marked, highlighted, and grouped based on the central issue. Subsequently, the collected data were analyzed using feminist theory, particularly drawing from Simone de Beauvoir's work (1953). This analysis aimed to address the study's key questions: How is the issue of women's struggle against patriarchy depicted in "Fight Night," and how do the female characters deal with patriarchy in the novel? Ultimately, the data were presented in essay format to ensure clarity and comprehension.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Women's Struggle against patriarchy in *Fight Night* Novel

There are three female character in the novel who experience injustice due to patriarchal society: Swiv, Elvira, Moshie. Their life is limited in terms of work, education and being multiple roles. Swiv character who requires him not to continue school because he is expelled. When Swiv had problems fighting with his classmates, he had to stop studying. That way grandma decided to teach Swiv at home with makeshift methods and materials.

“All right, school at home, said Grandma. First, the Sudoku. I'll time you. Have you had a BM? I didn't answer. She said if you bring forth what is within you it will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, it will destroy you. That's the gospel of Thomas” (Tows, 2021, p. 38)

1.1. The main character deciding to become independent in patriarchy family.

Women are marked as the second in family and men as the first gender, according to the statement, man is the subject, and the women is the other, then the women objects to a man. Women are marked as the second gender and men as the first gender in society (Beauvoir, 1953). According to the statement above, women can be more active and independent in any situation so that women can prove and have a positive impact on the surrounding environment so that women outside both want to grow and develop together. A woman who is able to make decisions based on her desire to be herself and her belief in what she is doing without needing to be anyone else is said to be capable of being herself. According to (Beauvoir, 1953) “a woman is like all humans, autonomous freedom, but she finds and chooses herself in a world where men force her to think of herself as the Other.” It is seen through the statement follows.

“Grandma lives with us now. She has one foot in the grave, she’s not afraid of anything.” (Tows, 2021, p. 2). Growing up and growing up in a patriarchal environment, she understands more and more about how women struggle to free themselves from the shackles of self-actualization limits. Social constructions that have been formed for a long time seem to impede the movement that is trying to be encouraged. Not only trying hard to fight for rights, but also fighting and breaking down the stigma that has been circulating widely in society. From the statement, we know that these characters live in a patriarchal family environment where a person lives with existing limitations without depending on men and has a positive impact on the next generation and makes women's mindsets so that they are more independent and responsible for their choices. Elvira A grandmother who changed the mindset of her two generations of women by proving the habit of living in a society with old limitations but still teaching her children and grandchildren to keep studying and working. Another quotation is when their families force them to be able to write.

“Our family therapist was the one who told us to write letters, but mom says we can't afford therapy anymore if all we are supposed to do is write to missing people, Grandma says she thinks it's useful. She says we can be like reporters and have our own news desk. She says letters start off as one thing and become another thing (Toews, 2021, p. 3)

1.2. The main character is Being Ostracized

Ostracism is an act of intentionality of a group or social setting that appears in the novel. The data found that Grandma and her family were ostracized by society in public places because of her low status.

The quotation happens when Grandma dan her family's life in the past to be Swiv's letters note.

“When she was kid her father protected her form Willit Braun Senior, the uber-schultz of the village who was a classic tyrant, pompous, authoritarian, insecure, frustrated, self-pitying, resentful, envious, vain and vindictive, and with a mighty chip on his shoulder and dumb.”

“When Grandma grew up, she protected herself from Willit Braun, and she protected Mom from him too, and everyone in her family, even Grandpa, who really liked that about her.” (Toews, 2021, p. 27).

2. The Protagonist's Efforts to Deal with Patriarchy in *Fight Night*

for injustice in the world of work, social society and education. the three female characters finally they try to accept with their own solutions". Swiv still gets limited learning from her grandmother and her life. Elvira is a teacher, mother, grandmother and role model for both generations Even though he was always the one who shouldn't be fighting, but with limited age, energy, and mind he still struggled to defend his home and the right to live in a Mennonite culture by fighting thugs who were in the situation in his city. Moshie, a mother, continued to fight until she gave birth to Gord at the hospital. The third generation Both of them have their respective roles to maintain something in their life. in this section, the writer presents data related to the second question regarding the statement of the problem about what is the influence of the struggles of patriarchal female characters in the novel *Fight Night*. in the novel is pretty accurate. As Beauvoir state, only women (ovulation, menstruation, and parturition) have experienced life experiences that are distinctly female, which make only women can talk about a women's life including the women's struggle and equality.

"Women are punished forever for everything! And her biggest fear is of losing you and Gord." (Toews,2021, p. 52). to get their rights, women should experience many declines from men, to get their rights, women must experience a lot of decline from men. This is because society has determined that men are taller than women. Then, the thoughts that are formed influence men's thoughts which make men not want to be outdone or allow women to be equated with them. With this, from the quote above, there is a statement that women are punished forever, this quote is when the grandmother is sick and the mother is pregnant, while Swiv must look after both of them in order to get their right to comfort. from the quote above they have to fight against the culture and myths they face.

"Mom put her hand on Jay Gatsby's arm. She turned him around to face the door. We are... shinobi, said Mom. Away you go! said Grandma to Jay Gatsby. She was trying to rescue him from Satan's power. We're not selling our house to you, said Mom. Like, this is where we live. It seemed to me like Mom was losing her strength." (Toews, 2021, p.106)

2.1.The main character struggle against, the terms of men's consideration and woman are follower.

Usually men do not have the authority to take away women's rights. Women and men must have equal rights to build society. However, in a patriarchal system, laws and regulations do not apply to women. The state is declared to have the authority to regulate all or some of the norms adopted by society. This means that the norms made by a society in which men participate make it only the property of men in their society. The proof is what sviw tells in the novel, he says:

"A man with an airport uniform walked over to me and said I had to wait in a line for the wheelchairs I couldn't just take one. He pointed at some people standing by a desk. Then Grandma's diuretic kicked in Gotta go! she said. I went back to the airport guy and asked if I could use one of the wheelchairs to take Grandma to the washroom which was forty miles away. He shook his head. I tried to tell him about Grandma's diuretic, but he kept shaking his head and then he walked away to talk with his airport employee friend about his new transmission which had set him back three G. I took a wheelchair and pushed it over to Grandma. (Toews, 2021, p.113)

2.2.The main character struggle for multiple roles

Woman tend to experience multiple roles, often several at once, with different responsibilities. to the expectations that others have of us in any of the roles may differ from the roles themselves, and will conflict with the goals of each individual. Woman were required to marry, have children, work at home, and follow their husbands' rules. Despite the limitations imposed on women, they play an important role in growth and survival.

“All right, school at home, said Grandma. First, the Sudoku I'll time you. Have you had a BM? I didn't answer. She said if you bring forth what is within you it will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, it will destroy you. That's the gospel of Thomas.” (Toews, 2021. p. 38)

D. Conclusion

After the previous chapter is finished, it can be concluded that *Fight Night* describes the struggle of women against patriarchal culture and gender equality. Elvira as the grandmother, Moshie as the mother, Swiv as the little girl, they are the main characters who face some of the abuse that she received as a woman. Elvira has struggled all her life. Since being raised in a strict religious community, she has resisted those who wish to rob her of her joy, independence, and passion. He has struggled to reconcile with his loved ones when they chose to leave him. And now, despite her failing health, Grandma is fighting for her family: for her daughter, single and in her third pregnancy; and for his grandson Swiv Elvira struggled to educate her children and grandchildren because she was considered unable to survive and fought against the Mennonite community, while Moshie as a mother was considered less capable and fought against the equality of her male counterparts because she was a woman, Moshie also struggled to be able to play multiple roles because she was pregnant and are required to continue working. While working as an artist, he is disliked by his superiors. Moshie was not persecuted because it was thought that pregnant women could not work too hard. Swiv, a spirited nine years old who has been suspended from school. Swiv, the narrator who wrote this novel in the form of a letter to every struggle women, Swiv struggles with the dual role of having to care for his grandmother and mother, but he has the ability to learn and develop. Her willingness to learn and grow shows that she is not afraid to take risks, and it is this attitude that made her a pioneer. Her intellectual prowess is her weapon, and she uses it to break the chains that bind her and empower herself.

Elvira made a number of efforts to educate her children and grandchildren and defend their rights in her community, Moshie made efforts to keep working during her pregnancy. one way is to convince officials and the general public that Elvira and her family are women worth considering. moshie finally succeeded in giving birth to her child and her grandmother was sick and had to be hospitalized. Based on the previous explanation, it can be interpreted that Elvira is a woman who tries to fight injustice driven by her gender in a religious community.

5.1.Suggestion

Regarding to this research, the writer would like to provide some suggestions for future writers who are interested in the same study of feminism. The author suggests taking seriously issues related to women's struggles to be analyzed using feminist theory. In addition, they need to be more accurate and precise in choosing the right related studies and their analysis must

correlate sharply with context and storyline. For readers can provide understanding and guidance in studying literary works.

It is advised that future students fill in the following constraints using new methodologies or with different sources, such as from films, short tales, or dramas, in order to address the inadequacies and limits of this study that were brought about by a lack of time and resources. As a result, the study presented on the same subject and with the same focus might be more varied and comprehensive. It is also acknowledged that this study is still limited to character studies which only considers the protagonist.

Hopefully this study can be useful for prospective students of the Department of English who are interested in studying literature, especially those who want to raise the same issue, namely the struggle of women against patriarchy. Furthermore, the author can suggest analyzing women's struggles and gender inequality from various perspectives, such as family aspects and more in the field of education. Finally, this research is expected to help readers understand the forms of struggle against patriarchal culture. In addition, it is expected to increase reading interest in appreciating literary works.

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