

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

In various literary works, the image of women is often shaped by certain stereotypes and models, such as the holy woman, the caring mother, or the obedient wife, that reflect the general public's views about men and women's roles. Even so, literature still serves as a radical space, where women's characters can show their courage, agency, and autonomy in the face of social expectations and power structures maintained by the patriarchal system.

With the development of time, the image of women in literature today increasingly pays attention to intersectional perspectives, which is the relationship between gender and other identities such as ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation. This change shows that women in literature no longer only play a role as a symbol or serve as objects of the story, but as active characters and are able to challenge stereotypes and widely accepted power relations (Vyawahare, 2024). One of the radical spaces that is interesting for challenging these power relations is found in Ernest Hemingway's works.

Whenever we talk about Ernest Hemingway, what we usually imagine is a harsh, cold, and controlled style of language. His journalistic background consists of simple and straightforward prose, without too much flowery language. His short sentences feel real and straightforward, shows self-control. He is very careful in constructing dialogue and uses more concrete nouns, avoiding overly emotional adjectives. (Wagner-martin, 2000). Although this may seem simple, it is actually very complex. The language that appears strong and straightforward actually hides deep emotional tension. Readers can sense a vulnerability that is never directly expressed between the lines.

This hidden deep emotional tension is related to Hemingway's famous "iceberg theory," or the theory of omission. According to research by Shipra (2023), the iceberg theory, introduced by Ernest Hemingway, is a writing technique that purposely hides most of the meaning within a narrative that appears simple on the surface. In this concept, the story is likened to an iceberg, where the visible part is

only the characters' actions, brief dialogue, and descriptions of a specific setting, like the point of the iceberg. At the same time, the true meaning is hidden behind all that narrative, forming emotions, psychological conflicts, and hidden messages, like the part of the iceberg hidden beneath the sea. The author does not explicitly explain the characters' feelings or thoughts but instead lets the reader interpret the meaning of these hidden messages for themselves. Hemingway also uses indirect characterization and atmosphere to build the story's mood without spelling out the details (Shipra, 2023).

Hemingway's works are often associated with strong themes and depictions of tough men who never seem to give up. This is no coincidence, but rather part of his effort to create an image of strong masculinity. However, as Wagner-martin (2000) emphasizes, women's characters play a crucial role apart from the dominance of male characters. They are rarely portrayed as fully developed characters, often appearing stereotypically, but they allow readers to understand the weaknesses in male characters' views of masculinity (Wagner-martin, 2000). In this situation, the role of the women's character is important as a bridge in observing men who try to maintain their concept of masculine strength, even though this hard attitude actually hides doubts and vulnerability.

Hemingway, despite being known for his masculine and cold writing style, uses subtle and complex storytelling techniques. In several of his short stories, he portrays the women's body as a symbolic space of conflict, which is subtly expressed through nature, inanimate objects, and other non-human elements. Women's struggle to maintain their bodily autonomy is not depicted through confrontation, but rather develops slowly through simple conversations, silences, which seem to be ordinary narratives, and quiet but tense moments. This approach allows women's resistance to patriarchal pressure to be hidden and almost invisible, but powerful in its silence.

The most obvious example of this depiction is in the short story "Hills Like White Elephants," where the issue of abortion is never explicitly mentioned. Hemingway, following the principle of "never say it yourself," conveys the conflict about women's bodies through implied meaning and silence, rather than through

direct statements. This strategy of avoidance actually strengthens patriarchal pressure, forcing readers to understand the hidden power dynamics behind simple dialogue. Therefore, women in Hemingway's work do not appear as passive characters, but as symbols of subtle conflict, the pull and push between personal desire and male control that works silently but strongly.

In "Hills Like White Elephants," as mentioned before, Jig, the women's character, struggles to defend her desire to keep her pregnancy, while her partner continues to pressure her to have an abortion. Although this desire is never explicitly stated, their conversation implicitly shows the pressure that the male character puts on Jig's decision regarding her body. The conflict in this story centers on their differing views, where the male character wants freedom without responsibility, while Jig faces choices that concern her future and her own body. The tension in their dialogue reveals an unequal relationship, where the man's desires are more dominant, but Jig continues to show resistance through her doubts, questions, and efforts to maintain the pregnancy.

A similar pattern of control is also seen in another Ernest Hemingway short story, "Cat in the Rain," although it is manifested through a different situation. In this short story, patriarchal dominance is reflected in the husband's indifferent attitude and neglect of his wife's emotional needs, which leads to subtle resistance. The wife feels lonely and neglected in her marriage, while her husband remains indifferent and prioritizes his own opinions over his wife's feelings. The simple desires expressed by the women's character reveal her longing for attention, warmth, and a more complete sense of identity in her domestic life. However, her husband's cold response only emphasizes the emotional distance between them. Through this dynamic, the story shows that in a space dominated by patriarchal values, women's resistance can emerge slowly and is not always expressed openly, but rather through attitudes and desires that appear simple but are rich in meaning.

In "The End of Something," the ruins of a lumber mill in Hortons Bay, showing Nick and Marjorie's relationship problems, represent not only the separation of two individuals, but also reflect a shift in social values from traditional lifestyles to a more individualistic modernity. The conflict that arises in their relationship reveals

an imbalance of power, in which Nick's passive yet dominant attitude impacts the direction of the relationship, while Marjorie is in a situation that requires her to accept one-sided decisions. This dynamic opens up a space for reading about issues of control, autonomy, and power relations in male-women's relationships. Although the story is told in a simple narrative style with minimal explicit explanation, the text contains indications of patriarchal tension and implied forms of women's resistance.

These short stories are relevant to feminist analysis, as they reveal inequality and differences in mindset between characters. As seen in the explanation above, Hemingway often implicitly depicts patriarchal control over women through dialogue and symbolic narratives in his works. In these three works, he indirectly expressed women's silent struggle for bodily autonomy through symbols such as nature or non-human objects. The patterns that occur in these short stories lead us to an understanding of how feminism works, especially in a short story.

Simone de Beauvoir states in her book, *The Second Sex*, that women are not born with a "biological fate." Instead, women are shaped by social conditions that make them unequal. Women's condition is not natural, but rather a result of a culture that sets limits on their bodies and roles. Women's bodies are considered a "situation" that is restricted by various rules within the patriarchal system. Biological experiences, such as menstruation and pregnancy, actually make the body feel strange (Beauvoir, 2010). In fact, it is not women's bodies themselves that make them unequal, but rather the way society views those bodies.

Beauvoir explains that gender inequality arises because men are always considered the subject or center, while women are seen as the other or the shadow of men. She says that men are human beings, and they define women not based on women's own identities, but based on women's relationships with men. Thus, in cases such as traditional marriage, women often lose their legal rights and financial control, limiting them to household tasks that are not particularly important (Beauvoir, 2010). They do not have the opportunity to develop outside the family. This inequality is not only a social problem, but has become an obstacle that limits women's freedom in various aspects of their lives.

The situation is even more complicated because women are often viewed only in terms of their reproductive abilities. Beauvoir criticizes the patriarchal view that sees women as nothing more than wombs, as if women only have a biological function for the benefit of society, rather than as individuals with rights (Beauvoir, 2010). If women do not have control over their reproduction, they are trapped in “reproductive slavery”. Access to contraception and legal abortion is essential for women’s independence. For Beauvoir, freedom is not just a word, but must be a real right that can be used to determine someone’s body and future.

In short, freedom is not just a matter of physical freedom. Beauvoir says that women can only truly be free if they work. Work is very important in avoiding economic dependence, which keeps women in a subordinate position. However, this struggle cannot be fought alone. Instead, it must be fought together to change societal norms and the way we learn (Beauvoir, 2010). Judith Butler also adds that gender identity is formed from repeatedly practiced social habits, so that to resist means to break down these rules that are considered “natural” (Butler, 1999). At the end of the day, women must reject the assumption that they are weak and just objects, then take control of themselves and no longer be ‘the Other,’ but become people who determine their own lives.

When women’s autonomy is constantly restricted by patriarchal social and cultural structures, women’s resistance is often implicit and rarely present in a frontal way in real life or in literature. Many literary narratives depict women’s resistance subtly, from word choice and dialogue tone, physical gestures that are considered unimportant, to symbols and storylines that appear neutral. Due to this subtle resistance, this study attempts to explore literary narratives, particularly Hemingway’s three short stories, “Hills Like White Elephants,” “Cat in the Rain,” and “The End of Something,” which symbolically depict women’s resistance in their narratives.

In addition, this study is also based on some previous studies that have intensively examined central issues related to patriarchal control and women’s bodily autonomy within the framework of the patriarchal system, especially through the analysis of literature in English. Several key studies have focused on deep

analysis of Ernest Hemingway's short stories from various perspectives and on gender conflict in general.

Previous research on Ernest Hemingway's short story "Cat in the Rain" has typically focused on gender conflict and women's search for identity within the context of patriarchy. Meng Jie (2022) and YAN Rui (2023) apply Spatial Criticism and Feminist Reading approaches to explore how space, symbols, and power relations shape the experiences of women's characters, but neither of them discusses the aspect of bodily resistance in depth. Meanwhile, Soegiarto et al. (2025) use Peirce's semiotic approach to analyze the cat as a symbol that represents the main character's desires and loneliness, but do not explain its relationship to feminist perspectives or women's bodily autonomy.

Furthermore, research on the story "Hills Like White Elephants" also shows attention to power relations and women's responses to male domination. Fonseka, (2018) examines the strength of women's characters in facing attempts to influence them regarding pregnancy, although her analysis remains within the psychological category. Bhuiyan, (2018) interprets Jig's decision as a form of resistance and control over sexual freedom through a feminist and new historicism approach, although her analysis focuses more on verbal resistance. Chaiyaphan, (2007) emphasizes obedience to gender stereotypes, which shows the strength of patriarchal norms, without thoroughly exploring narrative symbols as a form of discourse that controls women's bodies.

There is also previous research on Hemingway's short story "The End of Something" that has mostly focused on character relationships, narrative techniques, and correlation between the story's setting and the characters' emotions. For example, Raleigh (2016) interprets the ruin of Horton's Bay as a symbol of the broken relationship between Nick and Marjorie, while nature, as shown with the symbol of the moon, represents the place where Nick seeks protection and solutions. On the other hand, Bouzonviller (2007) uses Lacanian psychoanalysis and sees fishing as an indication of relational violence, as well as considering Nick's silence as a lack of communication. Hollister (2012) compares the "end" of Nick and Marjorie's relationship with the collapse of the lumber mill.

Barnes (2016) highlights the “Ending Echo” pattern with nature as a reflection of the characters’ feelings. Overall, these studies, despite their approaches, have not fully explored the symbolism and incidents in the story as the reflection of patriarchal power.

And the struggle against patriarchy continues to be developed by Fauziah et al., (2025), H. Alyousif & Basyah Sallehuddin, (2024), and Rahmawati, (2025), who highlight various forms of resistance, ranging from the process of power negotiation to the rejection of dependence on men. While, for bodily autonomy, Hafidz Hakami et al., (2025) emphasize the importance of autonomous actions as an effort to resist the objectification of women’s bodies. In general, the studies discussed have not specifically explored how bodily autonomy is symbolically fought for through seemingly neutral narrative elements in Hemingway’s work.

Upon closer examination, the previous studies discussed earlier have indeed been successful in providing a rich understanding of women’s resistance to patriarchal culture, whether through the search for identity, rejection of bodily objectification, or strategies for negotiating power in various social and cultural contexts. These various studies show that women keep trying to reclaim independent spaces in the middle of restrictive social structures.

However, despite offering significant contributions, these studies still leave analytical gaps. Most research stops at the level of description, describing how women resist patriarchal pressures in literary works or films, but it has not comprehensively connected how these narratives of resistance directly relate to fundamental issues concerning women’s bodily autonomy as the most basic human right.

Few studies link the dynamics of resistance in texts to the real-world challenges women face in society, such as difficulties to reproductive access, cultural pressures, or policy biases that systematically uphold patriarchal dominance. Therefore, this research emerges to bridge the gap between narrative readings and social realities by highlighting how symbolic resistance in literary works can reflect and critique the subtle mechanisms that limit women’s bodily freedom in everyday life.

The focus of this study shows a more specific and deeper direction compared to previous research studies. Most previous studies analyzed forms of resistance in general or examined literary works separately, thus failing to capture how symbols and narratives work together to form depictions of women's physical resistance. There are few studies of these three short stories by Ernest Hemingway that examine similar and specific symbolic patterns in depicting patriarchal pressure and resistance strategies that emerge from women's bodies themselves.

This research moves beyond such approaches by centering attention on symbolic narratives that subtly yet firmly mark forms of bodily resistance, and by linking them to contemporary gender issues through a cross-disciplinary approach grounded in feminist criticism. In this way, the study not only deepens the analysis of Hemingway's three short stories but also offers a more subtle understanding of how patriarchal structures are challenged through symbolic narratives, while providing an analytical foundation that can enrich the discourse on women's bodily autonomy in both literary and broader social contexts.

1.2.Statement of Problem

The issue of women's bodily autonomy in the patriarchal system has become a common problem all over the world, because it reflects the restriction on women's autonomy in patriarchal control issues. These problems then raise research questions about what and how narrative symbols of patriarchal control and women's bodily autonomy function in literary works. Based on the issues that arise in this context, the following questions can be made:

1. What are the forms of patriarchal control and women's bodily autonomy depicted in three Ernest Hemingway's short stories?
2. How do the narrative symbols in three Ernest Hemingway's short stories depict patriarchal control and women's bodily autonomy?

1.3.Research Purpose

Based on the research question above, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To discover the forms of symbols of patriarchal control and women's bodily autonomy presented in the three Ernest Hemingway's short stories.
2. To analyze the narrative symbols in three of Ernest Hemingway's short stories which portray patriarchal control and women's bodily autonomy.

1.4. Research Significance

The significance of exploring the forms of control patriarchy in the literary narrative of Ernest Hemingway's works can be understood both theoretically and practically. Especially when the urgency of this research is more obvious if we look at the current global conditions, where many women are still struggling to decide on their own reproductive health services.

Theoretically, this study may enrich feminist literary studies by analyzing the narrative symbols in the short stories "Hills Like White Elephants," "Cat in the Rain," and "The End of Something." Previous studies on Hemingway's short stories have generally focused on characters, general conflicts, or verbal resistance. This study broadens the perspective by linking Hemingway's narrative symbols to feminism, especially regarding women's fundamental right to bodily autonomy. In addition, the study can help expand understanding of feminist literary theory by highlighting how classic literary works depict forms of gender oppression and hidden power dynamics in everyday life. Therefore, this study is intended to serve as a reference for future research on similar topics.

Practically, this study is important because it is relevant to current global issues, where many women still face difficulties in making decisions regarding their own bodies, especially in matters of reproductive health. In some countries, women's rights over their own bodies are increasingly being restricted, indicating that patriarchal control remains strong and continues to impact women's health and gender equality. Through the analysis of Hemingway's works within the context of modern literature, this study contributes to the discussion on the importance of women's rights and resistance against the patriarchal system. The results of this study are also intended to contribute to gender education and women's studies,

raising awareness about the importance of reproductive rights for everyone and equal access to their own bodies, especially for less fortunate women, such as migrants, people with disabilities, and those in traditional societies. Ultimately, this study seeks to affirm that literature is a powerful medium for reflecting social reality, empowering feminism, and encouraging greater understanding and support for women's rights around the world.

