



**WOMEN'S INFERIORITY IN HAITI AS SEEN IN EDWIDGE DANTICAT'S
*BREATH EYES MEMORY***

THESIS

BY:

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PADANG

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*Submitted to Fulfill a Partial of Requirement for S1 Degree
In the Department of English Faculty of Humanities
Bung Hatta University*

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ABSTRACT

MUHAMMAD IDRIS (2015) Women's Inferiority In Haiti As Seen in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath Eyes Memory*. A Thesis: English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Bung Hatta University.

Supervisor I : Femmy Dahlan, S.S., M. Hum.

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This thesis discusses about women's inferiority in Haiti because of gender representation in Patriarchal culture which is pictured in *Breath Eyes Memory* by Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian- American author. This study has two major purposes, they are (1) to describe the aspects of women's inferiority in Haiti and (2) to describe how Haitian women resist toward their inferiority. In attaining the purpose, the writer applies feminist literary approach by Kate Millett which emphasizes on the issues of sexism in educational, economical, and social aspect. In addition, the writer applies qualitative and descriptive methods to analyze and understand the content in the novel. From the analysis, the writer found that there are different treatments between men and women in education, economy and social aspect in Haitian society where women are still more disadvantaged. Men also insist women to be submissive by men's rule that applied in Haitian society and make women feeling oppressed. These circumstances make men living in superior and women living in inferior. Living in inferior condition becomes conflict for them and the result they resist toward their inferiority.

Key words: patriarchal culture, inferiority, oppression, resistance.

TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	i
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Reason for Choosing the Topic	1
1.2 Objective and Scope of Study.....	3
1.3 Formulation of the Problem.....	4
1.4 Theoretical Framework.....	4
1.5 Method of the Research	7
CHAPTER II THE ASPECTS OF WOMEN INFERIORITY IN HAITI	
2.1 Educational Aspect.....	10
2.2 Economical Aspect.....	14
2.3 Social Aspect.....	17
CHAPTER III THE RESISTANCES OF HAITIAN WOMEN TOWARD THEIR INFERIORITY	
3.1 Improve Education	25
3.2 Improve Standard of Living.....	29
3.3 Ignore Social Beliefs.....	30
CHAPTER IV CONCLUSION	33
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Reason for Choosing the Topic

The phenomenon about women inferiority occurred not only in America, but also throughout the world including in a country in Caribbean officially known as Republic of Haiti. In Haiti women are living in inferior condition. The discrimination against women is being a structural feature in Haitian society and culture that has subsisted throughout its history, both in times of peace and unrest. The inequality right between men and women has been a longstanding problem in Haiti where men are more dominated in all aspects.

In Haitian society, men have important role to run economy than women. In both rural and urban areas, men monopolize the job market. Only men work as jewelers, construction workers, general laborers, mechanics, and chauffeurs. Most of them also have profession as doctors, teachers, and school directors. Men also prevail, although not entirely, in the professions of spiritual healer and herbal practitioner. While Haitian women's jobs are selling plantation products, pulling carts, and worker in plantations. There are limited educational opportunities for women which explain why poorer women are limited to performing jobs within a household. In many cases, the lack of educational opportunities makes it hard for women to find jobs, which therefore inhibits a women's flexibility in the role they play in society.

Haitian women are working very hard in their home and outside the home. At home they are responsible to cook, clean and take care of their children and outside the home they also had to earn money by selling fruits, vegetables, meat in the market and working in plantations. Women are also victims of sexual harassment and other discrimination.

Therefore, Haiti can be said as one of the countries that practices patriarchal culture. Ann Oakley in her book *Sex, Gender, And Society* explained “in Patriarchal culture women play the roles of the housewife and mother. This is because women are made to play these roles because of their biology.”(4) It means, patriarchal culture is a culture controlled by men. The women’s images by men’s views such as powerless, don’t grow up or stay passive, uneducated and dependent on men, because of those images women considered only able to do housework.

An interesting novel *Breath Eyes Memory* by Edwidge Danticat is a novel describing about women inferiority in Haitian society. *Breath Eyes Memory* first was published in 1994 and chosen as an Oprah Book Club in 1998. Edwidge Danticat is Haitian-American author, educator and lecturer. She was born in Port-au-Prince 19 January 1969, Haiti.

Breath Eyes Memory is a novel describing Haitian women existence in Haitian society. In some aspects, the women’s rights are very limited. The Haitian traditions make women can not do anything in their life. Four women pictured in this novel, Sophie, Martine, Atie and Grandme are depiction of Haitian women’s life in 20th century. In Haitian society, women have no opportunity to get education. This circumstance makes them living without knowledge and it is felt so hard for them.

There is no education also affecting to their economy because they have no skill to find good job. Pictured in this novel women characters are living in poverty. They are working as laborer in cane field, rice pounder, and tilling their land. In social, women have to submissive by rules made by men. Women always accept oppression, act despising and harassment in society. Women are considered have no power to fight back and they are being weak object for men.

Based on the explanations above, the writer is interested to analyze *Breath Eyes Memory* by Edwidge Danticat because the depictions of women's inferiority in Haiti pictured in Danticat's novel is an interesting issue to be analyzed. Finally, the writer determines this research under the title "Women's inferiority in Haiti As seen in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath Eyes Memory*."

1.2 The Objective and the Scope of Study

The object of this research is a novel entitled *Breath Eyes Memory* by Edwidge Danticat. The main objective of this study is to describe Women's inferiority in Haiti and how Haitian women resist toward their inferiority.

The writer focuses his scope of the study on women's inferiority and the role of patriarchy plays gender relations in education, economy and social. Therefore, this research will be limited to the resistance that is done by Haitian women toward their inferiority in patriarchal culture.

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

In reaching the purpose of this research, the writer makes it easier by using some questions in order to make this analysis more detail and the writer identifies the problems as follow:

1. What are the aspects of women's inferiority in Haiti described in *Breath Eyes Memory* by Edwidge Danticat?
2. How does Haitian women resist toward their inferiority in *Breath Eyes Memory* by Edwidge Danticat?

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In analyzing this research the writer uses feminist literary approach. According to Lois Tyson in *Critical Theory Today* explained "Feminist literary approach is the way in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women."(83). Booker in *A Practical Introduction to Literary Theory and Criticism* states "feminist focuses on the relationship between literature and patriarchal biases in society and on the potential role that literature can play in overcoming such biases." (89) and to support this analysis the writer uses theory by Kate Millett one of famous feminist writers who gives many critics of the issues of sexism in education, economy, politic and social in literary works.

Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* states “patriarchy enforces a temperamental imbalance of personality traits between the sexes, its educational institutions, segregated or co-educational, accept a cultural programing toward the generally operative division between "masculine" and "feminine" subject matter, assigning the humanities and certain social sciences (at least in their lower or marginal branches) to the female and science and technology, the professions, business and engineering to the male. Of course the balance of employment, prestige and reward at present lie with the latter. Control of these fields is very eminently a matter of political power. One might also point out how the exclusive dominance of males in the more prestigious fields directly serves the interests of patriarchal power in industry, government, and the military. And since patriarchy encourages an imbalance in human temperament along sex lines, both divisions of learning (science and the humanities) reflect this imbalance.”(42)

Millet claims “One of the most efficient branches of patriarchal government lies in the agency of its economic hold over its female subjects. In traditional patriarchy, women, as non-persons without legal standing, were permitted no actual economic existence as they could neither own nor earn in their own right. Since women have always worked in patriarchal societies, often at the most routine or strenuous tasks, what is at issue here is not labor but economic reward.”(39) And “is perfectly aware that among the poor the female is subject to greater indignities than anywhere else, as she is the only creature in the world over whom an exploited man can claim superiority and "prove" it by crude force.”(100)

Millett also states that “Patriarchal force also relies on a form of violence particularly sexual in character and realized most completely in the act of rape. The figures of rapes reported represent only a fraction of those which occur "as the "shame" of the event is sufficient to deter women from the notion of civil prosecution under the public circumstances of a trial. Traditionally rape has been viewed as an offense one male commits upon another—a matter of abusing "his woman." Vendetta, such as occurs in the American South, is carried out for masculine satisfaction, the exhilarations of race hatred, and the interests of property and vanity (honor). In rape, the emotions of aggression, hatred, contempt, and the desire to break or violate personality, take a form consummately appropriate to sexual politics.”(44)

Additionally, in <http://www.languageinindia.feminism> Shilpi Goel states “the rebellion of female consciousness against the male images of female identity and experience. The concept of female identity shows us how female experience is transformed into female consciousness, often reaction to male paradigms for female experience. It is an ideology that opposes the political, economical, and cultural relegation of women to the position inferiority. The critical project of feminist critics is thus concerned with covering the contingencies of gender as a cultural, social and political construct and instrument of domination.

1.5 Method of Research

In this research the writer uses two methods that are qualitative and descriptive methods to analyze women's inferiority in Haiti. According to Cresswell (1994) "A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" <http://www.computing.dcu.ie/~hruskin/htm> and descriptive method according to Nyoman Kuta Rata (2006:53) "descriptive method is an analyzing through describing facts and then followed by analysis.

So, it can be concluded that the qualitative method is a method in data collecting process of sorting out and make the data to be analyzed, while the descriptive method is a method that describes the process of the data that has been sorted. Thus, qualitative method is closely related to the descriptive method in which these methods are complementary to each other.

To achieve best goal in this research, the writer also uses two techniques which applied in this analysis the technique as follow:

1.5.1 Technique of Collecting the Data.

The writing of this proposal base on collected from any sources where the related books are available: to gain more detailed information to support the content of this proposal. As stated previously, the data needed in this study is about women's

inferiority in Haiti in the novel. The data that are collected from the source is especially the novel *Breath, Eyes, Momory*.

1.5.2 Technique of analyzing the data.

As soon as the significant data are collected the writer comes to analyze about women's inferiority in Haiti as seen in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. The writer read the novel to find some quotation to the object of the study and then the writer tries to interpret and explain it. At last the writer put it in the Proposal as the result of the research. The data is then presented in a descriptive method that is by describing the fact about the novel focusing on those questioned values. The description is then followed by interpretation and analysis making use the concepts related to literature and education values.