



TC

BİNGÖL ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI

**A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF GENDER ISSUES IN  
CHOPIN'S *THE AWAKENING* AND STRINDBERG'S *MISS  
JULIE* IN THE LIGHT OF FEMINIST CRITICISM AND  
NEW HISTORICISM**

(CHOPIN'İN *UYANIŞ* VE STRINDBERG'İN *MATMAZEL  
JULIE* ADLI ESERLERİNDE CİNSİYET TEMALARININ  
FEMİNİST ELEŞTİRİ VE YENİ TARİHSELÇİLİK IŞIĞINDA  
ELEŞTİREL BİR İNCELEMESİ)

**Duygu DOĞAN**

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**DR. ÖĞR. ÜYESİ Özlem ULUCAN**

**Bingöl -2022**





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## DECLARATION

I declare that all information in this master's thesis "A Critical Examination Of Gender Issues In Chopin's *The Awakening* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie* In The Light Of Feminist Criticism and New Historicism" has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic procedures and ethical principles.

.../.../2022

İmza

Duygu DOĞAN

## BİNGÖL ÜNİVERSİTESİ

### SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

*Duygu DOĞAN* tarafından hazırlanan "A Critical Examination Of Gender Issues In Chopin's *The Awakening* and Strindberg's *Miss Julie* In The Light Of Feminist Criticism and New Historicism" başlıklı bu çalışma, [Savunma Sınavı Tarihi] tarihinde yapılan tez savunma sınavı sonucunda [oybirliği/oy çokluğuyla] başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı'nda Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

#### **TEZ JÜRİSİ ÜYELERİ (Unvanı, Adı ve Soyadı)**

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**Üye:** ..... İmza: .....

#### **ONAY**

Bu Tez, Bingöl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yönetim Kurulunun ...../...../2022 tarih ve ..... sayılı oturumunda belirlenen jüri tarafından kabul edilmiştir.

Doç. Dr. Mehmet Zahir ERTEKİN

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## ABSTRACT

<b>Title of the Thesis Proposal: A Critical Examination of Gender Issues in Chopin's <i>The Awakening</i> and Strindberg's <i>Miss Julie</i> In The Light of Feminist Criticism and New Historicism</b>	
<b>Author</b>	<b>: Duygu DOĞAN</b>
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<b>Department</b>	<b>: English Language and Literature</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>: ..../..../2022</b>
<p>Many litterateurs have been concerned with issues related to sexism from past to present. Among them are Kate Chopin and August Strindberg who lived in the Victorian era and dealing with theme of woman in their works. Both, Chopin's <i>The Awakening</i> (1899) and Strindberg's <i>Miss Julie</i> (1888) focus on the Victorian era and emphasize common problems of women such as gender discrimination and supremacy of men in society. Contrary to comparisons among similar genres, the novel and the theatre play discussing similar issues on the social reality of women are compared in this study. The analysis of the works shed light on the zeitgeist of the time emphasizing how patriarchal societies suppress women and how the women struggle against it.</p> <p>In the first chapter of this study, general information about New historicism and Feminist theory, which are among literary theories, will be given and their historical development processes will be examined. In the second and third chapters, <i>The Awakening</i> and <i>Miss Julie</i> will be examined in a comparative way by means of Feminist criticism and New historicism. In the conclusion part, it will be shown that despite different settings, the historical and socio-cultural structure of the patriarchal societies lay the burden on the women.</p>	
<b>Key Words:</b> Feminism, Kate Chopin, August Strindberg, Woman	



## ÖZET

**Tez Önerisinin Başlığı : Chopin'in *Uyanış* ve Strindberg'in *Bayan Julie* İsimli Eserlerinde Cinsiyet Temalarının Feminist Eleştiri ve Yeni Tarihselcilik Işığında Eleştirel Bir İncelemesi**

**Yazarı : Duygu DOĞAN**

**Danışman : Özlem ULUCAN**

**Anabilim Dalı : İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı**

Geçmişten günümüze birçok edebiyatçı cinsiyetçilik ile alakalı konularla ilgilenmişlerdir. Bunlar arasında Viktorya döneminde yaşamış olan Kate Chopin ve August Strindberg eserlerinde kadın temasını ele alan isimlerdendir. Bu bağlamda, Chopin'in *The Awakening* (1899) ve Strindberg'in *Miss Julie* (1888) adlı eserleri Viktorya dönemi üzerinde durarak, toplumdaki cinsiyetçilik sorunsalı ve erkek egemenliği gibi kadınların ortak sorunlarına dikkat çekerler. Bu çalışmada, benzer türler arasındaki karşılaştırmaların aksine, kadının toplumsal gerçekliği üzerine benzer konuları ele alan bir roman ve tiyatro oyunu karşılaştırılmıştır. Eserlerin analizi, ataerkil toplumların kadınlar üstünde nasıl bir baskı oluşturduğu ve kadınların buna karşı nasıl tepki gösterdiğine vurgu yaparak zamanın ruhuna ışık tutacaktır.

Çalışmanın ilk bölümünde, edebiyat teorileri arasında yer alan Yeni Tarihselcilik ve Feminist teori hakkında genel bilgiler verilecek ve bunların tarihsel gelişim süreçleri incelenecektir. İkinci ve üçüncü bölümlerde, *The Awakening* ve *Miss Julie* adlı eserler, Feminist eleştiri ve Yeni tarihselcilik üzerinden karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde incelenecektir. Sonuç bölümünde, ataerkil toplumların tarihsel ve sosyo-kültürel yapısının, farklı ortamlara rağmen kadının omzuna yük bindirdiği gösterilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Feminizm, Kate Chopin, August Strindberg, Kadın

## INTRODUCTION

Applying New historicism to a literary work is to offer the reader a more in-depth understanding and a clearer analysis of the text compared to traditional approaches. When literary and non-literary texts are examined in terms of New historicism, all kinds of elements, both inside and outside the texts, are evaluated together; that is to say, numerous elements and phenomena, characterizing the conditions of the period in which the literary work was written, the power relations of that period, and the personal experiences of the author, that may have an impact on the interpretation of the work, are evaluated together (Gallagher, 1989, p. 37). In addition to this, non-textual elements draw the attention of the reader to the ignored features of a literary work, and they are also important for a better interpretation of the literary work. A link is established between text and values through New historicism. Besides literary text, the New historicists also give importance to all institutions, including dances, ceremonies, people's dressing styles, and archives that reflect society and culture (Kara, 2011, p. 30).

On the other hand, Feminist criticism, unlike other literary approaches, emphasizes the importance of women authors and figures throughout a work. It can even be said that most of the people who support the understanding of Feminism agree that women authors can express women's experiences better than men. Women's problems and their suffering may not be reflected accurately by men authors. When these theories are applied to *The Awakening* (1899) and *Miss Julie* (1888), the reader is involved in a versatile reading and interpretation process by both woman and man authors. Therefore, in this study based on gender issues, Feminist criticism in the 1800s and New historicism in the 1980s will be discussed together.

Women have fought for equality, respect, and the same rights as men in society throughout history. However, patriarchy, a notion in which men are always considered superior to women and have the right to exert control over them, makes it harder for women to gain their rights. This idea has expanded widely throughout society's social structures, making it even more difficult for women to achieve their Feminist goals.

Although the history of Feminism is complicated, the most likely explanation for its emergence is an effort to change women's lives. The study of gender issues is central to Feminist theory. The Feminist movement rejects violence against women, but it advocates equal pay with men, reproductive rights, and childcare leave. In Feminism, patriarchy, discrimination, and oppression are all matters of concern which are discussed.

The focus of this work is on Feminism through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Women's economic, social and political opportunities in the world, as well as their roles in society, were changing dramatically at the time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, women were regarded as second-class citizens. Men imposed rules and regulations on women, and they experienced by them. Women's responsibilities included marriage, caring for children, and fulfilling their duties as a mother and wife. Women did not have voting or property ownership rights because of society's male-dominated social structure. Feminist thoughts and attitudes that supported women's rights spread across the world at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Women strove for gender equality but ended up with male supremacy. Thereafter, Feminist ideas and the women's movement gained popularity. Women had an important place in society as politicians, economists, and authors, after years of abuse and injustice. The development of Feminism, which gave women rights, brought these successes.

Feminism is an ideology that argues for equal rights in the economy, politics, and social life for women and men. It can also be seen as a revolution in which men and women are treated equally without prejudice. Feminists suggest everyone is equal, regardless of gender, social and economic status, and age. Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, feminists have been organized to show that men are not superior to women. They have tried to show that social inequality is not predetermined innately by God, but the result of wrong doings of human beings and unfavorable social conditions. Feminists fight for legal, political, educational, and other reforms that will allow women to choose a life that suits their talents and interests, rather than a life dictated by society and traditions. Feminism, which started a global debate for solving women's problems and

eliminating inequality many years ago, continues its struggle as the voice of women who can not express their feelings and wishes. Also, the influence of literature in this struggle is inarguable (Abd Ali, 2021, p. 2).

Literature plays an important role in the development of society. It influences civilizations, changes political systems, and reveals injustice. Literature reflects society in both positive and negative ways. The purpose of literature is to reflect the faults of society to make society aware of its faults and correct them. Since literature is considered a cultural element, it reflects current events and human experiences. For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Victorian literature reflected the reality of American society. It was a patriarchal society that limited the role of women in the house. Hence, women were described as weak, irrational, and emotional creatures. However, this study is based on the views and thoughts of two opposite-sex authors, rather than looking at gender roles only as men or women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The common point of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* is that they deal with female and male identities in society, the loss of self, the vision of women, the oppression of women, the mother-wife role, and women's search for identity.

Öznur Yemez proposes that male-dominated civilizations normalize female suffering by instilling a sense of selflessness. As a result, women are confronted with enormous tasks at an early age and begin to live a life that is only relevant in the context of masculine norms and is physically and spiritually influenced by beliefs. Although women seek self-awareness and the recovery of identity confusion, they are unfairly punished by patriarchal society (Yemez, 2013, p. 3). Similarly, *Miss Julie* and *The Awakening* illustrate the obstacles women meet. In this respect, this thesis explores the importance of elements such as society and culture in shaping women's identity and their lifestyle. Unlike men, women are highly influenced by society, as it restricts their freedoms and gives men superiority. Ahmed Tarek Kadry claims that identity is a presupposed term that relates to an individual's essential features or ideas (Kadry, 2012, p. 7). That is, identity is the consequence of social experiences of the characters in *The Awakening* and *Miss Julie*. The main female characters, the

protagonists, Edna and Miss Julie, create discourse and survive despite social constraints. Their suicides may put an end to their lives, but both their deaths and the ethical effects of their discourses have a considerable impact on the perspectives of the people who read these works later. Furthermore, by choosing death for their female characters, authors participate in a meaningful conversation with their readers, highlighting the moral values because each work represents his/her contemporary social hierarchy and values. In this regard, this study sheds light on the struggle of women in different patriarchal societies such as Sweden and America in the same period. It also discusses Feminism's efforts to eradicate women's oppression around the world and support equal rights in all areas. This study examines and seeks an answer to the following questions: What are the gender roles in *Miss Julie* and *The Awakening*? What is the expectation of men and society from womanhood? What are the effects of Victorian gender discrimination on characters? What causes Julie and Edna to commit suicide? Indeed, what are the similarities and differences between the two works?

A traditional historical reading of *The Awakening* might analyze how relevant the exploitation of women's rights is to the historical realities of that period, based on the dominance of patriarchy and gender inequalities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to this, a traditional literary historian can analyze biographical elements to determine which parts of the novel are drawn from Chopin's own life or real experiences (Tyson, 2006, p. 292). To what extent are Edna Pontellier's experiences, those of Chopin's? To what extent does the novel depict events that Chopin saw or heard about herself? Moreover, according to traditional historians, biographical facts can be examined to learn about the author's creative imagination (Tyson, 2006, p. 294). For example, what is the influence on Chopin's writing of her early interest in philosophy and literature? Does she write largely from memory? Similarly, a traditional historical reading of *Miss Julie* may analyze -based on historical accounts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century class and gender conflicts, dominance and submission- whether or not Strindberg's description of these aspects of Swedish society is relatable to historical reality. Does Strindberg capture perspectives that reflect the spirit of this troubled period? A traditional historical

reading may analyze the circumstances that may have influenced the work to find historical sources of its characters, plot and setting. To give an example, are the characters and events in the play based on real historical figures and events? Or does Strindberg draw upon specific historical sources such as history books, newspapers, legal documents? As stated above, a traditional historical critic who wants to find evidence of the influence of other literary works on Strindberg's artistic style may analyze his reading habits. For example, does Strindberg's emphasis on psychological and philosophical elements in *Miss Julie* stem from his interest in early ages in these areas?

On the other hand, it is reasonable to assume that New historicists who turn to textualism and contextualism can no longer hide behind the idea of apolitical neutrality and must consequently choose a new path. New historicism aims to reach 'beyond'. This 'beyond' should abandon the utopian idea of apolitical neutrality or the myth of go-betweenness in favor of forming various alliances with other powerful ethical-political theories and 'isms' including feminism, multiculturalism, post-colonialism. In this thesis, since it is not possible to examine all the relationships between historicism and these otherness-oriented postmodern 'isms', the relationship between New historicism and Feminism will be examined. The relationship between New historicism and especially second-wave feminism has sometimes been an uneasy one, even though both share some common ideas(for example, they consider themselves as practices rather than merely rote textual analyzes)(Lai, 2006, p. 20). Lynda E. Boose refers to the genealogical difference between these two theories. She explains:

Of the two methodologies [New Historicism and feminism], feminism is the child not born to the manor of literary fathers but outside it, without academic foremothers, but thus perhaps endowed with that peculiar liminality of daughters that leaves it oddly free to constitute itself. New Historicism is, by contrast, the legitimate son, the heir that developed not only inside the academy but specifically inside Renaissance studies, appearing shortly after feminism and preceding Marxism into the field (Boose, 1987, p. 738).

While New historicism claims that there is not the possibility of any moment of pure, free, and autonomous subjectivity, Feminism is based on the fundamental

equality of women and men and the elimination of gender-based injustice. Therefore, Feminism considers women in society as moving, thinking and speaking subjects (Lai, 2006, p. 22). On the other hand, according to the New historicist Stephen Greenblatt, the subject's independence is limited by existing ideologies. He sees ideas such as free choice and autonomy as myths (Greenblatt, 1980, p. 256). Accordingly, examination of Feminism and New historicism together will help to look at the Feminist interpretation of history from different perspectives and to express the problems of women that have been ignored throughout history.

*The Awakening* written by Kate Chopin and *Miss Julie* written by August Strindberg reflect the lives of American and Swedish women and men at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both works reflect the woman protagonist's voyages beyond the constraints of patriarchal societies. These voyages are also representations of the authors' private lives as they expose gender and class discrimination in their societies. In this context, to better understand why Kate Chopin and August Strindberg produced *The Awakening* and *Miss Julie*, it is also necessary to first learn about their lives and experiences.

For example, Kate Chopin's family is matricentric and she is influenced by strong and smart women. She and her mother begin to live with her grandmother because of her father's death. Her grandmother and mother choose to live freely rather than remarry after the deaths of their husbands. Therefore, it is possible to see that she mostly deals with strong women in her works. In *The Awakening*, Edna is a female character who wants to use the power she has discovered in herself to protect herself. When it comes to motherhood, *The Awakening* is even more extreme. It goes against the belief that a woman's primary duties are childbirth and childcare.

On the other hand, August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* criticizes the class distinction in the changing world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and also makes references to gender roles in a patriarchal society. Raised by her mother in opposition to traditional gender roles, Miss Julie finds the courage to do anything except marriage in such a society. Strindberg portrays a woman in conflict with gender roles through Julie. For a

reader who questions why Strindberg chooses such a rebellious female character, contrary to the usual female profile, it is also important to know the important developments in the world at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Women began to rebel against men in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Besides the right to vote, women also demanded more freedom. In *Miss Julie*, the playwright August Strindberg attributes the role of 'new' woman, but he punishes her at the end of the play. Strindberg's attitude towards the changing women roles of the time, his rejection of Feminism, and Julie's interest in women's rights can be interpreted differently on this subject. According to Margaretha Fahlgren's claim, Strindberg feels a deep sense of loss in response to the developing Feminist movement, stating that he holds up the past as a reflection of changing and modern era where middle-class women oppose male dominance (Fahlgren, 2009, p. 20). Furthermore, when Strindberg's life is analyzed, it is remarkable that she is both a misogynist and a defender of women's rights in history. Besides, the reasons for this confusion may be bad examples around him and the problems he experiences in his private life. In this respect, as referred above, it is necessary to know New historicism to make an accurate analysis of the work. For this, the work should be analyzed by considering the conditions of the period in which it was written, how it was reflected, and the background of the writer. For example, traditions of the Victorian period are based on the suicide and death of women. According to patriarchal views on female suicide, women who rebel against social norms are punished with death. On the other hand, being a good woman is directly related to obeying patriarchal norms. A woman's self-destruction shows that she does not obey any strict rules. Similarly, suicide as a term in both works discusses the reasons behind the death of the heroines Edna and Julie's death is considered as a better preference than living under pressure. They are aware that even if they free themselves from restrictions and traditional norms, they will not get what they want. Therefore, in both works, suicide is a rejection of the expectations of society.

This study has been prepared with the aim of analyzing by considering all the textual and non-textual elements, unlike traditional readings, while dealing with class and gender problems in patriarchal societies. In the first chapter of the study, general



information about New historicism and Feminist theory will be given and reasons for their emergence and development processes will be discussed. In the second and third chapters, in order to apply the theories in detail, the plot of the works will be given briefly, and then, *The Awakening* and *Miss Julie* will be analyzed comparatively by means of New historicist and Feminist theories. In the conclusion part, it will be shown that despite different settings, the historical and socio-cultural structure of the patriarchal societies lay the burden on the women.

## CHAPTER I

### 1. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW HISTORICIST AND FEMINIST THEORIES

#### 1.1. The New Historicism

Literature does not suddenly exist. Some issues such as social conditions, the effects of these conditions on people, wars, migrations can be regarded among the reasons that reveal and direct literature throughout history. For example, the emergence of stories, novels, and other literary genres is largely related to the social and cultural environment of their authors. A literary work can not be apart from its author and the conditions of the period in which it was written. Therefore, it is possible to make inferences about social facts, moral and cultural values, and the lifestyle of the society in a literary text. That is, it can be concluded that literature can give society meaning and shape it. Therefore, it should not be forgotten that literature is a discipline that tells about a certain period of society and shapes its future significantly. The reason why literature is so influential on society is that it has a wide range of topics and an effective expression. From the lifestyle of people to nature, the universe, wealth, and poverty, many different subjects are included in the field of literature. Francis Merrill believes that the most important element in the formation of the novel is the author's power to reflect life. According to him, the novel is the study of the social environment through the eyes of the author(Merrill, 2004, p. 44). Similarly, literary historian Gustave Lanson thinks that literature is a reflection of society; therefore, he focuses on the connection between literature and life(Lanson, 1937, p. 29). There is an undeniable link between the thematic and formal features of the novels and the spirit of the period in which they were written, social and political events, and literary understandings. Because the novelist, who breathes the air of the period, gives his/her answer to the events and situations discussed in his/her period with his/her work. Even if the subject of the novel is to move away from the reality of the period, it

still carries traces with its period. Each period has come to the fore with its unique structure and problems. Therefore, the writer and his/her work can not be excluded from the changes effected by the whole society. Considering that novelists, like all people, have a certain worldview and ideology and view the world and life from different perspectives, these are effective in determining the formal and thematic features of the novel more clearly. For example, the crucial factor that determines the behavior of social separating types such as lower class-upper class, worker-bureaucrat, which is frequently encountered in the Victorian novels, is the author's world view. Therefore, literature considers the concepts of worldview and ideology for an accurate analysis of the work and its characters. In other words, literary work is a product of the writer's imaginary or real-world perception.

Besides, we may sometimes hesitate over understanding a text and question what exactly the author means at this point. The author may do this intentionally when he/she wants the reader to participate actively in the reading process by leaving a semantic gap in the text. However, he/she often gives some clues while doing this. The meaning of the literary work may not always be found in the text and according to some clues in the text, it is gradually noticed by the reader during the reading process. The process of reading and making sense of the work requires the sociological and philosophical background of the reader, as well as the analysis of the social conditions in which the author grew up and wrote his/her work. Thus, an analysis that includes the author and the social and historical structure in which the text emerges can provide the reader with multiple reading opportunities by giving clues to the hidden meaning in a literary text. At this point, one of the most appropriate literary approaches for the multifaceted reading is New historicism.

New historicism is a contemporary critical approach based on the simultaneous study of literary and non-literary texts from the same historical time. The term 'New historicism' was coined to describe a group of scholars' research in the 1980s. "Cultural poetics", "Historical materialist criticism", and "Critical historicism" were some of the labels given to this area of criticism by researchers interested in New Historicism. But, whatever term this form of critical interpretation is given, it is clear

that it emphasizes the tight relationship between history and cultural texts (Zengin, 2007, p. 1).

The year 1980 is considered the beginning of New historicism by anthologists and critics; because, Stephen Greenblatt states the main features of New historicism in his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More To Shakespeare*, and then, Greenblatt coins the word 'New historicism' in his "Introduction" to *The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance*. Greenblatt's New historicism argues that the past gains meaning with present ideas and as a result, there are subjective and private histories, not an objective and universal history as in the traditional historical approach (Kara, 2011, p. 97). He emphasizes it in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990):

[New Historicism] does not posit historical processes as unalterable and inexorable, but it does tend to discover limits or constraints upon individual intervention. Actions that appear to be single are disclosed as multiple; the apparently isolated power of the individual genius turns out to be bound up with collective, social energy (Greenblatt, 1990, p. 221).

This quote is an indication that Stephen Greenblatt adopts a multi-faceted understanding of history that includes more than one interpretation, rather than a universal and objective understanding of history.

In addition to this, according to Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, New Historicism becomes different from Traditional historicism "by its lack of faith in 'objectivity' and 'permanence' and its stress not upon the direct recreation of the past, but rather the process by which the past is constructed or invented" (Cox & Reynolds, 1993, p. 4).

Contrary to the universal and objective understanding of history, New historicism emerges in response to New criticism, also known as Formalist criticism and Russian formalism, which focuses on the literary text and differentiates literary criticism from the study of sources, biography, social and historical contexts, politics, and other extrinsic matters, and asserts that literature has different formal characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of writing. New criticism

emphasizes that the text is something which is unaffected by the author's life or his/her aim, history, or anything else. It is a formalist criticism because it centers on the formal and technical aspects of a literary work, such as form, style, and language, while neglecting the work's historical context (Zengin, 2007, p. 2). New historicism, unlike formalist criticism, is also concerned with the contexts of all kinds in which a work has emerged. Rather than considering a text in isolation from its historical context, New historicists focus on the historical and cultural contexts in which it has emerged, as well as its meanings, effects, and then, critical readings and evaluations (Abrams, 1999, p. 182-183).

The main differentiation between New historicism and its traditional counterpart, 'Old historicism,' is that New historicism includes a parallel reading of literary and non-literary works. Unlike Old historicism, which focused solely on establishing how a work reflects its time, it considers how the work is impacted by and influenced on the time it was written (Bressler, 2003, p. 187). Since historical events can be forgotten, New historicism claims that history can only be learned through the texts that have been passed down to us. Hence, it deals with history as it is reflected and documented in written sources (Barry, 1995, p. 173).

As stated above, New historicism, which rejects traditional historical views, opposes the theories that literature is prioritized. It approaches a text in multiple dimensions and analyzes it in terms of society, culture, power relations, and politics. This view equates history with literature. According to New historicists, society plays an important role in gaining an individual's identity. They claim that sense of self is not formed by people's own will but is shaped by society and culture. In this regard, Stephen Greenblatt's discourse of 'self-fashioning' becomes very important (Kara, 2011, p. 17). Stephen Greenblatt, who is the founder and representative of New historicism, accepts the human self as "a product of its particular historical moment" and asserts that social and ideological structures are effective in human experiences (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 3). New historicism opposes the Humanist and Marxist thought of a "human spirit which would be alienated or dehumanized by modernity, the idea of

self-fashioning shows the inextricable link between the formation of subjects and power. There are no pre-social selves who are then governed by a repressive or dominating authority” (Colebrook, 1997, p. 99). The idea proposed by new historicists about the self is that the self is constructed with the society and structured through interaction between self-invention and social rules (Brannigan, 1998, p. 74). The acquaintance of identity and language has a great influence on ourselves; hence, it is also a very persuasive force in the history of literature.

In addition to the opinions of Greenblatt, Foucault, inspired by new historicists, underlines that history can not stay away from both the historian and the historian’s time or cultural context. He emphasizes that historical knowledge will never be in the position of concrete knowledge as it is in natural sciences, and he points out that the historian should not claim objectivity to be honest with both himself and his reader (Urhan, 2000, p. 123). Another idea that guides new historicists is Foucault’s evaluation of history within the framework of the concept of ‘power’ and his connection between power and reality. For him, power is a phenomenon that represents a series of complex forces. In other words, even the power exercised by a cruel aristocrat is not totally unique to him. Because he is shaped by the discourses and practices that make up power (Çavuş, 2002, p. 129). According to this idea, power holders of the era can manipulate and change the truth. In other words, they can change history and how it is represented. History is extremely impressed by the culture and it would not be wrong to say that culture has a significant part in the power relations of every era in history.

Besides, New historicists argue that power comes not only from a socio-economic and political structure. According to Foucault, whose opinions contributed to the development of New historicism, power spreads at all times and all social levels, and some vehicles can provide power exchange as well. For example, the exchange of material goods through such practices as selling and buying, gambling, charity, and various forms of theft; the exchange of people through such special cases as marriage, adoption; the exchange of opinions through the various discourses a culture produces (Tyson, 2006, p. 284). However, New historical theory suggests that discourse is not

adequately in itself to express the complex cultural dynamics of social power, and the relationship between individual identity and society is mutually constructive. Individuals are never solely victims of an oppressive society, and they may find various ways to oppose authority in society (Tyson, 2006, p. 285). Because human being affects his/her environment in various ways and is affected by the environment. Also, he/she has constantly changing and contradictory demands according to environmental conditions; therefore, the most important factor in the change of history is the change of humans, so he/she can not be considered separately from the conditions, political agenda, and norms of the time. Even events associated with history during that period are reflected in literature. A writer uses literature to communicate his or her environment, the conditions of the time, his or her dissatisfaction, and thoughts to future generations, and may even criticize indirectly in his/her works. It is clear that New historicism emphasizes both period and the writer. Each critic can analyze work from different perspectives and can reveal different structures, so it can be regarded as a deeper way of understanding the writer, literary work, and the period it was written.

The features of New historicism can be briefly listed as follows: New historicism focuses particularly on unresolved conflicts and contradictions. Instead of praising the aesthetic order, it turns towards researching the ideological and materialist foundations that make up this order. New historicists are attracted to the strange, ambiguous, and unnoticed. For example, dreams, witchcraft, works on sexuality, diaries, biographies, and narratives about insanity. Greenblatt argues that these cultural phenomena referred have been neglected until today shows how restrictive the historical perspective is, that is, it is not possible to approach the past historically without considering these symbolic and concrete discourses that are the product of a society's ideology or imagination (Çavuş, 2002, p. 132). Also, New historicists propose that there is not a single truth. Each new reading can bring a different interpretation to the text. New historicism is a theory that deconstructs and reconstructs the reliability of history (Doğan, 2005, p. 79).

To sum up, emerging as a reaction to the New criticism that rejects historical approaches to literature, New Historicism focuses on history and literature. Claiming that there is no obvious line separating these two disciplines that seem to be unrelated to each other, it examines the literary dimension of history and the historical dimension of literature (Erdemir, 2018, p. 311). When examining texts New historicists give priority to the context and claim that a text can only be evaluated with its context. There are many indicators such as language, context, plot in a text. Context can only be considered in conjunction with other indicators. According to New historicism, literature is a whole of social and cultural formations from the past to the present and it would not be correct to evaluate literature from a single perspective. Therefore, one of the requirements for analyzing a literary text in the best way is to know the cultural environment in which that text was produced. Since human is social beings, history reflects the interaction and changes between time and human beings in literature. A literary critic can only write within the framework of his cultural background. Therefore, when making a literary criticism, the cultural conditions of the work should be taken into account. Finally, New historicism generally focuses on minority groups such as women, the oppressed, lunatics, and homosexuals that traditional history ignores, and it was influenced by many disciplines such as Feminism, Marxism, and Post-colonialism, all of which played an important role in the twentieth century (Kara, 2011, p. 3).

## **1.2. Feminist Theory**

Many societies interpret the concept of gender from different perspectives. The emergence of various attitudes towards gender is influenced by several fixed ideas that are engraved in people's minds and passed on from generation to generation. Related to this fact, when it comes to gender discrimination, the first thing that comes to mind is discrimination against women. Most societies view men as brave, free, self-confident individuals, and women as more dreamers, hesitant, vulnerable individuals who can not stand on their own feet (Deaux, 1984, p. 6). Because some stereotypical



ideas from the past have been attributed to women in particular, women have often been seen to be inferior to men and have faced gender discrimination (Sakallı Uğurlu, 2003, p. 5). As a controversial concept, gender has positioned women at a lower level than men in many areas by attributing traditional roles to men and women for centuries. Although only 'gender' has not been effective in othering people for centuries, some social norms, expectations of people, their positive/negative thoughts about us pave the way for this discrimination, and that's why we often strive to be an 'ideal' individual to please the society. Cordelia Fine explains how the judgments about femininity and masculinity unwittingly lead you to act by the established rules of ideology and that these rules have not changed despite all the developments: People can act against the existing mentality in parallel with the values they consciously defend, but the social identity of a woman as a mother or wife triggers her to do housework and look after her children and husband (Fine, 2010, p. 86).

'Sex' and 'gender' which are frequently used in daily life, seem to be similar terms, the meaning attributed to these two terms is not the same. Ann Oakley, in her book *Sex, Gender and Society*, clarifies this, expressing that the term 'sex' emphasizes biological differences such as reproductive functions and genital organs between male and female individuals, while 'gender' is defined as discrimination that society exposes to individuals since they are male or female (Oakley, 1985, p. 16). Although people are born with their biological sex, they grow up with certain ideologies and gender roles assigned to them by the society they live in. Over time, they gain their sexual identities. Kate Millett, one of the prominent names of the Feminist movement, refers in her *Sexual Politics* that our society is a patriarchal society and patriarchal power prevails in the society. Therefore, gender roles are also defined according to this ideology. There are two sexual identities for patriarchal ideology. Their characteristics are determined by whoever has power in the existing ideology, and the power relations are called politics by Millett (Millett, 2000, p. 25). That is, politics is a term in which a group of people establishes authority over others based on power relationships (Millett, 2000, p. 23). Sexuality also may be considered a significant part of this power relationship. Speaking of this sexual policy, the relationship between sexes and politics

can be confusing when the term ‘sexual politics’ is first encountered. Kate Millett makes an explanation about this term in *Sexual Politics*:

When referring to the concept of sexual politics, the question ‘is there a political connection with the relationship between the genders?’ is likely to come to mind. The answer depends on how people define politics. Politics can be explained as the tactics or methods required to govern a state. It also represents the control power of one group of people over another. When the patriarchal system based on male domination is viewed from this perspective, it can be considered as a similar political institution sustained by such control techniques (Millett, 2000, p. 45). Kate Millett deals with the term of patriarchy beyond its original definition in her book. She defines politics as having power unlike what is known. Perhaps this is one reason why her book has become so famous.

There is no innate superiority between men and women. The domination of men over women later turned into a political structure. The relationship between the sexes has been seen as a relationship of oppressor and oppressed throughout history. The sovereignty of men over women is seen as an inborn right and this creates a social order that otherizes women.

Millett, in *Sexual Politics*, defines patriarchy as the source of gender problems and inequality in the society (Millett, 2000, p. 14). Women have not been valued by men and have been subjected to second-class human treatment in societies dominated by the patriarchy. As a result, they are seen as inferior to the struggle for power relations with men.

In short, although gender has not been effective in othering people, some social norms, the expectations of other people, and the positive/negative thoughts about a person prepare the basis for this separation and in ‘patriarchal’ societies, willingly or unwillingly he/she feels obliged to be ideal individual. When the meaning of patriarchy is questioned, it is concluded that patriarchy is a system that was improved and controlled by men. Hence, in a patriarchal structure, men regard themselves as superior and the single authority. The relationships between men and women and their

social roles are identified in under patriarchal rules (Sultana, 2011, p. 15). While women are expected to obey the rules, give birth, take care of the kids, do housework, it is not possible for them to create time for writing and reading under these conditions. Mungkasa (2007) expresses these bad conditions by saying that the world would have been a better planet for women if it had started in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As it is understood from this sentence, women were more oppressed in the old times and subjected to a lot of sexist discrimination. The patriarchal ideology of the 19<sup>th</sup> century gave women little opportunities and limited their existence to sexuality and motherhood (Gray, 2004, p. 53). After years, women who are marginalized because of sexist ideology and exposed to separation lay the foundations of Feminist ideology. At this point, it will be proper to give some details about the concept of Feminism.

Feminism, which originates from the word 'Femina' in Latin(Halsey, 1983, p. 377) is known as a movement that is related to the relationship between men and women from family to business life and it aims to change the authority between two sexes (Aktaş, 2013, p. 59). In addition, Feminism assumes that women are not equal to men in social, political, legal, and many other areas, and they are always despised and pushed to the second plan in all areas of life. The struggles of women to achieve equal rights and freedom with men form the basis of Feminism(Arat, 1991, p. 12). Feminism, which does not accept this separation based on gender, is an approach that fights for the rights of women by rebelling against the existing patriarchal structure.

Contrary to the patriarchal system, which has put women as the second plan for centuries and always regard them as individuals dependent on men, Feminists suggest that women's bodies are considered as men's property in patriarchal societies. Women are valued only by their sexual attraction and beauty, so they spend much time making themselves look beautiful. Meeting the demands of their husbands is the only pride for them. However, this does not apply to men. They are valued for their intelligence, strength, and logic. But Feminist ideology destroys this view in time. According to feminists, the appearance and beauty of a woman are not important and all women should be aware of this.

As a result, to analyze the female and male characters in detail in a work, it is necessary to have knowledge of feminism, which can be defined as the struggle against sexist oppression (Hooks, 1984, p. 29). Feminists can be defined as the people who are concerned with the discrimination women are subjected to due to their lower position in society and gender (Freedman, 2001, p. 1). The important point here is that the aim of feminism is not concerned with women as superior. On the contrary, this movement aims for women to have equal rights in social, political, and economic fields like men. The first wave of the Feminist movement was concerned with women's rights in legal matters, in particular the right to vote, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is also possible to say that these issues are being discussed today as they were in the past and that the related problems are continuing. From this point of view, as a result of the existing discussions about women, which are the main objects of Feminist theory, feminism caused new discourses, actions, perceptions, and theoretical approaches to emerge. Now, to better understand the theory, the point that Feminism has reached from the early years to the recent past will be examined.

Feminism first emerged as a social movement and later turned into a social and political movement in the broader area. Along with this, Feminism brought along a theoretical perspective in disciplines such as international relations, sociology, economics, politics, law, and philosophy. In this context, different feminist approaches shaped by different international relations theories and including many branches emerged. The reason behind this process seems to be the time-varying position of the women in society and the different problems and needs of these women. Some divide the development process of feminism into one or two feminist waves, while others divide it into 3 or 4 Feminist waves. However, in general, the process that many searchers accept in the historical development process of Feminist movements consists of 4 chronological waves. These processes are called the first, second, third, and fourth Feminist waves and they generally cover a period from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, the historical development of Feminism is divided into certain processes because women or feminist groups have different demands and desires at different times, criticizing the patriarchal and capitalist system from different points.

The first Feminist wave, which emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was built on the demands that Wollstonecraft draw in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In general terms, these demands included women's voting, equal opportunities in education and women's property rights. They were fundamental rights according to the conditions of the period. In particular, Feminist groups, who thought that *United States Declaration of Independence*, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights of France* and the works of theorists who developed the natural rights doctrine were not sufficiently addressed in the social and political areas (Taş, 2016, p. 167).

Feminist theorists from the idea of natural rights argue that women are 'people' who have the same basic rights and freedoms as men, women should have the freedom to act outside housework. Because as Margaret Walters emphasizes in her *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*, her house is like a prison to a married woman what prison is to a criminal. That is, the man is responsible for everything in the house, and it is the woman who is the worst and is regarded as just a reproductive machine (Walters, 2005, p. 44). For example, an example that confirms this statement appears in *The Awakening*. At the beginning of the novel, protagonist Edna decides to marry Mr. Pontellier because she supposes that his thoughts against women are different from other men in society, and her desire to marry him is also related to challenging her father. However, she realizes after marriage that there is no difference between Mr. Pontellier and her father (Chopin, p. 30). He is a man who adheres to patriarchal norms like Edna's father. As a result, Edna is married to someone who dominates her like her father (Chopin, 1899, p. 31). Although Edna faces the facts, she is devoted to her husband and she accepts the responsibilities imposed on her instead of pursuing her freedom and making her dreams come true. She rejects her sexuality as required by patriarchal tradition and she does not consider it necessary. She acts by patriarchal norms. She has two children and she acts as her husband programmed her (Chopin, 1899, p. 74). She suppresses her desires and feelings. But later, she realizes that this mother-wife role is not suitable for her, and events change direction with her rebellion against social norms.

On the other hand, it is considered as one of the discriminatory effects of the patriarchal period on women that a woman loses all her property if she gets married. Such a situation is also included in *Miss Julie*. Julie's mother is a woman who believes in the equality of females and men. Julie also opposes the treatment of women as lower-class individuals like her mother and she behaves unusually against stereotypes of her society. As it is known, Julie comes from a wealthy family and although she has had relationships with a lot of men before, she does not consider marriage with them and she has an inner hatred of men inherited from her mother. Maybe, one of the reasons for this is Julie's fear that she will be deprived of her opportunities in the future.

Even if not in these works, when returning to real life, one emerges who expresses the righteous rebellion of many women like Edna and Julie, and the earliest attempt to adapt the basic natural rights doctrine to women is the *Declaration of Sentiments* written by Elisabeth Cady Stanton in 1848 and this declaration is ultimately signed by 100 women and men (Donovan, 2006, p. 21).

Ney Bensadon(1994) also points out that women engaged in the struggle both for social and political rights and against racism in that period. With the start of the First World War in 1914, as a result of the men joining the army in Britain, women began to work in jobs that were seen as men's work, such as working in agriculture and driving buses. The second wave of legal and social equality for women started in America in the 1960s and spread throughout the world. Although the first wave of the Feminist movement mainly included issues such as voting and ownership rights, it later expanded to new issues such as sexuality, reproduction, the workplace, and family. Then, at the end of the war, in France, many reformist arrangements were made for equal opportunities in girls' education, women's business life (p. 58).

Shortly, the most important result based on the first-wave Feminism was to resist the patriarchal ideology, to lay the foundation of the understandings that would affect the social status and mental structure area of the movement called 'sexual revolution'(Millett, 2000, p. 63). After this period, Feminists made different social,

political, economic demands, and they engaged in the struggle to have more free rights.

In the second wave of Feminism, women were directly influenced by the developments in the West in the 1960s. In particular, this was the period when some developments emerged that allowed women to give birth safely. Women had difficulties in accessing and using alternative methods and drugs. Women's groups were engaged in a struggle to offer these alternative opportunities to all women and to eliminate the oppressive and conservative laws in many countries. Although women secured their equality with men by law, they differed from men in the context of vital practices (Taş, 2016, p. 169), so women continued to argue that their problems were not related to biological gender, they were the product of the patriarchal system.

Some women also criticized the unequal roles of patriarchal structure in the family or domestic area and the definition of the 'private area' of the domestic area. In addition to this, they stated that the patriarchal structure of the family increases and diversifies sexist exploitation. As Margaret Walters referred, an important issue emphasized by second-wave Feminism was women's rights over their own bodies (Walters, 2005, p. 110). Besides, the second-wave feminists aimed to reduce patriarchy as much as possible. In this way, patriarchy would not constitute an obstacle to the independence, business, and social life of women. With this wave, the number of women working in sports, media, and military fields increased significantly. However, in this period, feminists who supported middle- and upper-class white women excluded working-class women and women of color. Therefore, this discrimination between white and women of color led to the reaction of different groups in the future. Feminists started the third-wave Feminist movement in the 1990s. This wave aimed to provide all women with opportunities in business, politics, and many other areas where they are restricted (Iannello, 2010 p. 72-73). From a general short analysis of second-wave feminism on *The Awakening* and *Miss Julie*, the following can be deduced: Chopin's feminist work, *The Awakening*, receives negative criticism for its unusual content at the time of its publication. When the novel is viewed from a second-wave feminist perspective, Edna is seen as a heroine who disrupted the social structure. As

referred before, while there is an aspect of second-wave feminism that supported middle- and upper-class white women, it neglects working-class and women of color. Therefore, in *The Awakening's* reading of second-wave Feminism, it is possible to sympathize with Edna and support her in her effort to break free from patriarchal social rules that restrict her freedom. Although second-wave feminism sees Edna as a general representation of all women who want to be liberated, she is not. Even Ammons emphasizes on this subject: This awakening can only result in silence, that is, death, as the fantasy of an individual and solipsistic white woman (Ammons, 1992, p. 10). Similar to Edna Pontellier, when black women are put in the center, we might think that Miss Julie's disappointments stem from the fact that she has all the opportunities and privileges she could ask for. The second-wave argument focuses on Julie expecting 'more' from her life and she ignores the great privileges she already has.

In addition to this, the third-wave of Feminism was born in the early 1990s as a response to the practices of second-wave feminism and the inaccuracies in perceptions. Third-wave feminists were mostly concerned with micro policies such as violence against women, sexuality, and empowerment of women. Rosemarie Tong, as a feminist, uses the following statements about third-wave feminism:

If a woman wants to wear makeup, have cosmetic surgery, wear sexually provocative clothes, sell her sexual services, then, as far as many third-wave feminists are concerned, she should feel free to do so, provided she feels empowered by her actions and not somehow demeaned, diminished, or otherwise objectified by them (Tong, 2009, p. 288).

According to Tong's sentences, third-wave feminists seem to focus on the concept of individual identity rather than political rights by breaking down stereotypical ideas about women. In addition, they focused on various topics in terms of content compared to the other two waves. It was particularly concerned with issues that limit and try to keep women under pressure, and it has supported awareness-raising actions and education as elements that will open the way to social change.

With most of the men joining the army in Britain, the number of women finding jobs in hospitals and factories has increased. Perhaps the only positive aspect



of the war in this period was that it gave women more opportunities to participate in business life (Anderson & Zinsser, 1998, p. 28). During the First World War, some women volunteered to join the army to help soldiers, while others replaced men in business. This serious change in the social role of women enabled them to develop a sense of belonging to their own society and made them feel more valuable (Pugh, 1992, p. 31).

Lastly, the fourth wave of Feminism, which began in the 2010s, was focused on female empowerment and the usage of the internet. The previous waves promote and advance women's independence, social mobility, and autonomy; however, the fourth wave fights with gender issues. Fourth-wave feminists, like earlier feminists, advocate for greater representation of these groups in politics and industry, claiming that society will be more stable if policies and practices reflect all people's perspectives. Fourth-wave Feminism also advocates for equal pay and opportunities for women (Hewitt, 2012, p. 670).

The above-referred developments like the participation of women in social life seem to progress but women still do not feel satisfied with their position in society. Betty Friedan, one of the advocates of women's rights, stated in her *The Feminine Mystique* on this issue that the main problem for women is not sexuality but identity. According to her, in the real sense, feminine women do not want the right to education, political rights, and career. What they want and are expected of is to find a husband and have children (Friedan, 2001, p. 44). As Friedan points out, most of the women say they sometimes feel empty or absent, even though they appear to be happy with the role assigned to them as a wife and mother. In other words, having a husband and children, or being like other women do not give them an identity. As this is the case, most of the women start to doubt the identity they have accepted without questioning. Both the patriarchal structure of the society and family pressure suppresses the real identity of these women. In *The Awakening*, just like Edna's emotional turmoil, women later regret their identity, which was initially accepted without questioning. Although her husband's wealth and her children are enough to

make Edna happy at first, she later realizes that she can not be a good wife and mother as society expects her.

## CHAPTER II

### 2. A NEW HISTORICIST APPROACH TO *THE AWAKENING AND MISS JULIE*

#### 2.1. A New Historicist Approach to *Miss Julie*

New historicism is a type of literary criticism, and it is based on some fundamentals. In New historicism, it is possible to see ordinary people rather than emperors or famous people. Even some people are despised and oppressed. Introducing this concept to the readers, Greenblatt draws the attention of the reader, especially, to the marginalized and oppressed people (Oppermann, 2006, p. 17). In this context, he frees the people, who have been ignored in the historical process, from their ambiguities and puts them in the center. The important thing in such texts is not a certain identity, but a lack of identity (Aytaç, 2005, p. 45). In addition, whereas New historicists are concerned with what historians leave out of the text, they also question the reasons for this situation (Opperman, 2006, p. 103).

Besides, in New historicist works, the readers are also actively involved in the reading process. Since the author has no absolute dominance in the text, there is no single meaning in texts. Many meanings may be derived from a text. The author offers the readers the opportunity to infer the meaning they want. While doing this, he/she provides an opportunity for the readers to interpret and make sense of the broken connections (Doğan, 2005, p. 82). As a result, according to this literary understanding, the reader must always be active, think, and question.

Another feature of New historicism is that it deals with the relationship between language and subject. It questions how the individual is defined in language, how social, cultural and historical patterns are formed, and how historical knowledge is accepted as correct (Oppermann, 2006, p. 47). This is one of the most distinctive features of New historicism that distinguishes it from the traditionalists.

Before analyzing *Miss Julie* from a new historicist perspective, it would be proper to outline the work and associate it with the theory.

One of the important plays of the 19<sup>th</sup> century theater, *Miss Julie* is a one-act play, mostly in the kitchen and based on class and sexist conflicts between the Count's daughter, Miss Julie and the servant, Jean. Julie, a member of a noble family, appears at the beginning of the play as an arrogant young woman who has had everything she ever wanted. Although everything seems very good for Julie, who grows up in very good conditions and a wealthy family, there are some problems within her family. Her mother is a freedom-loving woman who is totally against the patriarchal structure of society in her youth. She does not consider marriage because she believes that her freedom would be restricted when she married. However, one day, she has to marry Julie's father and their forced marriage also brings unhappiness and restlessness. The main reason for her male hostility is that she regards men as people who limit women and hinder their freedom. Therefore, she raises his daughter Julie from an early age by imposing that she should never be oppressed by any man. She is raised like a boy rather than a girl. She acts like boys and dresses like them. Although she is biologically female, she has a dual identity (androgen identity) because of her mother's upbringing. On the other hand, her father, Count, can be portrayed as a misogynist and he is a character whose presence and absence are uncertain. An unrestful atmosphere prevails in the house due to the incompatibility of the spouses, and silence reigns in Julie's family.

Julie, who is raised as spoiled, domineering, and egoistic, continues these habits when she grew up. Then, although she is an adult woman, she uses her wealth and power to act quite opposite to the ideal woman's understanding of the patriarchal society. Even the perception of ideal and submissive women in society is for lower-class women. They are doomed to be crushed by men. Julie, on the other hand, must be the oppressor, not the oppressed, as someone at the top of the hierarchical order. With this thought, she treats her lover cruelly. She tries to train him with a whip as if he was an animal; because, if she does not do it, she thinks that a man might do something similar to her one day, and this thought makes her nervous inside.

According to her, the dominant character in the relationship must be herself. But, one day, her lover can not endure anymore and he breaks up with Julie. The fact that Julie's feelings are extreme both in this relationship and her future relationship with Jean indicates that she may have hysteria as known a psychological disorder. There are many symptoms of hysteria, which mostly manifests itself in women and portrays women as mad. Some of these symptoms are exaggeration on many issues and a sudden changing mood. In the play, Julie goes overboard with everything just like she treats her boyfriend.

Jean is another main character who is one of the employees of the house, young, handsome, and a member of the lower class. While the social norms of the Victorian era are always in favor of rich and powerful people, poor people are always considered to be oppressed and exploited. It is not possible to mention the existence of the concepts of 'right' 'law' and 'equality' in a society where class distinctions are common and people in the lower classes are put in the background. Thus, some lower-class people, like Jean, can not accept the existing hierarchical order and try many ways to increase their social status. Having experienced the difficulties of class differences for years and dreaming of living like a noble person in the future, Jean's target is the Count's daughter, Julie. Jean, who looks at the life of Julie with envy but is also disturbed by her egoistic attitude, rebels against the hierarchical order. After a while, an intimacy begins between Miss Julie and Jean and this relationship later gains a sexual dimension. It is the beginning of a tragic end for Julie. It is not acceptable in society for the Count's daughter, Julie, to be with a lower-class servant. Therefore, Julie regrets what she has done and she is worried that it will be heard. On the other hand, Jean has found a way to raise her social status thanks to Julie and he manipulates it against Julie. Julie, who used to be cruel and domineering towards her ex-boyfriend, is replaced by a more obedient and docile woman. That is, the balances change. Jean gradually takes over the authority by using this sexual intimacy. In addition to gender and class conflicts, as a result of Julie's tragic fall, which hit the bottom in this power struggle Jean takes power and authority. Although Julie has told Jean many times that no one should know about that situation and that it will damage her and her family's

reputation, Jean does not care about it. Then, Julie offers Jean to go away together, but they can not make it real. In desperation, she asks him if there is a way out, and Jean gives her a razor and the play ends with Miss Julie walking towards the door to commit suicide.

Besides the outline of *Miss Julie*, basic information on the developments of the Victorian era will be useful to make a New historicist analysis of the work.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the Victorian age, biologist Charles Darwin made an impact in the scientific world with his studies on evolution and natural selection. Then, his work was called *Darwinism*, and as Mike Hawkins(1997) describes, this is a “biological theory about how new species are formed and existing ones can become extinct” (p. 24). At this point, Darwin examines the history of mankind down to apes. Similar to Darwin's interpretation, Spencer also states that people are in a struggle ‘for power and status in the society in which they live (Rebellato, 2010, p. 11). It is perceived as a natural thing that the strong compete for dominance over the weak. Gerda Lerner(1986) claims that as a result of the emergence of such theories in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the patriarchal ideology that regards women as inferior is also scientifically supported (p. 18). Spencer, who regards women as inferior, also states that they are far from intellectual because they spend their energies on household chores and their families (Hawkins, 1997, 252). As a result of gender inequality, which is also supported by scientific studies, the women of this period generally have silent and obedient characteristics. Also, Darwin's theories on ‘evolution’, ‘natural selection, and ‘heredity’ have a significant impact on the importance of this idea in theatre. Therefore, while many literary works were written in the Victorian era, like *Miss Julie*, reflect the combative side of women, they reveal women's anxieties and desires.

As stated above, when Strindberg wrote *Miss Julie*, the theory of ‘Social Darwinism’ was occupied the agenda. According to this theory, just as the strongest survive in the animal world, in society the fittest at work among humans would survive (Hawkins, 1997, p. 63). There is a power struggle among people; therefore, class systems arise in Europe. There are unfair situations in terms of women's and men's

rights due to class differences, and Strindberg also reflects the spirit of his time by turning around the perception of women and their determined roles at the time.

People, in Victorian society, are always in a struggle for status and power. Therefore, these people who are divided into classes are not satisfied with their status and they want to reach higher positions, and this causes disagreements in society. Society is divided into three classes, the working, middle and upper classes. In general, the income of the working class is from wages, the middle class's from profit and salary and the upper class's from land or rent. The classes to which people belong are determined according to their socioeconomic level, values, and income level (Steinbach, 2017, p. 125). The rich families employ a lot of lower-class people to be servants, gardeners, nannies, governesses, chefs... People's behaviors, ways of speaking, education, and dressing are all signs of their class. Each class reflects its living standards and traditions in almost every area. In Victorian society, people are aware of their position in this hierarchical system and they are obliged to obey the rules required by their class (Mitchell, 2009, p. 17). It shows that the developing world and industrialization influence negatively.

In *Miss Julie*, Julie is an upper-class woman already aware of the social environment that limits her desires; however, she is manipulated by Jean. Jean works as a servant and being a member of the upper class is his biggest dream and the only way to do this is to fall in love with Julie. Strindberg depicts Julie as inferior to show that the hierarchical system protects the biologically weak. He closes the curtain with Jean, who wants Julie to end her own life, and points out that the existing social hierarchy will gradually change to a hierarchical order in which 'new men' like Jean will dominate. Thus, people of all social classes will be seen as powerful and skillful.

At the beginning of the play, Miss Julie is a superior character towards Jean but then, her tragic fall begins. She orders herself to Jane. It shows that Miss Julie begins to act crazily. As stated before, the dominant ideology of society reflects women as irrational and men as rational. In other words, women represent sexuality, emotion, and even confusion whereas men represent logic and power (Qtd in Keith and Pile, 1993, p. 149). In the play, Julie who frequently dances is depicted as sick and crazy in

Jean's eyes. The depiction of Julie's physical and mental state by Jean reveals the relationship between subjectivity and madness of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Strindberg referred in his preface to *Julie*, one of the themes the play aims at is that Jean's masculinity makes him biologically superior to Julie. Influenced by the views of the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, Strindberg thinks that the world is naturally divided into weak and strong (Rebellato, 2010, p. 13). The implication is that the world is in a conflict between the weak and the strong. This struggle is reminiscent of Darwin's theory of "the survival of the fittest"(Hawkins, 1997) in the sexist issues between men and women in patriarchal Victorian society. In this society, the strong and the weak are already biologically and ideologically defined. In the play, Miss Julie is a representation of the weak struggling for survival among the strongest. Her cruel behavior towards men, especially her darling, and her desire to dominate over her darling are the spark that ignites the war between the sexes(Jain, 2015, p. 164). Then, this discussion is completed by Strindberg's fine line between normal and unusual behaviors for women during the play. While Strindberg describes Julie as a 'half-woman' who hates men for power, he points out that nowadays she is no different from women who sell themselves for money, power. Comparing the struggle for independence and equal rights for women like men with prostitution, Strindberg also felt an intense sense of mistrust towards women. Since Strindberg writes on the assumption that what is normal for a woman is to get married and have children, Julie's effort to gain independence and power in society manifests itself as sexual desire, a hatred of men and In *Miss Julie*, he tries to prove that women increase their suffering by trying to be equal with men. Also, according to him, Julie's portrayal of half-woman is based on her upbringing. Therefore, he often refers to her unusual upbringing. Miss Julie's inhumane treatment of her boyfriend and then, her desire to get Jean to kiss her feet reflect her dominance over men. However, this struggle between the sexes is reversed when Jean establishes authority over her after Jean and Julie have sexual intercourse. Strindberg underlines the fact through Jean's portrayal as he repeats "off her head...She's off her head" (Strindberg, 1888, p. 51). These words indicate a new degenerate woman to be mad.



Another indicator of her being half-woman is her intense sexual desires. Sexual desire is something unique to men and the expected behavior of a woman was to always remain innocent. After Jean and Julie have sexual intercourse, the balance of power changes. After the sexual intercourse, whereas Jean continues his usual life, Julie can not get rid of the stain on her honor. Strindberg, describing Julie as a half-woman who hates men in the preface, ultimately condemns her for her contempt and hatred towards men. For Strindberg, this is a result of Julie's unusual upbringing. Another reason for Julie's death is that she does not obey the dictates of her gender and social status. Briefly, the playwright believes gender duality exists, and the female character should have been depicted accordingly.

Besides, the unusual attitudes and behaviors of Julie are similar to the symptoms of hysteria. Hysteria, which is generally known as a female disease at that time, points to a disorder in female sexuality. He wants to introduce the reader to Julie as hysterical because she is both interested in men, and she may treat them inhumanly, moreover, she is both nonsexual and seductive. Her hatred of men inherited from her mother causes her to brutally enslave them. While Jean still would like to raise his social status, Miss Julie lives with a sense of burnout. She is not psychologically well. At the end of the play, she has hysteria, and this is the real destruction for her. She is controlled by a man. Jean is no longer dependent upon Julie because she has lost her power, social status. She remains on the line between feminism/ misogyny and masculine/ feminine, and she has no longer become a degenerate woman. She may be both the victim of an oppressive society and a description of all the evils previously attributed to society itself. From a New historic perspective, a human being can change in line with his/her life experiences, passions, and so on...or people's personality is shaped by society. People do not give birth with their values. For example, it is not an innate thing that a person will be a servant or earl in the future; but it is shaped by the hierarchical order in society. In the play, the sequence of events that led to the death of Julie is not only the result of internal turmoil but also, an indicator of class conflicts and inequalities in society. In a society where being a woman means to be oppressed, Julie, unlike most women, struggles to reconcile her rebellious and cruel nature with

the demands of social norms. Unlike a traditional Victorian woman, she wants to be successful, but she also needs help. However, she can not find a way out for herself.

Although Strindberg wants to portray Jean as the strongest and superior to Julie because of his masculinity, according to Davari and Sadeghi(2017), the playwright is disturbed by Julie's new woman identity; however, he may convey his negative thoughts towards the working class by portraying Jean as an impostor in the play at the same time. In the beginning, Jean is a servant, after which he does many things besides his work. He gets engaged to Kristin, he is in a relationship with Julie, and then, he turns into a selfish and dishonest person. Therefore, it can be concluded that the character of Jean that Strindberg exalts was a liar and a person who would do anything to be in a high class in the hierarchical order of the period.

To sum up, in *Miss Julie*, it is clear that there is a culture gap between the two classes. Julie is a woman belonging to an aristocratic family but she can not meet the requirements of this upper-class culture. Jean, on the other hand, is a member of the lower class culture and always lives with the dream of moving to the upper class. Hence, he manipulates Julie's status and causes her personality to change. Here, Strindberg wants to portray the inequality and injustice between women and men and poor and rich to his reader or audience. Also, the choice of characters and setting helps the reader to understand this idea more easily.

## **2.2. A New Historicist Approach to *The Awakening***

As stated above for *Miss Julie*, giving an outline of *The Awakening* before analyzing it from the New historicist approach will be proper to a better association.

*The Awakening*, one of the important feminist novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American Literature, begins with a young woman named Edna Pontellier, on vacation in Grand Isle with her husband and children. Edna's husband, Léonce, is busy most of the time, so he leaves the responsibility of the house and children to Edna. But Edna usually spends her time with her friend, Madame Adèle Ratignolle. Mrs. Ratignolle is

a woman who conforms to the 'ideal woman' perception in society and also is attractive and obedient. Unlike Mrs. Ratignolle, Edna does not want to accept her social identity as a woman who must obey her husband and take responsibility for her home and children alone. After that, Edna's awakening adventure accelerates with the involvement of Robert Lebrun. Edna initially has an innocent relationship with this young man. They become friends on their vacation on the island. However, as she spends more time with Robert, she moves away from the role of mother-wife imposed on her by her society. She begins to develop another sense of self thanks to Robert. She wants to be free, and do things she could not do before. She becomes interested in painting, learns to swim, and wants to be able to stand on her own feet without submitting to anyone. At the end of the summer, a romantic bond develops between Edna and Robert. As Robert avoids furthering their relationship, he decides to go to Mexico and tells Edna that he will call her again. That is terrible devastation for Edna. Shortly after that, Edna and her family return to their home in New Orleans. Her husband often goes on long business trips. Edna, who gave up her role as a good wife and mother, starts to draw and realizes that she is more peaceful when she is alone at home. After a while, Edna decides to leave the house and she moves to another house. She starts selling her paintings so that she can survive economically. Meanwhile, she begins a relationship with Alcée Arobin; however, she does not feel for him what she feels for Robert. One day, she meets Robert on the road and this encounter is really strange. Edna asks Robert why he did not call her when he came back. Although Robert says that he loves her, he tells that he can not be with her because she is a married woman, so he thinks that society will condemn them. Edna shouts that she is not her husband's property. Despite all, Robert says farewell to Edna. Edna can not sleep that night. She thinks about her life, her children, and her previous relationships. She is determined not to let anyone, including her children, possess her. With a confused mood, she decides to go to the beach that night and she swims. She begins to move away from the shore. After a while, she gets tired and disappears among the waves where she feels free, and the novel ends with the reader questioning whether

Edna's suicide is an escape or a way to reach real freedom by getting away from everyone and everything.

A close reading of *The Awakening* reveals that socio-cultural and historical conditions of the Victorian era are reflected to a large extent in the work. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian patriarchal society, women were at a lower level compared to men and they had to give up their dreams and wishes for others. Education for women, who were deprived of even the educational opportunities offered to men, consisted of sewing, raising children, and housework (Davari, 2015, p. 112). Therefore, Victorian society, which gave women limited opportunities to develop mentally, considered them weaker and more helpless than men. On the other hand, women living in this era suffered from many issues such as othering, property rights, voting, law, and prostitution. Briefly, women were seen as equal to men, neither in the family nor in society. Women's rights were limited and they had to live under the shadow of men (Showalter, 1977, p. 4).

When referring to the American novel, Leslie Fiedler states that it is different from its European models and that one of the most obvious differences is its non-discriminatory feature towards women and gender (Fiedler, 1982, p. 31). Indeed, American literary works, written until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, contain nothing in favor of men. However, although American fiction has reflected examples of female power and insubordination for years, by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of Puritanism, particularly its dangerous Calvinist idea, prevented the creation of self-sufficient female characters (Quawas, 2000, p. 51). On the other hand, in world literature, a lot of works written in the Victorian era like *The Awakening* reflect the desperation of women, but they also reveal women's requests and needs.

*The Awakening*, a work of American fiction, was set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Victorian era, at the Grand Isle. The Grand Isle is a holiday spot for the Creole society. In this period, the Creole society has a patriarchal structure positioning women at the bottom and that their status in society is determined by a man. In this society, the woman is under the protection of her husband after marriage and she must endure all kinds of difficulties. A woman is expected to be a good wife and mother, a servant in

charge of the house, or an individual who must obey her husband in all matters. According to Eden T. Hade for Creole society, in the patriarchal Creole society, women are the managers of the house, and men who are busy with their work-life leave all responsibility of the house to them. This requires the woman to accept motherhood and domestic duties without questioning, and peace in the home depends on its continuity (Hade, 2011, p. 19). As it can be understood from the sentences, in the Creole society in which the novel takes place, femininity is associated with motherhood, which prefers the needs of the family to the needs of the self. Femininity means motherhood, and motherhood means sacrifice. This perception prevents women from considering their own needs primarily. Women have some roles in society which included doing housework and caring for their children and husbands. Women are also expected to express their kindness through their behaviors, speech, and dressing style. The woman who fulfills these duties is described as the ideal woman of the period. While the world for women is considered to be just the four walls of the house, men have to take their place in business life. Because a man's earning money and meeting the needs of his family are also important duties that society expected from him. Women are members of the oppressed class in this era. In the eyes of men they are merely sexual objects and are used for the continuity of their ancestry. Society's expectation from women is that they give their bodies to their husbands. Edna Pontellier, who is different from other women, gets married in the Creole society. But she is rejected by his husband's society since she married an upper-classman. She is from the middle class, and she is never respected in Creole society. The upper-class people ignore her. Therefore, she prefers the Creole community's middle class. They treat Edna as if she were a member of their family, and they welcome her into their community sincerely. Also in Chopin's work, white skin is an important element of class discrimination. Through descriptions of sunburned and wrackful skin, the novel indicates Edna's social position. Edna returns home from the beach with her skin scorched at the beginning of the story (Chopin, 1899, p. 7). In the novel, Edna's burnt skin may be interpreted in two ways: It represents her status in the hierarchal system and indicates her white and upper-middle-class woman identity.

When she awakened, she notices that she is in a patriarchal and oppressive society, and she is no longer one of the members of this society. However, her passions and desires conflict with her responsibilities. She falls in love but knows that to follow it would mean resisting the social norms and losing her family and everything she had. In the end, the conflict between social norms, and her revolt leads to her suicide.

It seems clear from the process that prepares the end of Edna that society puts heavy emphasis on duty and responsibility. From Valkeakari's perspective, Edna's swimming in the sea reflects her liberation from the roles that were overthrown by the patriarchy. Thus, her suicide also symbolizes the end of her captivity in a patriarchal society (Valkeakari, 2003, p. 56). Edna wants to learn to swim and strives for it. However, she is not considered successful, as she drowns at the end of the novel. Here, the sea is also a phallic symbol. The charming male sea has sexual intercourse and destroys Edna. This is an indication of what women who rebelled against the masculine society might face. Edna's struggle ends at sea and her story ends there as well (Hildebrand, 2016, p. 206). Chopin criticizes the gender inequality in society through Edna's rebellious attitudes. Through this event, the author wants to show the reader the injustice and wrongness of the place and roles of women in patriarchal societies. Edna struggles for a 'new woman' identity in the Victorian era for a long time, and her suicide is ultimately a representation of patriarchal society and a rejection of its stereotypical traditions.

"Despondency had come upon her there in the wakeful night, and had never lifted. There was no one thing in the world that she desired" (Chopin, 1899, p. 147). According to some readers, Edna's suicide is a representation of giving up, defeat and guilt; however, the message that is intended to be given through this event is a criticism of the social order of the era. Judith Fryer is one of the critics who support that Edna's suicide is a representation of struggle. She wants to die but her suicide is part of her awakening. It would be more correct to call it an ultimate act of her free will. The suicide part in the novel refers to Edna's awakening, the result of her effort to find her new place in the society (Fryer, 1976, p. 244).

Bauer thinks that suicides in literary works do not refer to a loss but an internal dialogue. Hence, inequality and social conflicts may be revealed by the way of this internal dialogue. Society may question women's place and their situations through this internal dialogue, so her rebelliousness is not only rejection but also a search for selfness (Bauer, 1990, p. 4).

Edna's swimming in the sea naked may refer to her rebirth. The depiction of swimming in the novel is closely related to finding her self-expression and her suicide may be attributed to her choosing to fight against a patriarchal society instead of accepting its roles for women.

To sum up, the Victorian era is a period of socio-cultural, scientific, and economic developments and radical changes. These developments also pave the way for social changes. However, in these places where scientific and social developments take place, women, who are considered into a secondary position, continue to remain members of the lower class. The idea that women belong to the lower class ensures the continuity of the patriarchal understanding that regards men as superior (Greamer, 2016, p. 8). Victorian women begin to live as their families and society expect from them at early ages, and they are raised to be good wives and mothers in the future. In this respect, patriarchal ideology makes women adopt their inferior position from their childhood, and it teaches them to live accordingly. The most devastating effect of the era is on women. Women who are subjected to second-class treatment could not have equal rights with men. Their world is inside their home. Being a good wife and mother is their biggest responsibility. In addition, women are regarded as powerless. They can not anything alone and they can not stand on their legs. The extramarital affairs for a woman would have been disgraced in society.

Chopin reflects the socio-economic and cultural conditions of women in her book. In addition, she can not remain indifferent to the revolt of upper-class women against social norms, which is a part of the feminist struggle for women's rights and the serious problem of sexism in society. When the novel is viewed from a new historicist perspective, it is clear that Chopin was affected by the situation of women in society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the conditions of the environment in which she grew up.

These influences can be seen in the creation of independent female characters who rebel against some of the norms imposed by society to achieve their goals and satisfy their desires, and actually, it is possible to come across Chopin's characters even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Women continue to struggle to get rid of male domination on some issues. Although social reforms have also been made to encourage people to become aware of gender equality, modern women are still at times oppressed under the role of mother-wife. Edna's feminist views and independent attitudes help her challenge patriarchal society. But women like Edna are very few in society. America is still in a period when many women often go out to do errands and worship. For Chopin, this novel is her voice. Because of her gender, no one in society paid any attention to her words, but if she reflects all this in her novel, one day her words could be valued.



## CHAPTER III

### 3. A FEMINIST APPROACH TO *THE AWAKENING* AND *MISS JULIE*

#### 3.1. A Feminist Approach to *The Awakening*

Man for the field and woman for the health:

Man for the sword and for the needle she:

Man with the head and woman with the heart:

Man to command and woman to obey;

(Tennyson, 1897)

To begin this part with a poem by British poet Alfred Lord Tennyson who lived in the Victorian era, it is possible to see how different and unfair roles attributed to women and men contrary to the doctrines of Feminism, which supports the equality of women and men. That is, piety, purity, loyalty, obedience and domesticity are attributed to the woman by her family and then by society (Welter, 1966, p. 152).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a world in which men were superior both physically and mentally. It was unthinkable to have a woman writer in that world. In Victorian society, a woman means someone who is devoted to her home and children, who obeys her husband and always supports him. Whereas the most important duty of women is to be a good mother and wife, it is impossible to think that there are women authors in a world dominated by the masculine language; therefore, most women authors choose to enter the literary world under a pseudonym or anonymously. However, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kate Chopin, one of the pioneers of the Feminist movement, criticized the social position of women and rejected the roles attributed to women by the patriarchal society in the Victorian era (Aytür, 1991, p. 1) and she unfurled the flag of Feminism in such an environment. Also, she dealt with the issue of women unpredictably and she explained the struggles of women who are fond of personal freedom with their environment in her novels. Women in Chopin's stories are dissatisfied with the control of their lives by men and they do not want to accept

their position in society. Innermost drives of their hearts promote their courage and belief against freedom. As Chopin tries to gain the idea that female readers have the same rights as men, she encourages them to break the chains and rise against the social taboos. Although Chopin's famous novel, *The Awakening*, can not transcend the reactionary moral norms of the society in which it was written, it becomes the literary symbol of feminism in her own time, proposing that all women have their own private life. While *The Awakening* reflects the strict and restrictive Creole culture through the institution of marriage, it also sheds light on the social and historical context of the 1890s, and it is one of the great expectations of the society for a woman to be faithful to her home and to her husband, besides taking only the responsibility of motherhood from her (Özakça, 2004, p. 13). Edna Pontellier, who is one of the main characters of the novel and goes beyond the usual female prototype, wants to be a self-sufficient woman rather than being appreciated as a good wife or mother in the society, and the struggle for freedom breaks out.

Chopin integrates Edna with concepts such as marriage, motherhood, sexuality, and the search for freedom within the framework of the conditions of the Victorian era and the rules of society. Therefore, this novel made such an overwhelming impression that it was considered one of the first examples written in 1899 in which women's issues were clearly expressed (Büyükcü, 2015, p. 1).

Besides, Kate Chopin, unlike the female figure of the time, has been a free woman during her marriage but after her husband's death, she takes on the responsibility of her family just like a man; however, in her novels, Chopin's women are not born as free. They depend on the environment in which they live and this gives them certain responsibilities. One of the most obvious examples of this case is Edna in *The Awakening*. She is a character who wants to discover her female identity. As a woman living in a patriarchal society, she is uncomfortable with ideal woman roles assigned to her and she searches for herself instead of accepting to be oppressed like many women. Therefore, the responsibility of motherhood is an important obstacle in her eyes. The novel ends with her awakening from the dream of an 'angel in the house'. Briefly, Edna rejects the conditions of the era, and she becomes a female

character against the 'ideal woman' perception of society. She observes the roles of women in the society she lives in from different perspectives. She eventually realizes that the patriarchal system otherizes and alienates women under the pretext of idealization. Thus, it can be said that in Edna's world, one could either be controlled by men or they would survive being alienated by society. In other words, a woman can either become a good mother and wife or be exiled (Velkeakari, 2003, p. 45).

As Marie Fletcher refers that the fate of almost all female characters in Chopin's stories, and how they must behave during their lives have been determined by the rules of society and men. However, regardless of the consequences, going outside or staying within this framework is their decision. It is a fact that Chopin reflects her experiences in her private life to her literary life. In her biography, Oscar Chopin is described as a husband who does not restrict his wife and allows her to live her freedom. Therefore, Kate Chopin lives free from social restrictions and social norms (Fletcher, 1966, p. 120).

On the other hand, male characters who see themselves as the leader of the family establish sovereignty over women. The basis of female characters' disappointment is the superior position of men both within the family and in society. Male characters always want their wife to satisfy them regardless of their feelings and needs. To give an example, Leonce is regarded as masculine because he possesses the qualities required according to the masculinity criteria of the Victorian era. He is a symbol of superiority, and he is a leader in his family. Also, other family members can not act beyond his control and they are obedient to him. Besides, he is depicted as someone who prioritizes property. In fact, in Creole society, being respected in the eyes of the people is one of the most important things for a man. A man is known in society as much as his wealth. He must always seem happy and rich. Economic welfare is the most important factor that determines a man's place. Hence, Mr. Pontellier's only desire is to be financially strong. Because financial power is at the center of upper-middle-class marriages in the Victorian era, he offers his family good facilities and furnishes his home with expensive furniture. That is, he is a busy upper-class man who always thinks to earn money. Therefore, he ignores his wife's

requirements. Mr. Pontellier demonstrates the upper-class man's characteristics of the period by giving his wife presents and spending money in exchange for her love and care. Financial matters are more important for upper-class people, and he tries to make a strong relationship with his business partners instead of his wife. As it is understood from Mr. Pontellier's ideas on marriage and family life, women must always act in line with society's expectations from the institution of marriage. They must respect and comply with the decisions made by their husbands. Therefore, even in marriage, the controlling factor is men. For example, in the novel, birds represent women's right to speak as well as their imprisonment (the two birds in cages; the desire for flight; the pigeon house). Another image connected with birds in flight is a symbol of awakening. By going to the pigeon-house, Edna escapes from her husband and her life. However, when Edna moved to pigeon house and decided on her life by herself, her husband reacted to her thoughts and he tried to think professionally as if he were a boss.

The family, which mediates between the social structure and individual, affects control when political and other authorities are inadequate. As the basic unit of the patriarchal society, the role of the family is prototypical. In general, as a representation of society, the head of the family, man, encourages his family members to obey social norms and act under the norms. Also, this is a representation of patriarchal ideology with his thoughts and actions. Mr. Pontellier wants everything to be under his control regardless of his wife's feelings and his greatest goal in life is to prove his superiority to his family and society. It can be said that he is the man of his era. On the other hand, Edna can not keep up with the gender role that Victorian traditions impose on women and men. Gender discrimination by society is normalized by patriarchal ideology that reflects biology as the destiny of women. From the beginning of the work, readers are introduced to Edna as Mrs. Pontellier, not Edna. By denying Edna's name, the narrator demonstrates how the patriarchal ideology ignores feminine sexual personality. Edna slowly reconstructs herself as the story progresses. Then, the narrator begins to refer to Edna by her name.

Contrary to her character, the most important characteristic that makes Kate Chopin at the forefront is that she tries to express her ideas bravely by opposing the conditions of the period. As she learns new things, she improves herself. She learns from philosophers such as Darwin, Huxley, Spencer to look at people from the perspective of natural laws. She admires Whitman, but the author who impresses her is Maupassant. In her eyes, Maupassant is a freelance author from traditions and rules. Also, he is an author who tells the reader what he sees directly and clearly and so this is the truth itself (Le Marquand, 1998, p. 2). The books she read led Chopin to develop her unique style and encourages her to write stories that reflect reality as she sees it. Like Chopin, Edna is regarded as a feminist from her thoughts, attitudes of disregarding patriarchy and stereotyped norms toward women, an effort to gain her freedom. She is also interested in learning new things, and after discovering her talents, she takes new steps to improve herself without needing any man. Apart from Edna, Chopin deals with different types of women in her novel.

One of the mother-women is Madame Ratignolle. This type of woman is first described with a subtle sarcasm: Madame Ratignolle is a beautiful woman who is the epitome of all the virtues of femininity, combining the roles of soft-headed wife and mother (Chopin, 1899, p. 12). This expression refers that Madame Ratignolle, who is ready to sacrifice herself for her children, approves every word of her husband, a good housewife, tries to show Edna the right way, but Edna can not see an enviable side in her happiness. Because she sees only desperate boredom in this life. She feels pity for Madame Ratignolle because, in these colorless living conditions, this woman could not go beyond that fake happiness. She would never taste the madness of life. Shortly, from the first pages of the novel, Chopin has emphasized how different Edna is from mother-wife women. She is not one of the delicate heroines of the romantic stories. She is a real woman. Being a slave of marriage is not for her. Mr. Pontellier and Edna want different things: He wants an ideal wife while she wants her freedom. At this point, as Chopin referred, the institution of marriage is misrepresented and regulated by patriarchal ideology. According to the conditions of the Victorian era, this is just a fairy tale for women who are seen as an angel in the house.

While men must meet the needs of their families by working in the public sphere, women must fulfill the motherhood and womanhood duties that society expects from them. In this respect, it is clear that society supports the ideology that keeps women within four walls and that they must only look after their children and husband. Therefore, it also sheds light on the difficult conditions in Victorian society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century while the book reveals the perception of the ideal woman in the eyes of society (Kaya, 2015, p. 97).

On the other hand, Kathleen M. Streater refers to Adele Ratignolle: She can not fully attract the attention she deserves due to Edna's extreme feminism. Besides, Adele is a type of woman that symbolizes the type of women we have in society today. Streater remarks Adele lives to tell the story; therefore, Chopin represents an affirmation of feminist possibility through Adele's character. Streater argues how Adele's less dramatic way of going about her choices and Feminism differs from Edna's because Adele does not take a path that can cost her life to avoid her duties. She defends her mother's mother-wife role (Streater, 2007, p. 413).

In general, the female characters in *The Awakening* are obliged to submit to the power-structure relationship that places them in a lower position than men. Women may only be at the forefront with looking for their family and their beauty. In addition to this, the education given to women in the work is sometimes based on traditional sexist approaches. It imposes an upbringing model that keeps women in the background, such as how to sit and stand up, where to talk, and silence. In this respect, it can be said that the character of Adele reflects all aspects of femininity. It appears that Adele has the ideal mother-wife role and that she enjoys this submissive role of women. Life consists of the inside of her house and she does not care about the outside world. On the other hand, Edna's attitudes reflect how a patriarchal society makes women a victim and what they should choose to escape from this society.

“In short, Mrs. Pontellier was not a mother-woman. The mother-woman seemed [...] They were women who idolized their children, worshiped their husbands, and esteemed it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels” (Chopin, 1899, p. 12).

This quotation refers that Edna's behaviors and thoughts are different from other women at her time. Her thoughts are far away from the role of a good mother and wife. The norms of the society in which she lives are not suitable for her. George Arms suggests that Kate Chopin considers freedom from childhood as an essential base for complete freedom (Arms, 1981, p. 150). Thus, Edna Pontellier believes that she can achieve freedom only by moving away from her mother-wife role. In the novel, Edna reflects the unhappiness in her marriage by taking off her ring and throwing it on the ground (Chopin, 1899, p. 59). This can also be interpreted as a kind of rebellion of women against patriarchal norms. Throwing away her ring and trying to crush it is the embodiment of these feelings, but her ring is not broken indicating that Edna can not get rid of the marriage. Also, Martin Walker emphasizes that Edna "resembles a sleepwalker much of the time, not aware on an intellectual level of what she is doing" (Walker, 1979, p. 68). Walker thinks that Edna's awakening is related to her sexual instinct, and this is a process that entails a lack of control over her own actions and emotions (Walker, 1979, p. 69).

After some time, she feels that her husband, who is a good, generous businessman, sees her as a valuable commodity. Edna falls in love with another man, Robert although she is a married woman. Then, she realizes that her marriage is a mistake. On the other hand, from another perspective, Robert has an effect on Edna's transformation into a character who is excluded by going beyond certain dominant norms of the era and at the same time taking steps with the desire to find herself. Eventually, Edna begins to notice everything. Her love for Robert is different from her feelings towards her husband. However, her feelings begin to be meaningless when Edna realizes that Robert is going away from her (Chopin, 1899, p. 54)

Edna, against the limitations of marriage, feels ready to be with another man. However, her relationship with Robert, who adheres to Victorian marriage laws, would not be much different. Marriage is the only thing Robert can dream of with Edna but when Edna declares free to choose, this does not satisfy him. Robert is not ready to give her so much freedom as a Victorian gentleman (Hytonen, 2004, p. 70). Although Robert is someone whom Edna valued, he could be an obstacle to Edna's freedom.

Edna realizes many things by his presence. However, she worries that a loving man can not change his patriarchal thoughts on love and marriage. Furthermore, he could then act like an owner, not a loving man because of the sexual politics of the society in which he lived. When she returns home after her holiday, she begins to be interested in drawing. She ignores the chores and motherhood. She alienates her family, her relationships with society and her family are broken. Therefore, she loses the love and respect of her environment. Every bond she breaks will not only cause her pain, but this situation will also bring a sense of comfort. As a result, she cuts off each relationship that bored her. It gives Edna great pleasure. She gets rid of economic dependence on her husband, and she earns her living. She develops her art by drawing pictures as she wishes. Even if Edna tries to escape from the prison of traditional gender roles that see women as inferior in society, after that, she experiences more deeply the brutal side of the patriarchal ideology in her life.

The author aims to refer to the desire of Edna on being an educated woman. She wants to study with Laidpole, a talented person. She wants to learn something. The role of the angel in the house is no longer alien to her. Also, as referred above, New historicists propose that people's personality is shaped by society and culture. There are femininity roles in this novel that are tried to be imposed on Edna by the society. Edna does not initially oppose them, but as indicated by New Historicist, people can change in line with their needs, motives and passions in time, and the novel reflects this situation.

On the other hand, the difficulties that Edna encounters will begin after this point. She sometimes experiences a dilemma between the role of a free woman and the traditional female role. She sometimes asks who I am. It is never easy for a person to find his/her true self so world literature is also full of tragedies of people seeking identity. While some people pay a heavy price for this, others are not very pleased with the reality they have learned such as Oedipus and King Lear. In *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin shows that she is a successful novelist by making a good connection between social structure, local features of a society, and tragedy and self-seeking of her main character.



The years that are gone seem like dreams - if one might go on sleeping and dreaming but to wake up and find - oh! well! perhaps it is better to wake up, after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life... There are periods of despondency and suffering which take possession of me. But I don't want anything but my own way (Chopin, 1899, p. 123).

Above the quotation demonstrates that although Edna's awakening sometimes causes her suffering, it is better than living under male domination.

On the other hand, Madame Ratignolle says Edna "Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!"(Chopin, 1899, p. 146).According to Franklin,

Adele's 'Think of the children' reminds Edna of her duty and may suggest, at least subconsciously to her, the reality that, if she lives as a fully sexual woman, a state to which she has now awakened, she will likely have to think of some future children, a horrid idea to one struggling so desperately for her independence (Franklin, 1984, p. 525).

Her conversation with Madame Ratignolle shows how determined she is and surprises her with what she says: "I would give my life for my children, but I wouldn't give myself" (Chopin, 1899, p. 92) in the novel is a sign that Edna has entered a new path to find her self by going beyond the definition of femininity accepted by everyone in the Victorian society. In other words, it is time for a woman's suppressed desires and feelings to emerge. Although most of the previous authors do not want to refer to these matters, Chopin boldly introduces the complex inner world of a wealthy woman who rebels against social rules. Thus, she carries a woman who pursues her true self at the cost of her life to the literary world. Whereas Chopin screams for help at the helplessness of being a woman in a society where women are treated as a lower class, it is usual that the story of a woman in search of finding her true self ends in defeat.

In *The Awakening*, Chopin suggests that women want more than being the angel of the house, taking care of their home and children, through Edna. She is a feminist who rebels against patriarchal culture and gender inequality. Edna's state transforms dramatically from that of a dedicated mother and wife to that of a strange

awareness. She discovers her true self and fulfills both her emotional and sexual wants. She obtains her independence and she lives alone away from her children and husband, following her passions and dreams (Ariparno, 2016, p. 4). Chopin as a woman internalizes gender inequalities in society. The determined roles for men and women seem to be unquestionable. However, her novel was not popular at the time it was written because the writer's view and ideas about women and their place in society were quite different from the norms accepted by society, so the novel did not get the value it deserved.

As the second work, *Miss Julie* will be examined in the light of Feminist criticism and it will focus on the autobiographical features of the writer to understand the play better and to make good connections between the writer and his characters.

### **3.2. A Feminist Approach to *Miss Julie***

Written by Swedish playwright August Strindberg in 1888, *Miss Julie* is a naturalist theatre play that deals with sexism and class discrimination, two important problems of the Victorian era. Although it has deep and universal significance, it was banned in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because it was socially and morally inappropriate. The play deals with the power struggle between Jean and Julie, the main characters against the norms imposed by society on individuals. Julie is an upper-class woman who regrets her past with Jean. However, Jean turns Julie's confusion in his favor (Öğünç, 2018, p. 859). Jean's attitudes trigger Julie's suicide in time. Now, the main characters will be examined in some detail.

Miss Julie, who has a noble family, wants to go beyond the limitations of both class and gender roles. However, as her relationship with Jean takes on a sexual dimension, she is dragged towards a tragic end at the end of the play. The play begins with Julie's attempt to establish superiority as a noblewoman by using her status and ends with Jean gradually taking over the authority. While Julie stands out with her social power from this status, Jean from the lower class will show himself with a

personal power given by his ambition, confidence, and arrogance. The play reveals how the social and personal balance of power can change in time. Miss Julie reflects this duality of human nature. Seemingly, she may appear a good representation of the Victorian era. However, she also has a dark side in her character. Her upbringing by a man-hating mother and absent father has a great influence on the formation of this dark side. What she experienced is not only a result of her upbringing but is the result of the social pressure on women. Men have subjected women to everything from religion to gender to keep them under control throughout history. The main source of oppression is men's violence against women.

Jean as another main character, is a member of the lower class while Julie is an upper-class woman. Jean's statements about gender and class differences are remarkable in the play, and his emphasis on gender differences can be interpreted by his desire to gain a place in the hierarchal social system. His self-realization proceeds with the desire to establish authority over the other (Walton, 1995, p. 7). Today, although there has been progress in the problems arising from gender and class differences, the inequality existing in the structure of the patriarchal system has also left its mark in modern societies. *Miss Julie* also symbolizes these inequalities. The play is based on themes such as class differences and sexual politics. After that, the balance of power and the existing hierarchical system begin to change and become different. In short, the war between the sexes has been an entertaining and interesting subject in many literary and artistic genres for centuries. August Strindberg, on the other hand, reflects this issue on the stage more violently, catching the attention of audiences from the very beginning of the play. A girl raised just as a boy by her mother exhibits strange and cruel characteristics from the beginning of the play. The class differences of Miss Julie and Jean are an important fact that marks the beginning of the power struggle between them.

In the play, when giving orders to Jean, Miss Julie uses her feminine side towards him and says: "Kiss my hand first!" (Strindberg, 1888, p. 51). Although Jean seems to be doing his job as a servant, he provokes Julie and he says: "For what? Are you still a child at twenty-five? Don't you know that it's dangerous to play with fire?"

(Strindberg, 1888, p. 51). He kisses her and she slaps his face. “Are you serious or joking?”, “I’m a man, you will take the blame, but no one else” (Strindberg, 1888, p. 51). Jean warns Julie to be careful. However, Julie plays word games on Jean by asking specific questions, like whether he has ever been in love before (Strindberg, 1888, p. 51). The sexual intercourse of the Count’s daughter and the servant is a classist taboo. As the relationship between Julie and Jean takes on a different dimension over time, it is in the foreground that Julie acts contrary to social values as the daughter of an aristocrat.

The play overturns the well-known master-slave relationship through the characters’ economic power and their complex relationships from a different perspective. The struggle for authority and power is closely related to sexuality in the subconscious: seeking and bestowing sexual favor. Jean takes on the role of a master who is obeyed by her while Julie is like a slave.

Moreover, one of the most debated and confusing characteristics of August Strindberg is his ideas on women’s freedom. He is often labeled as a misogynist. It is possible to understand his relations with women from his writings. His works are generally full of negative expressions about women. It is suggested that the bad events he experienced in his marriage affected this situation. He accepts his ideas towards women through the portrayal of Miss Julie, and he claimed that women described themselves differently than they were (Singh, 2014, p. 19). But it is a fact that Strindberg is a misogynist and authoritarian as well as a supporter of the women’s suffrage movement and social democrat. Therefore, it would not be hard to guess that he often displaced one notion with its opposite. These are ‘patriarchy’ and ‘feminism’. Miss Julie has two different characters in the play, too. These are roles of women who suffer on the one hand and try to establish authority over men on the other. Julie is superior in terms of her social class while Jean is superior in terms of his sex. She is also an aristocratic woman who thinks there must not be gender differences and class distinctions among people; however, Jean belongs to the lower class because of his social status, so he uses his masculinity as a means to reach the aristocracy. He aims to raise his social status by using sexuality and pretending to be in love with Miss Julie.

So he uses the superiority of his gender on Julie and manipulates her social power (Singh, 2014, p. 18).

Also, an important factor influencing women's approach to the idea of good motherhood is their relationship with their mothers. Despite the backlash against their mother's neglect and her voluntary submission to her husband, many women still internalize their mother's attitude and behaviors. This instinctive attitude and remembering are very common (Coward, 1995, p. 113). Miss Julie has an androgen identity in her own eyes and this situation is connected with the traumas she has experienced. She describes herself as a half-woman. Since her childhood, her mother's feelings and her father's thoughts have left significant traces in her process of gaining sexual identity. Julie's mother believes in gender equality and she also hates men. Moreover, Julie's father is a misogynist. This hatred is inherited from her parents to her. Julie's upbringing seems to have a great impact on her androgynous behaviors. She is neither truly powerful nor naturally obedient; therefore, she may be regarded as misogynistic or unnatural. Besides, Julie is portrayed as hysterical: a sensitive girl who expects love from her parents but can not find it. She has a disappointment with her mother, who withholds her love even in her infancy and makes her feel worthless. In the period of Oedipus, when the love for the father deepens, she devalues her mother and turns to her father with intense love. Her father is extremely admirable in her eyes. But while trying to win the father she could not compete with her mother and so she has a confusion at that time. As a result of this situation, she notices that she begins to find men exciting and strong. On the other hand, she regards women, including herself, as insignificant and weak. So, she also uses her sexuality against men as a defense because she fears that men would abuse her power.

In addition to this, Julie's mother is reluctant to get married, and when his father proposed to her, she says that she might be his lover, not his wife. His father is in love with her and accepts this situation. After that, they are regarded as sinful and that's why they are rejected by society. They become a mockery of society (Strindberg, 1888, p. 97). It is reflected in the dual images of the ruined matriarchal community and a weak man who lost his esteem in the eyes of other men and thus

broke his ties with the social environment. Later, Julie's mother has to get married to his father, and Julie is born against her mother's wish. She is allowed to rampage, and she is taught the behaviors of boys. Julie is proof that a woman can be as strong as a man. Instead of wearing the cute, colorful clothes worn by girls, she wears boy's clothes. She learns how to groom and even shoot (Strindberg, 1888, p. 56). Shortly, there are a lot of reasons that affect Julie's inner world, and her confusion over her sexual identity is related to traumas at an early age.

When her mother is forced to marry her father, she rebels by burning their properties and running away with someone else. The threat to patriarchy in Strindberg's mind manifests itself in an environment dominated by feelings of aggression, indecision, and anxiety. According to Davari and Sadeghi(2017), Julie's mother's burning something in her revolt against the hierarchical system and social norms.

Furthermore, her mother raises her like a boy from childhood and instilled hatred towards men in her daughter. On the other hand, Julie's boyfriend breaks up with Julie because of her cruel behavior. She attempts to train her boyfriend with a riding whip and fantasizes about eradicating the male sex. So, she behaves as if he was an animal (Strindberg, 1964, p. 77). Therefore, she becomes an individual obsessed with establishing authority over the opposite sex. However, after her relationship with Jean, the balance of power changes. Julie, who always wanted to hold the power, still hates men, but she is not as strong as in the past. She is quite worried. Because, while illegitimate sex is considered usual for men, women are limited by traditional norms. To give an example, women are prohibited from having sexual intercourse before marriage. This situation is narrated by Penny Kane as the following: The woman is not only expected to be a virgin but also to be innocent by avoiding all ideas about sexuality until marriage (Kane, 1995, p. 97). In the traditional context, women have got two main duties in society. These are based on marriage and motherhood. Therefore, women's participation in social life is prevented. The famous phrase "angel in the house" in the poem written by Coventry Patmore emphasizes the innocence, beauty, and morality of the woman and reflects the model of the perfect woman. In

short, the 'angel' refers to the woman who obeyed the rules imposed by society and who was as pure as an angel.

One of the most dramatic parts of the play is the scene where Julie pours her resentment into the blood-pool where her greenfinch is killed by Jean:

"I would love to see your blood and your brains on a chopping block! I would like to see your whole sex swimming in a sea of blood, like my little bird. I think I could drink from your skull!" (Strindberg, 1999, p. 477). Julie says these sentences after Jean cut off the bird's head. Here, Jean's choosing of the bird as an innocent victim is perhaps a similar example of Julie's tragic end. Also, this quote may be an indication that Strindberg views all women as sick and mentally ill. While Julie reflects her anger and hatred towards men here, she can also be seen as a danger to Jean's and all men's sexuality. According to Gilbert and Gubar, women in the shadow of patriarchal ideology could only survive as an image in miniature since they could not escape the world created by men (Gilbert & Gubar, 1979, p. 2029). The bird in the cage represents Julie, trapped under patriarchal ideology. The death of the bird also symbolizes the end of Julie and her rebirth, free from social constraints. Here, Strindberg's frequently encountered dramatic motifs such as identity confusion, disgust with physicality, disappointments, and sadness clearly define the human situation. That is, he writes about the soul of a woman who is trying to be suppressed in a dark. Finally, Julie is no longer able to maintain her authority, and Jean acts like her and humiliates her.

**Jane:** You vile! Shut up and get out! Are you also telling me that I am rude? I have never seen anyone in my class act as rudely as you are today. Have you seen even one of the girls around me treat a man as sincerely as you? Do you think any of the girls in my class would fall for a man like that? I have never seen this anywhere but prostitutes and animals (Strindberg, 1888, p. 55).

To sum up, in *Miss Julie*, August Strindberg sheds light on many questions to consider. What are the root causes of communication problems between men and women? Can a degenerate woman find happiness in her life? Can the lower class later

raise their social status? These questions and more are the cornerstones of the exploration of Strindberg's narrative. In addition to this, this play, based on the themes of relationships, exploitation, identity, and sexuality, deals with the story of people trying to eliminate the social pressure they encounter in their lives. As a result of these classist, sexist, or psychological pressures, the characters seek a change in their lives. Problems arise when this change becomes dependent on the destruction of another individual. While everyone was living as a member of the class in which he/she was born, according to traditional norms, Jean had no hope of raising his social status to a satisfactory level. But the problem arises when Strindberg puts a lower-class man with an upper-class woman. He depicts Julie as a man-hating half woman and Julie is introduced as a predatory version of the 'new woman'. Julie, trying to be a free woman and individual, has to submit to the destructive ideas created by patriarchal culture, and she has a sense of hopelessness and weakness in time. In addition to this, the play can be regarded as an anti-feminist play that reflects its author's misogyny and supports the patriarchy. From the beginning of the play, Julie changes positions frequently. She sometimes commands Jean like a lady but then, she uses her sexuality against him. The source of her misfortunes, as a result of these sudden changes, is herself, that is, her flirty attitudes. Therefore, a perception is created by Strindberg that no one should be blamed for her downfall. Since Julie is a woman who has her mother's feminist ideology and can also empathize with her father, this prevents her from being manipulative like her mother or being completely submissive to a man. On the other hand, Strindberg glorifies Jean with these words: "[Jean] is superior to Miss Julie because he is a man. Sexually, he is an aristocrat because of his masculine strength ..." (Strindberg, 1999, p. 861) and reflects his thoughts. When Julie asks about the difference between female and male, Jean claims that there is a fundamental difference between the two sexes, stating that "the usual difference between man and a woman" (Strindberg, 1999, p. 479). Here, Strindberg refers to the gender roles attributed to men and women by society.

The feminist reading of *Miss Julie* reinforces the psychological and social pressure placed on women during the time in which it was written. Its female



protagonist acts against the traditional norms. However, in this power struggle, while Julie's passion and sexual desire are portrayed as disgusting and corrupt, Strindberg accepts Jean's behaviors as a natural quality of maleness.

## CONCLUSION

In this thesis, two literary works- Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*- have been discussed within the framework of New historicism and Feminist criticism.

Culture and its products are important elements that make up a text. Since the text is already part of the culture in which it is written, the social institutions of the target culture inevitably become the subject of the text. In this context, New historicism as a literary theory broadens the reader's viewpoint, and it helps the aim of changing the critics' and writers' ways of interpreting and using literature. It regards literature as a means and emphasizes that no writer is free of their age and influence. That is, New historicism does not consider history as the objective transfer of culture.

New historicism helps to develop culture and literature and strengthen the relationship between them. Despite its mostly fictitious tendency, literature enables the reader to evaluate the influence of culture, traditions, religion, power relations from different perspectives. Consequently, a qualified reader examines the non-ignorable influence of relations of the age and gets new perspectives about social norms. In other words, it is a dynamic structure that contains lots of elements in culture. The dynamic structure of society and culture requires multi-dimensional analysis. As a part of society, human endeavors to adapt to the outside world to survive, as in other living things. In addition, human being makes this effort to establish relationships with other people with whom she/he lives. More generally, one of the important features of the dynamic structure of a society is that it inevitably establishes relations with other societies. Thus, they can influence each other and become more open to change. A society can be effective in shaping another society with its own culture, traditions, and beliefs. Similarly, it would not be wrong to say that a literary work, which is the product of a human being who is a part of society, emerges as a result of historical, psychological, social, and political conditions. Regarding the influence of social relations on the construction of cultural elements and personal identity, it is necessary to consider the fact that literature owes much to the social paradigm. In short, the

literary text itself is already part of both the interaction of discourses and historical context. Starting from this point, in this study, New historicism provides a multidimensional basis for comparing *The Awakening* (1899) and *Miss Julie* (1888).

In *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin writes about the gender discrimination of her time and the dominance of the patriarchal system. She acquires firsthand experience because she has already faced with same problems in her society. On the other hand, in *Miss Julie*, Strindberg writes about social class and sexual identity and he questions whether these can be overcome and the consequences of trying to overcome them. Like Chopin, he also acquires firsthand experiences because of his patriarchal society. According to traditional historicist critics, the historical accuracy of a literary text must be evaluated with the historical background of the population presented. On the other hand, according to New historicist critics, there is no certainty of historical accuracy (Tyson, 2006, p. 292). *The Awakening* and *Miss Julie* provide us with interpretations of the populations they represent, and we can use them to help us understand the circulation of discourses within which Chopin and Strindberg wrote these works.

As stated above, New historicism emphasizes the importance of context in text analysis and it reveals that a text should be evaluated with its context. Unlike Traditional historicism, it approaches the text from a broader perspective. In addition to this, cultural formation is important for New historicists. Boundaries between the upper and lower classes are removed and people who are regarded as the upper class in society are later portrayed as ordinary or even helpless. New historicism also aims to reach real meaning in a work, and New historicist works are open to multiple readings. In this respect, one of the reasons for including New historicism in this study is how the works are examined from a multi-faceted perspective, and how non-textual elements affect the works. If the works are examined in the context of the period in which they were written, it is worth noting again that for centuries, the living areas of women have been limited by strict social rules and norms in patriarchal societies. In the Victorian patriarchal societies, women are regarded as ‘inferior’ and ‘other’ by men. Women who do not have equal rights with men in lots of areas of life are always despised by society and men because they do not have any chance to prove their

existence in society. Because the role of women in a patriarchal society has already been defined when they are born. All her duties are to take care of her husband and children. A woman can not work in any job outside of her home because her responsibility goes on 7 days 24 hours. Since women do not have a job, they are completely dependent on men economically. Therefore, a man's economic support is essential for her survival. For example, in *The Awakening*, Edna feels helpless because she can not do anything to achieve her dreams in her father's house. She feels herself shackled, as she can not find a way to escape from the strict rules of patriarchy. Also, these rules include compelling a woman to get married for economic reasons and social status in society. Edna considers marriage as a way to ensure luxury and wealth. However, after years, she becomes a victim of her society's expectations, fighting against the masculine structure.

Simone De Beauvoir (1956) expresses human race is masculine and the male identifies woman, not in herself. According to her, a woman is not free, but rather a valueless being (p. 16). Judith Butler (2007) states that women are labelled as the other; hence, they have disadvantages when compared to men. She also believes that there should not be a normative social structure that disregards women's value judgments (Butler, p. 13). In *The Awakening*, Chopin agrees with these notions and portrays Edna as someone who is otherized by society. She demonstrates that women are not free to change their social identity.

Similarly, in *Miss Julie*, just as Edna, Julie's society is a society that fully reflects the class divisions and gender issues of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian era, where various changes and developments were experienced around the world. Since she is the daughter of a noble family, she has many opportunities compared to other women in her society. In this era of class divisions, most people in the lower class do anything to raise their social status. Rebelling against this hierarchical order, Strindberg creates a sexual intimacy between the servant Jean and Count's daughter, Julie. However, Julie's power and status are manipulated by a lower class man. At the end of the play, she is forced to obey Jean. If this relationship is revealed, Julie will be condemned by

society for having sex with a lower-class man before marriage. Similarly, while the character Edna in Chopin's work is a married woman, she thinks that she will be excluded by society if she was with another man. But, on the contrary, this is not a problem for Jean and the other men. While there is always a way out for them in the masculine world, women like Edna and Julie are excluded from society. Both works reflect the unfair side of society. In short, every woman who does not obey the social rules, regardless of her status and power, is punished, while obedient women like Mrs. Ratignolle continue to be otherized under the perception of ideal women.

As the second theoretical framework of this study, Feminist criticism focuses on how literature has represented women and their relationships with men. Interpreting a study from a Feminist perspective requires focusing on women who are oppressed in the study. Thus, it primarily aims to deal with the place of women in society and literature throughout history. Feminist criticism tries to draw attention to the fact that women in society also have equal rights with men; however, it is, unfortunately, almost impossible to discuss women's rights, given the circumstances of Victorian society. According to patriarchal society rules, women are treated as second-class people and their lack of place in business life is the basis for gender discrimination in society. It would not be expected that women would be aware of literature while being exploited in a male-dominant society. However, in such a patriarchal society, Kate Chopin with high awareness unlike most women in her time becomes one of the pioneers of the Feminist movement by supporting the awakening of women so that they can express themselves fearlessly and create their living areas independently from men. Although she is exposed to the strict rules of society, she never loses her belief that women should have equal rights and opportunities with men. Therefore, she supports women's struggles in her writings. Edna Pontellier, one of the main characters in Chopin's novel, *The Awakening* seems to be the prototype of Chopin. This shows that she attempts to reflect her real-life experiences to the literature. For example, both Chopin and her heroine Edna do not want to be addicted to anyone. They are blindly not obeying social norms, questioning and struggling with them.

Therefore, it is clear that Chopin challenges society and marriage through Edna and also refers to themes such as identity, Feminism, family, and freedom.

Edna realizes her potential after marriage and tries new things like drawing, and she sells her paintings to earn money after leaving her husband's house. Here, the message Chopin wants to convey is that women should discover what they want as individuals to achieve happiness as well as they should strive for it.

Protagonist Edna, who has grown up under social pressures since her childhood, realizes herself in a different place where she thinks she can feel a little freer after getting out of her father's control and getting married. However, it can be deduced that this awareness is generally used to take revenge by fighting the strict rules of the patriarchal society. To give other examples from world literature, when *Madam Bovary*(1857) by French author Gustave Flaubert and *A Doll's House*(1879) by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen are analyzed, it is possible to say that women living in different countries experience similar situations as well.

On the other hand, in *Miss Julie*, Julie's tragic end is marked by the changing social roles between the noble Julie and her servant, Jean. It is against social norms for a servant and a noblewoman to have sexual intercourse. The manipulation of this situation by Jean who wants to raise his social status is an indication that a bad end approaches for Julie. Julie who can not know what to do thinks about the honor of both her family and herself in society if this is heard. Besides, she is herself angry that she let Jean use her. At the end of the play, she regains both her esteem by committing suicide and takes away Jean's chance to reach a high status thanks to her. Hence, her death also means Jean's fall without finding what he hoped for. As a result, she prefers death rather than being a woman who lives under Jean's authority and is condemned by society. It can also be considered the first step of a woman who does not accept male supremacy in society to a new world. Here, Strindberg illustrates that a woman prefers to give her life up in order not to be excluded by her society and family. On the other hand, as stated previously, since the author can leave traces both from him and from the socio-economic conditions of the period in which he lived; Strindberg plans a

tragic death for Julie for having ignored the moral norms. It is clear that although he occasionally criticizes the rigid society during his life, he gives importance to the customs and rules of the society. As a male author, his perception towards women is influenced by patriarchal Victorian society. In this respect, his work also includes his sexist views and gender prejudices. As a result, he may create such a tragedy at the end of the play to please his society.

Miss Julie seems to reveal some misogynistic characteristics since the women characters are vulnerable and obedient. As stated previously, she is a degenerated woman after having sexual relations with Jean but Jean is still a good man. It is the fear of her father's arrival that makes her anxious and desperate. At the end of the play, she suffers from psychological depression and then, submits to Jean. She emphasizes that she can not regret, escape, stay, but she can not live, die and she can do nothing. She needs help (Strindberg, 1888, p. 67). She requests one last thing from Jean, her honor, her reputation... Finally, she can not put up with the sorrow and decides to kill herself. As claimed by Gail Finney, this desperation of Julie is 'a scream for help' when she sees she is chained to her feminine roles (Finney, 1989, p. 8). She is a representation of oppression on women's mental health, and she symbolizes how a repressive society affects a woman's individuality. Burkman and Roof explain that misogyny includes such things as the psychological and physical punishment of women, negative portrayals of women, and their exclusion in modern drama (Burkman & Roof, 1998, p. 13).

**Jean:** ... but I would not do it (commit suicide), mind. There is a difference between us.

**Miss Julie:** Because you are a man and I am a woman? What difference does that make?

**Jean:** The difference- between a man and a woman (Strindberg, 1964, p. 75).

As Strindberg points out, Jean's emphasis on gender differences stems from his desire to have a good place in a class society. In his opinion, his self-realization becomes through the control of another. Besides, she is aware that she can not do this herself although Jean orders her to commit suicide. Perhaps the only option for Julie is

to be compelled to accept the social roles imposed on her. At the same time, this is a sign that she could not find any other way out.

Consequently, when Strindberg's *Miss Julie* and Chopin's *The Awakening* are compared, some common and different points are seen in terms of the Feminist approach and New historicism. In *The Awakening*, the character of Edna grows up in a house where the effects of a great man are seen in the atmosphere of the home. Edna can not develop herself and experience new things. She is limited in a house by her father and the rules of patriarchal societies. On the other hand, Chopin herself reflects her approach to her characters, and she reflects her life. However, she is lucky because she was brought up by an open-minded grandmother and mother in a patriarchal society.

In *The Awakening*, women have difficulty expressing their inner worlds and they do not have an opportunity to reflect their thoughts in Creole society. In every area, men are dominating, while women are restricted. Men have a sense of self-identity and a right to speak up. Women have difficulty in proving their existence. The world is also ruled by men. Men are always one step ahead of females. Chopin refuses to tolerate this inequality and struggles for women's economic and spiritual independence. Chopin emphasizes the importance of education and money. To get money women need jobs and education. In the novel, Madame Ratignolle has all the needed materials but because of her dependence, she can not follow her dreams and she can not get her achievements. On the other hand, Edna defines domestic life as a boring and unsatisfying kind of life and she has a different world-view. She wants to discover her inner world and ideas, she rebels against traditional norms. She desires to reach the truth with her emotions and imagination. She looks for a kind of independent lifestyle. She prefers a different life from her family. She chooses relationships that are based upon respect, love, freedom, and equality which are the values that women need to have.

In *Miss Julie*, Julie is mostly under the influence of her mother's upbringing and her approaches towards men. She is a kind of tool that will convey her mother's



man-hating attitudes to the next generation. Like Chopin, Strindberg shows that human beings are shaped by a society that includes selfishness, violent men, personal limitations. At the beginning of both works, the female characters have opposite characteristic features; however, in the end, the patriarchal society discourages women and destroys women's self-confidence with its strict rules and norms. The female characters are under the effect of their family members such as their mothers, fathers, and husbands. Whereas Chopin questions the role of women in society and their identities the relationship between men and women and gender discrimination in society, Strindberg questions the identity confusion and the relations between men and women in a world of class distinctions brought by capitalism and industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In addition to this, the similarities between the two works could be due to the authors' approach to build-up to the works' final incidents. Unlike in real life, Strindberg and Chopin do not utilize logically arranged dialogues. Emotions, society and class, repression, and the longing for liberation are common themes in both works. Edna's discovery of long-suppressed emotions fuels her quest for freedom, love, and self-expression. Her relationship with Robert arouses gone physical needs and makes her reflect on her life. Julie, on the other hand, conveys feminine thoughts of despair and helplessness. She focuses on her desires and reflects on the opposite sex the love she could not get from her family, as well as the hatred she inherited from them.

Also, both works contain several references to fate. Chopin uses fate in *The Awakening* to portray the demands of Edna Pontellier's society. Strindberg uses fate to illustrate his character's compulsive methods of dealing with her guilt and her rejection of personal responsibility. For example, Julie's dog mates with the gatekeeper's dog and gets pregnant. Her dog represents Miss Julie, a noblewoman; the gatekeeper's dog represents Jean, a lower class. This situation refers to the sexual intercourse of Jean and Miss Julie. In other words, it foreshadows her fate. On the other hand, Edna's fate is drawn by the patriarchal society she lives in. Her lifestyle has to depend on the expectations of society. Both authors believe that these women are oppressed by fate and that their masters, men, regard them as dependent as if they were slaves of their

patriarchal societies. However, although these women are dissatisfied with their partners, they use people (Miss Julie is also used herself) when needed.

Even though these works are written in the same period but in different countries -Sweden and America- their female characters, Edna and Miss Julie, have common experiences. In both works, themes such as infidelity, love, the institution of marriage, sexuality, loneliness, and freedom are discussed and questioned. Miss Julie and Edna Pontellier tend to have unusual love affairs because of their lack of love in their own families and their family problems. Mr. Pontellier's long business trips and careless attitudes towards his wife are the reason for Edna's interest in Robert. Robert falls in love with Edna; however, Edna dislikes Robert's adherence to traditional norms like Mr. Pontellier. Robert wants her to be his wife, but she does not accept to marry again. On the other hand, the family environment in which Julie grew up, the lack of communication in the family and the hatred she inherited from her parents are the biggest factors that prepared her tragic end because of her love affairs. Both female characters fall in love with a man who leads them to have adulterous love and both men are disappointments for female characters. Two authors who lived in different cultures deal with similar subjects in their works and they reveal that the situation and difficulties of women living in different societies are similar. Besides, Chopin focuses on the heroine's struggle for freedom and her passions. The men in her novel are regarded as an obstacle for women. Strindberg's Julie is only known for her relationship with her servant, Jean. Jean does not approve of Julie's behaviors as she acted against the patriarchal tradition. He pretends to be in love with Julie but he does not have deep feelings for her. His only thought is his social status. Hence, he manipulates Julie's feelings and power, and he causes Julie's death. However, although Strindberg claims that her passion causes Julie's death, he does not approve of Miss Julie as she engages in male affairs. There is no attempt to eliminate inequality. While Chopin and Strindberg foreshadow a similar tragic end for women struggling against obedience and oppression, both affirm the existence of real differences in the natures of men and women. They sacrifice their souls for freedom at the end of their stories. Briefly, Kate Chopin and August Strindberg shape the way the

world views gender roles with their unique writing styles and strong ideas. Their characters press sympathy and their backgrounds reflect an aspect of relation to other oppressed individuals.

Despite the developments related to women's rights over time, the traces of the patriarchal system in the modern world are still present though not as severe as stated in the Victorian age. The problem of inequality between men and women and gender discourses continues since history repeats itself. The patriarchal system, compelling the women to internalize social and cultural norms and feel inferior, is still within us. A New historicist and Feminist reading of in *Miss Julie* and *The Awakening* reveal the common struggle of the women by considering the socio-cultural conditions of the time and the works together.

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