



## The Duty of Women to Preserve Family Found in Fay Weldon's *Weekend*

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<b>Article History</b> Received: 2024-01-10 Revised: 2025-02-20 Published: 2025-03-02  <b>Keywords:</b> <i>Gender Role;</i> <i>Short Story;</i> <i>Feminism.</i>	This study examines the importance of women in preserving family structures, as represented in Fay Weldon's short story <i>Weekend</i> , with a focus on traditional gender roles. Using feminist literary criticism as the primary analytical framework, the study focuses on how the narrative depicts gender dynamics within the family. Marta plays the dual position of working woman and homemaker, combining agentic and communal features while fulfilling her responsibilities as a wife and mother. Martin, her spouse, follows traditional masculine duties as provider and decision-maker, but with less emotional involvement. The study also looks at ancillary characters like Colin, Janet, and Katie, who reflect different ideas on gender roles, from conventional homemaking to liberal feminism. The study uses a qualitative descriptive method to relate the story's characters and themes to larger feminist theories, demonstrating the interaction of gender roles, societal expectations, and family dynamics. This analysis helps to a better understanding of how literature can be used to explore and critique gender relations, as well as provide insights into changing social norms.
Artikel Info	Abstrak
<b>Sejarah Artikel</b> Diterima: 2025-01-10 Direvisi: 2025-02-20 Dipublikasi: 2025-03-02  <b>Kata kunci:</b> <i>Peran Gender;</i> <i>Cerita Pendek;</i> <i>Feminisme.</i>	Studi ini meneliti pentingnya perempuan dalam melestarikan struktur keluarga, seperti yang digambarkan dalam cerita pendek Fay Weldon berjudul <i>Weekend</i> , dengan fokus pada peran gender tradisional. Dengan menggunakan kritik sastra feminis sebagai kerangka analisis utama, studi ini berfokus pada bagaimana narasi menggambarkan dinamika gender dalam keluarga. Marta memainkan peran ganda sebagai wanita pekerja dan ibu rumah tangga, menggabungkan sifat-sifat agen dan komunal sambil memenuhi tanggung jawabnya sebagai istri dan ibu. Martin, suaminya, menjalankan peran maskulin tradisional sebagai pencari nafkah dan pembuat keputusan, tetapi dengan keterlibatan emosional yang lebih sedikit. Studi ini juga meneliti karakter pendukung seperti Colin, Janet, dan Katie, yang mencerminkan ide-ide berbeda tentang peran gender, dari pekerjaan rumah tangga konvensional hingga feminisme liberal. Studi ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menghubungkan karakter dan tema cerita dengan teori feminis yang lebih besar, yang menunjukkan interaksi peran gender, harapan masyarakat, dan dinamika keluarga. Analisis ini membantu untuk lebih memahami bagaimana literatur dapat digunakan untuk mengeksplorasi dan mengkritik hubungan gender, serta memberikan wawasan tentang perubahan norma sosial.

### I. INTRODUCTION

The best medium for conveying a message is literature, whether it be drama, poetry, or prose. Fictional narratives that elicit subjective satisfaction with the plot are not the only kind of literature. Literature can be used as a vehicle for social campaigns to raise awareness of systems that are failing society, such as gender issues. Gender difficulties primarily affect women in society because of their significant shortcomings in comparison to males, which have been used as a justification to support men's domination. Feminist literary critique refers to literary works that uncover women's perspectives in society.

The foundation of feminist literary critique predates the twentieth century, which is when the feminist movement began. It is a holdover from ancient Greek literature, which was originally introduced by Sappho and maybe in Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata*. Guo (2018) claims that feminist literary criticism is a critical examination of works that are based on women's long-term experiences and the accomplishment of their particular and useful actions. Feminism itself serves as the analytical tool in this kind of literary critique. Marxist-feminist, cultural feminism, psychoanalytic critique, deconstruction,

and other ideas of literary criticism are all mixed together in feminism criticism.

Feminist literary criticism aims to illustrate the connection between women's rights and global issues while analyzing the diversity and complexity of feminisms around the world. According to Suwardi (2010), feminist literary criticism calls on readers or the audience to critique literary works in order to increase understanding of gender relations toward literature and culture as well as the moral principles that underlie them. There are many stories going on in society, including those involving politics, economic class disparities, gender difficulties, and family issues. In Fay Weldon's *Weekend*, the supremacy of mothers in raising a family will be the social topic discussed in this literature-criticism piece.

The writers chose this subject because it has long been their primary focus and because they wish to gain a deeper comprehension of gender roles in literature. There are many advantages to studying gender roles as well. Through literary criticism, researchers can not only identify gender roles but also provide insights on how genders relate to one another in any given social context or social value that can be used in society.

The gender of the main character and the gender role that goes along with it are examined in this article in relation to the characters' roles in raising the family in Fay Weldon's *Weekend*. The primary subject of this research, which has a narrow concentration in the family domain, is the superiority of the housewife role in raising a family based on the characters from Fay Weldon's *Weekend*.

## II. METHOD

The writer will be using a descriptive qualitative research method in this article. According to Taylor and Bogdan-DeVault (2016, p. 9), the descriptive qualitative method is a research approach that focuses on understanding how people think and act in their everyday lives. This method is particularly relevant because qualitative research is naturally aligned with the study of human behavior and actions in real-world contexts. As Taylor and Bogdan-DeVault (2016, p. 9-10) explain, all perspectives are worthy of study, which aligns well with the issue of gender roles that the writer explores in this article. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the role and significance of women and other

gendered characters in Fay Weldon's *Weekend* from multiple perspectives.

The data sources for this study are drawn from an online resource, *teachingenglish.org.uk*, and the short story itself, which is available in a digital format. The data was revised and curated by the British Literature Kits (BriLit Kits) in 2009. All analysis will be presented in the form of a narrative text, allowing for a thorough exploration of the content.

To collect the data, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Reading the short story repeatedly to ensure a deep understanding of the narrative.
2. Understanding the plot and identifying relevant paragraphs and lines that relate to the focus of the study, specifically gender roles.
3. Analyzing the data and connecting it with established theoretical frameworks for gender studies.

For the analysis of the data, the following steps will be employed:

1. Identifying and classifying data: This involves categorizing the data based on themes, characters, and relevant gender dynamics as they appear in the short story.
2. Criticizing: This step will involve examining the data critically, questioning the underlying assumptions in the portrayal of gender roles and their implications in the story.
3. Reviewing the data: Finally, the data will be reviewed to ensure consistency with the research questions and the theoretical framework used in the study.

This method allows for a detailed and nuanced analysis of the representation of gender roles in *Weekend*, facilitating a deeper understanding of how gender identity and relations are constructed within literary texts. As Creswell (2014) suggests, qualitative research enables the exploration of complex phenomena, such as gender, by focusing on individual experiences and societal contexts. Through this approach, the writer will uncover the multilayered perspectives of gender roles, specifically the depiction of women's roles in the narrative, providing a comprehensive analysis that reflects the intricacies of gender dynamics.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Traditional gender role

*Weekend* is a short story made by Fay Weldon and first appeared in British magazine

'Cosmopolitan' in 1978. It was published by Penguin in 'Modern British Short Stories'. The story is about a middle-class family from London that is planning to spend their weekend in their cottage. The story carries the concept of traditional gender role, because the author is focusing the plot to the life a woman which played by a character named, Marta and the man of the house named, Martin. Also, there are another side characters named, Colin, Katie, and Janet which are Marta and Martin's friends. The concept of traditional gender role is describing the role of man and woman in the house, so the *Weekend* is describing Marta and her husband, Martin in their family. The expectation of traditional gender role is differed by the sex itself, men is expected to be the provider of family need and protect the family. In this short story Martin does have a job but as a freelance. Women in traditional gender roles are expected to become a homemaker, doing housework, serving husband and children. Marta in this story has a career job but she also still doing her role as a housewife and never feels bother with it.

#### **B. Marta**

Marta is a breadwinner and homemaker in her family. She is adopting the characteristic of agentic and communal. She has a career which represents her agentic quality, and even though she has children to be taking care of, she insists to spend of her hours in her work. This is symbolized her passion in having career path and leads her family needs by her work "She was a market researcher in an advertising agency, and Martin is a freelance designer" (Weldon, 2010: s.20) Marta thinks it was her moral responsibility and her pay wage pays her domestic stand-in enough. The moral responsibility represents her liberal feminist that still want to be a leading woman but not for herself for her family. Marta does have a housekeeper in her family, named Mrs. Hodder but even though she doesn't give all the housework to her. Marta still in charge in the running of the house like cooking, dishes, laundry and etc. (Weldon, 2010: s.40) Marta pays the housekeeper with her own wages and it more like the housekeeper just doing only little housework. It can be concluded, Marta not abandon her traditional role which as a homemaker. Marta has a great communal quality in her family, not just for taking care

housework but also serving her husband. Marta devout to her husband even sometimes her husband always tells her to do like he said (Weldon, 2014: s.50, 160), she never complains about it and do her role as wife as her husband like. Marta more like an obedient wife that doesn't like to argue and aware of her partner situation, the complaints she got from her husband just become something just need to listen and accept it. Also, when Marta can't stand of the complaints she just vents it all in her mind. Marta concerns the sexual need in her marriage life, she also thinks about how to improve her bedtime with her husband by finding way to satisfy Martin's pleasure.

#### **C. Martin**

Martin is a breadwinner, he has agentic qualities in his family. He pretty much doing precisely his role just as the traditional gender role expected. He has a job, a freelance designer (Weldon, 2010:20). In the short story, Martin's income is not mentioned but Marta's wage can pay their house. Martin holds the man of the house role, he is in charge for leading his family. He doesn't like being told or even argued with his wife (Weldon, 2010: s.50). Martin like to bossing in his family, he holding the upper command chain and he always complaining when something is not right for him. Even though, he is not abusive and didn't believe in violence to solve the problem. He is more like to critic and suggest his suggestion. (Weldon, 2010: s. 70, 360). Towards his three children, he is a loving father and 'funny daddy' with his kids (Weldon, 2010: s. 80). Conclusion is, Martin is just an ordinary husband that expected by traditional gender role but more like complaining things than do it by himself.

#### **D. Collin, Janet, and Katie**

Colin is Martin's oldest friend, he holds breadwinner role in his family and provide his family needs. Colin has been married twice, he divorced his former wife, Janet and marry Katie, a young woman and has liberal feminist vibe. Colin works as a photographer and make a lot of money and fairly famous from his career (Weldon, 2010: s.300). Colin's career affecting his relationship with his former wife, Janet. Since he is rich and famous, he more prefers young women who prettier and more energetic than his former wife. Janet is Colin's

ex-wife and she is now a single mother that taking care of their two children. Janet is a fully homemaker in their former family. She is focusing in taking care of her family, making food, do dishes, laundry and etc. But she lacks of emotion which make her described as a boring person and not bringing colors to her family (Weldon, 2010: s.240). She also an ecofeminist, she likes gardening and doesn't like to argue with anyone. In conclusion, Janet is holding a boring communal quality wife and she also a devoted mother to her children even though her ex-husband won't care anymore. Katie was described as beautiful and elegant woman (Weldon, 2010: s. 230). Colin and her don't have children and it will stay like that for a while. Katie doesn't have image of housewife as in traditional gender role, she more like a dynamic housewife that demands equality in family and decide what she like. Katie is a liberal feminist, instead obeying the traditional gender role, she revolutionizes her way as housewife with Colin. She more likes to walk and sit with the same table with men than focusing in taking care of housework and having children (Weldon, 2010: s. 250). This is because the age factor of Katie, she still young and her mind is still idealized by the feminism. She is also assumed, that she marries Colin because of his money and fame. As far as the writers can analyze, she holds egalitarian gender role which emphasized fair contribution in house.

#### **E. Beryl**

Beryl is a homemaker and also breadwinner. She used to have a bigger job since she married to Harry, she becomes a typewriter (Weldon, 2010: s.580). She is a nice lady and holds traditional gender role in the family, she served her husband and boys, she does cook, and other housework. She doesn't make a lot of money but for her being typewriter is just an activity to busy herself since her boys are in the boarding school, she has a housework in the house.

#### **F. Harry**

Harry is the breadwinner, he is the provider of his family, his job has taken his boys to boarding school (Weldon, 2010: s.580). He dominates his family, he is taking lead of his family, just like how he likes where his boys to study. Harry described as a person who chase integrity rather than money. He

once in the stockbroking, but now it was a disgrace for him because there is no artistic value in it. Also, Harry has family background from grand family and he is assumed inherit huge wealth and fame from his family status.

#### **G. The Dominance of Marta's Roles in her Family**

The short story using the first-person point of view, but the story is centered with the character 'Marta'. It can be seen the plot is linear and it goes as the main character experiencing with the situation until the end. The mother figure by Marta is really affecting the story, the family condition is really well controlled by Marta's role even though she holds the breadwinner role and the homemaker role. Marta's maternity in doing house works and having career in her life are proofs how's the women role is superior in Fay Weldon's short story Weekend. In the story, Marta never give up with her role. She loves her family no matter what. Her husband, Martin, does like to complain about her appearances and how she should act but Marta never mad and upset about it. Even though Marta is described as the obedient wife that never argue with her condition, it's made more clearer that Marta is the key of her family satisfaction. Marta didn't get jealous when she knew her husband has a secretary that more look attractive than her, instead she improves how to be better love mate in the bed and leave her thought of jealousy behind. Marta does cook, go to work, wash dishes, laundry, even she paid a maid to do those works but she still wants to take care the vital housework. Marta is very loved by her children. Her daughter Jenny, said that she is a wife, mother, and friend. When Jenny is having her first period, Marta is taking care of her and accompany her. Also, Marta is really well known what her children need when they are about to go to the cottage in the weekend. For instance, Jenny's recorder, Jasper's cassette player and Jolyon's antibiotic because he is having a sour throat. When Jolyon got stung by wasp and Jesper got hay fever in the cottage, Marta quickly take care of them. From all of these, this is proving that Marta's role as mother and wife is dominating in the family and even though her husband is the head of the house, the functional works are mostly done by Marta in the family and keeping her family's member well.

## **IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **A. Conclusion**

Gender role analysis is a research that important to reveal the gender situation at some social contexts. Literature can be a portrait of how a gender shall behave in some specific occasion. In this scenario, the research succeeded to unfold the superiority of women role in preserving family in Fay Weldon's short story *Weekend*. The short story pictured how the women role played by Marta is obedient with her role and loyal to her family in any condition. The dominancy is proved by how Marta holds two roles in the house, which the breadwinner and homemaker, she is also showing the communal behavior with being humble, obedient and loving mother. Martin role is breadwinner and he have agentic behavior which making him want be dominant and doesn't like bad temper. Martin does complain all the time about his wife, Marta but he never uses violence in the family. Collin is the breadwinner of his family and an agentic person, he shows dominance but being communal with his new wife Katie.

He is rich and famous, but he let his career destroying his first marriage with Janet and chasing young woman that more attractive. Janet is a homemaker woman, she is also an ecofeminist that doesn't like getting in an argument and love gardening. She is significantly communal in her family and taking care her family really well, even her husband is not with her anymore, she is still a loving mother to her children. Katie is liberal feminist, she didn't hold any traditional gender role, she loves do things equally with her new husband, Collin. She holds egalitarian role, she does anything equally with her husband in the house and want to look equal with among men. Beryl is a homemaker and breadwinner like Marta but she didn't do much housework in the house since her boys in boarding school. She does cook, and taking her family but she would like to spend her empty times at works rather than being at home. Harry is a breadwinner and agentic person, he is the leader of his family, he shows dominance in his family for example, sending his boys to boarding school. It can be concluded in the story, that the traditional gender roles are not permanent role for each sex. Fay Weldon's short story *Weekend* shows that the gender role in family can be switched with different sex in different families. Each

individual in the story sharing responsibilities with the roles they are taking to maintain the family. Also, the story is carried well with Marta presence in the family. She is the homemaker and the breadwinner in her family, even though the key satisfaction for the family is provided by Marta and the way Marta maintain her obedience and humble and also motherhood in the family proving that Marta roles is the superior in the family.

### **B. Suggestion**

Explore non-traditional gender roles in literature and their impact on family dynamics and societal views of gender as a social construct. Future research should focus on how literature portrays fluidity in gender roles, highlighting the shifting responsibilities within family structures and how they reflect real-world societal changes. Investigating these non-traditional roles can provide a broader understanding of gender as a dynamic and evolving concept.

Investigate the portrayal of women as both breadwinners and homemakers in literature. Marta's role in the story as a breadwinner and homemaker challenges traditional gender roles, and future studies can explore how such dual roles are presented in literature. Analyzing these roles can shed light on the changing representation of women and the complexities of their responsibilities in both the domestic and public spheres.

Delve into gender and power dynamics within family roles, particularly how these dynamics influence decision-making and personal relationships. Research could explore how power is negotiated and how characters use their gendered roles to assert dominance or submission. Understanding these dynamics will provide insights into the impact of gendered expectations on relationships and family structures.

Examine the role of feminist ideologies in reshaping gender roles, particularly liberal feminism and ecofeminism. Katie's character in the story, who challenges traditional gender roles, can serve as a model for exploring feminist perspectives in literature. Researching how different feminist ideologies are presented in literary works will offer a deeper understanding of gender equality and the transformation of traditional roles in family life.

Conduct comparative studies of gender roles across different cultures and social

contexts to better understand how these roles evolve. Research comparing gender roles in diverse cultures or socio-economic backgrounds can reveal how traditional norms are challenged or maintained in different settings. This comparative approach can broaden the understanding of how gender roles are shaped by cultural and societal factors.

Promote discussions on the influence of literature in shaping societal norms related to gender and family responsibilities. Scholars should encourage critical analysis of how literary works portray gender roles and their effects on readers' perceptions of gender equality. Literature can be a powerful tool in questioning and challenging traditional norms and fostering progressive changes in society.

Investigate character development through the lens of shifting gender roles, particularly how characters navigate or subvert traditional expectations. Analyzing how characters like Marta, Katie, and others evolve through their gendered roles will provide insight into personal growth and the transformation of identity in response to societal pressures. This approach will deepen the understanding of how literature reflects and influences the complex interplay between gender and individual agency.

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