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Abstract: The major problem of this study is how the struggle of woman for participation in public-policy-making processes is reflected in both novels of Empress Orchid (2004) and The Last Empress (2007) written by Anchee Min based on the feminist criticism. The objective of this study is to analyze those novels based on the structural elements and the feminist analysis. In analyzing these novels, the researcher uses qualitative method and feminist approach. The data sources consist of primary data and secondary data. The primary data are novels of Empress Orchid (2004) and The Last Empress (2007) and the secondary data are books and literatures related to the analysis such as books of feminist issue, literary theory, the author’s biography, the journals of USA, and other relevant information to analysis of this research paper. The method of the data collection is library research. The technique of data analysis is descriptive analysis. The outcome of the study is shown in the following conclusions. First, from the structural elements of the novel, it is shown that Anchee Min wants to uncover her idea about how women experience the inequality in all aspects of life, including political life. Second, based on the feminist criticism, Empress Orchid (2004) and The Last Empress (2007) show that there is a correlation between the social realities of American society in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Feminism, Empress Orchid, Last Empress, Struggle, Participation.
A. INTRODUCTION

There are many cases about injustice falling on women in society life. The injustice occurs in all aspect of life; social, political, economic, education, cultural, religious aspects and so on. In Empress Orchid (2004) and The Last Empress (2007) novels written by Anchee Min, there are many inequalities between women and men that are reflected. These novels reflect injustices that are experienced by women, began from subordinated position, emasculation of right, difference of role and limitation of participation. There is no physical violence such as hitting or slapping experienced by women character in this story. But they experienced the sexual violence in the form of restraint of sexual need. It is told that the Emperor collects 3000 of beautiful woman to be his concubines. He chooses some of them to have coitus and ignore others; the Emperor is not fair to distribute his seed among his concubines. Other forms of gender inequalities that occur in these novels are castration of women’s right and limitation women’s participation in engaging in political life. Orchid Yehonala, the major character, breaks this injustice. By breaking the role she struggles for her right to have role in political life. By using her smartness and a little of intrigue, Orchid participates in taking of decisions and making of public-policies.

These literary works get good responses from many sides. The researcher finds some reviews about them. One of them is by Julia Lovell, 2004, writes “Empress Orchid delivers a fictional peek into the intrigue of the Forbidden City and a novel take on the much reviled last empress.” Likewise its prequel, The Last Empress also gets good responses from many readers. Jonathan Mirsky, 2007 writes a review on Goodreads.com, “The Last Empress is the story of Orchid’s dramatic transition from a strong-willed, instinctive young woman to a wise and politically savvy leader who ruled China for more than four
decades. Anchee Min offers a powerful revisionist portrait based on extensive research of one of the most important figures in Chinese history.”

This study will be analyzed by using Feminist criticism. Feminism is a politic directed at changing existing power relation between women and men in society (Weedon, 1987 in Mandell, 1994: 4).

Bell Hooks (1984) states that feminism constitute a social, economic, and political commitment to eradicating race, class, and sexual domination and to reorganizing society so that individual self-development takes precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desires” (Mandell, 1994: 4).

In analyzing these literary works the researcher uses the feminism because major issue of these novels is about gender equality. The researcher analyzes what the author want to deliver through her works is that in the Dynasty of Ch’ing, around 1835-1909 there was system of patriarchy powered the social life that limited the participation of woman being empress. Patriarchy is a sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege (Einstein, 1979: 9 in Mandell, 1994: 14). This system make women (even also men) suffer by subordinating women’s position and limiting their right, role and participation. Feminism struggles for gender equality since in the 1792 by raising a proponent name Marry Wollstonecraft who wrote *Vindication of the Right of Women* (1792) published in London. In that book, she demanded women’s right in educational to give them opportunity in contribution in the society as well men (Mandell, 1994: 6). Feminism still struggle until today. The birth of these literary works in the early first-century is one of proof that feminism can be expressed, struggled and spread through the literary works. It is more effective and smoother to spread feminist ideology
through books than through actions of brutal campaign, oration or demonstration on the road.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study the researcher uses qualitative research. Qualitative research is the type of research that doesn’t need calculation or procedure. According to Howard and Bruce (2002: 4) qualitative research is a long hard, with elusive data on one side and stringent requirement for analysis on the other. The primary data sources in this study are the novels entitled *Empress Orchid* and *The Last Empress* written by Anchee Min. Then, the secondary data sources are Feminist theories, reviews of the novels, comments, critics, homepage, previous study and other relevance source.

The technique of data collection that the researcher uses is note taking with steps applied in this research are reading the novels of *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) repeatedly, searching the reviews from internet, taking notes of important information from the novels, marking the point in the novels and other to make easy in analyzing it, classifying the data into some relevance categories, analyzing the data, make conclusion based on the analyzed data. The technique of data description in this study started from studying material of feminist theory.

C. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of these novels illustrate the phenomena of gender inequality reflected in both novels that is divided in four major aspect; women’s position, women’s right, women’s role and women’s participation.
1. Women’s Position

As Mandell states in *Feminist Issue* (1994: 14) patriarchy places men as superior in all aspects; includes economic, while, women as inferior in all dimension. Patriarchy posits women as subordinate to men and exploited.

In both novels it is found the evidences showing that position of women is under men. Those unequal position between women and men are reflected in several phenomena; giving personal name, welcoming newly-born baby and competing for highest bidder.

a). Giving personal name

In Chinese society, commonly people have first and family name. Family name is taken from father's or men’s line descent, not women’s. It shows that patriarchy influences in giving name in Chinese society.

The name of the major character, Orchid Yehonala, is also influenced by patriarchal culture. Her family name is taken from her father’s line descent as quoted as follows;

My father’s name was Hui Cheng Yehonala. The name of Yehonala meant that our root could be traced to the Yelo tribe and Nala clan in sixteenth century (Empress Orchid, 2004: 3).

b). Welcoming newly-born baby

Patriarchy believes that male infant is more valuable than female. Male infant causes the fortune and female cause calamity. Husband will be proud if his wife gives birth the male infant, but he will be degraded if his wife gives him a girl. It is
reflected in *Empress Orchid* (2004: 133) in which the birth of Jung, a daughter of Lady Yun and the Emperor was welcomed by sadness and disappointment.

On the contrary, the birth of Tung Chih, a son of Orchid and the Emperor was welcomed by happiness of all people and deep gratitude to the Heaven by organizing the luxurious party (*Empress Orchid*, 2004: 202-203).

c). Competing for the highest bidder

The subordinated position of women makes them depend on men. Their happiness, future and destiny depend on men’s decision and pity. As result, women compete firmly among them to get the attention of men. It is reflected in the conversation between Big Sister Fann and Orchid. It was told that wedding was a market in which women compete for the highest bidder. If there was no quality, women would be left (*Empress Orchid*, 2004: 50).

2. Women’s Right

Patriarchy limits the right of women. Whereas, as Anderson states in Mandell (1994: 5) every person was to be given equal opportunity and civil right. In both novel, women’s right is limited and ignored. Among them are right to speak, to participate in social life, and to express feeling.

a). Women’s right to speak
Women’s right to speak is silenced by patriarchy. Patriarchy believes that women are only permitted to listen, not to speak. It is reflected in quotation as follows;

In front of me is a gauze curtain, a translucent symbolically separating the female from male. Guarding myself from criticism, I listen but speak a little (Empress Orchid, 2004: xiii).

b). Women’s right to participate in social life

The other right of women that is castrated is right to participate in social life. Patriarchy limits participation of women in social activity. It was described in Empress Orchid (2004: 165) that to have consultation with a doctor, an Imperial lady must be covered by a screen. The court law prohibited women to be seen by other man except the Emperor.

In one moment, Su Shun, a Grand Councilor, used the reason that Imperial women were only for the Emperor’s eyes to avoid the conversation with two empresses to discuss state problem. It told that patriarchy ignored women’s right to be involved in social activity to make domination (Empress Orchid, 2004: 121).

c). Women’s right to have education

Women’s right to engage education is also limited. Patriarchy means to make women uneducated by limiting them in extending knowledge in order to easy men to dominate
women. The Imperial ladies were not allowed to study anything but classical poem and history of Imperial household. Even, general history was forbidden to women (Empress Orchid, 2004: 44).

According to the myth, the Goddess would be disturbed by women trying to learn state’s documents. However, Orchid that was more rational than others, ignored this rule. She fulfilled her right to look after the documents clandestinely by being disguised as a eunuch (The Last Empress, 2007: 145).

d). Women’s right to express feeling

The fourth women’s right that is limited is to express feeling. The Last Empress (2007: 12) reflected that women’s desire was castrated. As Empress Dowager, Orchid and other concubines were prohibited to have relationship with other men. Their sexual needs were locked in coffin of their husband, the Emperor Hsien Feng. They were wished as moral model to people toward loyalty. On the contrary, Imperial men might have more than one concubine. Tradition allowed, even obliged them to posses tens of women. To the Emperor, it was patent right to collect thousands of beautiful women.
3. Women’s Role

To patriarchy, women only play role in domestic area; work in home, produce food, take after the children and service all member of family (Mandell, 1994: 10).

In *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) the activities of Imperial ladies are only embroidering and dressing up. An Imperial lady is not proper to play role in state business. It is reflected in utterances of Little Cloud, a slave of Nuharoo that she gave to Orchid as a present. Little Cloud found that instead of embroidering, Orchid prefered to study of documents of state. Little Cloud said some sentences as quoted as follows pressing that it is not proper to woman to barge in state’s business;

“You’d better to think whose dog you are kicking! So what if I have been spying on you? You have been reading court documents instead of embroidery patterns!” (*Empress Orchid*, 2004: 183).

However, Orchid proofed that she, a woman, had a big role in progress of the country. She was behind the decision taken by the Emperor. It was her, the one who studied the documents and treaties night after night and made the resume of them and then determined the the policies that were in effect in public.
4. Women’s Participation

In our society, men’s participation is more important than women’s. Women are less participated and men are much (Mandell, 1994: 188).

It is reflected in both Empress Orchid (2004) and The Last Empress (2007). Patriarchy prohibited women to participate in political life. Imperial ladies must not be mixed into state business. They were threaded by punishment if showed the attraction in political life. It was described in Empress Orchid (2004: 226-227). It reflected that participation of women was limited in all aspects. When Orchid helped the Emperor in looking into the state documents, the court that was sat by men, instituted the protest to discipline her.

However, Orchid proofed that she was able to do something in political life. When the Emperor Hsien Feng was too ill to look into documents, Orchid spent her energy to help the Emperor in looking into and summarizing the documents. She chose and answered the letters of Hsien Feng and uncovered her ideas and knowledge in making of public policy to save the country (Empress Orchid, 2004: 223-224).

Empress Orchid (2004: 225) told that Orchid participated in saving thousands hungry people in Schezuan province. She urged Hsien Feng to rises a decree to squeeze the money out of
corrupt officials to report income. To avoid resentment, according to her, it must be added by a clause to stating the decree that nobody would be charged with embezzlement in the guilty individuals donated their improper money to the victims of the flood disaster. The decree was proven exact and effective. Because of Orchid’s participation, thousand people were saved.

Orchid also participated in writing decree in emergency situation when enemies attacked. At that time, Hsien Feng was not able to move his fingers because of being frozen. He choked again and again. Orchid took his duty to write a decree ordering open war. In her writing, she made clear that the court would reward them that show the loyalty, wage war bravely and pay them that cut off every head of White (Empress Orchid, 2004: 230).

D. CONCLUSION

Based on feminist analysis it can be concluded that both novels are critical literary works. Ideas inside them fight against patriarchy. Gender inequaity is accused. There is a correlation between the content of the story with the reality in the country where these literary works were published in the early twenty-first century. The social background of American society in the early twenty-first century makes up critiques toward content of the story that is gender inequality.
in China in the nineteenth century. Through her works, Anchee Min compares the social condition of China in the nineteenth century and the social condition of America in the early twenty-first century. There is significant difference; China in the nineteenth century is powered by traditional and patriarchal culture, while America in the early twenty-first century is full of modernity and equality.

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