

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Empress Orchid (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) are two canon literary works written by Anchee Min. The first novel was published in 2004 by Houghton Mifflin Company, in New York, USA. The novel that is as thick as 336 of pages is divided into 24 chapters. Its sequel, *The Last Empress* (2007) was published three years later by the same publishing and city. It has 308 of pages which is divided into 47 chapters.

Born in Shanghai in 1957, Anchee Min is a talented Chinese-American writer, painter and photographer. She was born when her country was powered by communism. The hard life taught her to be an iron woman. In 1984 she moved to the United States and wrote her memoir, *Red Azela* (1994) getting an award of New York Times Notable Book of 1994. A year later she wrote her first novel *Katherine* (1995). She also wrote the controversial *Becoming Madam Mao* (2000) novel trying to give sympathy by uncovering the other side of controversial woman, Mao Zedong, the first lady of the president of China at that time, which hated by people. Her recent novel was *Pearl of Chinese* published in 2010.

Empress Orchid (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) beautifully and explicitly tell about the life cycle of young village woman becoming an empress, named Orchid Yehonala. She was the first child of Hui Cheng Yehonala, a governor of poorest province of China, Anhwei. Even though having noble blood, this family had nothing but respectability. Orchid and her sister and brother did not live in poverty, neither in luxury. However, the discharge of the father from his position making him sick made this family bankrupt. The bills of medicine debted them. Even, after the demise of the

father, this family remain in trouble with funding. The death of her father made up a turning point of Orchid. She and her family moved to Peking to bury her father's dead-body. In this Capital City of China, Orchid worked as shoe maker for Big Sister Fann that told her about the Imperial life. Through a selection, Orchid was selected as the fourth wife of Emperor Hsien Feng, entitled The Lady of Greatest Virtue. As one of three hundred wives of the Emperor, Orchid experienced competitions to get attention of the emperor. She paid Su Shun much to organize the meeting between her and the Emperor. The moment worked, the emperor fell in love with her and make her the dearest mistress. The birth of her son, Tung Chih, the only son of the Emperor, made her position same with the first mistress, Nuharoo. However, it made her threatened by jealousy of other concubines instead of peaceful and tranquil. Not only being able to contend the attacks of her enemies she also was able to show her existence in political life by intervening the Emperor in taking decisions and making policies.

The second turning point of Orchid's life was the death of her husband, The Emperor Hsien Feng. Hsien Feng left the only son who was too young to be the next emperor. Thus, Orchid, together with Nuharoo had duty as custody of Tung Chih, the Young Emperor. Working with Nuharoo as partner did not make the duties easy. Nuharoo was a spoiled woman that was more interested in sewing than in state business. Orchid worked hard in reading and analyzing many documents, meeting with ministers and foreign guesses. Not only facing the enemies from other country, Orchid was also attacked by the enemies from palace. They were Su Shun and other ministers that did not believe in regime of woman. Those men believed that the involvement of women in state could make destruction of country. They also hated

Orchid because she was a genuine and honest leader that would not tolerate any fraud, something that was done by officials commonly.

Beside experiencing the conflicts with others, Orchid also experienced the internal conflict. By breaking the law of Palace, she had an affair with a handsome man, named Yung Lu. Falling in love with Yung Lu made her hurt not only because she was betraying her late husband but also because she didn't know how Yung Lu see her. Orchid's love story in these novels described that inequality attacked women in all aspects, included in love business. Unlike men, women, especially Imperial women did not have right to show their love freely. They did not have peculiarity to possess husband more than one.

Orchid Yehonala or Queen Consort Tzu Hzi died in 75 years of age. She maybe could not restrain the attackings destroying the country, but she did make it be late to come by her strength, braveness, kindness and a little of intrigue. She felt how to be loved and hated, even after her demise.

The birth of these novels caused medley responses of public. Many of readers wrote a review about these novels in Goodreads that gave positive comments. While, response from market was also good. It was proven that these novels became the International Bestseller. The first novel was sold as many as 250.000 copies only a few of weeks after first publishing and 20 million of copies only in a month, also nominated to Richard Judy Best Read of the Year in 2006. They were also translated into 44 languages, included Indonesian.

Through Anchee Min's hand, the sequel *Empress Orchid* was born to uncover the other side of Tsu Hzi, the other name of Orchid Yehonala, that was hated by people of China. The history told that it was the fault of Orchid why the dynasty destroyed. Every child in China was taught to hate her. Min, through an interview about her

novel told that it was the reason of the birth of these novels; to present the facts about the Empress fairly. It needed long research to uncover the truth. Since the first publishing, it acquired the controversy and sympathy. Although these literary works did not change the perspective of people about Orchid suddenly and widely, the beauty of the story could not restrain them to be bestseller.

The researcher thinks that these novels are very beautiful literary works. They are more than fiction; based on diary of Mother Queen Tsu Hzi herself. It means, they are true stories with the additional of imagination and describing which are very detail and beautiful.

Beside the general reason above, there are five reasons why the researcher is interested to these novels to be analyzed. First, the researcher is interested in character and characterization. The main character, Orchid Yehonala, inspires her to be an iron woman. Princess of Yehonala was a country girl at first, she was nobody. But with hard work and wisdom she could be someone written in the history. She showed her existence as human by doing something to her country. Other people might dislike the bad side of Orchid, but to the researcher it was the weakness of her that the researcher accepts as human.

The setting of these novels that took place in China in dynasty of Ch'ing, around 1835-1908 is the second interesting thing. At that time, administration system still submitted to monarchy promoting the king based on lineage of noble and influence of patriarchy was very strong. The describing of every place in Palace and the situation around it was very detail and charming.

The third one is the plot. Even though the novels used the traditional plot begun by exposition and closed by resolution, they did not lose the interesting side. These

novels kept presenting the challenges to the readers to finish them. The readers would be easier to be drift into the story and imagination of the author.

The fourth is the style. The using of standard language both in narrative and dialogues added the beauty of these novels. Also, language that was used in these literary works were beautiful by using philosophy and figurative language.

The last one is the theme and subject meter. The researcher's attention at first to these novels is the theme written in its endorsement; the struggle of country woman to participate in politic life. While, the subject meter such as love, happiness, sorrow and loyalty enriched these novels to be good readings.

Based on the describing of background above, the researcher decides a title of this research paper; **WOMEN'S STRUGGLE FOR PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC-POLICY-MAKING PROCESSES IN ANCHEE MIN'S *EMPRESS ORCHID* (2004) AND *THE LAST EMPRESS* (2007) : A FEMINIST CRITICISM.**

B. Literature Review

Based on the knowledge of the researcher, there is no research analyzing *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) with feminist or other approach in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta nor in virtual references.

C. Problem Statement

The problem statement is how the women's struggle for participation in public-policy-making is reflected in Anchee min's *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007).

D. Limitation of the Study

In this study, the researcher focuses in analyzing the structural elements, character and characterization of major character, women's struggle for participation in public-

policy-making in Anchee Min's *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The last Empress* (2007) on feminist approach.

E. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyze the structural elements of the novels by finding character and characterization, setting, point of view, style, and theme.
2. To describe the women's struggle for participation in public-policy-making in Anchee Min's *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) based on the feminist perspective.

F. Benefit of the Study

There are two benefits of the study:

1. Theoretical Benefit

This study is expected to give additional knowledge and information particularly the literary studies on *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007).

2. Practical Benefit

This study is expected to give additional knowledge and experience as a direct reference for other researchers particularly focusing in *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007).

G. Research Method

To analyze the data found in these novels, the researcher used the qualitative method in this study.

1. Type of the Study

In this study, the researcher used qualitative research. It was library research while data sources were from library. Qualitative research was the type of research that did not need calculation or procedure.

2. Type of the Data and the Data Source

The type of data was text. There were two kinds of data source, they were;

a. Primary Data Source

The primary data were taken from Anchee Min's *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007).

b. Secondary Data Source

The secondary data were taken from other sources related to the primary data and supported the analysis. They were several books, articles and virtual references as documentation.

3. Technique Data Collection

The technique of data collecting was note taking, with the steps as follows;

a. Reading the Anchee Min's *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) more than three times.

b. Identifying the problems and finding the data. Therefore, research problem and objectives of the study could be drawn.

c. Collecting some supporting data from other references related to this topic. Therefore, the problem appearing would be able to be answered completely.

d. Drawing the conclusion of the analysis that had been already done in the former chapter.

4. Technique Data Analysis

The technique data analysis in this study was descriptive analysis in which the researcher identified the connection between the novels and feminist approach to show the women's struggle in political life reflected in the story.

H. Research Paper Organization

The research paper organization of "Women's Struggle for Participation in Public-Policy-Making in Anchee Min's *Empress Orchid* (2004) and *The Last Empress* (2007) : A Feminist Criticism" is as follows; Chapter I is Introduction, consists of Background of the Study, Literature Review, Problem Statement, Limitation of the Study, Objective of the Study, Benefits of the Study, Research Method, and Paper Organization. Chapter II is Underlying Theory, reviewing the Structural Elements of Novel, Notion of Feminism, and Theoretical Application. Chapter III is Social Background of American Society in the Early Twenty First Century, consists of Social Aspect, Economic Aspect, Cultural Aspect, Political Aspect, and Religion Aspect. Chapter IV is the Structural Analysis containing structural elements of the novels and its discussion. Chapter V is Feminist Analysis containing women's position, women's right, women's role and women's participation and its discussion. Chapter VI is Conclusion and Pedagogical Implication.