

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Sexuality is words, images, rituals and fantasy as it is about the body; the way we think about sex, fashion the way we live it; which are the definitions, categories and meanings transmitted to us by social construction (Weeks qtd. in Diiorio 268). In terms of activity, sexual intercourse (coitus) appears as a biological and physical activity which is set so deeply within the larger context of human affairs. It applies within varies of attitudes and values to which culture subscribes (Millet 23).

In the wide societies, human's sexuality is often gendered, differentiated and patriarchal. Meanings, moralities and learned behaviors that applied to men are mostly distinctive and unequally compared to women. Whereas man is licensed to exploit his sexual autonomy, woman is conditioned to deny her sexual autonomy included its pleasure (Diiorio 261).

The proposing paragraphs above, correlate to the chosen topic of the novel entitled Chinese Walls by Xu Xi, in which this thesis intends to analyze further: Woman and Sexuality.

Chinese Walls is the first novel of Xu Xi, one of Hong Kong's foremost contemporary English language novelists. Besides Chinese Walls, which is published in 1994, she also published three novels and two other fiction

collections, which broadcast internationally (<http://www.paddyfield.com.hk/authors/xuxi/author.html>). Her other published writings are essays and book reviews. By pioneering to use English language in writing literature, she is widely known over the world. Her works are taught and anthologized internationally (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xu_Xi). Xu Xi's awards include a NYFA fiction fellowship, writer-in-residence at Kulturhset USF of Bergen, Norway, and the Jack Kerouac Project of Orlando, Florida. Her work is also selected for the 2006 O. Henry Prize Stories collection.

By portraying the glimpses of Hong Kong in four decades, from the sixties to the nineties, Xu Xi is likely brings up theme of identity, return, home and rooted ness in most of her stories (Lai 3). She is also known and being praised by many critics for tackling subjects that are normally considered off limits for Chinese woman, such as sexuality, adultery, and seduction as part of literature (Alger 3).

Chinese Walls is Xu Xi's prominent work which talks a lot about woman's sexuality, despite other major theme occurred, the notion of identity. Within sexual theme, it is said to be equal, in sharing taboo-breaking shock value of the successful by Wei Hui's Shanghai Baby in 1999. Even better, because Xu Xi does not merely talk about sex and female libido but more to woman/human tensions over conflicts (DR, Michael Anthony Ingham qtd. in Xu Xi, vii). Both Chinese Walls and Shanghai Baby, portray the experience of a young modern Chinese woman toward sexual relationships. It covers up issues about having relationship with men from multi cultures, having pre-marital sexual intercourse, having

conflicts with adultery and other sexual deviant practices. It actually signifies Chinese modern phenomena within liberality during 1970s upward, particularly liberality in talking about woman and sexuality.

Chinese Walls is set against the background of China during 1960s through 1990s. The story portrays about Ai-Lin, the central female character who suffered in questioning her Chinese Identity, within multi mixed geographically and culturally bound between her Chinese blood and her Western Ideology. During her confusion of identity, Ai Lin experiences series of love which constitute sexual and emotional attachment to men. Starting from 'Incestuous sexual experience committed to her own brother Phillip, the presence of her 'Sexual Attractiveness' during her growth as a young woman to Ricardo, 'Sexually Subordinate's positioning to an American boyfriend named Derek, engage to 'Marital Sexuality' to an Italian man named Vince, and finally finding 'Self Sexual and Emotional Relieve' to a man named Don (Vince's brother). It is interesting to notice that Chinese Walls proposes various forms of woman's sexual relationships, which might occurred to any experiences of woman's relationship in the world.

Woman and Sexuality is a very crucial theme to be exposed literally, not only in China but also many countries over the world (which is most ideologically patriarchy). Particularly in modern China, woman sexual positioning will be much more conflicting. Still encapsulated by the former Confucian ideology, woman is still conditioned to be inferior by the forces of sexual inhibition. On the opposition, modernization signifies more opportunities for Chinese woman to

express liberality over sexual desire. Woman does not anymore presented in a complete inferior positioning (taboo and impropriety), rather it changes rapidly in more liberate ways. Ironically, even patriarchal ideology is eroded and reformed; the essential social system will never change and preserve undisturbed (Millet 177). Woman will never escape being placed subordinated, not only by man and society but also herself as well.

Similarly resembled to the novel. Ai Lin's sexual positioning as woman in her five different forms of relationship to men in her life, is also conflicting (unstable and dynamic). Sometimes she is able to well empowering herself by performing the equal sexual positioning for both herself as a woman and her partner, within sexual relationship, ex: enjoy the equal sexual pleasures within sexual activities, perform sexual confidences, do sexual initiation, etc. But most of the times, Ai Lin is still a woman who belongs herself to the construction of patriarchal virtue, woman's virtue, which continually positioned woman objected under man's supremacy: an oblique to be passive, inferior, submissive and subordinated in attempt for sexuality.

Kate Millet in Sexual Politics states that, "Sexual intercourse (coitus) may serve as a model of sexual 'politics' and personal plane of an individual (Millet 23)", where as the term of 'politics' refers to power structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another (Millet 23). It is obvious to see that sexual relationships/sexual intercourse does not merely represent as it is about humans' physiology but it represents man-woman power relations. To this notion, woman is then put within dynamic positioning of

dominance-sub ordinance to man. It is said dominance, if she is able to well empowering herself sexually by stating her wants within sexual relationship to man. It is said sub-ordinance if woman is still trapped within patriarchal conditioning that put her inferior in her conduct of sexual relationship to man. From this point of view, the thesis intents to see the representation of Ai Lin as woman, within power relations, in each of her sexual activities (a notion of dominance/empowered and sub ordinance/disempowered)..

Sexuality for individuals, out of its manifestation of innate biological drive, is somehow created by complex social processes. It appears as reflection of our underlying urges and desires (Diiorio 261), where as it's practices somehow can be interpreted as rational responses to human constraints (111). To this quoted statements, it might be conclude that woman's sexual conducts are actually reversed to vary meanings and motives. So later on, this thesis also intends to figure out those meanings and motives underlay behind Ai Lin's attainment to certain sexual activities.

B. Statements of the Problem

Within light of feminism, this thesis intent to analyze about 'woman's representations through her sexuality', in Xu Xi's Chinese Walls, by questioning:

1. How is Ai Lin as a woman positioned within power relations, in each of her sexual relationship to men in her life?

2. What does Ai Lin's sexual relationships signify, relating to her dynamic sexual positioning as a woman?

C. Objective of the Study

Regarding to the Statement of the Problem, the aims of the thesis analysis will be:

1. Proposing Ai Lin's sexual positioning as woman, within power relations, in each of her sexual relationship to men in her life (the notion of woman's empowering and woman's disempowering).
2. Figuring out the significations of Ai Lin's sexual relationships to her dynamic sexual positioning as a woman.

D. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to gain understanding about woman through her sexuality within light of feminism. The occurrence of woman's sexuality in patriarchal discourses is always negatively depicted. Toward religion, ethics and ideological constitutions, patriarchy tends to denigrate woman's sexuality as unclean, sinful, debilitating and humiliating (Millet 51). By upbringing the analysis of woman through her sexuality in Xu Xi's Chinese Walls, the writer of this thesis hopes that the prospective readers, might later provide themselves better framing toward woman's sexuality, a proportional conception which is based on rational thinking rather than merely consummate

patriarchal internalization. The reader need to realize that sexual entities are almost entirely products of learning, which take long series of learns and responses to patterns and attitudes (Millet 32). Despite giving a merely physical interests and shallow judgments whether woman choices over sexuality is right or wrong, it is better to occupy our selves a better understanding by proposing more rationale to meanings underlay woman's sexuality.

More over, this study also meant to give contributions and share valuable experiences, toward other students majoring literature, especially students of English Department in Airlangga University. It also attempts to contribute different forms of feminist study.

E. Scope and Limitations

In order to gain a proper analysis, there are some limitations contrived. The study of Xu Xi's Chinese Walls focuses to analyze about woman's representations through her sexuality within light of Feminism. 'Woman's representations' covers up studies about woman's positioning within man-woman power relations in the sexual relationships, which are sometimes dominance but most of the times sub ordinance. More over, it also covers up studies about meanings and motives which are created in the sexual relationship. 'Sexuality' refers to the conduct of sexual intimacy in any forms which occurred between Ai Lin to men in her lives.

F. Theoretical Framework

'Woman and Sexuality in Xu Xi's Chinese Walls', will apply the relevant feminist studies about woman and sexuality that are considered appropriate. However, this thesis does not intent to exclusively using certain feminist theorist, but applying proportional woman studies relevant to the issue, particularly in its relation to patriarchy.

The discourses over woman and sexuality have already been crucial matters for years upbringing by many feminists. Patriarchal ideology constructively perceives man in allowance/expectance and encouragement to behave sexually. On the other side woman is discouraged to openly express her sexuality (Brannon 282). Similarly suggests by Louis Tyson in Critical Theory Today, the patriarchal conception continually exerts forces to undermine woman's self confidence and assertiveness toward her sexuality. "The 'good girl' had to remain uninterested in sexual activity, except for the purpose of legitimate procreation, because it was believed unnatural for women to have sexual desire ... In fact, 'good' women were expected to find sex frightening or disgusting" (89). It's understandable, for those women who choose to cross the borders of woman's virtue (women's submissiveness over sexuality), society will then easily refer her into negative assumptions.

To the notion above, the Theoretical Framework of this thesis will give major proportions to several theorists who talk about woman and sexuality. Freud and Irigaray are two prominent theorists who talk a lot about woman's sexuality

through the point of social/gender difference and anatomical point of view (sex/biological differences). This thesis is also likely to bring up studies about woman's sexual politicizing by Kate Millet in her book Sexual Politics. This book mainly discuss about how sexuality might be politicized in creating man-woman's power relations within sexual relationship.

Another major issue which is discussed in the theoretical framework is about patriarchy in its relation to undermine woman's sexual perceiving. Patriarchy is the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power. The occurrence is so long and internalized universally. Its pervasiveness however assents to the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female (Millet 25-26). To this case, patriarchy has created two oppositional positioning of male-female/man-woman to their behaving over sexuality. Since it is often assumed to be endemic of human social life, there will be no way for women to explicate or even inevitable it (Millet27). Woman's positioning over sexuality will always conflicting. There will be no ultimate option for woman to freed her self sexually.

G. Method of the Study

This Study conducts qualitative methodology by collecting varieties of sources which are based on empirical information in order to gain sufficient data and establish the thesis analysis. The collection of sources, range from library research and internet browsing. Reading process are also believed to be reliable

method. It is accomplished from elaborating studies from several applicable references (ex: feminist studies, dictionaries, critics, comments and reviews of authors work and novel, dictates and other printed materials relevant to the issue). Hopefully it will give reliable contributions in the process of defining woman's sexuality in Xu Xi's Chinese Walls.

The novel itself is obviously the most important source of this literary research. The processes of analysis dig from the intrinsic parts of the novel. The data collection of author and novel constitute its historical backgrounds are also important to notice.

The process of analysis is gained after the elaboration of works reading within the chosen theoretical frameworks. Using the method of descriptive-analytic, this thesis attempts to propose the analysis further until the last phase of conclusion.

H. Definition of Key Terms

Sexuality : Any forms of sexual attitudes (words, images, rituals and fantasy) which cover feelings and actions connected with erotic desire. Its meanings, learned behaviors and moralities are transmitted to us by social construction.

Sexual Politics : **The Signification of power relations in sexual relationship, arrangements whereby one group or person who is inferior (commonly noticing as woman) is sexually controlled by the other one who has power (commonly noticing as man). This polarity sexual system occurred within ideology of patriarchy**

Woman's Sexuality : **Woman's sexual identifications which commonly defined in an unequal sexual positioning to man (inferior, improper, taboo, shameful, humiliating, and any other negatives attitudes might applied).**

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER II