

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Preliminary Explanation

Feminism in China firstly develops as part of the reform movement during the last decade of the 19th century. Female liberation is the main focus over numerous Chinese journals since then. "Female liberation was generally seen as an integral part of the greater goal of liberation of the Chinese nation" (www.hf.uio.no/ikos/forskning/forskerutdanning/stipbeskrivelse/Fossgaard.doc). Through years, woman's discourses in China changes dynamically. Nowadays, the progressive Chinese feminists start to put major concern toward issues upon of woman's sexuality. "It is become inextricable from citizenship projects in the early half of the twentieth century" (Ferry 2).

Hopefully the interrelation between Xu Xi's work, Chinese Walls; the chosen topic, Woman and Sexuality; and Feminism as theoretical framework; donate significant value to this study.

Theoretical framework of this thesis covers up studies about woman through her sexual matter. The ranges of literary studies are brought within perspectives of feminist discourses toward woman's sexual positioning within patriarchal circumstances. Several other women's studies contended biology, psychology and personality are also important to be considered on.

A. Woman and Sexuality within Patriarchal Discourse

Noted by Lois Tyson in Critical Theory Today, “Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economical, political, social, and psychological oppression of women” (81). All of the oppressions, resemble in the worldwide patriarchal circumstances.

Patriarchy is defined as a “Fatalistic submission which allows no space for the complexities of women’s defiance” (Rowbotham qtd. in Dixon 183). It is formed in a sexual system of power division. Whereas man possessed superior power, woman in the opposition positioned inferior (Tyson 84). The system is preserved by marriage and family, through the sexual division of labor and society” (Einstein qtd. in Dixon 183).

In term of sexuality, patriarchy proposes unequal positioning between man-woman in attempt for sexual desire. Whereas man is allowed, expected, and encouraged to behave sexually; woman is discouraged to openly express her sexuality. Woman expressiveness toward sexuality is perceived to be sinful, taboo, humiliating and improper (Brannon 282).

Sex in term of intercourse (coitus) is a human drive. As mark of human’s adulthood, its behavior is socialized as products of learning by our social environment (Millet 32). Both man and woman learned the proper value of sexual moralities from the patterns of society. Ironically, patriarchy is the fundamental

pattern of most society; pattern which connected woman and sex within sub ordinance positioning (Millet 51).

Within patriarchal circumstances, woman is more completely and more negatively conditioned than man. Woman's sexuality constitutes its desire, sexual choices, etc - are very subject to social forces (Millet 118). The large quantity of guilt may easily attach to woman only based on her sexuality (Millet 54). She does not encourage enjoying the pleasure of her sexuality but, she is made to suffer and shame of it (considering it as if it is a punishment rather than human's biological fate). The effect is obvious; women are then forcefully positioned to inhibit her sexual desire and neglect her sexual existence (Millet 119).

The 'virtue' of womanhood socializes woman's proper roles toward sexuality as passivity. Through religion and beliefs, woman's sexual virtue, appears in the name of woman's chastity. Chastity signifies woman's resistances toward sexuality by pointing out to the negative attitudes/notations toward coitus. This notion is marked by several examples, such as: woman's cult of virginity, woman's integrity by keeping herself frigid, etc (Millet 16).

Starting from the first three decades of 20th century, women are significantly seen to start chasing their freedom toward sexuality. Feminist movement gives significant roles to these chances. Along with the increasing notions of woman's dependency which is occurred in many aspects, such as: economic, education - woman's position over man, does not anymore appear in a complete inferiority. In term of sexuality, women are less described as inferior, submissive and passive; proven by several current literatures and many other

products of modern cultures that prone to show woman's liberation toward desire over sexuality. Woman's sexual initiation and the decreasing numbers of believer to the cult of virginity, etc – more or less signify that the ideology of patriarchy is eroded.

Unfortunately, society is not aware that – how far woman have been through in a way empower them - they somehow still have the essential patriarchal social order remained. “So deeply embedded is patriarchy that the character structure it creates in both sexes is perhaps even more a habit of mind and a way of life than a political system” (Millet 63).

B. Sexual Politics

(The Significance of Power Relation in Man Woman Sexual Relationship)

The prominent form of human relationship is sexual relationship. Sexual relationship is a relationship bounded between human in the form of sexual intercourse or any other gestures that trigger passion and desire. More over, sexual relationship (in term of intercourse). does not only appear biologically as physical activity, but personally, it serves as a model of sexual politics from one to another. “In Patriarchal culture the relationship between the sexes is essentially political in nature, which the term politics shall refer to power structured relationship, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another” (Millet 23). Power is the significance of mastery in which someone holds the opportunity to control, to dominate (sometimes to oppress) upon somebody.

To Millet, sexual intercourse is held within an assertion of mastery (20), as presented in her defining toward sexuality: *Surrender, Dominance and Mastery* (193). The three words stated, "Surrender versus Dominance and Mastery" signify the sexual polarities which are applied by our culture (patriarchy) to differentiate man and woman's roles over sexual relationship. It results to the creation of different types of roles, temperaments, attitudes and status of each sexes (man and woman) (Millet 214). It applies in most aspects of man woman's life. In this term, a major concern is put within sexual intercourse positioning only. Men are often positioning to be superior who applied the attitude of aggression, force and initiation in doing sexual intercourse. Opposites to men, women are positioned inferior, weak, passive, docile, frigid, servile and any other passive attitudes toward sexuality (Millet 26). Obviously, men who apply the attitude of aggressiveness is positioned as the dominance (master) and women who apply to them the attitudes of docile positioned as the sub ordinance (surrender). "If aggressiveness is the trait of the master class, docility must be the corresponding trait of a subject group" (Millet 32). If one is positioned as master (male/manhood), the other one must reverse as subject of the mastered act (female/womanhood). Max Weber in Millet defined this as *herrschaft*, a relationship of dominance and sub ordinance (Millet 25).

About male-female sexual binary oppositions, Luce Irigaray quoted in Harmon: "Female sexuality has always been theorized within masculine parameters" (1). The fact that female sexual existence is always in reference to male sexuality concludes that female sexuality is indeed positioning to be inferior

and mastered by male sexuality. More over, female sexuality is somehow always viewed and defined in relation but the opposition to male sexuality. As quoted in Klages. Judith Butler: Gender Troubles, stated "woman is always the other of man" (1), which to Beauvoir similarly represent as if woman conditioned to be the second sex of man. "Woman is constructed differently by man. Man writes about women to find out more about men. Man defines the human, not woman. He is the One, she the Other" (http://www.eng.fj.edu./Literary_Criticism/feminism/fem_history.html).

C. Biological Marks of Female Sexuality

This section proposes theoretical frameworks upon female sexuality sided from biological point of view (anatomical base). A major concern is put to Freud arguments in Kate Millet's Sexual Politics. To Freud, female innately/biologically/organically has less sexual drive than the male (Millet 185). It is then followed by several other theorists who tries to find logic reasons, why society prone to assume woman improper to like sex, woman distanced to sex, sex is only suits to man, etc.

Ones about sexuality from biological point of view, one might come to the term of sexual libido. In 1905, Freud defines libido as a term which denotes to the life force to every variety of human energy. In term of sexuality, libido is defined as sexual drive. To Freud, women organically have a very low libido which makes them weaker within sexual instinct. It results to the conclusion that woman does

not hunger for sex to the extent that man does (Millet 194). Thus, he then come to the further assuming that, sexual activity is only suits for men (Millet192). as represented to the massive belief of society in the 1900 Victorian era. Freud insists that Patriarchy which is massively held within this era, is only representing what nature made over woman. "A man's world has made of woman is only what nature had made of her first" (Millet 190).

Biologically, male is human who applied to the attitudes of masculinity, whereas female is human who applied the attitudes of femininity. Freud defines masculinity with act of activity and femininity with act of passivity. He proposes the analogy of male female's sexual cells, which are sperm and ova, to represent the proper conduct of man woman's behavior both to their social and coital (sexual intercourse) manifestations. In the process of copulation, sperm penetrates woman's vaginal reception and does the journey to the fallopian tubes. On the opposite, ova which signify female passivity is silently waiting the sperm to be caught, held and lifted by the plunger like movement of cervix (Millet 190). As renounced by Maria Bonaparte, the follower of Freudian Theory in Female Sexuality, "Passivity is characteristic of the female cell, the ovum whose mission is to await the male cell, the active mobile spermatozoa to come and penetrate it" (Millet 204). The descriptions above explained, why in most cases of sexual intercourse (as in life), man is often (almost always) conditioned as the actor (the dominance, the penetrator, the initiator) where woman as the passive one, the receiver and to be only the sexual object of acted upon by man.

Similar analogy is presented in the characterization of male attributes of reproduction: the testes, penis and scrotum as male supremacy/aggressiveness in sexual impulse. "...And even vulgarly celebrates it in such encomiums as 'that guy has balls' " (Millet 31). In several other literatures 'the balls' which occurred between the legs of man often signified as the master, confidence, root of sanity, strength, reason, beauty, even standard of moralities (Lawrence qtd. in Millet, 240). The similar analogy is also represented in the characterizations of female genitals which are hidden, shameful and subjective as signification of female virtue of passivity, shameful and docile. Female sexual organs, which are clitoris and vagina, are represented as a mere simple hole that the penis goes into, in order to facilitate ejaculation (female sexual organ as male commodity of pleasure in attaining for orgasm). The hole of female vagina signifies nothingness in one side, whereas penis signifies existence in the other side (Millet 240). Luce Irigaray called this anatomical distinction of penis and vagina as *scopophilic/phallogocentric* (kind of sexuality that privileged penis because it is based on looking of sexual organ):

Male sexuality is based on having a penis, which is privileged because it can be seen; it is visible (and larger); therefore, it is superior. In contrast, a woman's sexual organ(s) cannot be seen (small and inconspicuous organ); therefore it is inferior and becomes equated with having nothing. In other words, male sexuality is based on having a penis; female sexuality is based on having nothing (Harmon 1-2).

D. The Freudian Triad of Female Personality: Passivity, Masochism and Narcissism

Freudian triad is three most distinguishing traits of female personality, which are: Passivity, Masochism and Narcissism (Millet 194). Especially the two, Passivity and Masochism contribute significant attitudes to female inferior positioning in man woman sexual relationship, explained further.

To Freud, the leading female/feminine characteristic is Passivity. It covers all female passive instinctual impulses (Millet 194). Still exerts until today, female passivity toward sexual desire (near to frigidity) is considered to be the only virtue for woman, such as: female refusal in doing sexual intercourse to keep herself clean, un sinful and virgin. As presented in the following quotation, "A general female tendency is to ward off sexuality" (Millet 195). Other adding is showed by many literatures which often propose woman's positioning during coitus in the term of 'lay down', 'not move', etc – an unequal comparing to man's sexual positioning which often described in the words of exciting, powerful, active, aggressive, dominance, full of wisdom, etc.

Interrelated with the first trait is 'Masochism'. "Masochism comprises all passive attitudes to sexual life and object" (Millet 194). Freud argues that masochism only fits to female not to male, because masochism put subject in situation of womanhood. He then proposes several examples of masochistic attitudes that most of the time conducted by woman, such as: giving birth/reproduction, sexual inhibition, passive role in sexual intercourse, etc (Millet

194). Especially in the process of reproduction, Freud states that the painful process of female giving birth is so much linked to female pleasure and desire (Harmon 2). In other words, he tries to propose that the existence of woman's pleasure toward sexuality is actually referred to the desire over reproduction functioning only. There is no existence of pleasure to woman by reason that sexual intercourse is indeed pleasurable

Still refer to woman's masochism, hetero sexual intercourse is believed by some theorists to be painful for woman. But woman enjoy the heterosexual intercourse instead. It is believed that they lust for the pain; they are excited on it (both the feeling and the physic). "Women are always get pleasure for being a sexual object of men/male desire, even its painful" (Harmon 2-3). Since pain is enjoyable only for the masochist. He then comes to the conclusion that female is by naturally masochist (Millet 195). "Masochism is female; femininity is masochistic. It is ingenious to describe masochism and suffering as inherently feminine" (Millet 194).

The concept of female masochism and passivity is supported by Bonaparte, the prominent enunciator of Freudian theory. Bonaparte propose theory of the process of heterosexual copulation which signifies female masochistic trait.

Through out the whole range of living creatures, animal or vegetal; passivity is characteristic of the female cell, the ovum whose mission is to await the male cell, the active mobile spermatozoa to come and penetrate it. Such penetration, however, implies

infraction of its tissue, but infraction of a living creature's tissue may entail destruction: death as much as life. Thus the fecundation of the female cell is initiated by a kind of wound; in its way, the female cell is primordially masochistic. (Millet 204)

To the notion above, Bonaparte argues that the process of intercourse is actually closely related to the infraction of the female cell (ovum) which is caused by male cell (spermatozoa). This infraction/wound causes two oppositional condition for female cell, death and life. In its way, she said, female cell is primordially masochistic.

Another example is shown in the visible process of coitus. She states that female vaginal sensitivity is actually being subjected by the beating of man's penis during intercourse. The receiving blows of the penis, is actually painful to female but creates some sort of excitements which makes woman love and wish to be beaten and endure the pain (Millet 205).

Out of the explanations above, this thesis is also interested to propose other contradictive theories about female sexuality. Hopefully it will donate significant understanding of female empowering toward sexual liberation.

Dr. sherley in her articles entitled: The Evolution and Nature of Female Sexuality in Relation to Psychoanalytic Theory, quoted in Millet notes that women are actually endowed extraordinary biological potentiality for sexual arousal and pleasure. It is stated that a normal woman could go on having orgasm during intercourse if physical exhaustion did not intervene (Millet 118), because " ... Female possesses, biologically and inherently, a far greater capacity for sexuality

than the male, both as to frequency of coitus, and as to frequency of orgasm in coition" (Millet 116).

To these two oppositional arguments, female sexual positioning is proved to be very conflicting/crucial issues within discussion, not only based on the perspective of gender differences that derived from the existence of social construction, but also biological/anatomical based as well.

E. Biological Marks of Chinese Female Sexuality

Out of the mainstream conception toward female sexuality, which is based on the westerners' ideological point of view, this thesis would like also to propose similar study which is based on Chinese conception toward female sexuality.

Charlotte Furth in the article of Kang-I Sun, proposes study about female sexuality from the notion of Chinese cultural belief. Chinese body is basically androgynous. Oppositions to the ideology of westerners that create physical difference between male and female, Chinese ideology does not. There are both yin and yang elements in all male and female bodies that work in harmonious unity. "Thus both semen and menstrual blood are grouped together as yin, while other more exposed parts of the body are called yang" (Chang 2).

Shockingly reverse to the hundred years unequal treats to man-woman gender positioning in the old China, the basic ideology of Chinese people is actually seeing male and female as identical/homologous. "To the Chinese, the female sex is actually not considered a lack or the other" (Chang 3). This

quotation obviously present the basic traditional belief of Chinese to the equal sexual positioning to male and female sex, which ironically reverse to the fact of Chinese social conditioning that used to put woman's sexuality subordinated

To the notion above, human body especially female body (related also to its gender positioning) creates meanings that are valuable to study.

The paragraph below is a conclusion to the chapter of theoretical framework. "The conditions of patriarchal society have had such profound effects upon female sexuality that its function has been drastically affected, its true character long distorted and long unknown" (Millet 118). In term of sexual accomplishment, the subjection of woman true to the fact is a universal custom. It is said to be embedded deep in human's thought and way of life (patriarchy) where as the subordination of woman does not only believed by most societies and men, but ironically women as well.

Through time, woman/feminist movement proposes greater liberation for woman to express her sexuality. Chinese modernity (resulted from western invasion and Cultural Revolution in China) provide more chances and opportunity to woman's dependency and liberation over man in many aspects (economical/financial dependency, education, social status, etc).

To this study, woman and her chance of liberalizing sexuality is a matter of self empowering and disempowering. If a woman still trapped in the continuity of patriarchal cycles, that's what this thesis called disempowering, where as woman's stepping out of patriarchal mind set of female submissiveness over sexuality, that's what this thesis called woman's empowering.

CHAPTER III ANALYSIS