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FEMINISM IN JUNG CHANG'S WILD SWANS

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Abstract

This study is about feminism in Jung Chang' Wild Swans. The feminism is identified by the character of a woman who has been triggered by the social injustice at that time such as corruption, people humiliation, cultural abolishment, discrimination, private life interference and victims all of which are done by the previous and late government. Using close reading method and feminism as the approach, the researcher can identify the words and actions of the main character that belong to feminism. Finally the researcher finds that the main character, the woman, belongs to the feminism in her speeches and actions identified by the way the woman's donation to economies and societies, elimination of sexual aspiration from the female presence to get a more serious, earnest equivalence with men, and women acquisition of equal rights; the first refers to struggling for the elimination of those who belong to other party, existences as follows: teachers, private life, children, husband, and her own existence. The second refers to woman's right to choose her husband and the last refers to the wife's right to have her husband's care.

Keyword: *social injustice, feminism*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas feminisme dalam novel Wild Swans karya Jung Chang. Feminisme ini diidentifikasi oleh tokoh wanita yang dipicu oleh ketidakadilan sosial pada waktu itu seperti korupsi, perendahan harga diri masyarakat, penghilangan budaya, diskriminasi, mencampuri urusan pribadi, dan korban-korban yang semua itu dilakukan oleh



pemerintah yang sebelumnya maupun sesudahnya. Dengan menggunakan metode close reading, peneliti bisa mengidentifikasi kata-kata dan perilaku tokoh utama yang menunjukkan feminisme seperti keterlibatan si tokoh wanita dalam kehidupan ekonomi dan sosial, usaha menghapus diskriminasi dalam hal seksual, dan persamaan hak; yang pertama merujuk pada perjuangan si tokoh wanita untuk menghapus penghapusan anggota dari partai lain, berjuang untuk ekistensi seperti guru, pribadi, anak-anak, suami dan dirinya sendiri. Yang kedua merujuk pada hak-hak wanita untuk memilih suami dan yang terakhir merujuk pada hak-hak istri untuk mendapat perhatian suami.

Kata kunci: *ketidakadilan sosial, feminisme*

Introduction

As broadly understood that feminism refers to the women's strife to get their rights equal to men. Feminism happens because there are gaps in society between man and woman, gaps that posit woman below man: enslavement of woman (Tyagi, 2013:28), patriarchal oppression (Cohen, 2014:04, see also Taylor, 2014:11), patriarchal power (Dolezal, 2015:105, see also Savigny, 2015:03), sexual relations (Lynes, 2012:10), sexual violence (Healicon, 2016:03, see also Snitow, 2015:07), sex oppression (Hooks, 2015:26), and women's exploitation (Hay, 2013:54). Such kinds of gaps lead the women to struggle to get their equality with men (Reger, 2012:05). Feminism, then, is women's donations to economies and societies (English, 2015:03), women's right to education, women's right to vote, women's right to assistance and women's right to work with reasonable salaries and kindly work circumstances for women (Sica, 2016:26). Besides, Feminism is about women's equal opportunity, women's history, and women's culture (Gerhard, 2013:04), women's fight against patriarchy (Martin, 2014:02).

Feminism, then, is a plan that strives for question biological savings in women's reproductive bodies as the motors of national development (Nadkarni, 2014:12), eliminate sexual aspiration from the female presence to get a more serious, earnest equivalence with men (Nally, 2015:07). Likewise, Feminism is a global, political movement for the freedom of women and society based on equivalence for all people (Mackay, 2015:03) with the feature of feminism and its positive ability to remove sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression as well as women acquisition of equal rights (Hooks, 2015:i-xii) as well as with the position of women in a political movement with specific political goals and objectives. It is

a group combined by its political benefits, not its common practices (Whelehan, 2014:25).

In literature, feminism has been widely studied. Recently, studies of women's fight against the domination of men have been done by some researchers: Sadek studies about resistance mechanisms used by African women in a society dominated by male and seeing women used as beating and as polygamy, then empowered themselves by resistance mechanisms based on the concepts of sisterhood and female consciousness. Therefore, they become as superior as men in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow*. Rajasree analyzes Afro-American women that are doubly discriminated from their own community male as well as the white male and white female in Alice Walker's *the Color Purple*. Undergoing sexist oppression, the women struggles to get their identity in society. The result is that through education and economic independence, the women become aware of themselves. The authors in the studies above express the gaps between man and woman or feminism through the characters' point of view, whilst, this study discusses feminism through the main character, who behaves manly, against the social injustice that is expressed through her speak and action. Thus, the two previous studies above analyzes the protest of the female characters against the male's power, whilst, this study refers to the struggle of the female character against the powerful social injustice through which this study has the novelty. Accordingly, the researcher discusses in this study the female main character's feminism through the struggle against the social injustice.

To further make clear of the gap and the novelty of this study, the researcher narrows down to use feminism regarding women's donation to economies and societies, elimination of sexual aspiration from the female presence to get a more serious, earnest equivalence with men, and women acquisition of equal rights, all of which are found in Jung Chang's *Wild Swans*.

Jung Chang's *Wild Swans* is a novel about struggles of the mother's author to gain equality in the society as well as equality with men. Narrated by the author as the first person, the novel presents feminism presented by a woman (the author's mother) to seek for justice in any field of life in the era of the Kuomintang party and Communist party. The involvement of a woman to struggle against social injustice for the sake of her own kind and others is called feminism. Thus, this article discusses how feminism is performed by the woman. To get a vivid understanding of the woman's struggle, social injustice is worth a discussion before performing feminism by the woman.

Research Methods

The researcher uses close reading method referring to formal approach. Guerin, et al, in their book *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* states that a close reading is the way the formalists' approach do in analyzing a literary work in the sense that they commence with a feeling to the words of the text and all their denotative and connotative values and implications. He further states that internal connections slowly reveal a form. As we look over all the words, phrases, metaphors, images, and symbols wholly, any literary text performs its own internal logic. The reader is very close to the identification of the overall form of the work, when that logic has been set up (Guerin, et al, 2005:94-96). Formal approach then refers to the text itself as a structure of a language regardless of the author and the readers (Sandel, 1977:20).

Feminism approach is the only approach the researcher uses in that the researcher collects the data that have things to do with feminism: the main character's speech and action that are connected to feminism as well as social injustice leading the main character to behave in feminism way and then elaborate the data through close reading method.

The data analysis are taken from the novel in which the researcher quotes the words that have things to do with social injustice and feminism. Thus, not all items in the stories are worth quoting here, whilst, in the data analysis technique the researcher collects the data in two parts: social injustice and feminism. Therefore, this kind of technique makes the researcher easy to analyze the problems.

Results and Discussion

Before coming to discussion, the researcher needs to elaborate a little bit about the author of the novel, Jung Chang, because she is the witness of the social fact poured in her novel. It is her mother who becomes the main character in the novel, through whom the feminism is performed. Besides, the novel is narrated through the first-person point of view and that's why there are quotations using 'I/my' that refers to the author, Jung Chang.

Born in 1952 in Yibin, Sichuan, Jung Chang's parents were Communist Party officials. Originally named Er Hong, second Swan, Jung Chang asked her father for a new name when she was 12. Jung Chang wanted a name with a military meaning as Communists were viewed as red but sounded like the Chinese words for 'faded red.' Her father suggested Jung which means 'martial affairs.'

At 14, Jung Chang chose to join the Red Guards, but she later left saying the Red Guards were too violent. Jung Chang high-ranking family later came under attack by Mao's supporters. Before her parents were criticized and imprisoned, Jung Chang had supported Mao, but the time he died, she no longer did. Jung Chang worked as a peasant, a 'barefoot' doctor, a steel worker and an electrician before becoming an English Language student and, later, an assistant lecturer at Sichuan University (www.speakersbulgaria.com).

In 1978, Jung Chang went to study in Britain. Jung Chang became the first person from China to earn a doctorate in Britain when she received a linguistics Ph. D from York University in 1982. She has also been awarded several honorary degrees. Jung Chang lives in London with her husband, historian Jon Halliday (www.About.com).

Further, Jung Chang is the author of the best-selling books *Wild Swans-Three Daughters of China* (which has been said by the Asian Wall Street Journal to be the most read book about China), and *Mao: The Unknown Story* (co-written with Jon Halliday). Both books have been translated into more than 30 languages, and together sold some 15 million copies. Likewise, with Jon Halliday, Jung Chang wrote *Madame Sun Yat-Sen: Soong Ching-Ling* (1986), with Lyn Pan and Henry Zhao, Jung Chang wrote *Another Province: New Chinese writing from London* (1994).

Social Injustice in Jung Chang's Wild Swans

The government corrupt the power. After Japan domination ends, the Kuomintang party rules the country. Yet, its existence doesn't satisfy the woman as well as the people in common. It is because the Kuomintang corrupts its power by getting money forcibly from the rich people. The way the Kuomintang gets money is called Tiger-Beating Squad which "was a means for the really powerful to extort money from the rich" (Chang, 1991:90).

The government humiliate the people. As a ruling party, the Kuomintang party official underestimates the people. Indeed, it is an official's child who calls the people in the woman's area a slave of Japan: "Wang-guo-nu" ("Slaves who have no country of your own") (Chang, 1991:82). Therefore, the woman withdraws in that she goes away from the social engagement held by the Kuomintang party who claims to release the people of China from Japan domination. The following quotation is a proof that the humiliation of the ruling party towards the people by the action of the woman: "my mother and her friends walked out (Chang, 1991:82).

The government abolishes the culture. Soon after the Communists control the country, they set up the Cultural Revolution, one of whose rules is to

ban their members to attach to their member. The woman feels uneasy to be against such a policy because Chinese belongs to the extended family in that their existence is inseparable. Thus, every time the woman goes back to her parents' house, she is criticized. The following quotation verifies the previous explanation: "Every time she went home, she found herself being criticized. She was accused of being too attached to her family, which was condemned as a bourgeois habit and had to see less and less of her own mother" (Chang, 1991:155).

The government discriminates the opponent party member. Like the Kuomintang that hates the Communists, the Communists dislike those who belong to the Kuomintang. The woman becomes the victim because of the family connection to the Kuomintang. The woman is suspected because she is released by the Kuomintang without being tortured. It happens to the woman when her marriage is put off. The following quotation verifies the above condition: "What had caused the delay was that the Provincial Committee was suspicious of my mother because of her family connection" (Chang, 1991:150). Instead of the above fact, the woman is also worried of her children's future life, as the label Rightist falls on her.

The government interferes with the private life. The Communists don't give a leave to the member's new marriage, even to sleep together husband and wife which according to the woman's family, the Communists have broken traditional value. Though they are fanatical disciples to the Communists, there is a disparity in the way of thinking between the woman and the husband. The woman speaks differently in social and political life, whilst, the husband is strict to the politics only in the sense that the way he talks to the party is the same as to the woman, his wife. Thus, her husband agrees with such a prohibition. The following quotation verifies the above explanation: "What harm could it do the Revolution if she spent the night with her husband?" (Chang, 1991:155).

The government through the Cultural Revolution led by Chairman Mao has created a lot of victims in the whole country; beating and torture, people have to kneel on the floor and kow tow the Red Guards, the Mao's armies, people's property is destroyed or taken away. Though the woman's husband is strict to the Communists, in some cases he is against them. Therefore, he struggles against the Communists. He then becomes the victim like his wife, the woman. Both husband and wife then undergo torture. For the sake of her husband, the woman encourages herself to go to Peking for his justice. The following quotation verifies the previous elaboration: "I am here to seek justice for him" (Chang, 1991:444).

In recruiting teachers, the Communists' policy is based on the class category and it is in contrast with the woman's idea. That she promotes the teachers on professional merit, regardless their Kuomintang's background, is a fact of unfairness of the teacher's recruitment by the government. The following quotation verifies the preceding explanation: "My mother placed too much importance on professional merit rather than class background" (Chang, 1991:262).

Feminism in Jung Chang's Wild Swans

As explained above that feminism leads women to struggle to gain equality, then, feminism discussed here refers to women's donation to economies and societies, elimination of sexual aspiration from the female presence to get a more serious, earnest equivalence with men, and women acquisition of equal rights.

The Woman's donation to economies and societies

The woman struggles for the elimination of other party's member existence. The woman feels defiant on her knowledge that the other members of the political party are eliminated by the ruling Kuomintang party that means the existence of the other party is not regarded. To this reality, the woman turns her loyalty to the Communists that promises a better future to the people. The following quotation verifies the woman's sympathy to the Communists: "My mother had been turning more and more strongly against the Kuomintang for some time. The only alternative she knew was the Communists, and she had been particularly attracted by their promises to put an end to injustices against woman" (Chang, 1991:99). Further, the elimination of the other party member can be verified by the following quotation, "When my mother heard that her cousin Hu had been killed by the Kuomintang she approached Yu-Fu about working for the Communists" (Chang, 1991:101).

Likewise, when the Communists take control the country and the woman automatically become their member, the woman feels uneasy to know the fact that the Communists hate the Kuomintang existence. It happens to the woman when she is suspected to be the Kuomintang member by being released and having no torture as what the woman does against General Chiu is a terrible doing, or at least her family has connection to the Kuomintang, her wedding time is put off. The following quotation verifies the previous fact: "What had caused the delay was that the provincial Committee was suspicious of my mother because of her family connections" (Chang, 1991:150).

The woman struggles for the teachers' existence. When the Kuomintang party rules the country, the Kuomintang underestimates the

existence of teachers by giving them a very low salary so that their life is very miserable. Knowing that, the woman that has been elected the President of the students' union strives to get them financed by asking the charity of the Kuomintang officials when they are on a banquet spending their money extravagantly. The following quotation that is found when the woman is in concluding remarks how miserable the life of the teachers verifies the above condition: "We all know you are generous people. You must be very pleased to have this opportunity to open your pockets and show your generosity" (Chang, 1991:105) which has an approbation from them.

The woman is still beside the teachers in the era of the Communists. Though the Communists are against the Kuomintang members, yet, when it concerns the life of teachers whom the woman respects, the woman strives for their life by putting them in their suitable position though they are pro Kuomintang in the former days. Thus, the existence of teachers regardless their political back ground has the first place in the eye of the woman. The following quotation verifies the above illustration: "My mother placed too much importance on professional merit rather than 'class back ground'" (Chang, 1991:262).

The woman struggles for the private life existence. The woman regards that the Communists don't admit the existence of the life of husband and wife. Everything that is done should be in the interest of the political party. To this disregard, the woman is in protest because what husband and family have done like to sleep together is supposed to be against the Cultural Revolution law built by the Communists. The following quotation is the woman's protest against such wisdom: "What harm could it do the Revolution if she spent the night with her husband?" (Chang, 1991:155).

The woman struggles for the existence of her children. In this case, the woman requires the sacrifice of her principle. Indeed, the woman is against policy of Mao about the approach of economy. However, when she notices that Marshal Peng's letter criticizes such an approach, the woman orally doesn't advocate the letter since she will be regarded as being the rightist that not only the woman but also her children's future life will be in danger. The following quotation is her comment about Peng's letter when her turn to talk comes: "The views in the letter are not in keeping with the policies of the Party over the last couple of years" (Chang, 1991:283). Thus, through her not advocating Peng's criticism of Mao's policy about the approach of economy, the woman tries to defend her children's future existence.

The woman struggles for the peasants' existence. It is the Communists' policy to take away chickens and eggs from the peasants forcibly, therefore, the peasants are lack of them. As chicken and eggs are things that feed the peasants for survival, the woman then criticizes what the Communists have done to the peasants. Consequently, the woman is regarded as having right wing tendencies. The following is the woman's protest against such policy: "What's wrong with supplying things people need? If there is demand, there should be supply" (Chang, 1991:284).

The woman struggles for her husband's existence. Though her husband is a fanatical disciple of the Communists, however, he doesn't agree with what the Cultural Revolution has done to the innocent people, killing them, taking away or destroying their property just because they are not in line with Chairman Mao's policy. Therefore, he becomes one of the Communists target to punish. Knowing this, the woman, his wife, struggles for his existence by delivering a letter to Chairman Mao that demands rehabilitation. The following quotation verifies the above illustration: "I am here to seek justice for him" (Chang, 1991:444).

The woman struggles for her own existence. Fortunately, a year after her husband's death, Chairman Mao is dead. Therefore, she strives for her existence by asking her job back after some years of absence. She gets it though she is in the lower position than before. She doesn't mind. The following is a sign of her existence: "She was given a job as the number-seven deputy director in her department, of which she had been the director before the Cultural Revolution" (Chang, 1991:654).

Elimination of sexual aspiration from the female presence to get a more serious, earnest equivalence with men.

The woman struggles for the underestimation of other's existence. From her earlier years of life, the woman feels uneasy to hear the underestimation of the people by the ruling Kuomintang party. It means that the existence of people is not regarded. Likewise, the woman wishes to show that woman has rights to choose her own husband as well as plays roles in society, in family life. In this case, the woman hates so much the system of concubine, because concubine becomes a non-formal wife whose function is like a servant besides her sexual service to her husband. The following quotation verifies the previous condition: "She was disenchanted with the treatment of women, and hated the whole system of concubinage" (Chang, 1991:83). Thus, the woman wants her own sexual kind to be treated like the other women in society regardless their class.

The woman rejects a proposal of marriage. The woman bravely rejects a proposal of marriage by a high official which at that time nobody has courage to

reject on the ground that the woman has a right to choose her own husband. At her young age, the woman hates the way people treat women and the system of concubine, instead. The following quotation verifies her courage of rejecting the proposal of marriage made to the woman: "She was disenchanted with the treatment of women, and hated the whole system of concubinage" (Chang, 1991:83).

Women acquisition of equal rights

The woman struggles for wife's existence. Instead of sleeping with her husband prohibition, her husband turns out to sustain the Cultural Revolution rule that the members should put the political interest in priority which means to disregard the existence of a wife in her house hold because her husband never cares of what she needs though she is in terrible condition of being pregnant. The following quotation is the woman's complaint of her husband less care to the woman: "You are a good Communist but a rotten Husband!" (Chang, 1991:270). Such expression is said by the woman to her husband when she needs his immediate help from him but he doesn't meet her need. To her opinion, her husband should be able to help her because his position in the party makes him possible. As he regards his help as a corruption of power, he relents. What the woman needs is to be brought back home for her pregnancy is terrible.

Conclusion

It is not easy for the reader to draw conclusion since the novel is close to the study of the sociology of literature, however, since there are evidences that the main character's actions as well as speeches are entitled to the explanation of the feminism above, the researcher then concludes that feminism undergone by the woman is triggered by the social injustice such as corruption, people humiliation, cultural abolishment, discrimination, private life interference and victims all of which are done by the previous and late government.

Whilst, feminism itself is performed in the way the woman's donation to economies and societies, elimination of sexual aspiration from the female presence to get a more serious, earnest equivalence with men, and women acquisition of equal rights; the first refers to struggling for the elimination of those who belong to other party, existences as follows: teachers, private life, children, husband, and her own existence. The second refers to woman's right to choose her husband and the last refers to the wife's right to have her husband's care.

In spite of concluding, the researcher is looking forward to further study of the same novel with the same issue of feminism from different viewpoint in order to firstly strengthen the researcher's finding about feminism and secondly develop the study of literature in general and feminism in specific.

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