

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Women's liberation movement was a radical, multiracial feminist movement that was most active during the late 1960s and 1970s sought to free women from the oppression and the male supremacy (Napikoski, 2019). Women liberation had been mushroomed in several countries, while Russia is no exception that occurred in latest twentieth century. A hundred years ago Russia rejected feminism, as it was then understood and urged women to join the common cause of revolution and socialism (Stites, 1978, p.460). Eventually, the word *osvobozhdenie*, means liberation with its Russian roots and its verbal connotation of action, used by Russians who wanted to free women, workers, and nations.

In 2012, radical feminist punk band, Pussy Riot, which consisted of eight women hiding their faces by using neon balaclavas, took revolt to show their opposition to Vladimir Putin, President of Russia at that time, and have encountered criticism from the Russian Orthodox Church and the Putin Administration. In an interview, one of the band members, Tyurya, emphasizes "*The culture of protest needs to develop. We have one form, but we need many different kinds.*" (Elder, 2012). This is only one of several cases that urges women's liberation in Russia exists and they are still working today.

Russia women are still working to gain equality. According to The World Economic Forum 2013-2014 annual report, Russia takes place the 75th on the list

of 142 countries included in the Gender Gap Index. It points out that there is certain degree of gender equality in Russia in terms of education and health though in the political sphere women face a lot of discrimination (Smolentceva and friends, n.d). Hereinafter, several certain professions regarded as “women’s job” and “men’s job” based on the sphere and also the occupied position. The research of the Russian recruitment agency Superjob, also shows that professions with hard physical labour such as mechanics, turner, and private driver assigned to men. Meanwhile, women jobs are usually related to human resource, doctor, nurses, teacher, accountant, and psychologist.

As for income, Russia women earn wage 15-30% less than men. Svetlana Velikanova, an asset manager of the Denobi Group, big financial advisory and investments group states *“You have to be three, five times better than a man, even higher so that they will pay. There is a simple reason: because they think you will leave.”* Such wages gap has shown the lack of trust in quality of women’s work, even though women are considered much more dedicated particularly if they already have a child.

The discrimination also exists on the level of stereotypes and consciousness, for instance, for private sector, women are sometimes not paid the maternity leave, they are being fired, they are forced to sign the contracts that they will not marry and give a birth (Smolentceva and friends, n.d). These important issues triggered liberation feminists’ attention to question about women’s liberation, including Germaine Greer.

Germaine Greer, an Australian-born English writer, journalist, retired academic, and feminist, regarded as one of the most significant feminist voices of the twentieth century. Greer (1970) defines the women's liberation movement is to unify all women to be aware of their rights to establish the role they want to be. Greer states that women's liberation is self-determination of women, and that means that all attributes associated to men will have to be detached. Women must have room and scope to devise a morality which does not disqualify her from excellence, and a psychology which does not condemn her to the status cripple (Greer, 1970, p. 131). It means that women should create their own values to define themselves instead of believing on any false morality and psychology that are constructed by men.

In *The Guardian* news, Greer accentuates that equality is a profoundly conservative goal for women. It will change nothing. Women need to achieve more than simply drawing level with men (Davey, 2017). Here, she asserts the difference between women's empowerment and women's liberation. The goal of women's empowerment is to achieve equality, meanwhile the goal of women's liberation is to detach from any kind of man values. Afterward, the key of achieving women's liberation is through a revolutionary act. Liberal feminism defines revolutionary act is when a woman can develop herself from an unconscious state to find a point of being aware to deny her need for men. At this sense, women will release all things associated to men including their lust, dependence both financially and morally as they begin to create sisterhood between them to support each other's liberation.

Greer has written several feminist books including *The Female Eunuch* (1970), the international bestseller book that provoked controversy. In her book, Greer explains that woman has the right to express their own sexuality. She criticizes some famous psychoanalytic experts such as Sigmund Freud and Otto Weininger, as they differentiate characteristics between men and women. These gender groupings produce several stereotypes about women which mention that women have no ego, women are always end up as men's servers, and women's positions as men's inferiors in physically, socially, intellectually, and in terms of physical beauty (Greer, 1970). Greer believes that women can establish their own characters by taking off those stereotypes. She adds that women's liberation that women must confess their own body. Women should believe that they can stand on by their own that they can still live without having men by their sides (Greer, p. 72). Therefore, all the expected stereotypes should be released.

The Female Eunuch is a book that is inspired by the earliest feminist classic, *The Second Sex* by French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir which was published in 1949. Beauvoir (1949) finds that men essentially oppress women by characterizing women as the object, the other, meanwhile men considering themselves as the subject, the self. This invention called as *the Other*. As internalizing the term of other, women also start to create fear of revolting from all kinds of oppression men created. Thus, *The Second Sex* purposes to raise the awareness of women to step out from dependency and insecurity by achieving their own liberation. If woman can support herself, she can also achieve a form of liberation (Beauvoir, 1949).

The Power by Naomi Alderman is firstly published in 27 October 2016 by Viking that is a piece of feminist science fiction. This genre of feminist science fiction can be seen on how Alderman expands her story about the phenomenon of women all over the world suddenly develop their power and are able to electrocute jolt at will. Those phenomenon explicitly represent women's liberation, as can be seen that the power itself as attribute of women's superiority. As exploring the change of women in the story, Alderman approaches her readers by illustrating three main woman characters of each different background, for instance Roxy Monke, a young daughter of London crime boss, meets Mother Eve at the convent to seek help in strengthening her powers and ends up becoming Mother Eve's confidante; Margot Cleary, a middle-aged American politician, creates the North Star camp for training young girls on how to properly use their power as her advocacy; and Allie Montgomery-Taylor, an abused foster child, escapes to a convent and becomes a religious figure known as Mother Eve. In this grand story, what makes them related each other is they possess gifted *power*, which originated from their collarbone and can be released from their hands. The power they have triggers women to liberate themselves by developing sisterhood among them and creating new value, even inventing new country called Bessapara, located in Moldova, the place that every girl and woman can unite and use their power freely. Moreover, long before they get the power, each character has been oppressed of the value created by patriarchal system.

Naomi Alderman is a 54-year-old English novelist who won The Orange Award for New Writers in 2006 of her novel *Disobedience* and *The Baileys*

Women's Prize for Fiction in 2017 for her fourth novel *The Power*. Alderman's contribution in LGBT, and science fiction novels, supports her position as a feminist, as she also stated on the description of her twitter account, "Unorthodox jew. Feminist. Novelist. Game writer/designer.". Alderman's *The Power* is chosen for this analysis because it contributes to women liberation issue that tackles the hardest questions about this particular brand of feminism, which hit a fever pitch last year in the lead-up to the presidential election, without actually delivering us from, well, evil (Read, 2017), besides winning The Baileys Women's Prize for Fiction and named as one of the 10 Best Books of 2017 by New York Times. This study will reveal how the novel is related with Greer's definition of women's liberation and Beauvoir's definition of "Other".

Regarding this research, there are several previous related studies. The first study entitled "*Subversion of Conventional Gender Roles in Naomi Alderman's The Power*", conducted by Chetana Mahat (2019). This study investigates the issue of subversion of conventional gender roles that Naomi Alderman depicts through main characters like Roxy, Allie, Margot and Tunde. Using the theoretical approach of gender studies of Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, David Glover, and Cora Kaplan, it shows the discontinuities of gender roles and human desires for identity in society. The design of matriarchal history and literature reveals counter-discourses and ways to challenge the conventional notion of gender roles.

The other study is conducted by Sayed Sadek (2014), entitled "*The Struggle of African Women in Selected Works by Ngugi Wa Thiongo*". The study examines

the various aspects of the resistance mechanisms devised by Ngugi wa Thiongo in order to empower the African women in a male-dominated society. By using feminist approaches, it shows the wrongs to which women are subjected such as polygamy and wife-beating and analyses Thiongo's belief that change is a gradual process. While his early three novels *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Devil on the Cross* (1980) reflect traditional African values of motherhood and are more connected to African feminism, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006) breaks new grounds as women acquire more experience and conquer more fields towards empowering themselves through the resistance devices base on such concepts as sisterhood and female consciousness. In this sense, they manage to prove themselves as superior to men.

The other study entitled "*The African Woman in Coming to Birth: A Critical Analysis of Kenya's Liberation as Depicted by the Woman's Liberation in Society*", arranged by Gloria Ajami Makokha (2015). It discusses the Marjorie Macgoye's portrayal of the Kenyan woman in *Coming to Birth* novel, set in colonial and postcolonial Kenya. Through Paulina, the main character's life, Macgoye tells the story of a woman who gradually matures into a wise decision maker and leader in the society, alongside the history of Kenya from when she fights for her independence from the white man until she acquires it, and rules herself despite serious woes and challenges amongst her local leaders. The study explains that, by empowering the Kenyan women characters to stand up for themselves in various ways through her novel, Macgoye motivates the twenty first century Kenyan and African woman to stand up for herself as it is possible for

them to take a stand regardless of the challenges and resistance from the predominantly patriarchal African story.

In contrary to those three previous related studies, this study aims to investigate Roxy's, Margot's, and Allie's revolutionary act as a form of women liberation in Naomi Alderman's *The Power*. As there has not been any study that discussed women's liberation in *The Power*, this study is conducted to reveal how Roxy Monke, Margot Cleary, and Allie Montgomery-Taylor as fictional characters explore women's struggle to step out from patriarchal system to powerful women through Germaine Greer's and Simone de Beauvoir's feminist approaches.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the writer proposes the following question: How do the main three woman characters in *The Power* by Naomi Alderman liberate from the conditioning by men?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study purposes to investigate the woman characters; Roxy's, Margot's, and Allie's revolutionary act in Naomi Alderman's *The Power* to reveal the phenomenon of women's liberation, to understand more how *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer and *Woman as Other* by Simone de Beauvoir take part in literature context, and to contribute in research of feminist theory and women studies.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on analyzing the women's liberation in a novel entitled *The Power* by Naomi Alderman, through its main woman characters' point of views; Roxy, Margot, and Allie. This study will be analyzed by using only feminist theories, *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer and *Woman as Other* by Simone de Beauvoir to discover how Roxy, Margot, and Allie liberate themselves from the oppression.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to be useful for giving information and contribution of knowledge as references for other researchers conducting study related to literary works, particularly about women's liberation and woman as other in a novel through feminist theories, *The Female Eunuch* of Germaine Greer and *Woman as Other* of Simone de Beauvoir.