

**GENDER RECONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE  
CHARACTER IN THE PLAY “MACBETH” BY  
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: FEMINIST APPROACH**

**THESIS**



**By:  
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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES  
UNIVERSITAS PUTERA BATAM  
2019**

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements Thesis for the Degree  
of Sarjana Sastra**



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2019**

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**The thesis has been approved to be examined on the date as indicated below**

**Batam, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

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## **ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginterpretasikan karya drama berjudul Macbeth oleh William Shakespeare melalui perspektif feminis. Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk menguraikan rekonstruksi jender yang disebabkan oleh seorang karakter wanita sesuai dengan teori Butler dan mencari bukti pembenaran bahwa drama Macbeth termasuk dalam karya sastra feminis. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan dimana peneliti akan membaca naskah drama dan mencatat data-data yang penting. Oleh karena itu, hasil penelitian dipresentasikan dengan metode informal. Dengan dilaksanakannya penelitian ini, telah ditemukan semua bukti bahwa Lady Macbeth menyebabkan rekonstruksi jender, sesuai penjelasan Butler yang dimana dilakukan dengan ‘mendeskripsikan ulang identitas jender’ dan ‘mempresentasikan wanita tanpa mengundang emansipasi’. Peneliti menemukan lebih banyak bukti dalam klasifikasi ‘mendeskripsikan ulang identitas jender’ dengan sebelas data dan tujuh data dalam klasifikasi ‘mempresentasikan wanita tanpa mengundang emansipasi’. Mengikuti bukti yang sudah ada, peneliti menemukan banyak bukti untuk mendukung benarnya drama Macbeth oleh William Shakespeare sebagai karya sastra feminis.*

*Kata kunci: rekonstruksi jender, jender, feminisme*

## ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at interpreting tragedy *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare from feminist point of view. This research is conducted to elaborate the gender reconstruction caused by a female character based on Butler's theory and find justification to *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare being a feminist literary work. The method of this research is designed to be a descriptive-qualitative research. The data is collected with librarian research method in which requires reading the transcript of *Macbeth* play and then analyzed the data by taking notes on the important parts. Therefore the result is presented by using informal method. By conducting this research, it is found that Lady Macbeth shows all signs of causing gender reconstruction as explained by Butler by re-describing gender identities and representing woman without reify emancipation. The researcher found more proves on Lady Macbeth re-describing her gender identities with eleven data and seven data on Lady Macbeth representing woman without provoking the patriarchy. Following the signs, the researcher found enough justifications for *Macbeth* to be considered as a feminist literary work.

Keywords: gender reconstruction, gender, feminism

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

### **MOTTO**

*If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.*  
- *Benjamin Franklin*

### **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to:  
My dearest parents, Mom and Dad  
My amazing support system, Aan, Erwin and Selvi  
All respected English department lecturers and colleagues in Putera Batam  
University



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First of all, the researcher would like to thank the Almighty God for His blessings and guidance, the researcher is able to finish this thesis entitled “GENDER RECONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE CHARACTER IN THE PLAY “MACBETH” BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: FEMINIST APPROACH” on time. Then the researcher would like to thank her parents for the constant attention, love and support while the researcher is taking an undergraduate program. The researcher is very grateful of Mr. Emil Eka Putra, S.S., M.Hum., as her thesis advisor who has been a great help in guiding the researcher in finishing this thesis. In form of sharing ideas and arranging the thesis.

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May they are under God’s blessing and peace. Amen

Batam, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

Feminism has become the most talked topic these days. Issues regarding the topic is now being brought everywhere; not only just a merely blog topic but spoken loudly in speeches, news, television shows, movies, social marches and even written in platforms like songs and novels. Feminism itself roots from French word *féminisme* and as stated in Cambridge online dictionary, feminism is the belief that women should be allowed to have equal rights, equal power, and given the same opportunities as men. The past few years, this view is seen as controversial especially for conservative countries. Men and even women themselves are questioning this view. People tilting their heads, rubbing their foreheads, smirking and underestimating this view as useless and just temporary whining. As for Murphy Jr., (1995) stated that a movement to correct the laws and practices that prevent women from achieving full equal treatment as men in domestic and public life. The more people finally realize that this discrimination and gender underestimation needs to stop, the more it gets supporters; men and women. Feminism is not anti-men, like a lot of misunderstood people says; it is an empowering thinking that women should be objectified as lower class than men. Women can speak on their opinion, women can take charge, women can take in jobs and be a mother at the same time, women can vote and get into political circle, and women can be ambitious.

Now, years passed and we are now very vocal in speaking and practicing this view. Unlike today, which this topic is brought up in a lot of ways and multiple choices of media, the most likely platform to bring this topic back in the days are in written literary works. Novels, poetries and drama plays were and still are people's iconic entertainment. These medias were bound to entertain but possible to slip in a few essence of serious kind of matter. Despite of strong hold-back from patriarchal environment, the image of women holding power over men, unrestricted within rules, and free to do things were controversial and still are interesting enough to make a good character in literary works. There are a lot of popular and honorable mentions to strong woman characters from classic literary work. Starting from Hester Prynne in the *Scarlett Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* by William Makepeace Thackeray and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare.

Lady Macbeth is William Shakespeare's female character in his tragedy play *Macbeth*, a play about how ambition, power and guilt. The play begins with the appearance of three witches. They shows up to Macbeth, a Scottish general who just win a war. They prophesied him that he will be the thane of Cawdor and later to become the king of Scotland. Intrigued by the prophecy, he writes a letter to his wife, Lady Macbeth. She gets tempted by the prophecies and desires the kingship for him. She wants him to obtain the throne so then she pushed him to murder Duncan, the current king of Scotland. Corrupted by his wife's ambition, they did the deed and finally obtain the throne. Instead of a sweet achievement, Macbeth is prisoned in guilt as he gets hallucination of the King's ghost. Macbeth losing grip

of himself, ends up sending hire-man to get rid of anyone that considered a threat without discuss with his wife. Lady Macbeth that used to dominate Macbeth in making decisions and discussion, is shut down. The ambition that fires her to attend such tempting power, ends up firing back at her, resulting her sleepwalking in her guilt. Finally, she is affected by her conscience and becomes disappointed. So, she commits suicide, and ends her life.

Unlike any other strong female character that supports woman emancipation, Lady Macbeth shows a very different yet unique mind-range of what it takes to be a strong female. Lady Macbeth despises her own femininity. She thinks that to be a heartless figure is what needed to overthrow the king, by murder, so that after the deed is done she will not feel guilty. Lady Macbeth confronts Macbeth as she thinks he is too weak and soft to kill a king. She is the brain of the murdering plan and encourages Macbeth to commit the murder. For the sake of fulfilling the prophecy, she is not afraid to fail; she believes they will not fail. Macbeth upon hearing the prophecy plans to get rid of Duncan right away but found Macbeth is too weak to commit a murder of a royal family. Despite being a brave and respected general, Lady Macbeth found his husband to be 'full of human kindness', means she knows that Macbeth only kills for war and enemies, not allies. Lady Macbeth could have killed the King by herself but instead she pushes Macbeth to kill Duncan the King because she believes, that is what men do. Lady Macbeth believes that men are capable of such doings. She is vocal with her vision and confronting a man's masculinity can be seen as a very brave thing. It is interesting that Lady Macbeth's purpose of confronting the masculinity is not to put Macbeth down but instead to

put oil in a raging fire, to rebuild a thinking that murdering the King is the only way the prophecy works.

For Lady Macbeth, this kind of contrast thinking is similar to a theory by Butler (2009) which she stated that all social phenomena is created primarily by political interest. In this stance, what Lady Macbeth does is in the name of prophecy for status and power. From a wife of a respected general to a queen of Scotland, all that happens within the night as Lady Macbeth and Macbeth murdered the King. A king killed by his own subject is surely an act of treason; political move. Bulter then describes the theory in two key themes. First is about re-describing gender identities which offers a perspective view about the kind of gender identity they ought to be. In one scene, Lady Macbeth expressed her determination on casting out the bodily, biological traces of her sex. She hopes to stop any sense or feeling of sensitivity and caring associated with females. Lady Macbeth's negation of her own mothering instincts defies conventional gender boundaries and suggests that women desirous of social advancement must become as a man. Also, she suggests that masculinity is synonymous with "direst cruelty":

**Lady Macbeth**

Come you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood.

(*Mac.* 1.5. 30-33)

Secondly, it is important to represent women but to do it not in a way that distort the current construction. Lady Macbeth could have done all the deed by herself but she believes that Macbeth is the one that should be killing the King. She



sees and put herself on the same level as her husband, Macbeth, rather than sees him lower than herself. Lady Macbeth acknowledges her husband incapable of murdering the king because she knows he respect the chain in command, she knows he works that way. But because her idea that man is supposed to be less sensitive and because Macbeth is a general who is experienced in war, she decides that Macbeth should be the one in charge. In Lady Macbeth's case there are two opposite ideas: Despising femininity by wanting masculinity and accepting femininity but using men as a tool to achieve something. This kind of pattern rarely found in any other female characters that embracing feminism essence.

Lady Macbeth is a complex character. In some studies regarding Lady Macbeth herself, she is mostly considered as the embodiment of evil female character; sort of a villain. As what is mentioned in "Nature of Evil in Macbeth" by Saiful Islam (2011), Lady Macbeth's evil essence is much bigger and more obsessive than Macbeth himself and that makes her character's nature pure evil. The second study by Sharifat and Dorri (2016) says otherwise. The researchers concluded that Lady Macbeth's evil doings are not purely her human nature but her excessive ambition. What differs this study and previous studies are that this study based on the believe that Lady Macbeth is not purely evil but an ambitious dependent woman that respects the patriarchy and then measures how her actions actually resulting a gender reconstruction between her and Macbeth, as husband and wife.

## **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

Based on the problem that presented in the background, there are a few points that the researcher has found in 'Macbeth' by William Shakespeare (1984).

- Bigger ambition of the female character in Macbeth by William Shakespeare
- The desire of the female character in entering masculinity by stripping off femininity in Macbeth by William Shakespeare
- Confrontation of female character against her husband's masculinity

## **1.3 Limitation of the Problem**

By considering the background or motivation of this study and identified problems found, the researcher chooses to focus on these particular area; First, because this study choose a drama titled 'Macbeth', this research limits to Lady Macbeth and Macbeth lines, because this research revolves around Lady Macbeth. Secondly is femininity and masculinity, anything that mentions or nudging on this topic, because this research focuses on gender reconstruction caused by Lady Macbeth.

## **1.4 Formulation of the Problem**

Following the background, identified problems and limitation of the study, the researcher narrowed down the aspects to be analyzed more specifically. To have the aspects answered, they are present in form of these questions:

- 1) What kind of gender reconstruction reflected by Lady Macbeth in tragedy Macbeth by William Shakespeare?
- 2) How does the reflected gender reconstruction justify that Macbeth by William Shakespeare is a part of feminist literary work?

### **1.5 Objectives of the Research**

Considering from the formulation of the problem, the researcher divides the objective as in:

- 1) To describe in detail how Lady Macbeth is reflecting a gender reconstruction in Macbeth by William Shakespeare
- 2) To give more prove regarding the feminism aspect in Macbeth by William Shakespeare

### **1.6 Significance of the Research**

In conducting this research, the researcher aiming to achieve two important significance, in theoretical and practical. As in theoretical, this research introduces common reader and widen their knowledge about gender topics. As for academic people or lecturers, this research can enhance deeper topic regarding gender and feminism, specifically around gender reconstruction.

As in practical, the researcher conduct this study to complete final thesis. This research may help common reader to understand more about gender matters and identify similar phenomena around the society. As for academic people and

lecturers, this research can be used as a reference regarding the same study theme or topic as this research is expected to be an example of application of feminism.

### **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

**Gender Reconstruction:** reconstructing the performative acts of both gender which women are allowed to be represented but not causing a failure of patriarchy (Butler, 2009)

**Feminist Approach:** the approach which theories are to analyze women's experiences of gender subordination, the roots of women's oppression, perpetuated gender inequality and offer differing remedies for gender inequality. (Budig & Jones, 2008)

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this second chapter, it will reveal several things used in analyzing the data. The first thing is the theory that is used as the main theory for this research. The gender reconstruction theory in the view of Judith Butler is used as the main theory for analyzing the feminism aspect in the play. Aside of the theory, this chapter will also reveal the previous research and theoretical framework of this research.

#### **2.1 Feminist Approach**

Theories regarding feminism issues are widely acknowledged and taught in courses of gender studies, women studies, and the like. The diversity between feminists pay a lot of contribution in how wide the definition of the issue itself, therefore to suit them. Person's experience and belief can differ from each other and that makes it the primary source of conflict in feminism. This, then, resulting a common occurrence which is to see some theories that might clash with one's perspective. One may believe that women and men should be equal politically, economically and socially. In this likely case, it implies that one is whether or not practicing a form of feminism and directly associates with the movement or theory.

## **2.2 Gender reconstruction**

The main concept that Butler (2009) formed is that these social phenomena in which there is a rebuilding perception of what makes a man, woman and a binary is, it all primarily triggered by political interest. In the light of women behavioral of showing more 'masculinity', the concept then explained with having two ideas, which are re-describing gender identities and represent woman without reify emancipation.

### **2.2.1 Re-describing gender identities**

This offers a perspective view about the kind of gender identity the person ought to be, expressing the need or want to be other than what the society has constructed. Man wanting to have more feminine traits, female wanting to look more masculine or binary traits; simply wanting to change their appearance or physical. According to Butler (2009), in politic environment, woman are pushed to be more of a thinker than a feeler in act to fit into this man-majority work field. By pushing this image of a 'cold thinker' as a primary trait for women in political environment, it creates a stigma that in regards of decision making should not involve any 'soft feeling' character.

### **2.2.2 Representing women without reify emancipation**

Butler (2009) believed that within this society phenomenon, people make limit on woman representation, especially in politics. Within the politics itself, where majority are run by men, the ethics are based on how the society constructed

men work. So, accepting woman in a man-majority field is important but in a way that it will not distort the current construction, or simply not making men feel like their spot is taken away. Believing that woman can act but still behind the line the society has made.

### **2.3 Previous Studies**

After searching for references and ideas, the researcher has found some studies that credits to be compared and become reference to do this research for a better purpose.

First study is “Magic and Terrible’ Female Characters and Characterization in Charles Bukowski’s Post Office, Factotum and Women by Lauri Leinonen (2014). This study is analyzing the female characters in Charles Bukowski’s three novels, Post Office (1971), Factotum (1975) and Women (1978). The first novel, Post Office, is the story of Hank Chinaski’s years in the postal service, first as a mailman (when he is around 35 years old) and later as a mail sorter (ending his career when he was 50 years old). The second novel, Factotum, going on Chinaski’s early adulthood doing temporary work around The United States of America (from age around 20 to 35). The third novel, Women, revolves on Chinaski’s life after done with the postal work and being a celebrated and famous poet and a writer. Mainly, the major female characters in these novels are Chinaski’s love interests, but some female et cetera appear along. This study focuses on how the female characters are portrayed along with their purpose, while the study that the researcher

wants to conduct focuses mainly on one female character and similarly related in talking about how this character is portrayed.

The second study is *An Analysis of Perempuan Berkalung Sorban Novel: Feminist Perspective* by Septa Aryanika (2016). In this study, the focus is on how feminism works in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* novel and how the character deals with her struggle against patriarchy. Feminism around Islam and Indonesian's society where women are still considered lower than men. Aside of the obvious difference in the choice of work, the major female character from both research shows different view and response to patriarchy. Lady Macbeth for instance, instead of against the hierarchy, she respects it and play along with it.

The third study is *Reflection on Feminism in Jane Eyre* by Haiyan Gao, (2013). In this study, it aims in analyzing the contemporary social, historical and cultural background of Victorian period and key points of feminism, and reconnect them with Jane Eyre's experiences, a character from a novel by Charlotte Bronte in 1847.

The fourth study is *The Gentle Gender: Shakespeare's Tamora and Lady Macbeth as Models of Revenge* by Jenna Fitzgerald (2008). Fitzgerald did an analysis on two female characters of William Shakespeare that appears in different plays. Tamora is a female character in play titled *Titus Andronicus* while Lady Macbeth is from tragedy *Macbeth*. Despite of the similarity of analyzing Lady Macbeth in the eye of woman studies, it takes from different point of view. It analyzes their characterization and then challenges the idea that their character is just plain evil or not, while in this proposal it plans on analyzing the part which



makes Lady Macbeth's ambition clear as a form of feminism act; proven by the gender reconstruction that caused after.

The fifth study is entitled *Masking Femininity: Women and Power in Shakespeare's Macbeth, As You Like It, and Titus Andronicus* by Kelly Sorge (2017), very recently, it analyzes the power that Lady Macbeth from *Macbeth*, Rosalind from *As You Like It*, and Tamora from *Titus Andronicus* assert and answers the questions of how women assert power in Shakespeare and the role gender plays in power. Pretty similar with characters but in this research, it will analyze on one, Lady Macbeth. If Sorge focuses more on the role gender plays in power, this proposal is working on the gender reconstruction of the character.

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

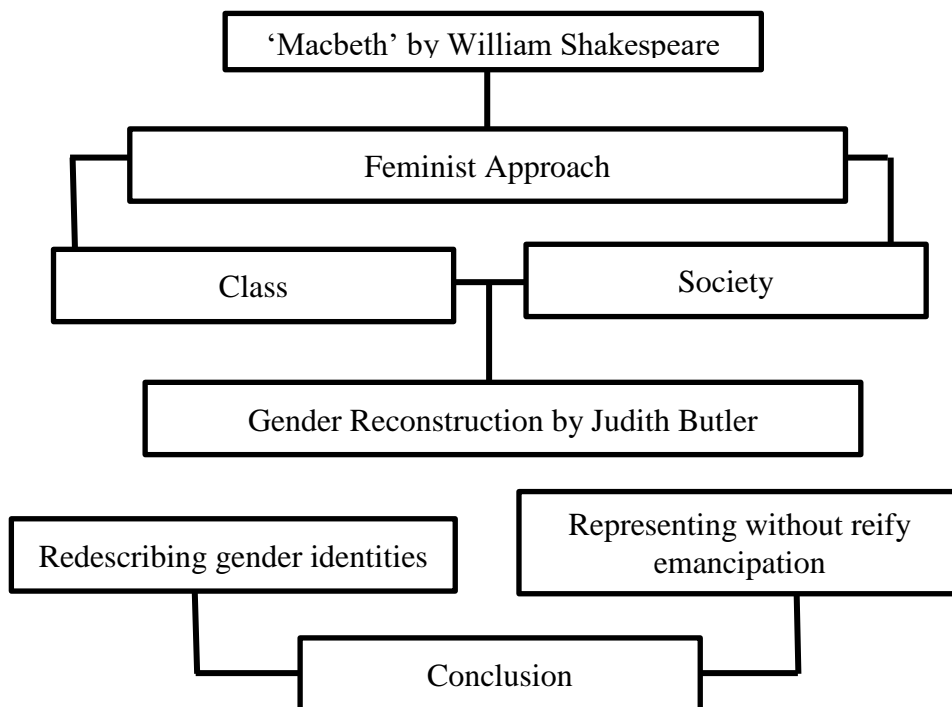


Figure 2.1

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

It is extremely important to know which method is appropriate to use in conducting a research. According to Ratna (2010), this research design is the any activities to collect, analyze the data, and present the study result, and it is carried out in systematic way and used the formal theory and method. In this study, the researcher will use a qualitative research as it will produce a descriptive data that exists in the written script of William Shakespeare's tragedy drama "Macbeth". The researcher will focus more on Lady Macbeth.

#### **3.2 Object of Research**

Objectives are the goals that the researcher set out to attain in the study. Since these objectives inform a reader of what the researcher want to achieve through the study, it is extremely important to word the objectives clearly and specifically. In this research, the object is the gender reconstruction caused by Lady Macbeth in the tragedy "Macbeth". Then, the data are all the utterances by Lady Macbeth in the tragedy "Macbeth", because the media is a drama script. Macbeth is a tragedy play written by William Shakespeare. The play cannot be dated as precise as other William Shakespeare's literary work but mostly believed that is written earlier than 1603. William Shakespeare is one of world's famous English playwright, and Macbeth is one of his famous works that has been brought as adaptations in films, operas, comics, novels and other media. The story revolves around husband and

wife that plot murder to please their ambition to be the King of the country which later devastate themselves with regret and agony. This play has become the icon work of dramatized betrayal and ambition. In multiples of adaptations, a lot of them won a prize in numerous international film award.

### **3.3 Method of Collecting Data**

In a qualitative research, the output of analyzing is descriptive, which is that the information is richer and has a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study. In this study, the researcher will collect the data using librarian research. Librarian research, according to Moleong (2005) is method of collecting data research regarding of notes, transcript, books, magazines and images. In this study, the researcher first read the drama script of tragedy “Macbeth” several times. Second, the research focuses more on Lady Macbeth on how she is reconstructing gender in the tragedy “Macbeth”.

### **3.4 Method of Analyzing Data**

In doing this research, there are two step analyzing the data. The researcher will do the read and take notes analyzing method. First, the researcher read the whole drama script of “Macbeth” a few times. Despite of the researcher’s knowledge of how the play is applied in practical beforehand, any practical pictorial of the play did not count in and effect the researcher’s analysis. Second, the research take notes on the important data of the drama script of “Macbeth. Once again, any of the play’s practical pictorial did not count as data.

### **3.5 Method of Presenting Research Result**

After the researcher is done with the analysis, the next step is how to present the result analysis. Creswell (2007) stated that in terms of presenting the result of a qualitative method research, narrative text will be done rather than a scientific report. For a better and easier understanding regarding the research, the result is presented in words and sentences. The narrative text is neatly written and in form of descriptive sentences. Therefore, the form used in presenting the research result is in descriptive narrative text.