

A Feminist Analysis on Performativity and Gender Identity of Main Character in Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway'

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Abstract: Literature is the kind of the tool to tell the daily life of the people, their behaviours, performances and identities of both sexes. There is a close relationship between the gender performativity and literature. In the same way, characters are agents of the people who want to tell or show something they want in daily life for different purposes: political, economic, social and other aspects. In the book 'Mrs. Dalloway' written by feminist novelist Virginia Woolf, the writer revealed the life of women and those feelings concerning men, their perceptions, life choices and self-portrayal of life. There are some previous studies that analyzed the life of women and their perceptions based on gender performativity. Based on the findings of these studies, the writer had an attempt to do the research. In this paper, the researcher studied gender performativity and identity of the main character in 'Mrs. Dalloway'. The title of doing this research is A Feminist Analysis on Performativity and Gender Identity of Main Character in Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway'. The main purpose of doing this research is to investigate the gender performativity and gender identity of the main character from the novel 'Mrs. Dalloway' and analyze how such performativity and identity reflect the life of a woman. The research took a month. It was conducted with Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990). As the main data source, the writer used Virginia Woolf's a famous novel 'Mrs. Dalloway'. Data were collected and analyzed by qualitative ways. Due to the findings of the research, the main character, Clarissa Dalloway's performativity and gender identity can portray her courageous, industrious, keen, intelligent and strong-minded feminist image at best. In brief, findings from this research can be supportive my further research related to gender performativity in the feminist approach.

Keywords: feminism, gender identity, performativity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is the like main pillar of the society and it performs as the representative tool for society because we can study about the ways of life and behaviors or performances and efforts of the people completely in literature. Indeed, the creators of the literature, the writers both males and females have served the society with their artistic and aesthetic skills by writhing different kinds of literary genres such as novels, novellas, short stories, poems, etc. Like male writers such as Henry James, Ernest Hemingway and so on, the female writers including British writer have served the society with their great works. They revealed and portrayed the life of the women and how their struggles for earning their lives from their different perspective. Their great works represented the women society and their attitudes, choices, performances, identities and perceptions on their current lives. Concerning gender performativity, some scholars analyzed in their studies from their different point of view. Based on the findings from these studies, the writer attempted to do a study based on Virginia Woolf's a famous novel. The title of doing this research is 'is A Feminist Analysis on Performativity and Gender Identity of Main Character in Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway''. To do this research, the following steps were considered. The main

purpose of doing this research is to investigate the gender performativity and gender identity of the main character from the novel 'Mrs. Dalloway' and analyze how such performativity and identity reflect the life of a woman. The objectives of doing this research are to extract and study the gender performativity and gender identity of the main character from the novel 'Mrs. Dalloway' and analyze how such performativity and identity can reflect the life of a woman.

The research questions of doing this research are as follows:

- What types of gender performativity and gender identity of the main character are found in 'Mrs. Dalloway'?
- In what ways can these types of performativity and gender identity reflect the life of a woman?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, there are two main parts: literature of related researches and theoretical framework

2.1 Literature of related researches

In 'Performativity of Main Character Identity in 'Colour Purple' by Alice Walker: Feminist Approach, the writer Nolen (2020) explained the gender performativity that reflected the main character and aspects that form of gender performativity in the main character in the novel *The Colour Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker. The writer used Butler's (1990) performativity theory to analyze data related to gender performativity in novels. As the research method, he used descriptive qualitative methods. Due to findings from the research, it was found that the main character in the novel "*The Color Purple* (1982)" showed performativity repeatedly so that she changed her sexual orientation. Besides, many aspects influenced on gender made a change in this orientation. The main character changed her sexual orientation as a lesbian who loves fellow women. The main character changed her attitudes repeatedly to become as a lesbian. The writer found some aspects caused the formation of gender performativity. As the result, 27 data related to gender performativity were found in the whole novel. This result pointed the main character displayed changing in gender and sexual orientation due to a bad past and a bad view of men.

In *Gender, Performativity and Agency in Virginia Woolf: A Butlerian Reading of Orlando*, the writers Bakhtiar Sadjadi and Serveh Hozhabri (2019) studied Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* by using Judith Butler's gender performativity and agency. In this research, they focused their main study on the female characters' positions and mentality through the lines, dialogues and events. Besides they studied the perspectives of the female characters concerning the choice of dress codes, clothes based on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity and agency. The writers also observed the *Orlando* from the perspective of construction and representation of gender, manifestation of gender performativity and the subjecthood and agency. Due to the findings from this research, Sarah, Harry and Orlando gained the gender identity through their performances. They could emphasize gender performativity of the characters through the repeated rituals and non-identity between sex and gender. Besides, it was found that the fluidity of gender can be socially and culturally built up but it can be altered through times. The consequence of resistance against the standing rules could also be highlighted. through Butlerian agency.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Feminist Theory

This theory is the extension of feminism for the purpose of understanding the gender in equality. The feminist theory examined social roles, interests, chores, experience, and politics. Ben Agger (1998) stated that the major achievement of feminist theory is to make the politics of sex and gender central to understanding oppression. However, it is not only about understanding but also about action. A goal of feminist project is to end the oppression of women and attain social equity for them. Thus, feminist theory is a tool for women to fight for their rights. It is closely related to racial class conflict, especially in gender conflicts and discussing more about gender. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional, or philosophical discourse. It aims at understanding the nature of gender inequality. It examines women's and men's social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, such as anthropology and sociology, communication, media studies, psychoanalysis, political theory, domestic finance, literature, education, and philosophy. Feminist theory focuses on analyzing gender inequality. Themes explored in feminist theory include discrimination, objectification particularly sexual objectification), oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, art history and contemporary art and aesthetic

Gender

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler addresses the idea of gender and its affinity with sex and sexuality. According to her, gender is not something we acquire by birth; on the contrary, one constitutes its gender by acting. What we do is central, rather than what we have, thus without doing, we have no gender. Hence, acts are significant in making one's gender. There isn't not only an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalize but also an objective ideal to which gender aspires. Gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts there would be no gender at all.

Performativity

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler is engaged in the performativity of gender and emphasizes that gender is always a "doing," by that deed, a subject is formed; however, that subject is not prior to the gender itself. She declares that "gender proves to be performance, which constitutes the identity it is purported to be." In this sense, "gender is always a doing though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed". She enunciates that "gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we see that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence". She also believes that defining the meaning of the notion of 'performativity' is difficult for the reason that it 'might vary over time'. Performative speech acts are dynamic dialectic between the past, and present, the one that names and the one that is being named. Butler also asserts that performativity is not external to discourse. However, for Butler whatever is done even by 'norms of sex' is performative; that is why gender is more essential than sex for her. Whilst Butler argues that sex is a 'gendered category,' she means performativity in the action of a gendered subject; that is why she ignores what feminism draws as a distinction between sex and gender, when she writes 'the category of sex always reinscribed as gender'. Butler's concept of performative is in close association with her perception of gender. The indication of 'gender performativity' starts a 'reinterpretation of political moments of subject of enlightenment set aside, and considered unintelligible. Performativity brings the subject into existence, and it is the performativity of gender that makes a coherent interrelationship between identity categories.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the book, 'Mrs. Dalloway', Virginia Woolf described the gender performativity and the role of genders at most. In this research, the writer studied the performativity of the main character identity in the novel. The major aim of doing this research is to investigate gender performativity of the main character identity. To find out the solutions for targeted research questions, the writer set up two steps to do this research: research design and research procedure. As the research design, it was conducted with Judith Butler's gender performativity theory (1990). As the primary source of data, Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway' was used. It took a month. Data were collected and analyzed with qualitative research method. According to research procedure, the following steps were considered.

- ✓ Studying the whole story and extracting the main points which can show the performativity and identity of the main character
- ✓ Analyzing these points by using Judith Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990) to investigate how the main character's gender performativity and identity can reflect the life of a woman

3.1 Data Collection and Data Analysis

At the beginning of the novel 'Mrs. Dalloway', the writer Virginia Woolf introduced the gender performativity of the main character Mrs. Dalloway. The main character, Clarissa Dalloway is an upper-class housewife married to Richard, a politician in the Conservative Party, one of the most powerful political parties in United Kingdom. Clarissa threw a party that night, and in the morning, she walked about London on her way to get flowers. When Lucy offered to buy flowers for her but she replied as follows:

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), Mrs. Richard Dalloway doesn't like to be helped by others for her daily routine. When her maid, Lucy offered her help to her mistress if she would buy the flowers, Mrs. Dalloway replied that she would buy the flowers herself. This point indicated that Mrs. Dalloway is a kind of woman who prefers depending on herself for daily activities. Clarissa Dalloway got married with a politician, Richard to reach the higher class by leaving her family in a small, own town, Bourton that was far from the Capital London.

This point showed that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway is a woman who has the great life expectations because she had a dream to become a Prime Minister with the help of her husband party. Although she came from the ordinary family, she was too ambitious to be a high-class woman. This point showed that Clarissa Dalloway had the great intention to be born as a high-class wife. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), it is found that Mrs. Dalloway is a woman who only admires the high social life. She believed herself that one day, her dream would come true because of her great efforts. Besides, although Mrs. Dalloway has lived with her family in London for twenty-first year, sometimes she missed her hometown, Bourton. Hence, she used to walk around the town and buy something, mostly flowers. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), it is found that Mrs. Dalloway is a high-class woman, sometimes, she has the blue mood with such privilege and she wants to live in the ordinary life. One day when she returned from strolling downtown of London, she met her old friend Peter Walsh again. Peter lived in India for many years.

In fact, he returned his native town, Bourton and visited Dalloway. Peter was passionately in love with Clarissa Dalloway and he tried to propose her for getting marriage but Dalloway refused his proposal but Peter and Clarissa still had good relationship but mostly they were very cynical to each other. Their brief meeting was loaded with shared memories. Indeed, Dalloway chose the politician from Conservative party of United Kingdom, Richard. At that time, that political party was one of the most powerful political parties in Britain. Dalloway made the right decision for future life and her life changed and her gender role reached to a high place. Continuously, Virginia introduced Clarissa's significant performance at the beginning part of the story that she was throwing the party at that night. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), it can be said that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway's gender performance is very envious for the readers including us because her decision, her effort and her attitude makes the readers, especially female readers interested in choosing the right life partner for their whole life.

Because of missing the chance to marry with Peter Walsh chose a young woman who used to idealize Clarissa Dalloway from afar as. To visualize the main character's gender identity, Virginia Woolf introduced a man named Septimus Warren Smith who was a close friend of Mrs. Dalloway. Because of that man, the performativity of the main character's gender identity became more significant. Septimus Warren Smith was a veteran of World War I. He was suffering from shell shock. Smith was waiting in Regent's Park with his Italian wife, Lurezia. Septimus imagined himself as a kind of prophet and he had hallucinations with his dead soldier friend, Evans. Septimus was an inspiring poet but he became numb and unable to feel after the war. He often thought of his lacking emotions because of his crime killing people in war. He, thus, frequently condemned himself to death and tried to commit suicide. Lurezia took him to Dr. Sir Williams Holmes but the doctor convinced that Septimus had nothing wrong with him and was just in a funk. That afternoon, Smiths visited to Sir Williams Bradshaw, a famous doctor who subscribed a worldwide view of proportion and had the bad news with his psychological bully on his patients He planned Septimus to send to the mental institution in the country. Septimus grew suddenly lucid while Lucrezia was making a hat. The couple designed the hat and joked together, sharing a moment of happiness. Then Dr. Holmes visited Smiths, Lurezia tried to stop him, however, the doctor pushed past her. Septimus thought that Holmes as a devil condemning him to death, so he jumped out the window, killing himself as an act of defiance. On that day, Mrs. Dalloway was having lunch with her husband and a descendant of famous generals, and Hugh Whitbread, a charming aristocrat. They helped her write a letter about emigration. After lunch, Richard Dalloway got roses for Clarissa and planned to tell how he loved his wife but he couldn't say it a loud. Clarissa considered that was the privacy of the soul and the gulf which had existed between even a husband and a wife. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), we can say that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway favoured occupying the popularity among the high-class English society instead of feeling love of men. She got married Richard for admiring his dignity, his wealth and his position, not for love. Indeed, Clarissa Dalloway is a kind of woman who values to raise her life higher and higher. Otherwise, she cannot still feel love even she has a daughter with her husband.

After Richard left, her daughter Elizabeth emerged with Doris Kilmen, her history tutor. She was too unattractive and miserable. She always tried to convert Elizabeth to Christianity. Mrs. Dalloway and Miss Kilmen hated to each other and were jealous of other influences on Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Miss Kilmen went shopping together. Then Elizabeth left, leaving Miss Kilmen in hatred and self-pity with her mother. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), we can say that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway wanted her daughter to bring up under her guidance, not overwhelming by others, especially she disliked the religious control by others. This point showed that Mrs. Dalloway was a good mother and she had the great ambition upon her daughter. She wanted to see her daughter as a clever, intelligent and obedient girl.

Besides, she wanted her daughter to have the own decision and own ideas for nurturing her life. In brief, all her performances with her daughter proved that she was very disciplined and straightforward but just all were for her daughter.

Peter heard the ambulance go by and wondered at it as a symbol of English civilization. He lingered at his hotel and then went to Clarissa's party in which most of the novel's upper-class characters eventually assembled. Clarissa performed as a "perfect hostess", however, was worried the party would not completely held, and she was aware of Peter's silent criticism. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), we can say that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway was self-confident upon her performances but sometimes, unexpected anxiety influenced her. Nevertheless, it can be said that she is a brave and keen woman. Sally Seton, a woman who Clarissa had loved passionately as a teen at Bourton arrived unexpectedly. The once-radical Sally married a rich man and settled down. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), we can say that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway had the homosexual sense and she was interested in women, not men. When she met with a girl who was passionately in love once, she might shock more or less. That point indicated that her marriage with Richard was uncomplete with warmly love and kindness.

The Prime Minister visited briefly but his appearance looked anticlimactic. Sir William Bradshaw arrived late, and his wife told Clarissa about Septimus's suicide. Clarissa went off alone to consider the sudden arrival of death at her party, and she felt a kinship with Septimus. But she admired the purity of his soul and considered her own property would only the shallow existence. She saw Septimus's suicide merely as an act of communication. Peter and Sally reminisced waiting for Clarissa to join them. Clarissa finally appeared but ecstasy and terror overwhelmed Peter. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), it might be said that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway was not satisfied with her party for being late by his guests.

To the worst, she received the news of the sudden death of Septimus but she admired his soul's purity and thought of herself that she current existence was too shallow or unvaluable than his death. She felt that his suicide as an act of communication. But she could control her mind easily and appeared at the party again to join Peter and Sally. Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), it might be said that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway was a strong-minded woman and she was ready to face with two persons with simile, the first one was a guy who was passionately in love with her and the another one was she was passionately in love as a teen-boy.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Due to data collection and data analysis, we can say that the main character was a kind of woman who really values of building up her own life at best. She chose the high-class member of Conservative party, one of the most famous and powerful political parties of United Kingdom as her life companion by rejecting the proposal of her old friend, Peter Walsh from her native town, Bourton far from the Capital London. She neglected his passionate love and selected the right way for her whole life. Though she had a daughter, Elizabeth with Richard, she didn't seem having interest with love upon her husband. Love was not the essential thing for her life. She just married with Richard for admiring his position, his wealth and his popularity. She had lived in London for twenty years since she married with Richard.

Throughout her life, she might be busy with handling her husband and nurturing her daughter. But she remembered her native town and longed for the joyful life without duties and loyalties. So, she strolled in Bond Street, buying flowers and visiting the houses of her husband's friends, members of parliament. She preferred buying flowers herself, not accepting the help of her maid, Lucy. Furthermore, she wanted her daughter to have the own decision and own ideas for everything, depending others like her. Indeed, she wanted her daughter to become a keen and strong-minded woman like her. She planned a party and hosted the venerable guests from parliament including Prime Minister so that she wanted to receive their recommendation for emigration. At that party, she got a letter of emigration from her important guests. At the same time, she got the bad news of her colleague, Septimus and met with joining of two persons: one was a man who loved her and the other one was who she loved. But she held her party completely by overcoming the sudden conditions. In brief, her whole life was filled with struggles for gaining popularity among the members of parliament by holding the parties frequently with her husband and depending her husband's party to become a prime minister. Overall, Due to Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990), it can be said that the main character, Clarissa Dalloway's performativity and gender identity could portray her courageous, industrious, keen, intelligent and strong-minded life at best and that can make female readers enthusiastic in choosing the right life partners and guide them how to set up the better future life. Indeed, it can be said that Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is the sample of a woman who can build up her own life abreast with the men. In brief, all findings from this research can be supportive my further research related to gender performativity in feministic approach.

5. CONCLUSION

This research is a kind of qualitative research. The writer explored the performativity and gender identity of the main character, Clarissa Dalloway in the novel 'Mrs. Dalloway' written by the famous British writer Virginia Woolf in this research. It took a month. The main purpose of doing this research is to investigate the gender performativity and gender identity of the main character and analyze how these performativity and identity reflect the life of a woman. To find out the solutions of the targeted research questions for doing this research, the writer used Butler's Gender Performativity Theory (1990) for analyzing the data extracted from the novel. As the main data source, the writer used the British writer Virginia Woolf's famous novel 'Mrs. Dalloway'. Due to findings from the research, the main character, Clarissa Dalloway's performativity and gender identity can portray her courageous, industrious, keen, intelligent and strong-minded life at best and that can make female readers enthusiastic in choosing the right life partners and guide them how to set up the better future life. Indeed, it can be said that Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is the sample of a woman who can build up her own life abreast with the men. In brief, all findings from this research can be supportive my further research related to gender performativity in feministic approach.

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