GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ETAF RUM'S *"A WOMAN IS NO MAN"* NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyse gender stereotypes and how the main character deal with it that is portrayed in the novel entitled *A Woman is No Man* by Etaf Rum. This study uses the qualitative approach by describing and analysing the characters in the novel. In order to analyse the data, the writer uses theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1999). The result of this study shows the analysis of gender stereotypes on how male and female bodies are differentiated through certain standards of appearance, personality traits, also responsibility that are considered appropriate for both genders. It also describes that the main character can deal with the gender stereotype by understanding herself to take opportunity for growth. Through analysing this study, it concluded that female and male bodies identified being feminine and masculine as they performed certain acts and attributes purpose for female and male.

Keywords: *Gender Stereotypes, Feminine, Masculine, Novel.*

ABSTRAK

Tujuan skripsi ini adalah untuk menganalisis isu stereotip gender dan bagaimana karakter utama menghadapi stereotip yang terdapat di novel *A Woman is No Man* karya Etaf Rum. Skripsi ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan mendeskripsikan dan menganalisa para karakter di novel. Untuk menganalisis data, penulis menggunakan teori tentang performativitas gender (Butler, 1999). Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana stereotip gender membedakan laki-laki dan perempuan dengan standar tertentu melalui penampilan, kepribadian, serta tanggung jawab yang dianggap pantas untuk keduanya. Hasil penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bagaimana karakter utama dapat menghadapi isu stereotip gender dengan memahami dirinya sendiri agar dapat berkembang. Setelah menganalisa studi ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa karakter perempuan dan laki-laki dapat diidentifikasi sebagai feminin dan maskulin karena telah melakukan tindakan dan mengenakan atribut untuk perempuan dan laki-laki.

Kata kunci: *Stereotip Gender, Feminin, Maskulin, Novel.*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Feminism refers to a social and political movement that advocate the equality of women (Brunell & Burkett, 2021). It demands the equality in opportunities without deny the biological differences between the sexes. This movement is not just benefit for women, since it allow individuals to live freely without getting tied by the restriction in the society (Toppr, 2021). Individuals should have the same rights and opportunities in every aspect in social life that it will not discriminate them based on the gender. Thus, it can be concluded that gender is the center issue in feminism.

Most people naturally behave according to their gender. The term gender itself is related to women and men behavioral which are different depend on their sex. Gender and sex are two different ideas that are correlated. The

term sex is refers to biological phenomena, while gender is a social construct. Butler (1999) points out the concept of gender divided male body associated to be masculine, while female body related to being feminine. The identity of human being is reflected through the appearance, personality traits, roles, also behaviour. These aspects may appear differently because individuals are expected to adopt certain standards to be accepted within the society.

Society has a certain standard where individuals play different roles depending to their gender. Masculinity and femininity are the center concept of gender roles. WHO defines gender roles as "socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women" (World Health Organization, 2011). Thus, gender roles in society may be defined as how individuals are expected to act, dress, speak, and conduct themselves based upon the assigned sex. Though, without considering the possible exception of individuals can perform and adopt what is fit for them, they often get overly generalized from the society. Due to this form, stereotype belief may happen to both genders.

Gender stereotypes are the beliefs that people have about the characteristics of males and females (Martin & Dinella, 2001). Gender stereotypes can hold back men and women in defining their identities. Furthermore, gender stereotypes make people culturally restricted in personality traits and behaviors, it can limit the life opportunities for both men and women in general. This may negatively affect an individual that they may get discrimination due to this stereotypes belief. Even though gender stereotypes generally inappropriate, society has accepted such belief and recognized it as a truth. Despite, Butler's theory of performativity give another perspective in defining gender binary.

Butler (1999) defines gender as continuous process that performed repeatedly.

Gender performativity give another insight in defining gender binary. Gender performativity is the opposite acts that break gender stereotypes. Individuals can present themselves as how they show the truly they are without following the rules of gender stereotype within the society. The biological sex is not following the real gender as society rules for every individual. Butler (1999) also argues that performativity is not only an action but a repetition of acts. Thus, the theory of gender performativity criticized gender binary opposition that limiting individuals' identity.

The form of being masculine for males and feminine for females are the product of gender as binary results that explained by Butler (1999). She argues that gender is not about what someone is, but what someone does. However, individuals' gender within society is not a true expression of their gender identity, but it is just a performance to fit social expectations. The individuals' performance based on the binary product creates behaviors that causing the limitation of gender roles. For example, female identically wear pink skirt, while male cannot wear such that cloth. Female also commonly stereotyped has less power than male. It is often being compared to male, female frequently cry to express the disappointment.

Gender stereotypes also occur in the social life such as: women have a multi-role in the household, while men have an opportunity to get a higher position in the company. In the household, women are expected to be the one who are responsible for domestic chores, children education, and managing the family finances. Despite, some of them also having a job in a company, but their opportunity to have a higher position is less compared to men. Moreover, gender stereotypes cannot be separated in the workplace where some roles are dominated by one gender. Especially in Indonesia, it can be seen that mostly secretary and nurse are women, while most of the pilot and engineer are men. Thus, gender stereotypes

in the society may influence different roles. The gender stereotype also appears in literary works such as novel.

Gender stereotype is not only happens in many aspect in our life, but also literary works such a novel. The novel entitled *A Woman is No Man* (2019) is Etaf Rum's debut novel that count as a New York Times bestseller and one of Cosmopolitan's best books by POC for 2019. This novel contains gender stereotype that is the concern of this study. It shows how Palestinian – American women and men are often get overly generalized within their community that woman as a wife is the one who bear their children and life under the men's rules, while a man as a son is needed to bring their family name and help the family in financial. In order to reveal gender stereotypes and how the main character deals with it, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is used to analyze the novel. The title of this study is "Gender Stereotypes in Etaf Rum's *a Woman is No Man* Novel."

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background above, the problem of this study is formulated as follows:

1. How is gender stereotype reflected in *A Woman Is No Man* novel by Etaf Rum?
2. How does the main character deal with the gender stereotypes in *A Woman Is No Man* novel by Etaf Rum?

1.3 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study is concerned with literature, especially *A Woman Is No Man* novel by Etaf Rum. The limitation of the study focuses on gender stereotypes that represented in the novel. Theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1999) is used to discuss the topic.

1.4 Goals of the Study

Based on the statements of the problem above, the goals of the study are:

1. To analyze about the gender stereotypes in *A Woman Is No Man* by Etaf Rum.

2. To describe the main character dealing with gender stereotypes in *A Woman Is No Man* by Etaf Rum.

1.5 The Functions of the Study

The writer expects this study has the functions:

1. To improve the writer's knowledge and skill in analyzing issue in literary works.
2. To give more information to the readers concerning on the gender stereotypes using gender performativity theory.
3. To become reference for those who want to analyze gender stereotypes in literary work.

1.6 Systematical Presentation

This study is divided into five chapters:

Chapter I is introduction that consist of six sub-chapters which are background of the study, statements of problem, scope and limitation of the study, the goals of the study, functions of the study, and systematical presentation. This chapter explains the formal and material object in this study that related to the issue that will be analyzed.

Chapter II consists of related studies, review of literature, and theoretical framework. This chapter shows the similarities also the differences between this study and the previous studies. Also some theories related to gender stereotypes used to analyze the topic discussed in chapter IV.

Chapter III is research methodology consisting of the approach of the study, data sources, data collection, and method of data analysis. This chapter will explain about the data sources, the steps of collecting data, and the method that will be used to analyze the data.

Chapter IV consists of data finding and analysis that is related to the result of this study. Chapter V includes the conclusions and suggestions that conclude the whole study and give some suggestions to the reader or the other writer who will conduct the same study.

DATA FINDING AND ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses gender stereotypes in Etaf Rum's *A Woman is no Man* novel. This novel portrays a common rule in society that divided individual gender identity into masculine and feminine depend on their biological sex. The novel shows how the distinct stereotypes and characteristics between female and male characters portrayed in this novel. The issues are analyzed through physical appearance, traits, behaviors, and roles of the female character compared to the male character. *A Woman is no Man* novel tells about how Palestinian – American women and men who live in Brooklyn often get overly-generalized within their society.

This novel depict traditional roles through the conversation also characters' feeling description. As the title *A Woman is no Man*, this novel actually tells about womanhood and its constraints. However, men characters in this novel are represented as son that expected as the one who bring their family name also take responsibility for the family financial and needs. Due to all of the pressure that he gets, his life becomes darker. Thus, it is always highlighted that male character is the one who expected to have great power and authority over the female character. Even so, all of the characters got so much pressure that made them oppressed by the gender roles according to their society.

Gender Stereotypes in A Woman is No Man Novel

4.1.1 Gender Stereotype in terms of Appearance

Gender stereotypes can be seen through the way the characters dressed up. How they choose what kind of cloth and the color itself associated with particular gender identity.

"She met Isra's eyes. "Don't forget to wash the garlic smell off your hands before greeting our guest." Isra washed her hands, trying not to dirty the rose-colored kaftan that Mama had chosen for the occasion. "Do I look okay?" Isra asked. "You look fine." Mama said, turning to leave." (Rum, 2019, p. 9)

The quotation above shows the feminine stereotypes towards the representation of female. It portrays that Isra wore the rose-colored long loose dress that her mother had chosen. It depicts the rose-colored dress is preferred for woman. In addition, Isra's mother chooses the best new dress for the occasion shows how woman expected having a nice-looking to get a good impression. Moreover, the garlic smell in Isra's hands depicts she is cooking in the kitchen as females are expected to do certain housework include cooking.

"Adam wore a navy-blue shirt with buttons lined up the front and tan khakis, cuffed at his ankles. His shoes were shiny brown leather with tiny holes pricked in them and a solid black heel of good quality. His feet caressed the dirt with ease." (Rum, 2019, p. 18)

The quotation describes Adam dressed casually with a navy-blue shirt and tan khakis with shiny brown leather shoes. The set of attributes he wear shows the distinct characteristic of being female and male. As a male representative, Adam wears clothes that preferred for a man. He dressed casually as for an informal occasion to meet Isra. Masculine stereotypes expected a male representation to have certain characteristics in order to differentiate male and female bodies.

The data above portrays how gender identity constructed through the

way they dressed up. It is pictured as how the clothes itself associated with a particular gender identity. Moreover, It depicts the rose-colored dress is preferred for woman and the navy-blue shirt is for man. It shows the way they expected to act and the attributes they expected to wear are considered as a pre-existing identity. However, how Isra and Adam dressed up clearly shows how female and male bodies are differentiated by the attributes they wear. Thus, it also shows how Isra identified being feminine as she performed certain act and attribute purpose for female and Adam used attribute purpose for male that expected being masculine.

> *"Fareeda was very much like Mama, Isra soon realized. She cooked and cleaned all day, dressed in loose cotton nightgown. She sipped on chai and kahwa from sunrise until sunset. ... Fareeda awoke each day at sunrise and headed straight to the kitchen to make chai."* (Rum, 2019, p. 78)

Fareeda is Adam's mom. Isra describes her as a mother-in-law that stronger than Isra's mother. She encourage herself to stand for what she wants and what she considers the best for her family. Although, feminine stereotype also implied through her acts and attributes she wear. From the quotation above, it implies that stereotype of being female also reflected through Fareeda's behavior and appearance. Moreover, she is pictured to perform certain housework also wear loose cotton nightgown that she usually wear such that clothes every day since a comfortable dress support her activities as well. The way she is described enjoy her tea from dawn until dusk also portrays she is used to be stay in the house, as how female expected to be. Thus, Fareeda also identified being feminine as she performed certain acts and attributes that related to female body.

> *"The woman had deep black hair and fair olive skin. Yet her hair fell wild and wavy over her shoulders, her cheeks were full and bronzed, her lips a crimson red. ... She was startled to see the woman wearing a short skirt, her legs covered only with sheer panty hose…"* (Rum, 2019, p. 129)

From the quote above, it can be seen how a female body described trough certain attributes she wear and how the kind of cloth itself related to particular gender identity. The quote also implies that a female body can be identified by performed certain attributes that related to femininity. In addition, feminine stereotype portrays wearing a skirt as the symbol of being a female, so basically society had already belief that skirt can only wear by a woman. Thus, a set of standard of being female that pictured through the physical appearance of female character can be considered as the result of pre-existing identity.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
5.1 Conclusions

After analyzing *A Woman is No Man* novel by Etaf Rum using Judith Butler perspective about gender performativity, the writer could gain the conclusions. The analysis of gender stereotypes in this novel portrays male and female bodies are differentiated through certain standards that are considered appropriate for both genders such as

appearance, personality traits, also responsibility. Moreover, the biological sex as binary divides individuals into masculinity and femininity that can creates expected roles determined by particular characteristics. Male and female characters in this novel pictured as how they are expected to be. Therefore, they have to deal with gender stereotypes due to the rigid category that made them could not control their own life.

The main character in this novel can deal with gender stereotypes by gaining confidence through the understanding of her life. She could not break the stereotypes in the society where she lives, but she can take it as the opportunity for growth. She accepted the arranged marriage where it becomes a necessary for both genders, but she still sees that as the opportunity to start a new life. No matter that the society consider a woman as a burden, she considers her daughters as blessings. Although she could not go outside the house area, she can travel through the book that she secretly read every time she has chance. She found out that the safest and comfiest place is in her house, so she can easily know what she

wanted to do. She presents herself as how society expected a woman to be, but she can deal with it.

It can be concluded that gender stereotype leads to belief of femininity only belong to female body, while the male body only appropriate for being masculine. Thus, it clearly shows the pre-existing identity limits male and female bodies to perform the naturalness of gender. They could not stand what they are wanted to be or what they are preferred to do. Moreover, it made both gender have to deal with the stereotypes due to the rigid expectations. Therefore, main character in this novel found out that she can deal with stereotypes by understanding herself to take opportunity for growth.

5.2 Suggestions

In this part, for the next writers who are interested in literary study especially focusing in gender stereotype, the writer suggested to enrich the knowledge and understanding related to this study. They are also suggested to analyze gender stereotypes using other theory that can be the way to give more references for other researchers. The writer also suggests using other objects such as picture books or short stories in order to find other aspects of gender stereotypes. This study is not perfect yet, but the writer expects this study is able to give contribution in understanding the gender stereotypes.

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