

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Research

The discussion about William Shakespeare and his works is undeniably very interesting. He is undoubtedly still a very famous and influential person in the world today. Started his career in London as an actor and poet, but he is generally known as a great dramatist. Shakespeare had written many plays both in the genre of tragedy, history, and comedy. He had produced thirty seven plays, which were composed during the twenty four years of his career as a writer. Most of those plays present many issues open to critique and analysis. It makes the writer of the research interested to analyze them.

As the objects of this research, the writer has chosen three of Shakespeare's plays. They are *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594-1599), *Hamlet* (1599-1608) and *Henry VIII* (1613). The choosing of the three plays are based on the plays different genres; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy, while *Hamlet* is a tragedy and *Henry VIII* is a historical one. These plays are very attractive and remain interesting objects of research particularly because they contain many issues that are still related to current social life. One of the most interesting in those plays, the writer believes, is deconstructing them through paired oppositions hidden behind.

Paired things are commonly called as binary oppositions. Both words come from Latin 'binarius' which means 'two together' and 'oppositus' is 'set

against'. More clearly, definition of both words refers to two things contradict in meanings. In other words, the meanings are created by a society for a particular purpose. Generally, the differences are presented as cultural and social stereotypes in a conservative society. For examples, male versus female, white versus black, and so on. In the stereotype, male and white are considered better than their oppositions, female and black. This stereotype is seen in the inherent characteristics for each pairs, such as physical appearance, or mental trait. The binary oppositions in *Hamlet*, *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* and *Henry VIII*, however, are not in such physical forms, as male vs female, or white vs black. The binary oppositions of the plays are found in a more abstract form analyzed through the actions of the actors and actresses.

The play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of the famous comedies, which is very beautiful, yet absurd. It presents hatred and happiness, which run together in human life. More interestingly, this story involves reality and imaginative life in one set. On the other side, *Hamlet* gives different perspectives to face a tragic life as experienced by Prince Hamlet and all of his royal family. This story portrays that good and evil things even run together to create a conflict. The last one is *Henry VIII* which tells about two sides of romantic human life involving goodness and wickedness. King Henry VIII are frequently provoked by many of his close people makes him get a trouble within his marital life. Therefore, the three plays' narratives confirm the writer that there are many binary opposites in the three plays, which show that Shakespeare's way of thinking was influenced by the opposite relationship of things. Those binary opposites are

generally deconstructive – they do not have one fixed meaning. Therefore, the plays seem to stand for no certain moral standard. This becomes the main reason why the writer chooses the three plays as the object of analysis; the writer assumes that the binary opposites' multiple meanings represent many voices of people in society.

Analyzing binary oppositions in a play is probably inconvenient to conduct. As Klarer states, drama is a complex cultural product presenting in a script and in performance to reflect humans' reality (133). These features, text and stage, are the significant differences between play and other form of literary works. Thus, a play sometimes needs long process of analysis since it is more complex than other work, particularly when it has been performed many times by different stage directors. Therefore, the writer feels challenged to analyze the three famous plays by William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry VIII*, since the three plays have become very well known yet still have many binary opposites that need to be dismantled in order to find the postponed meanings or themes.

1.2. The Identification of the Problem

Claude Levi-Strauss argues that meanings are derived from binary opposition (Linsley, 2012: 2). The three plays - *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry VIII* - show many binary oppositions. For example, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare blends reality and imaginative world; some characters run their life in a dream and later they continue their lives in reality

with some changes as the effect of the dream. Meanwhile, in *Hamlet*, similar opposition of reality and non-reality beings are represented by the figure of ghost and the call of revenge he brings to Prince Hamlet. Then, *Henry VIII* gives the description of royal group's life to be regarded as an ideal life but shows many manipulation and abuse. There are many such oppositions in the three plays. Thus, the writer believes that the three plays' narratives are built by these binary opposites and Shakespeare did it intentionally, or at least, chose it as his style of presenting the themes of the plays.

1.3. The Scope of the Research

In order to make a clear focus, this research will analyze the three plays' narratives by focusing on the binary oppositions that construct the narratives and explaining the meaning of each binary pairs; showing that the words in the pairs have unstable meanings.

1.4. The Objectives of the Research

As mentioned before, the writer's hypothesis is that the three plays do not stand for any certain moral standard. Shakespeare seems to intentionally leave his works open for anyone to adore them by involving a lot of deconstructive binary oppositions. On the other words, by dismantling the binary oppositions found in the plays and presenting their differed/deferred meanings.

1.5. The Review of Previous Study

William Shakespeare is indeed acknowledged as one of prominent dramatists who ever existed in the world. He has produced many remarkable plays, which invite people to analyze and criticize them even until today since the plays are rich of many interesting issues related to human life. Here, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry VIII* are including into the works of Shakespeare's that have been analyzed frequently.

Tomy Yusram, the student of English Department in Andalas University, writes the thesis entitled "Patriarchal Ideology and Oppression through Language Practice in Athens as the Reflection of Elizabethan Society in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" (2011). He applies the way of thinking based on feminism by Luce Irigaray. It primarily reveals the practice of language and repression against women in Elizabethan period described in the play's manuscript.

The next research is by Deborah Fade, a student of English Department in University of New Jersey, USA. Her essay emphasizes on deconstructing one of Shakespeare's comedy. Her research which was written in the year 2012 is entitled "Deconstructing Royal Symbolism in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*". Her essay contains historical aspect of Elizabeth I who falls in love with a lower ranking man named Lord Robert Dudley. But, their love relationship is banned by the royal's council. It is reflected to Hermia falling in love with Lysander, in which it is banned by Hermia's father. Fade says, "Like Hermia, however,

Elizabeth had fallen in love with the man who was regarded by her court advisors as an unsuitable match” (2010: 2). In fact, both Elizabeth I and Hermia live in patriarchal societies. They even fall in love with the men having lower class. But, they challenge the patriarchal system by their own ways. Elizabeth refuses to marry; meanwhile, Hermia refuses her father’s request to marry Demetrius. Finally, she marries with her beloved man, Lysander.

Furthermore, the other research is written by Dr. William Leahy, a supervisor of PhD’s students in Shakespeare and Jacobean literature in Brunel University, London, entitled *You Cannot Show Me: Two Tudor Coronation Procession, Shakespeare’s King Henry VIII and the staging of Anne Boleyn*. The study is not related directly to deconstructive idea. But, it informs to ironical decision made by King Henry VIII. Leahy vividly focuses on William Shakespeare’s play entitled *Henry VIII* as reflecting the procession of coronation in Tudor royal family to both King Henry and his second wife, Anne Bullen (Queen Anne). Ironically, Katharine (Queen Katharine) was even still alive with the status of widow of King Henry VIII. Besides, the history of coronation was celebrated so luxurious that invited many critiques from most of the English’s people.

Another research has been conducted by Ken Jacobson, a professor of English Department in Newfoundland University, Canada. He analyzes *Hamlet* from Anthropology perspective. His essay is entitled “What a Piece of Work is Man: Theatrical Anthropology in *Hamlet*” (2011). Jacobson uses the main terms to depict human nature in *Hamlet*, such as ‘homo rationalist’ (man as

a rational) and ‘homo histrio’ (man the actor). He considers that human nature in Shakespeare’s play – *Hamlet*– seems ambivalent. Humans who are present in the play have the paradoxical features. Jacobson states:

Yet, despite this insistent emphasis on “man, “ Shakespeare’s view of human nature in the play seems ambivalent; it is perhaps the safest path to argue that the implied anthropology of *Hamlet* is paradoxical, both affirming optimistic classical – humanist commonplaces and subverting them by voicing radical pessimism, doubt, and uncertainty. (47)

On the one side, human beings work hard to be positive things to obtain good nature, mainly in solving a problem. But, on the other side, they occasionally destroy their optimism by thinking negatively and doing something uncertain.

Then, Marthinus Christoffel van Nieker, a student of master’s degree program in Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, South Africa, writes a thesis entitled “Shakespearian Plays: Deconstructive Readings of *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Hamlet* (2003). It applies poststructuralism approach, one of which is deconstruction. It deconstructs several problems related to those four Shakespeare’s plays. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Nieker deconstructs the ‘restrictive law’ and ‘justice and mercy’. This deconstruction is shown through Shylock who wants his right to be filled; to get a pound of Antonio’s flesh. According to an agreement on the story, Shylock has a right to take a pound of Antonio’s flesh (without blood). However, it is impossible to do so because the flesh must join together with the blood. In this case, if the justice for Shylock is executed, it will break the restrictive law. On the contrary, if the law is conducted, Shylock cannot obtain his right. Therefore, mercy is involved to solve the problem, “Mercy becomes embroiled in all the treading that

occurs in *The Merchant of Venice*, and demonstrates the capacity to be mercenary” (Nieker iii, 2003). In other words, restrictive law and justice can be bargained by ‘mercy’ to finish the case between Shylock and Antonio.

Furthermore, In *The Tempest*, Van Nieker emphasizes on binary pairs between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’. It is shown by several characters, such as Prospero and Caliban. They have distinctive features, in which Prospero is cultural person, while Caliban is regarded as natural man. For this reason, Prospero is considered being better than Caliban who are considered having no knowledge of language. However, this consideration is collapsed because Caliban, actually, has his own basic knowledge of language. In fact, he gets it before Prospero’s arrival on his island.

Then, Nieker deconstructs *Hamlet*. He emphasizes on the popular question of Prince Hamlet ‘To be or not to be’. In his thesis, the question refers to the distinction between ‘being’ and ‘imitation’. More clearly, it is Prince Hamlet’s contemplation of a decision to be ‘of being’ and ‘of not being’, ‘existence’ and inexistence, ‘life’ and ‘death’. But, these binary pairs join together in the prince of Hamlet. According to Nieker, his father’s ghost is an image (imitation) reflected in a mirror. “The image of Ghost is reflected in a mirror. ... Another part is Hamlet. Hamlet and the Ghost – hamlet and Hamlet – form part of a trope, are joined together by a trope that makes them one even if they remain two. It is not only a name that they share” (2003: 23). The Prince of Hamlet contemplates the image’s request to revenge. Basically, he is doubtful, but the decision must be taken fast in order that he will not be the murderer’s next target. Nieker states that

‘being’ refers to Prince of Hamlet’s passivity. It means that he, basically, does not want revenge. Meanwhile, ‘imitation’ is *regarded* as the prince of Hamlet’s ghost father who motivates his son to get revenge.

The last one is the deconstruction of *Measure for Measure*’s pair between ‘restraint’ and ‘freedom’. It can be seen when Lucio asks Claudio about how he gets his restraint (the reason why he is imprisoned). Claudio states that he gets restrained from too much liberty (freedom) he has had. Claudio has done premarital intercourse with his girl, Juliet. He has been considered breaking the rule made by Duke of Vienna. Therefore, the freedom of doing forbidden intercourse makes Claudio jailed (restraint). Here, there is cause and effect relation between Claudio’s restraint and freedom. It implies that ‘freedom’ is pleasant thing, but if it is done redundantly, it will result in someone’s restraint.

Five reviews above can enrich and support the content of this research to be better. Despite the similarity in the objects and approach, this research is different in the emphasis. It is aimed at exploring many more binary oppositions in the three plays and presenting their postponed meanings to prove that Shakespeare’s plays are dialogic in nature; they do not exclusively belong to certain moral constraint.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

This research starts by finding the sets of binary oppositions in the three plays of William Shakespeare entitled *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry VIII* then followed by showing that the plays’ binarisms are dismantled by

themselves. It requires the understanding of the theory of deconstruction. The basic premise of deconstruction is that language has unstable meaning. Thus, every text, using language as its media, has no one fixed meaning. The term was coined by the poststructuralist thinker Jacques Derrida in 1960s. Derrida rejects western logic, which sees the world in form of binarism with fixed hierarchical meanings. He argues that there is no such 'centre' of meanings, as the structuralist has believed. With his concept of *differánce*, he argues that there are 'differed' (different/other) and 'deferred' (postponed) meanings. Thus, what is believed to be the meaning of a text is actually not the final meaning. The text still contains other meanings that are not brought into the surface, yet.

As a famous American deconstructor, J. Hills Miller (1976), puts it, "Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air" (in Murfin and Ray 1998). Miller's argument above proves that every text is already dismantled by itself. Thus the task of the researcher is to show the multiple meanings hidden in the text.

Lois Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today: A User-friendly Guide* concludes Jaques Derrida's theory of deconstruction as follows:

(1) language is dynamic, ambiguous, and unstable, continually disseminating possible meanings; (2) existence has no center, no stable meaning, no fixed ground; and (3) human beings are fragmented battle fields for competing ideologies whose only "identities" are the ones we invent and choose to believe. (2006:258)

Similarly with Miller, her conclusion shows that the text is unstable. There are many meanings, but the text probably dominantly brings about one out of the many possible meanings. The steps of deconstructing a literary text, as Tyson explains, involve the following steps:

(1) note all the various interpretations—of characters, events, images, and soon—the text seems to offer; (2) show the ways in which these interpretations conflict with one another; (3) show how these conflicts produce still more interpretations, which produce still more conflicts, which produce still more interpretations; and (4) use steps 1, 2, and 3 to argue for the text’s undecidability (259).

More specifically, Tyson says, the other purpose of deconstructing a literary text is “to see what the text can show us about the ideologies of which it is constructed” (259). Therefore, deconstructing Shakespeare’s plays, the writer believes, can show his ideological consideration of moral teachings he wanted to share in his plays.

1.7. The Methods of the Research

This research is conducted by completing several steps. The first is collecting the data. This research applies library research method in collecting the data. Primary data are in form of sets of binary oppositions collected from three plays of William Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *Henry VIII*. Secondary data are all information related to the three plays and the theories (deconstruction), which will be collected from books and journals from library and internet sources.

This research is a textual analysis. The writer will apply qualitative method since most of the data are in form of words from the dialogue in the plays. The first step in the analysis involves the collecting of the sets of binary oppositions in the play. The next is the deconstructive reading to the sets of binary oppositions to show the postponed or deferred meanings of each word in the pairs. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively.

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS