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# Gender Performativity as Asserted on Kate Chopin's *A Respectable Woman*

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## ABSTRACT

Literature is colored with gender studies that emphasize female struggle to define her self-identity. *A Respectable Woman* is Kate Chopin's short story that tells Mrs. Baroda who is disturbed with the presence of her husband's friend, Gouvernail, at her home. She is tempted by him but she realizes that and leaves home. She returns home and speaks to her husband, Gaston that she has made up her mind and be ready if his friend will stay over again. This study asserts analysis of Gender Performativity by Judith Butler on Kate Chopin's *A Respectable Woman*. Through qualitative method on cultural studies, this writing underlines the wife's firm state for not being tempted as her own self-definition. It becomes usual for a woman to fall for another man, but the wife thinks differently. She is aware of being tempted and she avoids it. Her identity is not defined by common ideas of easily being tempted or dictated by male domination that tries to seduce her. She is herself with her own determination by being so earnest. In conclusion, the wife's resolution to step back, think, and return to her husband is her approach to defining her identity. This is in line with gender performativity that is stated in line with Chopin's focus on female subjectivity.

**Keywords:** cultural studies, gender performativity, Judith Butler, Kate Chopin, respectable woman

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is indeed a direct reflection of identity between male and female in reality (Braithwaite and Orr, 2017). Those parties interact inward and toward various perspectives that contain abundant values as well. No literature is so neutral yet free-value but contains how every character expresses identity through certain deeds (Barker, 2014; Braithwaite and Orr, 2017). Literary criticism indicates that understanding by underlining the role of men and women. Then, women's roles are becoming more specific and independent by leaving men's dictation out of it (Braithwaite and Orr, 2017). Kate Chopin's short story entitled *A Respectable Woman* is necessary audacity to speak about identity of the feminine (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988). It tells Mrs. Baroda who is disturbed with the presence of her husband's friend, Gouvernail, at her home. Her husband, Gaston, used to travel abroad, leaving her alone at home. At first, she does not feel lonely at all but the presence of Gouvernail shapes her own doubt. She is tempted by him but she realizes that and leaves home. She realizes that she is someone's wife and should always be respectable as her own firm identity (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988; Liu, 2018). She returns home and speaks to her husband that she has made up her mind and is ready if his friend will stay over again.

Moreover, Judith Butler says that gender is not natural, but social (Butler, 1990). Gender as an identity is performative as practiced through cultural deeds. It is not a biological organ that determines gender differences, but it is a matter of being contingent on identifications. Gender is about the repetition of acts. As Afdholi (2019) explains determining self-identification as male or

female is the main foundation for self-identity that is widely believed as the 'performance' of body shape and certain attributes that are forever attached to someone who decides male and female behavior. Moreover, Goofman (in Nurhadi, 2018) agrees that gender is a cultural production that lives and performs consistently. It is not firm or even static since it moves together with anyone who interprets the surroundings (Butler, 2010; Barker, 2014). Being performative in gender also shows that self-identity is not defined but being produced as well as reproduced. There will always be excess of meanings that will overflow definitions (Highmore, 2016; Rahmawati and Nugroho, 2019). Gender construction, which tends to be bipolar and contains binary opposition, could no longer be continuous since conformity to gendered norms is being disturbed. This is to examine such result that gender is fluid as it is not a static noun but a verb of doing (Butler, 1990).

The question is, how is gender performativity asserted on Kate Chopin's *A Respectable Woman*? This writing underlines the wife's firm state for not being tempted as her own self-definition. It becomes usual for a woman to fall to other man, but Mrs. Baroda as the wife thinks differently. She is aware of being tempted and she avoids it. Her identity is not defined by common ideas or dictated by male dominations in society. She is herself with her own determination by being so earnest. Mrs. Baroda's idea of being respectable is performance of her own deeds of caring to her and her husband's conditions (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988; Liu, 2018). The wife's resolution to step back, to think, and to return to her husband is her approach to define her identity. She does not move at all because of the presence of Gouvernail. This is in line with gender performativity that is stated in line with Chopin's focus on female subjectivity. She understands really well about her own positions. Her actions also show how her roles do not come as fixed but strengthened through gendered practice in everyday life.

## 25 2. METHOD

By using qualitative method, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the question in this paper. The primary object of analysis of this paper is a short story written by Kate Chopin entitled *A Respectable Woman* which was released on 1894. The short story is compiled with other literary works from other authors by Robert DiYanni in his book entitled *An Anthology of Short Stories* which was published on 1988. Besides that story, the paper also uses other journals as secondary sources such as those written by A. Preeshl and M. P. P. Sinaga to deepen understandings about the short story. As a theory to analyze, the writers use a concept named Gender Performativity as listed in Judith Butler's book entitled *Gender Trouble* on 1990 together with literary concepts and cultural studies idea.

The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references lists. The research data includes Chopin's short story as analyzed through Butler's book. Each of them is read then broken down into its every particular element. The plots and settings of the short story are mainly involved to point significance condition of Mrs. Baroda. The premises and logics used in *Gender Trouble* are also drawn to underline gender performativity. The following analyses then include how being a respectable woman is matter of gender performativity. Here, the short story is the object while the Butler's book is a tool to analyze. More elaborations that relate to the opposite analysis are also provided in addition furthermore.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Firmness of Self in *A Respectable Woman*

This section Kate Chopin's work in *A Respectable Woman*, concentrates on the woman who struggled to overcome and to understand her own desire in the United States in the late 1800s. The

story introduces Mrs. Baroda's marriage, in which she lives happily with her husband, Gaston. Mrs. Baroda is represented as a good and caring wife, as well as a protagonist of a respectable woman in her society (Preeshl, 2019; Sinaga, 2022). Her husband, who frequently welcomes family and friends to spend time with them at their home, tells that his friend, Gouvernail, is coming up to stay a week or two.

Mrs. Baroda rejects the idea of Gouvernail coming over after knowing that she will not be able to spend some time alone with her husband (Preeshl, 2019). She has never met Gouvernail, despite the fact that she is aware that he and her husband were college friends and that he is now a journalist. Mrs. Baroda is baffled as to why she likes Gouvernail, as he does not perceive all of Gaston's great characteristics. He does not appear intelligent, but only in reaction to her own excitement to welcome him. It is alongside with her husband's hospitality as he appears quiet and kind (Preeshl, 2019; Sinaga, 2022). He makes no effort to impress her in any other way.

As a good wife and "lady of the house," it is her responsibility to entertain her husband's visitors. That is why, Mrs. Baroda as a submissive wife, still obeys her husband's orders to receive Gouvernail (Preeshl, 2019). Gaston unwittingly builds temptation into his wife's behavior by inviting his college friend to spend two weeks with them on the sugar plantation. Mrs. Baroda exemplifies the type of woman stuck inside a marriage from the start, who was "a bit offended" to learn that her husband is expecting a friend she had never seen but had heard a lot about (Preeshl, 2019). When she eventually meets him, though, he makes a positive first impression as seen in following quotation. *"And she rather liked him when he first presented himself. But why she liked him she could not explain satisfactorily to herself when she partly attempted to do so. She could discover in him none of those brilliant and promising traits."* (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 208).

Mrs. Baroda finds Gouvernail perplexing, yet he is lovable. She initially leaves him alone with her husband, but as she works to overcome his apprehension, she begins to accompany him on walks. Her husband informs her that he will be staying another week and inquires as to why she does not want him to. Gaston is amused when she says that she prefers him to be more demanding. Mrs. Baroda reveals that she expected Gouvernail to be more intriguing, and that he merely wishes for a respite from his busy life. Gaston tells her that he does not expect a commotion over his presence and that he simply wishes for a break from his busy life. She sits alone on a bench later that night, bewildered and desiring to leave the plantation, having told her husband that she might go to the city in the morning and stay with her aunt. Gouvernail notices her and sits next to her, unaware of her unhappiness with his presence. Gouvernail presents her a scarf from Gaston and murmurs about the night, and his quiet is broken for the first time when he speaks up (Preeshl, 2019; Sinaga, 2022). She is drawn to his voice more than his words, and she considers drawing him closer, despite her resistance because she is "a respectable woman." She eventually leaves, but Gouvernail stays behind to conclude his presence for the evening.

The above part means that Mrs. Baroda likes him for some reasons she could not explain. She was initially confused by her inability to explain herself why she was interested in Gouvernail. *"Gouvernail's personality puzzled Mrs. Baroda, but she liked him."* (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209). Mrs. Baroda is attracted to Gouvernail. She finds Gouvernail appealing, but she does not see the same qualities in him as she sees in her husband. She could not identify any of the dazzling and promising qualities in Gouvernail that Gaston had told her before. He possesses quietness and she could not complain about his respectful manner. Mrs. Baroda tries to resist him at this point, implying that she is beginning to set boundaries since she is feeling threatened and seduced as well (Sinaga, 2022).

The story also shows that Gouvernail is uninterested in Mrs. Baroda. He sits calmly with his friend Gaston, smoking cigars and listening to his stories while also petting the dogs and enjoying the



warm fragrant air from the sugar plantation. Gouvernail may arouse Mrs. Baroda even more by not paying attention to her. During Gouvernail's visit, Mrs. Baroda learned that Gouvernail was a charming and loveable fellow, moreover he was not too demanding like other guests, but it was also, what puzzled her the most. She got romantically and physically attracted to Gouvernail. The reader could see about how Mrs. Baroda developed such strange desire towards Gouvernail during the story. There is an internal battle within her, whether or not to abide by society's unwritten rules of "being a respectable woman" or giving in to her desires to be with Gouvernail. She tried to overcome her immoral desire because she was a good wife and she was a respectable woman.

Mrs. Baroda wants to tell Gaston about her strange feeling, but she understands that she must deal with this emotion on her own. She goes for the city the next morning and does not return until Gouvernail left. Gaston requests that Gouvernail will return the next summer, but she declines. She subsequently changes her mind, much to her husband's surprise, who assures her that Gouvernail did not deserve her disapproval. She kisses her husband and declares that she has overcome everything and will now treat him more nicely.

Mrs. Baroda, on the other hand, is eager to see him go as quickly as possible, as evidenced by her interrogation of Gaston about Gouvernail's departure. In other words, if Mrs. Baroda wants to maintain her respectability, she must quit meeting him, a theory that is later verified by her decision to leave her home until Gouvernail left. Mrs. Baroda contemplates telling her husband about her folly but decides not to do it.

*"Gaston took his wife's pretty face between his hands and looked tenderly and laughingly into her troubled eyes. They were making a bit of toilet sociably together in Mrs. Baroda's dressing room."*

*"You are full of surprises, ma belle," he said to her. "Even I can never count upon how you are going to act under given conditions." He kissed her and turned to fasten his cravat before the mirror.*

*"Here you are," he went on, "taking poor Gouvernail seriously and making a commotion over him, the last thing he would desire or expect." (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209).*

Instead of listening empathetically and helping her wife to feel better, Gaston laughs at her wife and discounts her wife's feelings. Mrs. Baroda's weakness is further revealed when Gaston accuses her of "creating a commotion about him," to which she responds angrily. She defends her distaste by claiming that Gouvernail is not bright or intriguing. This demonstrates that she tries to justify her actions rather than to acknowledge her genuine feelings.

Mrs. Baroda sits alone on a bench the night before she leaves her house, trying to comprehend why she is so puzzled. This is also the point at which Gouvernail approaches her and takes a seat next to her on the bench. He begins to speak to her, but she is unknown to what he is saying. All she can think of is stroking his face or lips and uttering anything to him, things that "she would have done if she had not been a respectable woman." This leads us to believe that she builds thick barriers to prevent her from acting on her instincts and accepting her sexuality.

<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Baroda and Gouvernail were described as having contrasting characteristics in the story: *"His manner was courteous toward her as the most exacting woman could require. ... It pleased him also to get on familiar terms with the big dogs that came about him, rubbing themselves sociably against his legs. He did not care to fish, and displayed no eagerness to go out and kill grosbecks when Gaston proposed doing so"* (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209). These differences puzzled Mrs. Baroda but also opened her minds. She is beginning to prefer Gouvernail to her husband. Her sensation had turned into a cause of pain for her. On one hand, she was a married and respectable woman who had to suppress her desire. On the other hand, she began to recognize her want to be understood particularly as an individual woman which she had not received from her marriage and her status as a wife.

Mrs. Baroda's actions are immediately justified in the story as "she did not cave to temptation." She was not only a respectable woman, but she was also a wise one who understood that there are some conflicts in life that a human being must fight alone. This leads to conclusion that she did so in order to stay faithful to her husband. At the end of the story, after Mrs. Baroda leaves the plantation for her Aunt Octavie's to get relaxed and make up her mind, the reader gets surprised by Mrs. Baroda's statement: "*I have overcome everything! You will see. This time I shall be very nice to him.*" (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 211). Her statement indicates that, in the end, she is willing to set aside her desire to love Gouvernail to fulfill her responsibilities as a respectable wife. She has managed to make up her mind and to strengthen herself to show herself as a respectable woman.

The points above show how Mrs. Baroda is emphasized as having firmness of self. She quite understands everything that she faces. The incoming Gouvernail has been such important event for her. She knows that Gouvernail is different from her husband, in which she is attracted to him (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988). Meanwhile, she also fully knows that her identity is how it may shape herself. Self does not come as an instant or even given. It is a condition that is always in process (Padron, 2021). In this story, Mrs. Baroda shows firmness in herself to face the temptation bravely and to overcome it as well. She thinks that any kind of temptation must never change her identity as a respectable woman. Being respectable means being strong in her own identity as a good wife.

Interestingly, Mrs. Baroda has inner fight in herself between being tempted and being a respectable woman. She does not easily fall into a side but she thinks deeply about her current conditions (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988). Her thoughts on the advantages and disadvantages of being tempted are collided with her stable position of a wife. She knows that she has to face it by herself. Even her husband thinks that her situation is so funny (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988). She has to hurry to response to the temptation since it keeps coming on. At first, it seems that she can cope with the temptation. Then it keeps going on and she does not have any option besides facing it.

Another interesting point that shows her firm self is how she finds a way to deal with the temptations. Gouvernail might not have seduced her but she feels otherwise. So, the choice is totally hers (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988). She faces it from time to time but she realizes that she is weak too. Mrs. Baroda chooses to leave home for a while to make up her mind. By leaving, she tries to get away from current temptation that she feels in her mind. By going to her aunt's home, she could amend her views and dialogues, from Gouvernail's and Gaston's, to other things. Her feelings of being aroused could be taken out by doing anything else. Besides, she also knows that the temptations will never end as Gouvernail may stay over again next time (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988). She prepares herself from future temptations that could be bigger from the first. Her strategy of leaving is on point since she could postpone it and be ready for another attack. By leaving, she does not surrender, but she equips herself with bigger heart. The heart is her firm identity of being a respectable woman.

### 3. 2 Subjectivity and Matter of Gender Performativity

Matter of gender has been spoken in literature from time to time. It reaches the heart of the women that are being oppressed and her struggle to define her own being. Indeed, the main contacts of women are men's and society's perspectives. Men are told as a side supported by society to undermine women's roles (Barker, 2014: 73). Biological differences are shown as the main idea to shape social status. Then gender comes up with that crucial differences. While modern idea thinks that subject is defined and static, current understanding of feminism speaks otherwise (Rahmawati and Nugroho, 2019; Padron, 2021). If it is so static then women should always accept anything including oppressions even if it violates human right. However, that situation neglects the flexibility of human itself. Identity then is not static at all (Barker, 2014; Rahmawati and Nugroho, 2019). Subjectivity should always be seen as fluid. It may still live in a certain place but its forms could always

be different from time to time (Kelz, 2016:47-48). The places could be plural too so that identities are either. The idea is not to say that identity is totally like water that does not easily fit into any place. Identity is fluid because its presupposition is diverse and the places are abundant as well. People, in this case are women, live multiple identities at the same time (Butler, 2010; Barker, 2014). Those are not static but each may correlate to each other. It is plural in its nature. It is not meant to be only dictated by monolithic condition. It means to define itself by considering many perspectives that each person could interact with.

Perception of gender widens as beyond normativity through support of Judith Butler's explanations. Going beyond normativity is about breaking normalcy seen through sexual differences. Gender has been concluded in similar points as sexes that latter static points totally define former roles (Barker, 2014: 73; Padron, 2021). Breaking the habitual differences must be done to reshape conceptions on identities of gender. Woman is the main point here, especially its womanhood. Questioning again the womanhood then opening more possibilities how gender is so dictated in its flowing contexts. The main interrogations are on who woman actually is. Biologically, woman is stated in matter of reproduction. This ability is narrow character of woman; this also alienates those who could not reproduce and ignores matter of choices that a woman has (Salih, 2002: 45-46; Butler, 2010). Another aspect shows how woman is defined through her existence out of phallus. This is problem of seeing woman only as absence of man's possession. Other aspect indicates how woman is object of man's objectification. This condition on a side asserts realities though feminists' views but on the other side also exclude free will of woman to leave such deeds of objectifying. Those matters above then result to perspective of womanhood is not about herself but reflection of social problems (Butler, 2010; Çınar, 2015). Woman is used to be defined but not to actively determine herself. Gender should be returned to its original owner, in this case is woman.

The consequences of talking about gender are involving significance of identities within. Gender is stated on a process, an unending one, stated by individuals and cultural norms as well (Butler, 2010; Çınar, 2015). Identity then is not a being. It is not something that has been caught before. It is always in loose like fluctuating between being static and fluid. It does not come as a thing to be controlled. The condition is so suiting that could enrich its surrounding by contributing certain effects. It has its place but its interpretation could always be separated from its main form (Butler, 2010; Padron, 2021). Identity is going out from concepts towards contexts. It always tries to stay away from fixed statements. It never reaches finality as it is always practiced from place to place alongside with from time to time. It goes beyond any mystification through performativity in order to oppose matters of normativity (Butler, 2010; Çınar, 2015).

Stated formerly by Simone de Beauvoir and enriched by Butler, gender is in matter of becoming than being (Butler, 1986; Salih, 2002: 45-46). Therefore, it automatically opposes fixations done by biological views through sexual differences. There are abundant ontological contrasts between sex and gender and those affect more to positions of gender. The differences are as explained in following explorations. First, sex means in biological aspects while genders takes place through cultural matters (Butler, 1986; Salih, 2002: 46-47). Biological differences are so stiff and rigid while cultural ones look through everyday life of individuals and societies. Second, matter of sex is so determined but gender is more perceptual. Determinations speak through further limitations and restrictions while perceptions are more open through senses of discourses (Çınar, 2015; He, 2017). Third, sexual differences works through definitions while gender roles move away from widened alienations. Definitions used to limit meanings to certain measurement (Barker, 2014). This is opposed by matter of gender by indicating that any human being must not be alienated from their surrounding meanings (Butler, 1986; He, 2017). Fourth, sexual aspect speak in woman as something that is so fixed and destined while gender founds talking about woman-ness. In this case, gender



underlines woman in how woman-ness aspect is practiced from time to time through points of choices (Salih, 2002: 45-46; He, 2017). It is in reverse with sex that follows precision of word of woman with closed characteristics.

The fifth aspect emphasizes sex as noun yet gender as verb. As a noun, sex is such an object that is ready to be used in further matter. It is dissimilar with gender that works as a verb that gives meanings as subject to whoever practices this thing (Butler, 1986; Fitriani, Sunggingwati, and Nasrullah, 2021). Sixth, sex is essential but gender is existential. Essence of gender is stated on self as its own and by itself. Existential of gender plays wider role to be more flexible in identifying self. While essence stops after finding the fundamentals, existence keeps moving through further cultural dedications (He, 2017; Fitriani, Sunggingwati, and Nasrullah, 2021). Seventh, sex explains how inner matter shapes outer matter, but gender is otherwise. Sexual differences state themselves then those could indicate anything hereafter. Gender works through practice in outer matter that will further form inner identity of being a self (Butler, 1986; Fitriani, Sunggingwati, and Nasrullah, 2021). Gender is celebrating differences furthermore that any behavior could always change from time to time in its process (Setyorini, 2011; He, 2017). The last, the eighth, sex works through performance, but gender works in performative ways. Performance is like acting in stage that always wants to be seen as the main one in a certain destination. Performativity is otherwise by taking more effects in making responsive choices according to any situation. Performativity is not about being the main one, but about practicing gender as becoming in everyday life (Setyorini, 2011; Çınar, 2015). This performativity is greatly underlined by Butler and also the main emphasis in this article.

The eight differences above show that gender matters. It does not mean that sexual differences are totally undermined, but gender enriches those by positioning more flexibilities. This is crucial since any identity is not fixed and monistic at all (Setyorini, 2011; Çınar, 2015). It walks together with human beings through every day interpretation and this also applies to gender. Identities do not stop only to being normative, but their plural subjectivities always try to ask what is really happening (Kelz, 2016:47-48). Gender teaches people not to always nod to every norm. It is due to ultimate condition that norm is always open to actively act of review and passively reviewed by widened matters of individuals and societies.

Butler said that although we live as if "women" and "humans" are made with internal realities, and therefore there is no question; it is the behavior itself that creates gender (Çınar, 2015; Supardan, 2020). We act, we speak, and we dress in ways that consolidate who we are. So gender is not an unquestionable internal truth. It is more of a phenomenon that occurs and reproduces abundant meanings constantly (Diamond, 2000; Çınar, 2015). So to say that gender is performative implies that no one has a given gender from the outset, but that this happens during constant implementation, in example in the daily repetition of gender norms that tell us how to be or not to be a man, or, how to be or not to be a woman (Butler, 1988; Setyorini, 2011).

In the same sense, Butler makes a distinction between "gender is performance" and "gender is performative". The first case refers to what we do introduce ourselves to the world under a genre label, usually binary (female or male), while the second term refers to the effect that performance produces in normative terms (to become the norm). Performance already states human as subject with its wholeness subjectivity (Setyorini, 2011; Kelz, 2016:47-48). There is nothing else different from what is seen on the stage. Performativity is otherwise. It is stylized repetition of acts that is practiced every time human beings move (Butler, 1988). It works in certain patterns as it is stylized but not to be totally dictated by any definition of style. Performativity also plays as an unending process that walking through acts that speak in wider language. This kind finds meanings in every corner that it passes. Being performative is about having gender that is open to any kind of possibility



(Butler, 1988; Setyorini, 2011). Human beings do not surrender to bad situations, but they explore more to reside with their identities.

There are three important points to be emphasized in discussion of performativity, especially Butler's gender performativity. First, the understanding that gender is a series of actions that are fluid and not fixed. It is not something that is given or normally becomes the default mode of humans who are born with a certain gender (Kelz, 2016:48-49; Liu, 2018). Gestures, words, clothing styles, and anything that is considered attached to a particular subject, even the body, has a temporary dimension that is always changing. This understanding at the same time expands that the subject of performance is very flexible and not limited only to living things. In local social relationships, everything that is thought to be linked to a certain person or thing in some way actually acts and performs (Butler, 1988; Wadbeld, 2019).

Second, the previous understanding of performativity actually opens the door to the emotional dimension of it. The main idea is because being able to do things has consequences (Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017; Wadbeld, 2019). An influential person can make someone do or say something different, or they can make something happen. Being affective is in line with the way people feel about things. The word "affect" describes something that can make something else do something different. It is similar to impact that makes a bigger difference as the result of something else. This is because at this point, performativity becomes something that makes someone or something have certain meanings and can have an effect on social life (Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017; Liu, 2018).

Third, performativity reflects deeply in relationships. It influences social relations, but is shackled to social relations themselves. So it is natural for Butler to say that "acts" are shared experience and 'collective actions' (Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017; Wadbeld, 2019). It is due to performance as shown in performativity is so collective that could not stand alone, although sometimes the private realm seems hidden and individualistic. Performativity is about a series of actions that move quickly and change over time (Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017). These actions have an effect on the way people interact with each other in the world around them. The more people know, the easier it is to figure out how a person in the public sphere does his or her acts and see it as part of a bigger group.

In Butler's performativity, gender is a series of social performativity that are kept going by repeated rituals (Salih, 2002: 45-46; Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017). But what needs to be said is that this does not mean that a certain sexual practice causes a person to be a certain way. Butler raised this issue from the start. Gender is not seen as a result, but rather as acts that someone do or do not do (He, 2017). Because performativity could not be seen as a single action, but rather as a form of public collective actions, it is important to note that. The idea that "the personal is political" makes sense because even the illusion of a personal life is political and disguised as something that is easy to understand (Salih, 2002: 45-46; Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017). In addition, in situations where heterosexuality is encouraged, conditioning and even gender-regulation become important political issues to keep heterosexuality. What is thought to be the essence of gender, which is usually thought of as having outward body parts, is just a set of actions that are done through a kind of gender adjustment to the body (Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017; He, 2017). So it is interesting to know that it is not just about gender, but many things like gestures, words, and even affection can be thought of as things that do and have effects in a bigger world.

### 3. 3 Pre-Existing Identity and Otherwise in Gender as Performativity

Kate Chopin exposes Mrs. Baroda's dilemmatic status and position as a wife and a woman (Tolentino, 2008). In the story, the wife was drawn to another man who was her husband's best friend after years of marriage. This is not only an impulsive reaction that occurs without warning. Her

feelings toward Gouvernail can be understood as a reaction to her own marriage (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209; Boriçi, 2014). Her family appeared normal and happy in the story, and she had a good and affluent husband. Nothing would go wrong, as one would expect. The story expands matter of gender performativity as well. It shows gender not as fixed status, but as perceptual process. Gender is shown walks together with Mrs. Baroda's practices of being a respectable woman in her life. The process then underlines gender as reflection of plural identities, not monolithic one. The wife never only relates to herself, but how she understands and is understood by Gaston, Gouvernail, and society as well (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209; Rosita and Purwani, 2022). Moreover, the role of Mrs. Baroda emphasizes cultural understandings rather than merely biological differences between man and woman. She knows that she is a woman and a wife differentiated from a man and a husband, and those conditions shape her widened knowledge to be firmer in order to face further temptations that may come.

There are four crucial phases of Chopin's story on Mrs. Baroda. First, the wife does not like the idea of her husband to let his friend to come over. She was looking forward to some uninterrupted rest, but she still obeys her husband's orders to receive Gouvernail (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988). This is the way point to see how Mrs. Baroda is aware of her position, role, and identity. Here, the wife does not feel alienated by her identity, yet she thinks of refusing things that she does not like. Second, when the wife meets Gouvernail, she finds him appealing, but she does not see the same qualities in him as she sees in her husband. In this point, Mrs. Baroda started to open her hands to Gouvernail but she still takes distance from him. She starts to compare Gaston to Gouvernail (Sinaga, 2022; Rosita and Purwani, 2022). She has desire, but she also has choice to reject it. She practices gender as matter of choice rather than totally follows sexual desire as reflection of biological fixations.

Third, Mrs. Baroda likes Gouvernail as she feels comfortable with Gouvernail for his calm sayings. She found some comfort different from how Gaston treats her. She does not want to be forced as she needs a calmer man (Sinaga, 2022; Rosita and Purwani, 2022). The conflict reaches its peak here located in Mrs. Baroda's mind. She is torn between following society's unwritten rules of being a respectable woman and giving in to her desires to be with Gouvernail. She understands well that her position is not essential but existential regarding to any choice that she takes. Fourth, Mrs. Baroda feels conflicted as whether she should tell Gaston about strong impulses for Gouvernail. Rather than telling Gaston the truth, Mrs. Baroda remembers that she *"is a respectable woman [...] and she knew that some battles in life" must be fought alone* (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 336). Once again, Mrs. Baroda remains alone with her thoughts and desires; she truly believes that she must keep everything a secret so she can remain a sensible and respectable woman. In this point, to suppress her sensual desires for Gouvernail and maintain her title, Mrs. Baroda leaves her home and stays in the city, where she can ignore her longing for her husband's friend. She must continue to change and adapt her actions in order to keep her desires restrained (Sinaga, 2022; Rosita and Purwani, 2022). She makes her decision at the end of the excerpt, when her desire meets her awareness of the world around her. Then, she made the right choice. As much as Mrs. Baroda wants to have a physical relationship with Gouvernail, she deliberately suppresses these feelings and focuses on her good name in society.

The above crucial conditions of Mrs. Baroda indeed indicates positions of gender beside merely sexual differences. As a wife, she is defined different than a husband. Moreover, her roles as a wife is at stake here since that identity moves flexibly to identify and to understand certain ongoing event that she faces (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209). The wife then finds her significance not only as a woman, but an entity who is respectable by her husband and society. She is aware of perceptions of others, which is why she could understand the seduction that she feels and later gets distanced

from it (Tolentino, 2008; Boriçi, 2014). Furthermore, her situation as a respectable woman does not limit her at all. She even does not think that identity as a burden. It brings more freedom for her to realize who she is throughout practice of identities. The practice itself reflects matter of a respectable woman as idea of becoming rather than being. Her identities move fluidly in line with her accentuation in becoming a good wife. She strengthens her identities by facing the temptation that could disturb her firm concept of a wife. It is not statically happened or even instantly attached to her like a sticker (Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017). A respectable woman is not a state of being, but process of becoming as practiced through her languages. This is also assumption of gender in which such woman-ness is approached not as definition but as continuous process (Salih, 2002: 45-46; He, 2017).

In addition, Mrs. Baroda's identity is essential for her, and she embraces it well. Her actions even enrich and bring more effects as her existence is accentuated. Her situation is not closed but open (Sinaga, 2022). Indeed this results to consequences. On the one hand, her openness makes her able to be seduced. On the other hand, that circumstance also what makes her keeping identities so tightly (Boriçi, 2014; Rosita and Purwani, 2022). She is moving towards possibilities and those could be good or bad. However, it is not her status that dictates her further responses, but otherwise. She moves from her outer practice into firming her inner identities. By facing the temptation bravely, Mrs. Baroda strengthens her position as a respectable wife. Her identity is stronger when she practices it and not merely keeping it deeply. It is practiced since any identity has a temporary dimension that requires actions that result to certain consequences. As a respectable woman, Mrs. Baroda is not someone that could be predicted as easily being seduced (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209; Boriçi, 2014). She is tempted but the temptation stopped only to that condition. She is the one who performs by regarding the social discourse of being a good wife. The awareness exists and that what makes her return to her husband and be ready if Gouvernail will stay over again.

The crucial phases and matters of gender in Chopin's story indicate such pre-existing identities and otherwise. Identity is seen as a product of a series of actions that are repeated in everyday life (Barker, 2014: 73; Amiri and Khoshkam, 2017). Here, the identities that already existed are moving forward flexibly to following process. As pre-existing ones, Mrs. Baroda's identities as a wife and a respectable woman reflect her positions in internal family and external society (Sinaga, 2022; Rosita and Purwani, 2022). Later on, her feeling of being seduced disturbed her firmness as a wife. She also has to face such social tendency that a woman tends to fall for another man after being seduced. She further thinks about both situation and strengthens her internal matters to oppose any doubt that may come to her from being tempted. She returned to show that she is recommitting to marriage (Sinaga, 2022).

The wife's gender performativity underlines that gender is not to be performed as written on a script of identities, but it is practiced then its understanding could be firmed furthermore. The more it is practiced, the more it brings bigger effects to herself, to her husband, to Gouvernail, even to society. Mrs. Baroda's identity is still firm and she also stays loyal to her husband (Chopin in DiYanni, 1988: 209; Boriçi, 2014). Her firmness then only sees Gouvernail as her husband's friend, not as temptation that could eradicate her own position as a respectable woman in society. The respectable woman becomes an identity because of a series of actions that were carried out repeatedly and in this case was interpreted as a form of rejection of the expression that women easily fall in love with other men. Moreover, the process of emancipation never stops and it may bring in bigger threat in the future as well (Butler, 2010; Boriçi, 2014). By returning home, Mrs. Baroda may not eliminate the seduction. She prefers to shape more understandings of herself and her surroundings as she practices her gender performativity.



#### 4. CONCLUSION

In Chopin's story, a respectable woman is the one who not only respects herself, but is also respected by the world she lives in. In this context, there is a phenomenon of a wife who does not stop being a respectable woman even though she is attracted to her husband's friend. Mrs. Baroda knows she could be tempted, fall in love, and have an affair with her husband's friend. But she chooses to throw that desire away, leave the house, make up her mind, and come back with a new mind, a new mentality, which is ready to face the next obstacle. In other words, she still maintains herself as a respectable woman. Mrs. Baroda practices gender performativity to firm her identities to face every temptation that she may deal with. The wife's gender performativity underlines that gender is not to be performed as written on a script of identities, but it is practiced since any identity has a temporary dimension that requires actions that result to certain consequences. The more it is practiced, the more it brings bigger effects to herself, to her husband, to Gouvernail, and even to society. She strengthens her identities by facing the temptation that could disturb her firm concept of a wife. Mrs. Baroda proves that a respectable woman is not a state of being, but process of becoming as practiced through her languages every time she faces any temptation.

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PAGE 4

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PAGE 5

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PAGE 6

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PAGE 7

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PAGE 8

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PAGE 9

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PAGE 10

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PAGE 11

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PAGE 12

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