

Beth Harmon's Literacy as Power and Its Impact on Gender Roles in Walter Tevis' *The Queen's Gambit*

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Abstrak

Praktik literasi seringkali direpresentasikan dalam berbagai media melalui karya sastra seperti novel, film, dan lain-lain. Karya sastra merupakan hasil dari praktik literasi, dan nilai-nilai praktik literasi terkadang dimasukkan ke dalam karya sastra melalui tokoh-tokoh yang ada di dalamnya. Namun, seringkali pembaca mengabaikan nilai literasi dalam karya sastra. Literasi lebih dari sekedar kemampuan kognitif untuk membaca dan menulis; itu juga mengacu pada apa yang orang lakukan dengan literasi. Literasi dapat direpresentasikan dalam beberapa bentuk dan digunakan untuk tujuan yang berbeda, salah satunya adalah kekuasaan. Literasi dalam novel *The Queen's Gambit* merepresentasikan kekuasaan di mata Beth Harmon. Kekuatan literasi yang diperoleh Beth direpresentasikan dengan peningkatan kelas sosial dan peningkatan popularitas, yang kemudian berdampak pada peran gendernya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menampilkan representasi literasi sebagai kekuatan dan dampaknya terhadap peran gender dari Beth Harmon dalam novel *The Queen's Gambit*. Metode yang digunakan adalah analisis tekstual yang sumber utamanya adalah novel *The Queen's Gambit* karya Walter Tevis, menggunakan kerangka New Literacy Studies (NLS) sebagai perspektif sosial praktik literasi dengan menggunakan teori Williams dan Zenger (2007) dari buku mereka "Popular Culture and Representation Literacy". Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa literasi dapat menjadi kekuatan dan berdampak pada peran gender Beth Harmon.

Kata Kunci: *Representasi, literasi, daya, peran gender*

Abstract

Literacy practices are often represented in various media through literary works such as novels, films, and others. Literary works are the result of literacy practices, and the values of literacy practices are sometimes incorporated into literary works through the characters in them. However, readers often ignore the value of literacy in literary works. Literacy is more than just the cognitive ability to read and write; it also refers to what people do with literacy. Literacy can be represented in several forms and used for different purposes, one of which is power. The literacies in *The Queen's Gambit* novel represent power in the eyes of Beth Harmon. The power of literacy gained by Beth is represented by improving social class and increasing popularity, which later impacted her gender roles. The purpose of this study is to display literacy representation as power and its impact on gender roles in Beth Harmon, the main character in *The Queen's Gambit* novel. The method used is textual analysis, the main source of which is the novel *The Queen's Gambit* by Walter Tevis, using the framework of New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a social practice of literacy perspective using the theory of Williams and Zenger (2007) from their book "Popular Culture and Representation Literacy". The results of the study show that literacy can be powerful and impact Beth Harmon's gender roles.

Keywords: *representation, literacy, power, gender roles*

INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the representation of Literacy as Power and Gender Roles in Walter Tevis' *The Queen's Gambit*. *The Queen's Gambit* by Walter Tevis is

one of the literary works that signifies the importance of literacy. The novel, first published in 1983, depicts the life of Beth Harmon, a fictional character living in an

orphanage and obsessed with chess. She becomes a chess prodigy, and struggles through many things because of her gender regarding the representation of chess that is identical to men. Those events would lead her to a life-changing journey. With an intriguing and clever plot, this novel was eventually selected as a Netflix miniseries in 2020 with the same title.

The writer has chosen *The Queen's Gambit* by Walter Tevis' to be analyzed since it shows that literacy has the value of power and its impact towards gender roles. It is represented through the character of Beth Harmon, who has loved to play chess since she was a child, which makes her love to read any books related to chess. Beth became better than any other mature men she had played with. Moreover, Beth turns out to be a talented woman chess player after she defeated the number 1 rank chess player in the world male-domination in the 1960s, and literacy is the essential primary skill that helps her to develop more skills in playing chess. Furthermore, the depiction of Beth Harmon, capable of fighting against the prejudice of a female that plays chess, is the most interesting thing. Although her gender became the main attention, as soon as she was known as a talented female chess player, people focused predominantly on the game rather than the label "woman".

Therefore, this topic is chosen to be analyzed the value of literacy is often being neglected by the readers in literary works. In this case, literacy becomes one of the important elements in literary works that helps character development and improves characters' roles in social and cultural contexts. Tevis also demonstrated how literacy could tremendously impact someone's personality and life. Beth Harmon, the main character, is fascinated by chess and enjoys reading chess books and other publications about chess. Without realizing it, she has developed her capacity through literacy, especially in reading and has used it as a power to change the prejudice around female chess players. In the representation of literacy and social contexts, literacy has the functions of control and action. It means that literacy has a significant effect as power for people who use literacy and apply it for specific intentions. Williams and Zenger (2007) argued that literacy could represent power and danger. They claim that unofficial literacy grants the novel's hero more power than official literacy.

This study examines how Beth Harmon's literacy as power and gender roles are depicted in Walter Tevis' *The Queen's Gambit*. It would be examined through the actions of the novel's main character and focuses on the literacy events and practices in the novel by critical reading or comprehensive reading, etc. The next aim of the study is to determine the effect of Beth's literacy competency on her gender roles.

The writer uses theories of new literacy studies by Street and Gee, which defines literacy as practices rather than as cognitive skills. Gee (1991) and Street (1996) and the theories of representation of literacy by Williams and Zenger (2007), explains about literacy as power and literacy and gender roles. Literacy has always been associated with activities related to cognitive abilities, such as reading and writing, for a long time. However, it is denied in The New Literacy Study because literacy is considered an activity that is more than just reading and writing. On the other hand, literacy is more than just reading and writing; it also refers to what people do with literacy (Literacy & Al, 2010).

According to Gee (1991) and Street (1996), the New Literacy Study established a new tradition in literacy studies. New Literacy Studies focuses on literacy as a social practice rather than a cognitive skill (Street, 1985). Scholars also refer to Gee's assertion in "A Situated Sociocultural Approach to Literacy and Technology" that NLS or New Literacy Studies takes a standard psychology approach to literacy, treating literacy as a cognitive process before adding that literacy is a social and cultural practice in which both readers and writers participate directly.

Gee (2013: 3) also observes that different social and cultural groups may employ written language differently within different practices. However, language is always linked to other aspects of life, such as how people speak, behave, interact, judge, believe, and use various tools and technologies. In NLS, a single text can be read in various ways for various reasons.

According to Williams and Zenger (2007), in their book "Popular Culture and Representation of Literacy", literacy is commonly depicted as a representation of social phenomena as a result of events and literacy practices. Events, texts, and practices are often used to define literacy as a set of social practices, and those can be seen through events mediated by written texts (Barton &

Hamilton, 1998). In novels or films, the representations of literacy are often depicted through the heroes' actions. Action heroes are typically represented as having the capacity to read and write according to their desires, which they will use when necessary (Williams & Zenger, 2007, pp. 85-104). In addition, these action heroes are frequently depicted as defying institutional and traditional rules. They frequently cause trouble in society and cause them into rebels who dislike being tied by institutions, norms, and traditions. However, they would eventually return to the mainstream and be welcomed by the public.

In the representation of literacy and social contexts, literacy has the functions of control and action. It means that literacy has a significant effect as power for people who use literacy and apply it for particular intentions. According to Williams and Zenger (2007), the main characters' literacy skill is part of their power, which they use to deceive others or have more control over people who have less power than them.

Generally, the main character's literacy practice is remarkable and frequently defies the conventional practice of their superiors, bureaucrats, scientists, and other enemies. Like any other routine and conventional activity, literacy skills are loathed by action heroes who must operate outside the system to be effective. The system, including literacy practice, is defenceless against the threat, which is why the action hero must save the day. Furthermore, the main characters' literacy practices are generally linked to their social class, gender, race, and other factors, just as in real life. However, the main characters are not always from the elite class.

Furthermore, the depictions of female and male characters are often depicted as stereotypes that exist in society. According to Williams and Zenger (2007), literacy and gender roles are commonly perceived as intimate, emotional, and personal acts for female characters and commodified, professional, and rational activities for male characters or looking at depictions of literacy that reinforce the gender of the private and dominant culture.

However, literacy events depicted in literature are commonly reflected and reinforce power and gender markers. As a result of existing stereotypes, the portrayal of gender roles in female characters is often limited. In *The Cut* film, for example, the character Pauline shows women who have only one overarching desire: to marry, which is

the conventional narrative for female characters in films adapted from books and theatre (Williams & Zenger, 2007). Based on Bell Hooks (1994) puts it in *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*, resisting representation in a dominant culture necessitates learning "to do things differently." Hooks also claims that learning to think differently is required to fight against the representation of the dominant culture so that people can see things from a new point of view, especially in fighting for themselves as subjects and not objects.

The writer uses four previous studies related to the representations of literacy and the theory of New Literacy Studies or NLS to reveal the power of literacy in Beth Harmon and its impact on gender roles. The first previous study from Afiyah Maghfiroh's *The Representation of Literacy as Power and Danger in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2016), claims that literacy is more strongly represented as a threat than a power in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* because more characters regard it as a threat than a power. The theory of New Literacy Studies (NLS) was used in this study. Only Harry Potter sees literacy as a source of power; literacy's power is mirrored in the growth of breakout, the rise of social class, and the development of amusement in this situation. Literacy capital is closely linked to literacy power, as it allows Harry to obtain extra capital by employing literacy practices and artefacts (Maghfiroh, 2016).

The second previous study is from Dina Octavia's *The Representation of Literacy as Self-Improvement in Betty Smith's A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (2016). The New Literacy Study (NLS) is used in this study to look at how literacy is portrayed as a tool for self-improvement in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Literacy can take numerous forms and be used for various purposes, including self-improvement through literacy activities like reading the newspaper. Among the findings are representations of literacy and how reading alters Francie's identity (Octavia, 2016).

The third study, Nur Adyanti's previous research is *The Representations of Literacy As Power Markus Zusak's The Book Thief* (2016). This study examines how literacy is depicted in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* through the acts of reading and writing and how this novel reflects the characters' concepts of power, using the New Literacy Study (NLS) theory. The research shows how

literacy events in *The Book Thief* are portrayed as power in many aspects of a character's life and how texts can generate different interpretations of power interactions by different characters (Adyanti, 2016).

The fourth study regarding this topic is *The Representation of Literacy as Salvation in Peter Weir's Dead Poets Society* by Ajeng Eka Noviyanty (2021). The New Literacy Studies (NLS) is used in this research as a conceptual framework. This research focuses on Neil Perry, a student who lives in a home that expects him to be precisely what his parents want him to be. Then there was John Keating, a teacher who taught them about poetry and how to use it in real life. A poetry community that positively impacts kids' lives, with literacy as the primary topic of study. This study employs the New Literacy Studies Theory (Street, 2003). The study's findings demonstrate that literacy can save Neil Perry's life.

All previous research mentioned above deals with similar concerns, each with its point of view and approach. New Literacy Studies reveals all past studies exposing literacy as a source of power using the theory of NLS. There is no research on literacy as power and its impact on gender roles. As a result, this study can help future researchers, particularly those interested in various works that address the issue of literacy. In addition, this study is being undertaken to expand knowledge and comprehension of literacy and to raise public awareness of the importance of reading in everyday life.

METHOD

This is a literary analysis of data concerning Beth Harmon's literacy as power and its impact on gender roles in Walter Tevis' *The Queen's Gambit*. It refers to the phrases or labels used to define specific traits or attributes. Because the data in this study came from *The Queen's Gambit* novel, the literary evaluation utilized in the novel was likewise used in this study. The writer models each phrase or word in the novel as a given meaning, while some functions are conveyed via textual assessment obtained from the novel.

The Queen's Gambit novel was used as the primary data source in this paper. A document model is typically utilized as the second source to support and complete the first data (Sumardi Suryabrata: 1983:39). Data were collected through novel dialogues, narration, plots, quotations, and monologues. Furthermore, as the author

stated, this study mainly focuses on literacy as power and its impact towards gender roles.

The first stage is reading the novel using critical reading or comprehensive reading. Next, the writer examines the power of literacy through the actions of the novel's main character and focuses on the literacy events and practice in the novel. The writer reads and explores the novel to discover Beth's literacy competency's effect on her power and gender roles. The next step is to examine how literacy as power can be used to benefit Beth's fight against the prejudice of gender roles in playing chess that happens through the main character, by proving from the narrative and dialogues in the novel. The final step is to draw conclusions based on the data analysis.

ANALYSIS

Beth Harmon's Literacy as Power

Literacy helps people to develop skills that they do not or already have. This is certainly beneficial because it allows someone to do or develop something they did not know before. When reading, someone who reads would get new knowledge which certainly benefits the individual in various aspects. This gives the impression that literacy is an actual power for the individual. That is what happened to Beth Harmon; she learned new chess skills through literacy that had never been taught by any classes in her school and in the orphanage where she lived and studied. Although literacy is not the book's primary topic, it plays a significant role in Beth Harmon's life. In this case, literacy benefits Beth in raising her social class and popularity.

In *The Queen's Gambit*, Beth is depicted as actively participating in literacy because Beth is considered an intelligent student in the orphanage since she is at the top of her class in Reading and Arithmetic. She shows her interest in chess through reading. The first book about chess that Beth read was *Modern Chess Openings* which was given to Beth by Mr. Shaibel. Mr. Shaibel was also the first to introduce Beth to chess. He gives the book as a gift because he feels that Beth has potential talent but still needs to gain knowledge. Beth, who learns about chess, is self-taught by playing with Mr. Shaibel and through her imagination, every time she goes to sleep, she gets even more excited when she receives the book. She learned various techniques and rules of chess through the book.

Beth shows the effect and practice of literacy when she reads *Modern Chess Openings*. Beth read the book anywhere, even in her classes. In this case, Beth makes the practice of literacy an escape. For instance, when she was in English class, which Beth considered the dullest class, Beth practiced literacy by reading *Modern Chess Openings* as an escape.

“She held *Modern Chess Openings* under her desk while Mr. Espero read. She went through variations one at a time, playing them out in her head. By the third day the notations—P-K4, N-KB3—leapt into her quick mind as solid pieces on real squares. She saw them easily; there was no need for a board.” (Tevis, 2014:16)

The effect of this literacy was directly related to Beth's imagination about her admiration for chess. Beth quickly read the book with one glance. She even imagines a game of chess by reading through her imagination.

Besides being an escape for Beth, literacy also helps Beth upgrade her social class. After being adopted by Mrs. Wheatley at the age of 13, Beth finally went to public school. A hierarchy in the school makes Beth challenging to get along with the other students. Although Beth's academic performance is beyond good, she still lags in terms of economic wealth, networks, etc. In the novel, Beth manages to make a hierarchical upgrade primarily because of chess. She participated in various chess competitions and always won them, making her more known to other students and even outsiders. This made her quickly gain fame and achieve a higher social class. In addition, the practice and effects of literacy play a crucial role in the social class upgrades experienced by Beth. The following data shows how Beth's situation and feelings before and after facing literacy practices through the books she had read (mainly from *Modern Chess Openings*) finally gave Beth the feeling of getting a social upgrade.

Before practicing literacy on chess from the book *Modern Chess Opening*, Beth felt that she needed to gain general knowledge and techniques of chess. This can be seen in her great effort to achieve it. For instance, Beth always took the time to go to the basement when attending classes to play chess with Mr. Shaibel. Beth also uses her imagination every time she goes to sleep with pills given by Methuen to learn every possible move of the chess she plays, which later leads her into addiction. She always

tried hard to be seen by Mr. Shaibel so he could teach her to play. When Beth got the *Modern Chess Openings* book from Mr. Shaibel, she was eager to learn it anywhere and anytime. Moreover, Beth's efforts to be able to play chess illustrate her very ambitious feelings.

Beth, who has no difficulty with literacy, would find it quite easy to learn chess through reading. She learns a lot about Queen's Pawn Openings, Indian Defense Systems, Réti Openings or the hypermodern system in the book through reading books like *Modern Chess Openings* and *My Chess Career*. For instance, it is shown when Beth met Mr. Ganz, a friend of Mr. Shaibel, for a match as Beth gains more technique after reading *Modern Chess Openings*:

“She beat him even more handily, using the Réti Opening. The book had called it a “hypermodern” system; she liked the way it used her king's bishop. After twenty moves she stopped him to point out her upcoming mate in three. It took him half a minute to see it. He shook his head in disbelief and toppled his king.” (Tevis, 2014:20)

She easily toppled Mr. Ganz when she was 8 after learned about various chess techniques through reading. However, Beth never sees literacy activities to be beneficial to her.

Beth's perspective changed significantly after winning her first tournament in Kentucky. Her literacy competence allows Beth to easily defeat Beltik, who has a higher rank than Beth. Then, Beth continuously learns about her enemies in every upcoming tournament through their published books. In addition, Beth's increased ability also changed her from an awkward person to a confident person.

Beth's success also improved her relationship with her adoptive mother, Mrs. Wheatley, which made them closer. Nevertheless, since Mrs. Wheatley becomes closer to Beth, she points out that the actions that garner the most applause are those she executes quickly:

“intuition does not come from books,” (Tevis, 126)

Beth's natural talent has helped her establish a strong reputation at tournaments. Beth admits to having a surprising skill for the game. She is quietly impressed by the complexities that seemed to flow from her fingertips at

a tournament in Mexico City. This image of her techniques flowing from her fingertips shows a natural ease and spontaneity that has helped her defeat many international competitors. This also makes Beth known as an intuitive player and has natural talent.

Although Beth is recognized as an intuitive player with natural talent, she has also demonstrated that reading may have a huge impact, particularly in defeating her opponents in chess. Beth presented some proof when she faced Benny Watts and Vasily Borgov. While Beth's natural talent was fantastic, her progress in chess stagnated without learning. At the US Open, Beth faced US Champion Benny Watts; she recognized he had much more expertise than she did.

“The horrible feeling, at the bottom of the anger and fear, was that she was the weaker player—that Benny Watts knew more about chess than she did.” Beth acknowledged (Tevis, 112)

Benny effortlessly overpowers her, catching her off guard. While her talent has gotten her far, she now recognizes that she has more to learn.

After losing against World Champion Vasily Borgov in Mexico City, Beth discovered the same thing. She knows that whatever Borgov does is "unimaginative" and "bureaucratic" (Tevis, 142) implying that Beth lacks the knowledge to compete with Borgov's precise and rigorous chess. This heartbreaking loss motivates Beth to study hard, demonstrating her admission that a lack of preparation is insufficient.

As a result, when she is about to face Borgov in Moscow, she studies books and increases her studying efforts because she has always lost to Borgov. This highlights that natural talent was not the sole factor in Beth's success, notably when she defeated World Champion Vasily Borgov. On the other hand, reading enabled Beth to achieve her greatest success through an unwavering dedication to learning; without that rigorous learning, Beth's game fell apart.

As a result, she gained a lot of interpersonal improvements in the form of confidence in her abilities about her natural talents and abilities that she gained from doing literacy activities, or specifically by reading which eventually led Beth getting achievements in chess as well as significant life upgrades. Reading here has helped Beth achieve excellent human resources. Beth, who originally

read only for school lessons, became a genius chess player. At first, Beth never knew what to do with her life; all she got in her previous life was trauma from her mother, and she never thought that reading could change her life significantly. This strengthens that literacy provides power for Beth. Thus make, Beth always thrills to read more literacy about chess.

In addition, Beth is getting many increases in cultural capital. Literacy practices in the form of reading also make Beth experience interpersonal improvements, which are part of symbolic, social and economic capital. The purpose of interpersonal improvement is to see how others see Beth has improved. In this case, other characters are used as the audience for the analysis indicators of this increase. There is some evidence based on the audience's response coming from Beth's stepmother.

“Play chess? I have no idea.” Mrs. Wheatley peered at her for a moment. “Isn't it primarily a game for boys?” (Tevis, 50)

Mrs. Wheatley initially had a negative response toward Beth, who was attracted to chess which she thought was not feminine. A positive response also came from Mrs. Wheatley when she began to see Beth's abilities and became close to her.

Mrs. Wheatley never shows any interest when Beth mentions her wish to buy anything related to chess. Instead, she would buy clothes and other girls' stuff Beth never asked for. However, she started to notice how talented Beth was after winning a chess competition that later would completely change their life. Mrs. Wheatley starts to grow a strong bonding with Beth as a mother and daughter with more respect towards each other. Those shows that Beth has become recognized by the people around her, which is part of the symbolic capital.

Alongside cultural and symbolic capital. Literacy also impacted social capital to Beth. When Beth started to play in many competitions worldwide, she gained popularity because of her outstanding performance and gender. She mostly wins all of her games and eventually becomes the winner and the only woman in the competition. Beth also made some friends, mostly from her previous competition opponents.

“They went on together, exploring possibilities, following out line after line, for almost an hour.

Benny was amazing. He had worked out everything; she began to see ways of crowding Borgov, finessing Borgov, deceiving him, tying up his pieces, forcing him to compromise and retreat. Finally she looked at her watch and said, "Benny, it's nine-fifteen here." "Okay," he said. "Go beat him." (Tevis, 259)

In this case, Beth gains popularity and support as the social capital. This evidence is shown when Beth competes against Borgov in Moscow Invitational Chess Tournament; she gains support from Benny Watts, opponent of her previous competition. Many fans are also waiting for her outside the building in Moscow to support her and see her compete with Borgov.

Beth's economic capital also rises alongside her social capital. Beth gains much money from winning the competitions, which helps her upgrade her economic condition. It is shown when Beth and her stepmother spend their money on expensive and fancy things. They travel by plane, buy expensive clothes, book expensive room hotels, etc. Beth's popularity is also what makes many magazines want to interview her. Which also increases her economic capital. The transformation above is caused by literacy. The literacy shown positively affects Beth's life which provides power for Beth.

The Impact of Beth Harmon's Literacy on Her Gender Roles

The power that Beth gets from literacy also has an impact on her gender role. According to Williams and Zenger (2007:35), female characters are commonly depicted as having only one desire: getting married. This is often found in narrative novels and theatre. Most female characters are portrayed as passive, naive, dependent, and sweet. Meanwhile, male characters are described as active, powerful, adventurous, independent, and capable. In this case, it formed a societal stereotype about how women and men should act. The existence of stereotypes that distinguish gender between women and men makes those who act differently from the stereotypes would feel a marginal impact.

In the 1960s, women were stereotyped as weak and under the influence of patriarchal power, which defined their goal in life as housewives. This was shown when Beth grew up in the Methuen orphanage as she described to get threatened by Mrs. Deardoff:

"The sauce was sweet and terrible, but the fish beneath it was worse. The taste of it nearly gagged her. But you had to eat every bite, or Mrs. Deardorff would be told about you and you wouldn't get adopted." (Tevis, 3)

She was educated to be a kind, polite, and obedient woman. She and all the other girls were taught to become good women later on and fit into the norms imposed by the patriarchal society. However, Beth's character is depicted differently from the stereotype of a woman at that time. Because of her interest in chess, Beth becomes a petty hooligan at the Methuen orphanage, which has strict rules, including about gender roles.

Beth has to face some struggles before she starts her chess career. When she first saw Mr. Shaibel playing chess, she was curious and asked him to teach her. Unfortunately, Mr. Shaibel rejected her.

"Girls do not play chess." Mr. Shaibel's voice was flat (Tevis, 6)

This event shows how gender representations as it appears to struggle to redefine what it means to be a girl at a time when feminism comes under concerted attack by masculinity. Nevertheless, after proving that she knows how to play, Mr. Shaibel finally gives Beth a chance to teach and play with him.

Beth also gets negative responses towards her interest in chess from the people around her. Mrs. Deardorff as the director at the Methuen Orphanage prohibits her from continuing to play chess, and Mrs. Wheatley or her stepmother underestimates her talent at first. However, Beth's passionate interest in chess makes her survive those struggles with the help of literacy.

When she started her career as a female chess player, Beth made people and the press interested in her. However, they focused on Beth's gender rather than her ability to play chess. This annoyed Beth, as she complained to her stepmother over dinner about the articles the press had written about her.

Beth said. "They did not print half the things I told them. They did not tell about Mr. Shaibel. They did not say anything about how I play the Sicilian." (Tevis, 102)

This indicates that the press does not appreciate and value her work as a chess player but instead highlights her gender as the main topic. However, along with the many

competitions and wins that Beth got, she was increasingly known for her outstanding talent rather than her gender.

Based on Sally Haslanger (2000), the term "woman" has negative connotations since it represents women's systemic subjection to men. When the label of female chess player has changed over time, Beth is no longer considered as the weaker or the subordinate. Beth successfully overcomes the stereotype of a female chess player, and people now focus on the game itself.

Furthermore, another piece of evidence is shown by Tevis through other female characters in the novel, reinforcing the dominant narrative about women. At that time, the concept of 'women' itself indicated a subordinate status attached to them. According to Williams and Zenger (2007), literacy is often used as a marker for gender in literacy practices. For example, male characters would usually be shamed away for writing and reading for personal and expressive ends. Meanwhile, female characters are often shamed away from writing and reading for academic or public purposes. For example, the destructive effect is shown in Beth's adoptive mother, Alma. Pressured and neglected by her husband, Alma was not recognized as a talented person but instead as a woman who paced her house all day.

This shows that Beth's character still has something special because she has independence and freedom to do what she likes. Her ability in terms of literacy allows her to develop her talents and use them to become someone who has the freedom to pursue her dreams and change the perspective of gender roles.

Beth's literacy skill helps her to break the stereotype of "women". As revealed in the final game, when Beth faces Borgov, she begins as a pawn and gradually rises through the ranks to become the queen of the chess world. This represents that Beth has become more literate than before. Even though Beth was known to be an outstanding player, she never won against Borgov. After lots of hard work, she finally defeats her strongest rival. This indicates that literacy activities such as reading have the power and impact Beth to have bold femininity, equal opportunities and gender roles.

Clark and Rumbold (2006) cited a statement from the International Reading Association (Moore et al., 1999, p. 3) states, "They (people) will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future" (Clark & Rumbold, 2006, p. 5). Literacy has brought the

"future" for Beth. Her dark past has changed after she mastered literacy competence about chess. Literacy as power correlates with Beth's bravery in facing every male opponent in chess competitions. Beth is aware that she has power through reading various books and creating Bold Femininity, which is also her charm. This makes Beth a brave, confident, persistent, strong, resilient, and optimistic woman. Having bold femininity is also shown by Beth through her clear passion and goals in life. Everything Beth does is based on her capability to achieve her goals and ambitions.

Beth also shows bold femininity under challenging situations. For instance, when she isolated herself after losing against Borgov and the sudden death of Mrs. Wheatley. Even though she was down by experiencing addiction to drinking alcohol and drugs, Beth managed to get back up with the help of her friends and continue her dream of becoming a world chess champion. Beth shows that as a bold woman, she knows what she wants and is not afraid of intimacy by embracing friends or even lovers around her. In addition, after she managed to beat Borgov and become the world champion, Beth wishes to be free because she now has a new purpose in life. She wants to travel the world freely, as if she were a queen, going as far as she wants in each direction.

Beth has never stopped reading books about chess, and her intuitive abilities have made her become a chess prodigy. Beth, who was initially doubted about her ability to play chess, began to get recognition after winning various competitions. Because of her win, she has now become the family's breadwinner. Mr. Wheatley, the father who adopted her, abandoned his wife and Beth, causing them to face financial difficulties, which Beth overcame by winning every chess competition. This demonstrates that women, rather than relying on men, may become the family's breadwinners through their own power.

Furthermore, Getting equal opportunities with men in playing chess made Beth consider chess competitions as her main job. Beth proved that she succeeded in changing gender role stereotypes regarding women who should be housewives to be equal to men who earn a living. This was proven when she enjoyed various luxury facilities with her stepmother with the money she earned. Even the facilities that Beth enjoyed were better than those she had from her adoptive father. Beth's success made her

relationship with her stepmother get closer and made them become business partners. Beth worked as the breadwinner by playing chess, and her mother managed their finances and the facilities they used.

Beth experienced changes in various gender roles in her life; this made her a strong person and changed the societal stereotype that women are not always subordinate. In addition, with her power in gender roles, Beth has succeeded in empowering the people around her. For example, Mrs. Wheatley, who was initially only seen as a housewife, could successfully show another side or talent from her that was valuable.

CONCLUSION

Literacy as power has been felt by Beth since she started reading various books about chess, which made her feel the benefits of it. The benefits felt by Beth include the upgrade in social class and popularity. Literacy as power in the form of social class upgrade is shown when Beth manages to beat various opponents in chess by reading the books they write or other books about chess. With her success in various competitions, Beth has received interpersonal improvements, recognition, and praise.

Literacy as power also increases Beth's popularity as social class upgrade increases. Beth, who initially had no friends, finally made friends through her increasing popularity. Apart from that, Beth also got public fame because of her abilities and made various magazines want to interview her; additionally, it enabled her social and economic capital.

Moreover, literacy as power has an impact on the gender roles experienced by Beth. Beth resisted gender stereotypes and overcame them through reading and playing chess. In the end, Beth succeeded in having bold femininity, equal opportunities and gender roles. This is shown through Beth's improved relationship with her stepmother and making them partners in work, where Beth has the main role as breadwinner.

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