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SYMBOLIC DOMINATION AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN TAUFIQ AL-HAKIM'S ANA AL-MAWT

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ABSTRACT

Studies of power relations and masculinity in literary works are important for understanding how gender constructions are maintained and reversed through interactions among characters. This study examines women's symbolic domination and hegemonic masculinity in Taufiq al-Hakim's short story *Ana al-Mawt*. It addresses two main questions: how female characters exercise symbolic domination over male characters and how such domination contributes to the collapse of hegemonic masculinity. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method within a gender literary criticism approach. This study uses Pierre Bourdieu's framework of symbolic domination to identify and analyze the forms of symbolic domination exercised by the female characters, and Raewyn Connell's framework of hegemonic masculinity to analyze the transformation and collapse of the male characters' masculine authority. The findings reveal that forms of domination progressively undermine the male characters' authority over their bodies and actions, rationality and discourse, position as protectors, and existential autonomy. The study further demonstrates that women's symbolic domination functions as a mechanism for reversing power relations and progressively destabilizing the hegemonic masculinity of the male characters. The contribution of this study lies in interpreting the expression "I am Death" as a metaphor for the collapse of hegemonic masculine identity rather than merely as a representation of biological death.

Key Words: *Ana al-Mawt; symbolic domination; hegemonic masculinity; Raewyn Connell; gender relations; Taufiq al-Hakim*.

ABSTRAK

Kajian mengenai relasi kuasa dan maskulinitas dalam sastra penting untuk memahami bagaimana konstruksi gender dapat dipertahankan maupun dibalikkan melalui hubungan antartokoh. Penelitian ini menganalisis dominasi simbolik perempuan dan maskulinitas hegemonik dalam cerpen *Ana al-Mawt* karya Taufiq al-Hakim. Masalah utama penelitian ini adalah bagaimana tokoh perempuan menjalankan dominasi simbolik terhadap tokoh laki-laki serta bagaimana dominasi tersebut menyebabkan keruntuhan maskulinitas hegemonik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan kritik sastra gender. Teori dominasi simbolik Pierre Bourdieu digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis bentuk-bentuk dominasi simbolik yang dilakukan oleh tokoh perempuan, sedangkan teori maskulinitas hegemonik Raewyn Connell digunakan untuk menganalisis perubahan dan keruntuhan otoritas maskulin tokoh laki-laki. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dominasi tersebut secara bertahap menyebabkan kegagalan otoritas tokoh laki-laki atas tubuh dan tindakannya, rasionalitas dan wacananya, posisi sebagai pelindung, serta otonomi eksistensialnya. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa dominasi simbolik

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perempuan menjadi mekanisme pembalikan relasi kuasa yang secara progresif meruntuhkan maskulinitas hegemonik tokoh laki-laki. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada pemaknaan ungkapan 'Akulah Maut' sebagai metafora keruntuhan identitas maskulinitas hegemonik, bukan semata-mata sebagai representasi kematian biologis.

Kata kunci: *Ana al-Mawt; dominasi simbolik; maskulinitas hegemonik; Raewyn Connell; relasi gender; Taufiq al-Hakim.*

INTRODUCTION

Male dominance, which for centuries has been legitimized through patriarchal systems, has increasingly undergone shifts alongside the growing awareness of gender equality. These changes have required men to renegotiate their masculine identities, so that masculinity is no longer viewed or understood as a single, fixed construct. This development has encouraged the emergence of more dynamic forms of gender relations, in which male authority as the center of power is no longer regarded as natural or unquestionable but can instead be reconsidered (Jewkes et al., 2015). Various phenomena demonstrate that women are no longer positioned solely as subordinate parties but are also able to become agents who exercise power in both domestic and public spheres (Nur ajizah & Khomisah, 2021). This shift not only transforms relations between men and women but also gives rise to a crisis of masculine identity associated with power, rationality, courage, and dominance (Anindya, 2018). In this context, masculinity is understood not as a biological characteristic inherently attached to men but as a social construct shaped through power relations and cultural practices. Raewyn Connell explains that hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that gains social legitimacy to maintain male dominance over women (Connell, 2005). In addition to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, this study employs Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination to explain the mechanisms of power operating in the relationship between the female and male characters. Bourdieu explains that symbolic domination is a form of power that operates through symbols, language, knowledge, and systems of meaning, allowing a particular position or power relation to be accepted as legitimate, natural, and not necessarily recognized as a form of domination. In the context of language, power lies not only in the content of an utterance but also in an individual's ability to

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determine meaning, shape perspectives, and gain recognition of their authority. Thus, symbolic domination can operate without the direct use of physical violence because the dominated party may accept the existing power structure through processes of recognition and internalization of meanings constructed by the dominant party(Bourdieu et al., 1991).

This phenomenon is also reflected in literary works. As a representation of social life, literature not only mirrors societal reality but also serves as a space for negotiating various gender ideologies (Tyas & Parmin, 2022). One work that illustrates this phenomenon is the short story Ana al-Mawt (Al-Hakim, 2023). This short story presents an unconventional narrative. The male character attempts to end his life through suicide as a form of rejection of life, yet every attempt is thwarted by a woman he does not know. Interestingly, the woman in this story acts not merely as a savior, but also gradually assumes control over the male character's various decisions. The dialogue that unfolds shows that the woman is capable of dominating conversations, controlling the man's actions, deconstructing his mindset, and even determining choices regarding his life and death. This dominance operates not only through direct action, but also through language, conversational mastery, the shaping of perspectives, and the legitimation of the woman's authority. This condition can be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic dominance, a form of power that operates through language, symbols, knowledge, and meaning, such that the dominant position is accepted and recognized without relying on direct physical violence (Bourdieu et al., 1991). This shift can then be analyzed through Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. Connell's theory enables an analysis focused on how female dominance actually leads to the collapse of the male character's hegemonic masculinity. Thus, this study does not stem from questions of how women experience oppression, but rather how men lose their masculine legitimacy when facing a woman who possesses symbolic authority.

Research on the short story Ana al-Mawt by Taufiq al-Hakim has been conducted from various perspectives. Uswatun Hasanah (2017) examined the short story through the lens of balaghah (Arabic rhetoric), specifically ilm al-ma'ani, and found the use of various forms of istifham (interrogative structures) as rhetorical

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strategies to reinforce the message and aesthetic beauty of the language. Arifin (2014) employed Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic approach, revealing that the protagonist's suicidal actions were related to the dominance of the id working alongside the ego, while the superego failed to control them. Through deconstructive feminist literary criticism, Latifi (2015) demonstrated that the binary opposition between men and women undergoes deconstruction, thereby placing women as strong figures who occupy higher positions, ultimately leading toward a more egalitarian gender dynamic. Khasanah M. (2022) applied Robert Stanton's structural theory to analyze the intrinsic elements of the short story—including theme, characters, plot, setting, point of view, literary style, and moral message—which collectively form a cohesive narrative structure. Najah (2023) investigated the syntactic aspects through the analysis of tawabi', particularly na'at (adjectives) and badal (appositives), finding a dominance of na'at haqiqi and badal kull min kull with specific i'rab variations; however, this study focused solely on grammatical aspects and did not address gender dynamics or character identity construction. Utilizing Roland Barthes' narrative semiotics, Muhsin et al. (2025) revealed that symbols of death, dialogue, and monologue represent psychological pressure, alienation, existential anxiety, and the search for the meaning of life. Meanwhile, Siregar et al. (2026) used Carl Gustav Jung's literary psychology to identify four types of introverted personalities in the main character—thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuition—without discussing power relations, female dominance, or the construction of masculinity. Based on these previous studies, scholarship on Ana al-Mawt remains focused on rhetorical, psychological, structural, linguistic, semiotic, and gender-deconstructive dimensions, while no research has yet analyzed the short story through the lens of female symbolic dominance and the collapse of the male character's hegemonic masculinity.

Thus, this study offers novelty in terms of both the object and the perspective of analysis, specifically by examining the symbolic dominance of the female character as the driving factor behind the collapse of the male character's hegemonic masculinity. Based on this background, this research is directed toward addressing two research questions. First, what forms does the female character's symbolic

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dominance take in Taufiq al-Hakim's short story Ana al-Mawt? Second, how does this symbolic dominance lead to the collapse of the male character's hegemonic masculinity according to Raewyn Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity?

METHOD

This study applies a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach. Qualitative research focuses on revealing and understanding the qualities, characteristics, and meanings embedded within a phenomenon or research object (Riyadi et al., 2025). The data used in this study consists of non-numerical data centered on words, narratives, and dialogues contained within the research object as the primary source for uncovering the meaning of the phenomenon under study (Utami & Durrah, 2024). The analyzed Arabic text is sourced from the digital edition published by Hindawi Foundation (Muassasah Hindawi) in 2023. This edition notes that the original work was first published in 1953, whereas the version used in this research is the 2023 Hindawi Foundation edition. Thus, the 2023 edition is used as the textual source of the research to maintain the consistency of the analyzed text.

The data collection process began with repeated readings of the short story Ana al-Mawt by Taufiq al-Hakim, accompanied by the translation of the Arabic text into Indonesian to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the narrative content. Upon understanding the entire text, the researcher identified and documented data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, narratives, and paragraphs relevant to the focus of the study. The selection of excerpts was conducted purposively based on their relevance to the research focus. Rather than utilizing the entire short story as data, only sections meeting specific analytical criteria were selected. The first criterion was the presence of actions, dialogues, or narratives illustrating how the female character acquires, exercises, or maintains power over the male character. This data was used to analyze forms of symbolic dominance based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept. The second criterion was the presence of shifts in the male character's position, authority, actions, or identity that indicate a weakening of his capacity as an entity holding masculine authority. This data was subsequently analyzed using Raewyn Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity. Through this

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procedure, excerpts were selected not based on textual length, but on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to demonstrate the relationship involving symbolic dominance.

Once collected, the data was classified into two analytical categories. The first category comprises data demonstrating forms of female symbolic dominance, such as control over the male body and actions, control over discourse, the use of irony and humor to undermine male authority, power over life and death decisions, and symbolic claims over male existence. The second category consists of data reflecting changes in or the collapse of the male character's masculine authority. The analysis of the first category employs Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic dominance to explain the mechanisms of power operating through actions, language, symbols, and the recognition of power positions. The analysis of the second category utilizes Raewyn Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity to explain the consequences of shifting power dynamics on the male character's masculine position.

The four indicators of the collapse of hegemonic masculinity in this study are derived from the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity outlined in Connell's theoretical framework, particularly regarding the legitimacy of dominance, gender power relations, and the position of men as authoritative entities within the gender structure. These indicators are treated not as categories explicitly labeled by Connell as "four indicators of collapse," but rather as the researcher's operationalization of Connell's concepts to read the process of collapse represented in the text. First, the failure of authority over one's own body and actions, which is used to identify conditions where the male character is no longer able to determine or control his own actions and body. Second, the failure of discursive authority and rationality, which is used to examine the male character's loss of capacity to maintain his intellectual and argumentative position when confronting the female character. Third, the inversion of the protector and protected positions, which is used to analyze the reversal of gender roles wherein the male, previously positioned as an independent and protective figure, becomes the rescued and dependent party instead. Fourth, symbolic submission to the female's existential control, which is used to identify conditions

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where the male character no longer holds authority over decisions concerning his own existence and death, while that control shifts to the female character.

Thus, the relationship between the two theories in this study's analysis is sequential and complementary. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic dominance is applied first to explain the mechanisms and forms of female power, while Connell's theory of Hegemonic Masculinity is utilized next to explain the shifting position and collapse of the male's masculine authority as a consequence of these changing power dynamics. The analysis is conducted through a close reading approach by linking each excerpt to its narrative context, subsequently interpreting it based on the established categories of symbolic dominance and indicators of masculinity collapse. The analytical results are then structured in a descriptive-analytical manner to illustrate the process of shifting power dynamics—from the man as an authoritative entity to a position where he is subjected to female symbolic control.

DISCUSSION

A. Initial Construction of Masculine Authority: Solitude, Contemplation, and Claims to Rationality

In the opening section, Taufiq al-Hakim initially constructs the image of the young man as a representation of hegemonic masculinity before subsequently dismantling it through a sequence of events. This construction is evident in the depiction of the male character standing alone on a cliff, holding a book. This portrayal indicates that the author does not immediately present the man as a weak figure, but rather as an individual possessing authority, independence, and intellectual capacity. Within the perspective of hegemonic masculinity, male legitimacy is constructed through a socially recognized dominant position, such that men are viewed as worthy of occupying the center of decision-making and power control (Connell, 2005).

فوق قمة تلك الصخرة جلس شاب في يده كتاب، لا يطالعه... ولكنه يطالع الأفق اللانهائى تارة، وتارة أعماق الماء...

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"Atop the summit of the cliff sat a young man with a book in his hand. However, he was not reading it. At times, he gazed toward the endless horizon, and at times, he stared into the depths of the sea."

The position "atop the summit" spatially reinforces the male character's superiority and independence: he stands at the peak, gazing at the boundless horizon, as if mastering the view over the world. The act of throwing himself into the sea is intended as the pinnacle of masculine autonomy—the ultimate decision over his own life and death, representing a claim to full authority over his body and destiny. This is the initial construction of hegemonic masculinity: the male as a determining, rational, and self-sovereign subject. This initial pattern of construction aligns with the conventional markers of hegemonic masculinity identified by Yusuf (2023) in the novel Natisha—self-control, superiority, and decision-making autonomy—as well as the "gender hierarchy" category formulated by Rohman et al. (2025). The alignment of this initial pattern reinforces the validity of the reading that the young man is indeed constructed as an ideal representation of hegemonic masculinity before undergoing its collapse.

1. The First Collapse: The Failure of Authority Over the Body

Following the opening section in which the male character is constructed as an individual possessing full autonomy over himself, Taufiq al-Hakim immediately presents an event that dismantles this construction. The first collapse occurs when the male character's decision to end his life fails to materialize due to the intervention of the female character. From this moment onward, the male body is no longer under his own control, but rather becomes an object of action and rescue entirely determined by the woman. This shift marks a transition in power dynamics—from the man as a subject controlling his actions to the man as an object controlled by another party. Within the perspective of hegemonic masculinity, the loss of the capacity to control one's own body represents an initial form of losing masculine legitimacy, given that authority over the body

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constitutes one of the primary foundations supporting male identity as a dominant entity (Connell, 2005).

فقبضت على ذراعه وجذبته إلى مطيتها الخشبية وهو خائر القوى فاقد الوعى...

"The girl grabbed his arm and pulled him onto her boat just as the young man lost his strength and fell unconscious."

The predicate of being an individual lacking strength and consciousness places the male body in an exceptionally vulnerable and passive condition, diametrically opposed to the active-dominant image constructed in the opening paragraph. Conversely, the female character is depicted through a succession of active verbs: grabbing (qabadat), pulling (jadhabat), and rescuing. Within Connell's framework, this marks the initial moment of crisis tendency: the material basis of masculine authority—control over one's own body—literally collapses at the hands of a woman (Connell, 2005). This pattern stands in sharp contrast to the general trend mapped by Nurfaidah (2017) in "Dominasi Maskulinitas dalam Cerpen Indonesia," which found that short stories generally perpetuate male physical and narrative dominance over women; this very contrast reinforces the argument that Ana al-Mawt is deliberately constructed as a counter-narrative to the prevailing gender dominance conventions in the broader short story tradition. This finding demonstrates that the representation of gender relations in Ana al-Mawt diverges from the trends in masculinity representation identified. While Nurfaidah shows that Indonesian short stories generally maintain male physical dominance by positioning men as protectors, saviors, and controllers of women's actions, Ana al-Mawt presents an opposing configuration. The female character emerges as an agent possessing the physical capacity and initiative to rescue, whereas the male character is positioned as an object of assistance who has lost control over his own body. Consequently, the findings of this study not only reveal a reversal of gender roles, but also demonstrate that the collapse of hegemonic masculinity begins when the man loses authority over his body as a result of female intervention. This finding expands scholarship on masculinity by

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showing that female dominance in literary works can serve as a mechanism that gradually displaces the legitimacy of male masculinity.

2. The Second Collapse: The Failure of Discursive Authority in the Interrogation Room

In the subsequent interrogation scene at the prosecutor's office, the male character attempts to maintain his authority through convoluted philosophical arguments; however, these arguments are decisively dismantled by the woman's simple logic.

لو رأيت منديلى يسقط منى فى الطريق أفلا تنجني وتتناوله وترده إلى؟... أفلا يحق لي وقد رأيت حياتك تسقط منك في البحر أن أنحنى وأتناولها وأردها إليك؟!

"If you saw my handkerchief drop from me in the street, would you not bend down and pick it up for me? If that is your right, then do I not also have the right—upon seeing your life fall from you into the sea—to bend down, retrieve it, and return it to you?"

The handkerchief analogy proposed by the woman rhetorically dismantles the man's claim to bodily sovereignty: if a woman has the right to return an object that was "dropped," she similarly possesses the right to return a life that was "dropped." The male character does object on the grounds that his life was "intentionally dropped" rather than falling involuntarily; however, this debate merely illustrates that he is trapped in a defensive posture, no longer occupying the authoritative position he held at the beginning of the story. Furthermore, when the prosecutor presses for a rational explanation, the male character fails to provide a coherent answer, shifting erratically from economic reasoning to philosophy, and ultimately to "mental illness":

اكتب إذن أن السبب هو مرض نفسى... وهذا كل ما عندى

"Just write down that the cause is mental illness... that is all I have."

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This admission serves as a pivotal symbol: the claim to masculine rationality that formed the basis of his authority from the beginning of the story—depicted through the book and his master's degree in philosophy—culminates in an acknowledgment of irrationality. The man's discursive authority, the second pillar of hegemonic masculinity according to Connell, collapses within a formal public space (a state interrogation room) that ought to function as a stage for masculine legitimation.

The findings at this stage both support and sharpen the conclusions of Latifi (2015), who asserts that the female character's capacity in this short story is depicted as superior to that of the male character. While Latifi interprets this superiority as part of a general deconstruction of binary oppositions, this study elaborates on its specific mechanism: female superiority occurs precisely within the realm of rational-legal argumentation—the very domain that constitutes the core claim of hegemonic masculinity according to (Connell, 2005). In other words, the woman is not merely "stronger" in a general sense, as Latifi concludes, but specifically defeats the man on the exact terrain that serves as the source of his power and legitimacy.

These findings must also be placed in dialogue with Yusuf (2023) and Rohman et al. (2025), whose respective studies on the novels Natisha and Ayah... Kisah Buya Hamka demonstrate that emotional control and the mastery of rational discourse serve as primary markers that perpetuate, rather than dismantle, the masculine authority of male characters. In both novels, a man's composure and argumentative capacity are presented as evidence of a sustained and mature hegemonic masculinity. Conversely, the interrogation scene in Ana al-Mawt reverses this pattern: the man's failure to maintain rational discourse becomes a marker of collapse rather than affirmation. This comparison reveals that the same indicator—mastery of rational discourse—can function either as a pillar or a point of collapse for hegemonic masculinity, depending on whether the male character succeeds or fails in sustaining it against external challenges. The short story Ana al-Mawt specifically dramatizes this scenario of failure, thereby

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enriching the understanding of the fragile dimension of hegemonic masculinity, which in other studies tends to be analyzed solely through the lens of its success.

3. The Third Collapse: The Inversion of the Protector-Protected Dynamics

The structure of hegemonic masculinity presupposes the man as the protector and the woman as the protected party. In Ana al-Mawt, this structure is consistently inverted, including during the traffic accident scene that nearly claims the male character's life for a second time.

وإذا سيارة نقل ضخمة قد داهمته وكادت عجلاتها تسحقه... لولا جذبة من يد الفتاة جرته إلى الخلف أعادته سالماً إلى الإفريز

"Suddenly, a large truck nearly struck him, its wheels on the verge of running him over, had it not been for the pull of the girl's hand, who yanked him backward and returned him safely to the sidewalk."

The repetition of the rescue pattern—moving from the sea to the public road—reinforces the complete transfer of the protective role, conventionally attached to men, to the woman. The climax of this inversion is explicitly voiced by the male character himself, in a tone of desperation that fundamentally acknowledges his powerlessness:

لا فائدة... ما دمت أنت موجودة فلن أرى الموت بعينى!

"It's no use... as long as you are here, I will never see death with my own eyes!"

This statement constitutes a direct acknowledgment of the man's loss of agency: death, which was originally his autonomous decision, now falls entirely under the control of the woman's presence. The power relations have undergone a complete reversal.

At this point, this study must correct a specific emphasis made by Latifi (2015), who concludes that the pattern of gender relations in the short story

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represents a form of "egalitarianism" between men and women. Data from the scene depicting the inversion of the protector-protected dynamics instead reveals an asymmetrical pattern: the woman consistently occupies a superior position—she is the one who rescues, controls, and decides—whereas the man never once reclaims a protective stance toward the woman throughout the narrative. The relationship depicted is more accurately described as a hierarchical inversion (female dominance supplanting male dominance) rather than egalitarianism (an equality of positioning between both parties). This counter-argument does not negate Latifi's contribution in deconstructing binary oppositions that demean women; rather, it questions the accuracy of the label "equal" to describe a power relation that ultimately remains hierarchical, albeit with a reversed directional flow.

4. The Climax of Collapse: The Identification of the Woman as "Death" and the Existential Submission of the Man

Throughout the dialogue atop the cliff, the female character gradually assumes control over the existential discourse that was originally the man's domain—including the dismantling of his philosophical arguments regarding the relativity of truth (the "Luna Park mirror" trope) through an irony that targets his very physical presence:

هل تشكو من إمساك مزمن؟

“Are you suffering from chronic constipation?”

This ironic and seemingly vulgar question functions to entirely deconstruct the male character's philosophical authority: grand discourse on the absence of ultimate truth is reduced to mere physiological symptoms. After a series of failed attempts by the man to reclaim control over the narrative, the story's climax positions the female character no longer merely as a human savior, but as the symbolic personification of death itself:

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ألا تريد أحضان الموت؟ ... أنا الموت!

"Do you not desire the embrace of Death?... I am Death!"

This concluding statement, which also serves as the title of the short story, reinforces the collapse of the male character's hegemonic masculinity at its most fundamental level, namely the existential level. If, in the opening section, the male character appears as a subject who attempts to approach death according to his own will, in the concluding section, it is instead the woman who transforms into Death, placing the man in the position of an object who passively awaits his fate rather than a subject who retains control over his own destiny. From Connell's (2005) perspective, this transformation can be understood as a form of destabilization of the male character's hegemonic position, as the authority and legitimacy that sustain his masculine position can no longer be maintained. In the short story, the authority previously associated with the male character through control over the body, rational discourse, and the protective role is weakened and transferred to the female character. The woman then exercises control not only over the physical, discursive, and protective domains, but also, symbolically, over the realm of death as the ultimate boundary of human existence. Thus, the woman's identification as Death represents the culmination of the reversal of gender power relations and simultaneously marks the point at which the male character's hegemonic masculine position has lost its foundation of authority.

This existential-symbolic dimension constitutes an additional contribution rather than merely repeating the framework established by Latifi (2015). Latifi's study remains at the level of social relations, focusing on power, capacity, and equality, whereas the identification of the woman as the personification of Death demonstrates that domination in this short story extends to the ontological level. The woman is not merely socially superior to the man; she is transformed into the ultimate authority over existence itself. This aspect is not explicitly addressed within Latifi's framework of binary deconstruction, but it becomes a significant point of intersection when examined through Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity crisis, which suggests that the destabilization of masculine authority

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may extend into the existential-symbolic domain rather than being confined to everyday social relations (Connell, 2005).

Based on the four stages outlined above, it can be concluded that Taufiq al-Hakim constructs a narrative structure that systematically and progressively undermines hegemonic masculinity: beginning with the failure of bodily authority (the rescue from the sea), followed by the failure of rational discursive authority (the prosecutorial interrogation and philosophical debate), the inversion of the protector‑protected position (the truck incident), and ultimately total existential submission (the woman's identification as Death). This gradual pattern demonstrates that the collapse is not a single event but an accumulative process, consistent with Connell's notion of crisis tendencies, in which the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity is eroded as its material bases—bodily control, rational authority, and the protective function—are progressively taken over by the party who was initially subordinated.

B. Forms of Domination Exercised by the Female Character

Whereas the preceding subsection maps the collapse of hegemonic masculinity from the perspective of the male character, this section specifically classifies the forms of domination exercised by the female character as the active agent who seizes and maintains power throughout the narrative. At least five mutually reinforcing forms of domination are identified.

a. Physical-Motor Domination

The female character demonstrates superior bodily control and physical skills by rowing, reaching, and lifting the helpless male character, thereby assuming a role conventionally associated with men.

فأسرعت إليه مجدفة بكل قوتها حتى بلغته... فقبضت على ذراعه وجذبته إلى مطيتها الخشبية

"She immediately rowed with all her strength until she reached him, then grabbed his arm and pulled him into her boat."

b. Domination over Public Discursive Space

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Within the prosecutorial interrogation room, a formal and rational domain conventionally associated with male authority, the female character instead takes control of the conversation and directly refutes the male character's arguments in the presence of state officials, without waiting for permission to speak.

ولكن الآنسة انطلقت تجيب: لو رأيت منديلى يسقط منى فى الطريق أفلا تنجني وتتناوله وترده إلى؟...

"However, the young woman immediately replied, If you saw my handkerchief fall on the road, wouldn't you pick it up for me?"

c. Domination through Irony and Humor

This form of domination undermines the authority of the male character's discourse. The female character repeatedly responds to the male character's serious philosophical statements with light, and at times vulgar, remarks that effectively strip his arguments of their authority.

ما كنت أعرف أن للموت هواة كهواة التنس... هل تشكو من إمساك مزمن؟

"I never thought that death could have its own enthusiasts, just like tennis... Do you suffer from chronic constipation?"

d. Domination over the Male Character's Fate and Life-and-Death Decisions

The female character explicitly positions herself as the one who holds full control over the male character's life and death. She even expresses her willingness to "hand him over" to death according to her own will, rather than according to the male character's wishes.

أنا ذاهب إلى الموت... وأنت.... ما شأنك؟.... أسلمك إليه بيدى كما أنقذتك منه!

"I am going to meet Death... And you, what business is it of yours? I will hand you over to Death with my own hands, just as I saved you from Death!"

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e. Peak Existential-Symbolic Domination

Self-identification as the personification of Death. The highest form of domination occurs when the female character no longer merely controls the male character's body, discourse, or fate in specific situations, but instead claims to embody Death itself—the ultimate authority that constitutes the final destination of the male character's existential quest throughout the story.

ألا تريد أحضان الموت؟ ... أنا الموت!

"Do you not desire the embrace of Death?... I am Death!"

The five forms of domination are cumulative and mutually reinforcing: physical domination paves the way for discursive domination, discursive domination strengthens control over the male character's fate, and all of these forms ultimately culminate in existential-symbolic domination, which serves as the final marker of the collapse of hegemonic masculinity. This pattern demonstrates that in Ana al-Mawt, the female character is not merely a narrative counterbalance or companion but an active agent who progressively takes control of every domain of power that was initially monopolized by the male character.

The mapping of these five forms of domination also brings the findings of this study into dialogue with previous studies discussed in the theoretical framework. On the one hand, the pattern of female domination identified in Ana al-Mawt differs from the findings of Nurfaidah (2017) and Anindya (2018), which indicate that physical, sexual, and narrative domination in Indonesian short stories and novels is generally more frequently attributed to male characters. This difference demonstrates that Ana al-Mawt presents a configuration of gender relations that differs from this general tendency, particularly through the reversal of power from male to female characters. On the other hand, when compared with Yusuf (2023) and Rohman et al. (2025), who identify various markers of hegemonic masculinity maintained by male characters, the five forms of female domination identified in this study reveal an opposing pattern. Whereas control, social superiority, authority, and hierarchical

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position constitute elements that sustain hegemonic masculinity in the previous studies, Ana al-Mawt instead portrays the weakening and reversal of these elements in the male character. Thus, the loss of control over his body, discourse, role, and life-and-death decisions serves as textual evidence of the process through which the male character's hegemonic masculine position collapses. Therefore, the five forms of symbolic domination do not stand as isolated findings but derive their significance from their comparison with patterns identified in previous studies. These similarities and differences strengthen the interpretation that Ana al-Mawt presents a reversal of gender power relations, in which authority generally associated with the masculine position shifts and comes under the control of the female character. This reversal provides the basis for understanding the relationship between women's symbolic domination and the collapse of the male character's hegemonic masculinity in the short story.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that women's symbolic domination in the short story Ana al-Mawt gradually shifts the male character's position from that of an authoritative subject to that of an individual who loses control over his body, discourse, role, and existence. This shift results in the progressive collapse of hegemonic masculinity as the center of authority moves from the male character to the female character.

Theoretically, this study contributes by bringing together Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination and R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity to explain the relationship between mechanisms of female domination and the collapse of masculine authority. This approach expands the interpretation of Ana al-Mawt, which has previously focused primarily on psychological, structural, linguistic, semiotic, and gender-deconstruction aspects.

This study is limited to a single short story and focuses on women's symbolic domination and the collapse of the male character's hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, future research may broaden the scope of the study by examining other literary works and employing different theoretical perspectives to further investigate

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patterns of gender relations in Taufiq al-Hakim's works and modern Arabic literature more broadly.

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