

# The Logic of Phallus and Object of Desire: Rethinking 'Masculinities' in Literary Works of Contemporary Indonesia Women Writers

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**Submission date:** 24-Jul-2023 12:03PM (UTC+0800)

**Submission ID:** 2135840924

**File name:** 3.\_Artikel\_The\_Logic\_of\_Phallus.pdf (331.07K)

**Word count:** 5517

**Character count:** 28854

## The Logic of Phallus and Object of Desire: Rethinking 'Masculinities' in Literary Works of Contemporary Indonesia Women Writers

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**Article History:**

Received 22 December 2021  
Revised 7 January 2021  
Accepted 23 January 2022

### Abstract

The recent studies commonly pointed out that literary works of contemporary Indonesian women writers have coined feminist ideology. However, the study on reading these writers in a 'masculine' perspective is rarely given. This study aims to analyze the works of two critical Indonesian women writers, Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Ayu, to demonstrate the inadequate definition of labels 'masculine' and 'feminine' as a binary opposition between male and female for explaining a much more fundamental problem: desire. This study concluded that first, the short stories of Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Utami demonstrate—in Connell's terminology—the master signifier or—in Lacan's terminology—phallic desire towards a male, meaning that, instead of being regarded as "feminist champions," they are possible to be considered as "masculine without an object." Second, the concept of "masculine without an object" is plural and split. Although neither Djenar nor Utami can avoid the fact that they are female, both were born into a multifaceted environment, which strove to break down an essentialist barrier between male and female.

**Keywords:** *phallus, the object of desire, Ayu Utami, Djenar Maesa Ayu, masculinity*

### Abstrak

Kajian-kajian terkini umumnya menunjukkan bahwa karya-karya sastrawan perempuan Indonesia kontemporer didasarkan pada ideologi feminis. Namun, studi tentang bagaimana para penulis perempuan ini dibaca dalam perspektif 'maskulin' jarang dilakukan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis karya dua penulis penting perempuan Indonesia, Ayu Utami dan Djenar Maesa Ayu, untuk menunjukkan tidak memadainya label 'maskulin' dan 'feminin' sebagai oposisi biner antara laki-laki dan perempuan untuk menjelaskan masalah yang jauh lebih mendasar: hasrat. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa *pertama*, cerpen Ayu Utami dan Djenar Maesa <sup>1</sup>tami menunjukkan—dalam terminologi Connell—penanda utama atau—dalam terminologi Lacan—hasrat phallic terhadap laki-laki. Artinya, alih-alih dianggap sebagai "pejuang feminis", mereka sangat mungkin ditafsirkan sebagai "maskulin tanpa objek." *Kedua*, konsep "maskulin tanpa objek" ini bersifat plural dan terbelah. Meskipun Djenar maupun Utami tidak dapat menghindari kenyataan bahwa mereka adalah perempuan, keduanya dilahirkan dalam lingkungan beraneka ragam, lingkungan yang berusaha mendobrak penghalang esensialis antara laki-laki dan perempuan.

**Kata Kunci:** *phalus, objek hasrat, Ayu Utami, Djenar Maesa Ayu, maskulinitas*

## Introduction

The recent studies point out that women writers such as Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Ayu have conveyed feminist ideologies (Aveling, 2008; Listyowulan, 2010; Rahayuni, 2013). By using this fact as starting point, this study aims to analyze the works of both writers to deal with two critical issues: firstly, to find another way of reading their short stories based on Lacanian perspective, and secondly, to demonstrate the inadequate definition of labels between 'masculine' and 'feminine' as a binary opposition between male and female for explaining a much more fundamental problem: desire. Is it true that masculinity is always related to males? Do women not have masculine sides? What is the meaning of masculinity in this sense? How do the works of Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Ayu figure out the lack of binary definition?

The current trend to position these writers as feminist champions who do not resort to jargon Rahayuni (2013) claims that the feminist spirit in Ayu Utami's *Saman* and Djenar Maesa Ayu's *Nayla* is based on several criteria: 1) persistence; 2) independence; and 3) deviant behavior. Aveling (2008) has described Ayu Utami as a cutting-edge writer of the reform era. The evidence is that she can demonstrate—to borrow Henk Wer's term—emphatic realism, a reaction to pre-reform limitations on freedom of expression. As Aveling points out, *Saman* is significant because it describes the individual's will and female sexuality. Listyowulan (2010) also identified feminist elements in Ayu Utami's trilogy of novels: *Saman*, *Larung*, and *Bilangan Fu*. It is an element that is evident in how Ayu Utami successfully discusses sexual freedom, religion, and language as a form of resistance to the stability of the New Order regime.

In *Literature, Women, Sex* (2006), Bandel has made a feminist critique of the works of these writers. She questioned the mass media's responses

to their works, the glorification of their works, and the numbers of their market sales, which resulted in a public opinion on the great works of their works with a new style of writing and breaking taboos. Katrin has argued that these women writers had done nothing new by critiquing the government. She even questioned the motive behind readers' reaction to Ayu Utami's work: Was it because they contained radical new themes? Or was it because Indonesian literature had been starved of sex themes? What about classical works such as G. Francis's *Story of Njai Dasima* and Pramoedya's *Bumi Manusia*, both of which had criticized the (colonial) government through sexuality?

While Katrin's feminist perspective claimed that there was 'nothing new' in these writers' works, this study analyzes their works based on the logic of masculinity. This perspective involves some risks: 1) by critiquing their feminism and situating them into masculine, this article - consciously or unconsciously - may fall into the trap of essentialism, but that essentialism is also 'suicide' because 2) the gender oppositions of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are no longer adequate for understanding the phallogocentrism of their works.

Although using the term 'masculine' to describe these works, while at the same time, this article aims to deconstruct that term, masculinity—as it is used here—does not refer merely to 'male' power (because there are various definitions of masculinity), but also to phallic desire, a part of the female domain. If the masculine is signified as desire, the feminine will be the object of desire, and it is constantly forced to be under masculine control unconsciously.

## Result and Discussion:

### On Phallic Desire and Masculinity/masculinities

Lacan said, "Subject's desire is the desire of the Other." By the desire of the Other, Lacan implied

some critical arguments (Lacan, 1953, 2003, 2007). Firstly, the subject has a desire to be recognized? Desire can be identified in two contexts: desire for recognition and desire for what the other desires. First of all, the subject has desired to be recognized. However, that recognition does not derive from the issue himself but the desire of the Other. It implies that the Master desires to be acknowledged by the Hysteric. However, the Master is convinced that such recognition is not his own need. Nevertheless, somewhat the need for the Hysteric to be recognized.

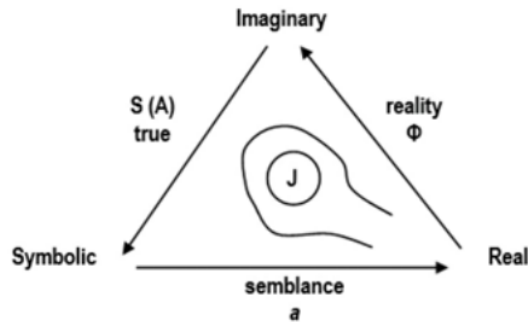
Secondly, by the Other, Lacan implied it into two contexts. First, the other as another person, a semblance, a counterpart. Second, Other with a capital O, as the Wholly Other, a symbolic power that we believe exists, but whose form and desires we do not know. It usually refers to this second Other as The Big Other, which refers to Religion, Nation, Freedom, God, Etc.

At this point, since the subject desires the other, the phallus comes into play. Unlike Freud, who believed that the phallus signified the advancement of the male genitalia, which at the same time indicates the incompleteness of the female genitalia, Lacan regarded the phallus as a signifier of the object of desire. This signifier connects two different aspects: the Real as Father and the Imaginary as Mother. When the child rapes his mother, he believes—by doing it—that he can reach the Real, the father, but we know that the Real can never be got. The mother is the imaginary, through whose rape—through the symbolic signifier—he wants to get the Real.

The 'schizophrenia' of the subject occurs when he cannot escape from the Real. On the one hand, the subject has no choice except to use the Symbolic. It means that he finally reached the Imaginary. This structure implied what Lacan said as the moment of castration, signifying the denial of phallic desire towards the Real. It is a moment of multiple structures which connects the advancement of the phallus

with the incompleteness of the feminine subject on the one hand and separates them in continuing schizophrenic topics on the other hand. Figure 1 demonstrates the logic of Lacan's concepts of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary:

Figure 1. The logic of Lacanian Trilogy (Imaginary – Real – Symbolic)



Information:  
 S(A) = Subject  
 Semblance (a) = counterpart, the other, (with a small 'o')  
 reality (φ) = unachievable reality  
 J = jouissance, object of desire, phallic desire

However, Lacan's concept of the phallus has been the target of much feminist criticism, for instance, by Butler. According to Butler, the words *penis* and *phallus* by Freud and Lacan only serve to reinforce the symbolic naturalization of the male body. Although the phallus is not the same thing as the penis, the concept of phallus continues to deploy the penis as its natural signifier. In *Gender Trouble* (2006), Butler explains:

**1** *The law requires conformity to its own notion of nature. It gains its legitimacy through the binary*  
**1** *and asymmetrical naturalization of bodies in*  
**1** *which the phallus, though clearly not identical to the penis, deploys the penis as its naturalized instrument and sign.*

In *Bodies that Matter* (2011), Butler further analyses the possibilities for the phallus in her discussion of the lesbian phallus. It suggests that the phallus is the domain of male towards female and female towards female and possibly female towards male (as shown in several cases of female rape of men in Africa).

In the view of Connell (1995), Butler's critique positions Freud as a psychoanalyst who employs strategic essentialism to define the masculine as activity and the feminine as passivity, an arbitrary and risky definition. Rather than representing the masculine using one rigid concept, Connell suggests four possible perspectives to define masculinities:

1. The essentialist definition. This approach limits masculine meaning and associates it only and directly with the male. For example, Freud associates masculinity with activity and femininity with passivity.
2. The positivist definition. This approach is based on "what men are." This approach automatically marginalizes women who behave in a masculine way and men who act femininely. In this approach, women and men have fixed and non-sharable characteristics.
3. The normative definition. This approach defines the male based on "what men ought to be." It is often used media analysis to explain the male in cultural assumption.
4. The semiotic definition. This approach defines *masculinity* as "non-femininity" in which the symbolic differences in male and female roles are pitted against each other. This approach assumes the masculine as the master signifier, the phallus, while femininity lacks incompleteness.

These various definitions figure out that Connell's contribution to this article is evident. The final description shows that masculinity is not merely associated with the male but also with the master-signifier. In short, following Foucault's conceptualization, power has essentially controlled gender relations in every aspect of institutions and social struggles. There is a strong connection between masculinity and authority because, as Ratele (2001) maintains, gender, class, and heterosexual masculinity determined the power

structures.

Like Foucault, Connell also argued that power is everywhere. Power relations, according to Foucault, are "intentional and non-subjective" (1978), and the rationality of control is often signified by specific inter-connected "tactics" that are generally assumed to be the norm. Connell (1987) describes these tactics as "imperatives" between the power of males and the subordination of women.

This article attempts to compare these perspectives in reading short stories of Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Ayu. As the feminists emphasize, it is probably true that Lacan still uses patriarchal concepts such as the phallus, but a phallus concept that he used refers to an analogy of critique to Freud's concept of the penis. Furthermore, the idea of the phallus is not simply connected to sexuality between males and females. Instead, it is more about function: how desire functions in these subjects and signifies a latent addition to the "deficiency" in the feminine genitalia, which possibly refers to any matter, including males. At this point, Lacan made an analogy of phallus with mythological symbols of Medea and Jason as metaphors for phallic desire.

This kind of Lacanian concept of desire is not found in significant feminists' perspectives. The modern feminists are unaware that behind their struggle for women, the Big Other controls them. The Big Other is Freedom, and in the name of freedom, the female subject's need inevitably creates another, namely the male as her object, to fulfill her desire to reach the Real. It means that major feminist theories are under the shadow of the illusory Big Other.

Phallogocentrism, a desire for totality under continual regression and castration, appears in every subject, male or female. This desire functions as long as it guarantees that sexual pleasure is a secondary function of the feminine genitalia, which cannot satisfy itself. This Lacanian concept of desire and phallus will be applied in this paper.

However, this concept is flawed because the phallus can belong to a lesbian or a woman raping a man. This conceptual framework is usually discussed by modern feminists, including Judith Butler and Connell, which will also be used in this paper. It means that Lacanian concept of phallus and Connell's concept of the master signifier is inseparable from explaining how masculinity and phallogocentrism operate in short stories of women writers, such as Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Ayu. In summary, masculine phallogocentrism is connected to the function of desire, not just to sexuality.

### The Phallogocentrism of Ayu Utami's "Terbang"

*Terbang* is a short story about mother-of-two Ari, who married Jati. The story begins with Ari boarding a plane and not wishing to accompany her husband. She did not even want her husband to buy the ticket. Also, she would have canceled it and bought her ticket if he had done so. She calls herself 'realistic.' On the plane, she meets a man who had once worked as a cook and photographer in Eastern Indonesia. During the journey, they get talking. As characters narrated by Ayu Utami, there are always scenes that many would regard as provocative. For example, Ari admires the man she meets on the plane to stay with her *until a piece of my soul is restored to me... the piece that Jati took.*

However, instead of focusing on that scene, it is possible to analyze the ways Utami reveals a tendency of the phallic desire of a woman (Ari) towards a man. How does phallic desire operate? Why does masculinity occur in the subject of Ari?

*Ever since it had been possible for our two children not to join us on our travels, ever since we had been able to leave them at home, I had decided I would never again travel on the same plane as my husband. Nor would I travel at the same time. One of us would have to leave earlier than the other. Once that plane had landed safely, the other could*

*go. This was a decision of mine that must be abided by. If my husband tried to wriggle out of it - as he had done the day before by buying our tickets - I would let him know what I felt about it. I would cancel my ticket and buy another one for myself.*

Ari is positioned as narrator, representing Ayu Utami, the "rebel." Why did Ari refuse to fly with Jati, her husband? This story has given a clear rationale: "so that our children are not orphaned." However, a reason "so their children do not become orphans" is a moment of recognition that the subject does not wish to acknowledge. She covers her desire to have power over her husband by seeking another rationale. Ari's phallic desire is situated when she symbolizes her freedom with an alternative explanation. The space that she craves as the Real is reduced—and limited, so it is not freedom—to "so her children are not orphaned." Eventually, after being reduced by the Symbolic (her children are not orphaned), Freedom as the Real becomes no more than imagination (the Imaginary).

Freedom, as the Real for the subject, eventually becomes Imaginary because the subject cannot be freed from the Symbolic. The desire in this short story is not signified only by a narrative about our children not being orphaned, but also in "there are no more stories about flying together!", "I have neither husband nor children," "a man with a flatter skull and more prominent brow bones," "like the man she meets in the plane," "a man with an animal smile," Etc.

These narrations imply the symbolic moment of castration and the end of desire because the subject is impossible to reach the Real. The subject calls the Imaginary that reflects the Real, signed by something that comes from outside itself from the Symbolic. This phallic desire positions the narrator, as subject, as being divided. On the one hand, she desires recognition as a "realistic" person who

craves Freedom as the Big Other. Still, she convinces us—with her stealthy ways—that her desire is the desire for the other, for the husband or children who want to control her. Although Ari is overcome by a jouissance that celebrates her power over her husband, she is still ‘tortured’ by realizing the lack of her ability. She goes in search of another object, an object that will guarantee that her phallic desire is still operating, and that object is a man she meets in the plane, who can restore to her “a piece of her soul that Jati, her husband, had taken.”

### **The Phallogocentrism of Djenar Maesa's "Jangan Bermain-Main dengan Kelaminmu"**

This short story essentially presents a single narrator with multiple points of view. There are four main episodes with a similar story but narrated from different viewpoints, with a conclusion. In each episode, the narrator sometimes describes herself as the sole first person (“I” as the protagonist, “I” as additional characters), regular first person, second person, sole third person (all-knowing, limited), and regular third person. These four episodes are basically about how marriage can be damaged or maintained through sexual activity.

Behind the stories, the narrator also demonstrates phallic desire through her various points of view. It is possible to look at the following extracts from the story.

*“I’m beautiful, he’s rich. I need money, he needs pleasure. So were compatible, right?”*

*“Do I not have the right to determine and choose my happiness?” I feel I’m in too deep. I have wasted so much time on trivial stuff. It is time to take a stand I will not grumble about it, I’m going to determine and choose my happiness (Ayu, 2007).*

The female character’s phallic reaches the climax when she rebels against her husband. This story also shows how the subject “I” exists in the moment

of castration when she is unable to reach phallic desire, desire for jouissance, object petit a the object of desire itself. What kind of thing does which extinguish the phallic willingness of the subject? Her desire is extinguished when she tries to define happiness as the Real by “not wanting to waste time on trivial stuff.”

The subject expresses the desire for recognition as a “beautiful” person, a “happy” person, meaning that, for her, Beauty and Happiness are The Big Other, the Real. However, she unwittingly covers up Beauty and Happiness by believing that they are the desire of the other, the lust of men who want her to be “Beautiful” and “Happy.” Every time she refers to beauty, she juxtaposes it with the “security” of the male; every time she mentions happiness, she juxtaposes it with the “pettiness” of the male. In other words, Happiness and Beauty have been reduced to nothing more than reflections (the Imaginary). As a result, the subject cannot let herself from the Symbolic, from her attempts to symbolize them and her need for a male counterpart.

The schizophrenia of the “I” character occurs in this story when she has a phallic desire towards the Real on the one hand, while she cannot free herself from the Symbolic on the other hand. This symbolic limitation that she has constructed herself with his image of the Real is eventually no more than the imaginary. Beauty and happiness only occur—and only in a limited way—when the subject cannot be free from symbolizing the other, the “security” and “pettiness.” This moment of discontinuity of phallic desire is what Lacan coined the moment of castration.

### **Phallogocentrism in Djenar Maesa Ayu's "Menyusu Ayah"**

This story is perhaps the most explicit in demonstrating how phallic desire operates. The character Nayla, who has been suckling her father’s

penis since she was a child, is not opposed to suckling the penises of her father's friends. However, when one of her father's friends begins touching her breasts and her genitals, she immediately feels violated in her integrity.

*One day as I have absorbed in suckling the penis of one of my father's friends, he rubbed my flat chest. I felt uncomfortable. My father's statement that breasts are not for suckling but male enjoyment rang in my ears. I did not want to be enjoyed. I just wanted to enjoy ... (Ayu, 2007).*

The "I" character has a desire. Whoever has this desire will be in a state of constant need of others. The above quote shows us the multiple structures of the phallus itself. On the one hand, the phallic desire of the "I" character makes her powerful, as she traps the male body in a domestic space in the name of sexual freedom on the other hand. However, desire also forces the woman into an area with a similar structure, namely the space of freedom that she never actually reaches because she still needs the other, the male penis, to guarantee her power.

When her father's friend, the other, attempts to undermine the autonomy of the subject "I," "I" looks for another object, which is invisible. It is used to ensure that the phallogocentric subject operates under her control. What is meant by the object of the other? The "I" character says, "I felt uncomfortable," and eventually—in the next scene—"she grabbed a statue of a horse's head from the table and smashed into his head" (p. 40). This scene is the climax of her search for another object. An object has nothing more than the elimination of the other. Also, another object of desire, whatever, however, wherever that might be.

This moment signifies how the "I" character is in the moment of castration. When she feels that "suckling her father's penis" is the way to fulfill her phallic desire, she enjoys it over and over again,

and she feels tortured at the same time. She feels tortured because the phallic desire demands more. What she imagines as the Real from her father never becomes the Reality. It is just the Imaginary. It appears because desire is always in a simulacrum of jouissance (excruciatingly pleasure). She enjoyed suckling her father's penis, which she regards, as the only way to achieve Freedom, the Real, but she feels tortured because doing it never delivers absolute freedom; it is a Freedom that in the end is no more than the Imaginary, but freedom continues to demand that she do more to fulfill her phallic desire.

### **The Masculinity of Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Ayu**

By an essentialist definition, both these women are, of course, feminine. However, viewed from how they construct narratives about a character who depicts herself as a Lacan-Master, it might be suggested that they are masculine, in the semiotic way Connell (1995) uses the word to mean not femininity. As demonstrated in the above analysis, they are narrators with phallic desire towards every symbol of femininity to be found in the male.

In an interview with the *Jakarta Post*, Ayu Utami said:

*"So far, people exploit sex, but by objectifying women. What I write is no cruder than those pictures or rape stories that they write. However, I want to make women become the subjects. That is considered taboo." (Diani, 2010).*

This statement demonstrates Utami's awareness of creating women as subjects. In the narratives Utami subsequently created in her short stories, this subject shows the issue from a Lacanian perspective. Ayu Utami's subject rebels against patriarchy, against the stability of the state, against the establishment, against religious dogma, Etc. Eventually, her narratives about Freedom, Pluralism,



love without Marriage become the Real for Utami. Unfortunately, to function, the desire for the Real always requires the other. Moreover, the only name that fits the phallic desire is the male.

In one of the narrative episodes in "Terbang," Utami (2021) clearly defines the males as those who lack something, who thus have feminine characteristics.

*A good man is not sarcastic or boastful, not a show-off or a preacher. However, even that does not make a man good. A good man, namely one who is loyal to his family, might be annoying or boastful for the sake of his family's reputation. A good man is fun to talk to, even though he might not be one you want to live with.*

It was not without reason that Utami came to this conclusion. As a child, Utami studied in a conservative religious family. Still, her parents gave her the freedom to marry whomever she loved, even someone of a different religion, as long as they were not Communist. However, while at university, Utami began to lose her religious faith; she became an agnostic at that point in her life.

Unlike Utami, Djenar experienced the household problem on 15 August 2005. She was divorced from her husband, Edi Wijaya. One of the reasons was an irreconcilable difference in culture between them. Although she claims to have been happy with her husband, their differences made her feel subordinated like a woman.

Djenar was no stranger to divorce. She was the daughter of the well-known artist Sjumandjaya and the actress Tutie Kirana. She was the only child of the marriage, the second marriage for both her parents, and lasted only a year. For her, sexuality was something to be discussed in the public domain, "put aside any ideas of taboo," she once said in an interview. Djenar's parents were open-minded and gave her free rein to critique and discuss many

things, including sexuality.

*"My work derives from life around me, and the things I am thinking about Sexual harassment, for example, as the mother of two daughters, is something of great concern to me. Every day I read and hear reports in print and electronic media. While I have never experienced it, I can feel it; the pain feels real while not real. That is why I regard it as a problem for me too," she said (Herlambang, 2009).*

The above statement reveals that, like Utami, Djenar desires the Real. For her, the Real is Freedom from sexual harassment. This freedom is something that she narrates in, for example, her short story "Jangan Bermain-Main Dengan Kelaminmu!" Djenar has known the phallic desire of liberty ever since she was a child. However, this freedom was fractured when she realized that she could not be free from her mother and father. Djenar is, of course, a woman from a gender perspective. Still, Djenar has said: "Many people say that I am more like Bung (her term of affection for her father, ed.), whose personality was 180 degrees different from that of Momon (her time of love for her mother, ed.). Bung was a very down-to-earth artist, free, a man who did as he pleased and liked to get about in daggy clothes. He was a mess, you know! Thus, I learned how to immerse myself in o worlds, the world of Momon and the world of Bung.

It is not because she resembles her father as masculine but because a narrative that Djenar presents about men, as found in her creative works, demonstrates that she possesses more activity than passivity in Connell's terms. It is possible to see this activity—or perhaps aggressivity—when Djenar describes the "I" character as "an enjoyer of the penis" rather than one who is enjoyed by the penis." Connell (1995) states:

*The social semiotics of gender, emphasizing the*

endless play of signification, the multiplicity of discourses, and the diversity of subject positions, have been important in escaping the rigidities of biological determinism.

Based on this statement, Connel argued that masculinity is not a character type, nor is it a particular behavioral norm, but rather “part of the processes and relations in which men and women establish their genderism lives.” Masculinity is possible to be measured, for example, by

1. the place of masculinity in gender relations;
2. the practices that underpin the involvement of men and women in gender relations; and
3. the effects of those practices in physical, personal, and cultural experiences.

Based on the social background of these two female writers, it is possible to agree with Connell's assumption (1995) that masculinity is always created from the relations between a man and woman that occur in places of production and consumption of natural and cultural environments. Utami and Djenar share similar backgrounds. They were both born in liberating families, growing up aware that it is essential to talk about sexuality. They are both involved in gender practices, and their experiences and personalities are more masculine than those of most other women.

Most importantly, their masculinity is formed

precisely when they explain their desire for the Real, the desire for Freedom from Patriarchy. The result is that the only valid “object” for them—as recorded in their creative works—is the male. It is possible to conclude that the more they desire to control the male, the more they narrate the iniquity of the male; the more they endeavor to be a free subject, the clearer is the bonds that oppress them, the bonds that they need to “transgress” periodically, to ensure that their desire is still operating.

### Conclusion

Drawing on Lacan's concept of phallic desire and Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity, this paper reveals two critical findings. First, the short stories of Ayu Utami and Djenar Maesa Utami demonstrate—in Connell's terminology—the master signifier or—in Lacan's terminology—phallic desire towards the male, meaning that, instead of being regarded as “feminist champions who do not resort to jargon,” they can be considered “masculine without an object.”

Second, the concept of “masculine without an object” is plural and split. Although neither Djenar nor Utami can avoid the fact that they are female, both were born into a multifaceted environment, which strove to break down an essentialist barrier between male and female. Furthermore, both Utami and Djenar are always simulacrums between masculine and feminine, which is difficult to identify.

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