

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Gender is seen as performative, relational, geographical, situational, and fluid, and interacts with various dimensions of identity in femininity and masculinity (Ambjornsson, 2020). Gender is not associated with sex, which is a biological characteristic that distinguishes males and females. Instead, gender is a socially established distinction between men and women. Women are born feminine, while men are born masculine this gender classification was created by society (Tyson, 2006).

Every human being should have two traits, femininity and masculinity, and which attitude is most prominent will determine their identity. Women, in some ways, need masculinity in their lives to have a sense of leadership and independence (Sulistia, 2016). Gender does not determine the definition of masculinity and femininity but rather on social constructs. Based on the hypothesis above, it can be seen that masculine characteristics are not only possessed by men but also by women.

Femininity is invariably associated with women, whereas masculinity is always associated with males. When masculinity appears in women, it is called female masculinity. Masculine refers to anything related to male. It is often associated with traits like strength, courage, heroism, violence, and military work. Masculinity always connotes a handsome face, courage, power, independence, leadership,

strength, bravery, heroism, aggression, and a strong body (Kusumaningrum, 2018). Meanwhile, femininity is described as a woman with beautiful, emotional, dependent, submissive, respectful, and sensitive personality traits (Handayani in Apriyani, 2008).

The notion that masculinity is a trait exclusive to men is not entirely accurate. Men and women can exhibit masculine attributes based on their appearance (Halberstam, 1998). This concept produces the idea that masculinity is exclusive to men, which is inaccurate. Masculinity can be exhibited by both men and women based on their appearance, and this concept encompasses gender performances that go beyond biology (Padmi, 2018).

*“It is crucial that masculinity does not belong to men, has not been produced only by men and does not properly express male heterosexuality... what we call 'masculinity' has also been produced by masculine women, gender deviants, and often lesbians”.*

That was the opinion of Halberstam, (1998: 241) about female masculinity, the statement above shows that masculinity cannot only be found in men but also women.

Women who perform masculine actions are known as female masculinity. (Parvathi, 2017). This phenomenon has existed for centuries as society constructed personal traits of masculinity and femininity. Women who exhibit female masculinity possess male physical and behavioral traits (Wulandari, 2019). In social life, gender complexity appears as a phenomenon of male femininity and female masculinity. Female masculinity is manifested as a combination of social opposition and the articulation of male masculinity in terms of superiority. This is

also known as gender performativity, namely how masculine actions and roles are realized in femininity and women's bodies (Halberstam, 1998).

Female masculinity appears to reject patriarchal dominance, but it also manifests it in acts toward other women. Female masculinity is accused of rejecting or dismissing women's and femininity's roles, as well as treating women as men do under patriarchal institutions (Nguyen, 2008). Female masculinity is considered to challenge the patriarchal system. However, their role in society's gender standards continues to be debated and unacknowledged. Attempts to establish female masculinity as a third gender category, such as transgender or transsexual identity, distinct from masculine and feminine genders (Wickman, 2003). Female masculinity is regarded to be an independent gender that is commonly unrecognized, rejected, and ignored (Levitt, 2004).

Several studies have discussed female masculinity. The emergence of female masculinity has been stigmatized as a threat to traditional gender roles. Some studies related to female masculinity are found in literary works such as novels. Davis, (2016) studies on "Female Masculinity in Lohenstein's Epicharis and Cleopatra," show that female characters exhibit male traits to teach boys leadership skills. Not only found in a novel but female masculinity also can be found in a short story. In line with the previous result study, Manki, (2020) in a study entitled "Black Female Masculinity in Toni Morrison's Sula" found that women more act like a man than women to create their identities and reject traditional gender roles typical of women in society. Both research results show female characters who can have masculine traits and challenge gender boundaries, both observe women who have

traits commonly associated with men and show that masculinity is not limited to men. Therefore the researcher is interested in continuing the previous research, research on female masculinity is limited by a lack of understanding of various expressions and societal perceptions of gender identity. Although previous studies have explored gender identity and masculinity, these studies have not fully discussed the challenges and experiences faced by individuals who embody female masculinity and how the depiction of this masculinity in women influences readers' understanding of female masculinity. This is important because it highlights the complexity of gender expression beyond traditional norms, thereby contributing to a more inclusive understanding of gender diversity.

The purpose of this research is to add understanding about how women respond to and access roles that are usually considered masculine and also supports the gender equality movement and breaks down stereotypes about how women should act or look. The *Once and Future Witches* novel was chosen because, in addition to describing female power, the novel's exploration of relationships between women and the way they support and empower each other is an important aspect of the depiction of female masculinity in this novel (Martin, 2020). *The Once and Future Witches* has also won several awards, such as the novel won the British Fantasy Award for Best Fantasy Novel (the Robert Hold Sock Award) in 2021, the novel was a New York Times bestseller, and Alix E. Harrow, the author of the novel, won the Hugo Award for Best Short Story in 2019 for "A Witch's Guide to Escape" (Locus Magazine, 2021).

The source of data for this research is the content of *The Once and Future Witches* novel and the portrayal of female masculinity can be found in the narration of one character in this novel, it was the narration about Cleopatra Quinn (Miss Quinn), the narration explains how Miss Quinn mimicking masculine traits through her action to Bella.

“Oh?” Miss Quinn perches on the same stack of encyclopedias Juniper occupied a few weeks before and extends her hand, palm up, toward Beatrice and her black notebook. Her expression is teasing but her eyes are sober, her hand steady. “You didn’t have me.” (p. 79)

The sentence "Miss Quinn perches on the same stack of encyclopedias Juniper occupied a few weeks before." describes that Miss Quinn sits in the same place where Bella sat before showing that Miss Quinn takes over the space with confidence, an action often associated with masculine dominance. Supported by the sentence "extends her hand, palm up, toward Beatrice and her black notebook." Extending a hand with the palm up is a gesture that shows authority and control. This action is a masculine gesture that mimics the way men might command or direct others in similar situations. The sentence "Her expression is teasing but her eyes are sober, her hand steady." is a description of Her expression is teasing but with serious eyes showing strong emotional control, an attribute often associated with masculinity. The calmness and stability of her hand also show composure under pressure, which mimics the masculine way of handling situations. then the line "You didn't have me" confirms Miss Quinn's identity and presence in the interaction, showing dominance and control in an assertive and confident manner. Miss Quinn's actions mimic masculine attributes (dominance, power, poise, and gesture) in a deliberate and performative context. This shows how he adopts a

masculine role in the interaction in a way that accentuates his presence and authority. So this narrative fits the category of male mimicry because it highlights the imitation of masculine attributes in actions that appear deliberate and performative.

The characteristics of masculinity also can be seen in this novel, one example of that was from the narration about Juniper when she was trying to escape herself from the inquisitors who at that moment managed to catch them and were going to eliminate them as the witches.

“Juniper flings herself down onto the Inquisitors, fists bruising against armor, and Agnes lunges for Hill a second time. Hands intercept her, tangle in her cloak and skirts, and drag her to the cobbles. Pan’s claws skree against helmets and shields and men’s voices swear.” (p 431)

From the narration above, the description of Juniper's actions can be seen as an example of physical attraction, as described by Chafetz in her theory of masculinity. Juniper's actions of flinging herself down onto the Inquisitors, lunging for Hill, and using her fists against armor can be seen as a demonstration of physical attraction. Her physical strength and aggression are highlighted, as she engages in physical combat with the Inquisitors. This portrayal of Juniper's physical abilities and actions can be seen as a representation of physical attraction, as it showcases her physical prowess and strength. Although based on the definition of physics the characteristics of masculinity presented by Chafetz (1978) are those men who have muscular, and athletic bodies, like other definitions he conveyed that the characteristics of physics are not only about how his body posture is described, but also by the presence of bravery in themselves. In this situation, Juniper highlights a

very brave attitude as a woman she can utilize her physical strength to attack and fight the inquisitors. So although not through her physical appearance, Juniper has a brave personality, which is considered a masculinity concept.

The *Once and Future Witches* Novel by Alix E. Harrow is a historical fantasy that follows three sisters- James Juniper, Agnes Amaranth, and Beatrice Belladonna- who reunite in New Salem in 1893. The sisters discover that they are witches and decide to use their powers to fight for women's suffrage and women's rights. Alix E. Harrow is an American author who was born in Kentucky and currently resides in Berea, Kentucky. The main focus of this study is to analyze the female characters portrayed of female masculinity in the novel using Judith Halberstam's theory of female masculinity.

### **B. Research Problem**

1. What are the characteristics of female masculinity shown by the female characters in *The Once and Future Witches* novel?
2. How do the female characters portray their traits of female masculinity in *The Once and Future Witches* novel?

### **C. The Objective of the Study**

1. To find out the characteristics of masculinity shown by female characters in *The Once and Future Witches* novel.
2. To describe the way female characters portrayed their female masculinity traits in *The Once and Future Witches* novel.

#### **D. The Scope of the Study**

This research explored female masculinity in *The Once and Future Witches* novel. The main focus of this research is to examine the characteristics of masculinity shown by the female characters using the theory of masculinity by Chafetz (1978) and the portrayal of their female masculinity traits using the theory of female masculinity by Judith Halberstam (1998).

#### **E. The Significance of the Study**

This study has significance in two areas:

##### **1. Theoretically**

This study added to the understanding of female masculinity portrayed in a novel. The theoretically significant research study on female masculinity could explore how a woman can also show herself in a way men show themselves. This study by looking at how women show their masculinity could help us better understand that masculinity and femininity are not constructed by a biological sexuality but constructed by the social environment.

##### **2. Practically**

- a. For future researchers, this research is expected to be utilized as a reference in the field of gender roles especially female masculinity, encouraging further progress in similar topics for more comprehensive research.
- b. For educational resources, use the findings to develop educational materials that address the theme of female masculinity in novels.

This can help students understand the ways women show their masculine traits.

- c. For critical media literacy, for the public, this research can promote critical media literacy. It can encourage viewers to examine the portrayal of female masculinity in a novel and engage in thoughtful discussion with people around them.

