



Literary Studies

Analysis Mixed Traits of Jo March That Affects Her Gender Identity

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SUBMISSION TRACK

Received: June 06, 2022

Final Revision: May 20, 2023

Available Online: October 30, 2023

KEYWORD

androgyny, femininity, gender identity, masculinity

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A B S T R A C T

The objective of this research is to reveal and explain the mixed traits through Jo March character and to understand the impact that influence her gender identities. This research employs qualitative analysis method and applying the theory of Robert DiYanni character and characterization, gender stereotypes and sex role inventory which invented by Sandra Bem. This theory has a purpose to analysis the gender issues which contained in this film. The result shows that the main character, Jo March has the characterization of self-sufficient, brave and principled woman through DiYanni point of view. Moreover, the research discovered that Jo March adopts both mixed traits which is both masculinity and femininity traits in woman's body that made them include to androgyny. Her masculinity traits are independent, strong personality, assertive and analytical, while her femininity traits are affectionate, compassion, sensitive and warm. This mixed traits that possessed in Jo breaks the stereotype that female character constantly depicted inferior role, however in this research it demonstrates that Jo not only dominate by masculine traits yet she balanced her feminine traits as well. In this context, it affects her relationship with Laurie, the male character by leads the relationship to frustration and regret between them.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender identity is a term that exist since the old era, in that time society has construct the terms for them specifically masculinity and femininity towards the labelled of woman and man in a way by distinguish of their personality (Khafidzy et al. 52). (Khafidzy et al. 52). Masculinity is the term that related to a man that Timothy Moore mentioned have the trait as unemotional, physically strong, independent, active and aggressive (Moore 579). On the contrary, femininity refers to a woman that has the expectations become domestic, warm, pretty, emotional, dependent physically weak and passive (Moore 579).

Stets and Burke also explain that the gender construction of femininity and masculinity is look as the degree to which one perceives oneself as being masculine of feminine that give a meaning of a male that tend to see themselves as masculinity

while female tend to see themselves as femininity (Rifani 1). Furthermore, (Butler 1998) state about gender deliberately established adapted with the culture and not happen in natural. Through of this perception, it is illuminate that the masculinity and femininity is not naturally happen, instead it is consolidate with culture behind the gender construction.

Therefore, in this research will discussed one of adapted film under the title *Little Women* by Greta Gerwig. *Little Women* film give illustration and construction all at once that build through the protagonist character, Jo March which is the main female character that has both of the two characteristics of masculinity and femininity that appear in the form of personality, behavior, work, objects. Through the portrayal of Jo March, the existence of masculinity traits in a female character is possible in view of masculinity and femininity

concept are built by the society itself.

Through this mixed gender trait, this give the impact of the relationship of her to the male character towards her feeling because of her eagerness of achievement in her life of became a writer and live independently which damage he relationship between them. The film depicts of the masculinity and femininity in the main female character's emancipation of the gender construction to see how the gender issues portrayed in the film by giving the masculinity and femininity trait and its impact to the male character. The writer purpose is to give a proof and evidence this kind of mixed traits has influence her gender identities through decision-making and so on.

II. METHODS

The literary work can be studied through the gender theory of Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) that composed by Sandra L Bem from the Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology under the title *The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny* published in 1974. Bem theory offers a category from a person's personality that divide into 60 traits contain of 20 masculine traits, 20 feminine traits and 20 neutral traits. Moreover, to support the analysis, the theory characterization by DiYanni will also be used in order to give the detail analysis of the research.

This research will used qualitative method which will describe the data and analyzed from the description that can be seen through the phenomenon in the film. Moreover, this research will collects the data by take note from script in the film and analyzed from the evidence to support the argument by using library research, in several books and other supporting literary documents which contain the data needed by the researcher that compatible with the theory that used in order to accomplished the data to be analyzed comprehensively.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The collected data consists of 8 data which classifications of masculinity and femininity that possessed in Jo March.

Masculinity Traits

The first masculine trait on Jo March the writer can analyze is **independent**, the uniqueness and how she reflects her free spirit. The story tells that Jo is the breadwinner and became the only child

that worked in order to provide and support her family financially because Jo was born in a poor family and her father was one of the soldiers who took part in the war at that time.

Her independence shows in the beginning of the film when she is a grown woman who decided to leave her hometown, Concord, Massachusetts to go to New York and live her life alone. Jo's intention to go there is to pursue her career and achieve her dream to become a well-known female writer, other than that she wants to contribute to fulfill the needs of her mother and her sisters through her income. This can be seen through the picture below.



The writer analyzes the characterizations through her action. The setting place in this scene is in the publisher office when Jo intended to offer her work to be published into wide audience, even though she has been repeatedly rejected by publishers and critics considering work as a writer still dominated by men at that time. Regardless, it does not make Jo yield on the circumstances; in fact she looks for a strategic way by confessing to Mr. Dashwood (the editor) that the work herself is the work of a friend.

Next, Jo March is a character that is portrayed as a person with a **strong personality**, reflected by the book's writer, Louisa May Alcott, who assumed the traditionally masculine responsibility of supporting her family (Greene, 8). Like the character Jo, since beginning she refuses the idea of getting married and having a family because she has a big dream which became her priority. Jo is free to express her desires for independence and never afraid to live in solitary because of her free-spirited personality. Her strong personality is portrayed from the dialogues between Jo and Meg when she resists Meg to get married after she proposes to John Brooke.

...

MEG : I can't believe today is my wedding day.
 ...
 JO : We can leave. We can leave right now. I can make money. I'll sell stories. I'll do anything. I'll cook. I'll clean. I'll work in a factory. I can make a life for us, and you should be an actress, and you should have a life on the stage. Let's just run away together.
 MEG : I want to get married.
 JO : Oh, why?
 MEG : Because I love him."
 JO : You will be bored of him in two years, and we will be interesting forever."
 MEG : Just because my dreams are different than yours doesn't mean they're unimportant. I want a home, and a family, and I'm willing to work and struggle. But I want to do it with John.
 JO : I just hate that you're leaving me. Don't leave.
 MEG : Oh, Jo. I'm not leaving you, and besides one day, it will be your turn.
 JO : I'd rather be a free spinster and paddle my own canoe.
 ...

(01:31:26 – 01:33:00)

It is clearly seen that Jo is contrary to the idea of getting married and she enjoyed single life surrounded by her sisters and family. Furthermore, observed by the biography of Louisa May Alcott stated that she felt obliged to justify her independence and her fame "as a matter of duty to the family" (Greene, 8) because the society has an expectation for women to stay at home arrange the household and do the domestic things. In this sense, Jo's idea reflects masculine behavior according to Sandra Bem, which is a strong personality. She has a strong opinion about woman's figure in a Western culture that is full of man domination, indirectly cultivates and builds the mindset that women have the right to be independent and receive gender and social equality equal to men.

Other than that, Jo March also shows up as **assertive** person when she refuses Laurie's confess. Jo and Laurie have become good friends since they were teenagers, for a long time Laurie falls in love with her but he chooses to hide his feelings for many years. He loves Jo because she is different from most women, even though she is the only woman that called Laurie with a nickname "Teddy". However, Jo has the opposite feeling; she never treats Laurie in a romance way like Laurie

do more than a friend. In this sense, Jo depicting her assertive communication which she can be able to honest with herself about one's own feelings (Dorothy, 2015).

Moreover, Jo emphasizes her words "*No, I can't. I can't change how I feel, and it would be a lie to say I do when I don't. I'm so sorry, Teddy. I'm so sorry, but I just can't help it.*" (01:27:22-01:37:37) clearly shows his firmness towards something that she doesn't want it and it doesn't feel right to her which in this sense relatable with what Dorothy state about the typical of assertive person which they feel no hesitation in saying 'Yes' when one wants to and saying 'No' when one means 'no' rather than agreeing to do something just to please someone (Dorothy, 2015).

Feminine Traits

Beside her masculine, Jo March also portrayed as someone who full of **affection**. The behavior above is shown by Jo as she really cares of her sister, she gives words of encouragement to stay afloat and fight with her disease. From Jo's action, it can be seen that Jo portrays verbal affection. In this sense, verbal affection includes the use of language (spoken or written) in deliver or expressing affection feelings for another (Reis and Sprecher, 2009).

...

(IN NOSTALGIC MOMENT, BETH WAS SICK AND JO ACCOMPANY HER ALL NIGHT LONG)

JO : Please fight. (*Staring at Beth with misty-eyed*)
 Don't go quietly.
 Fight.
 Please, please, just fight to the end and be loud, and don't just quietly go away, Beth.

...(01:27:25 – 01: 27:48)

This kind of feminine traits is the opposite of masculine traits which they expected to be self-reliant and uncommonly to express their emotions; this has always been the stereotype of people who has high masculinity, mostly in men. However, in this sense Jo naturally shows her emotion which the writer analyzes that she is not fully dominant by masculine traits but she also has high feminine traits.

The next feminine trait on Jo March that the

writer found is **compassion**. Even though Jo is boyish and pictured as someone tough and fierce, in fact she has big hearted in any case someone asked for help or even they did not ask for help, she is always delicate to lend a hand to relieve someone's problem especially her family by helping them. Her appearance became evidence to support this argument can be seen in the picture and script below.



From the picture above, it can be analyzed that Jo show her compassionate by selling her hair to get money to support her mother. This scene tells about the situation hustle and bustle at home attended when Ms. March had to go after her sick husband in a world war camp. She asked Jo to lend some money from Aunt March. But instead, Jo did something unexpected and she was willing to cut off her hair to a man hairstyle, which at that time still taboo especially women's hair is a crown. According to Jacoba M. Lilius (2011), compassion implicate senses of other person's misery and find a way to help alleviate their suffering (Lilius and Kanov, 2011) which Jo shows through finding extra money for her mother.

Furthermore, Jo also a **sensitive** person, even though she is boyish, she tends to feel deeply moved by someone they are really care about. Below is the evidence of the form of dialogue between Jo and Mrs. March while Jo visits her hometown to take care of her loving sister, Beth who got serious disease Scarlett fever. Besides visiting, her arrival also to helped with Beth's treatment with money.

...

- MARMEE : We thought she was better, but the fever'd weakened her heart.
 JO : Take this and find her best doctor you can.
 MARMEE : You need this to live in New York.

JO : No, I'm not going back. I'm using the rest to take her to the sea and get her strong.

...

(00:43:57 – 00:44:10)

From the dialogue above, Jo asked her mother, Mrs. March to use all the money to go to the doctor for Beth's treatment. At first, Mrs. March refuses because she thinks that Jo will need it later when she goes back to New York, however, in point of fact she decides to go back to hometown not only for visiting but to stay and look for Beth.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research, First, the writer found there are some dialogues and actions which shows in Jo March that she has both masculinity and femininity which made them to be androgyny person. Many research said that Jo has high masculine traits, however she also invented high feminine traits. According to the result analysis of Jo's characteristics, it implies that Jo is self-sufficient, brave and principled woman. Thus, based in The Bem Sex Role Inventory, masculinity traits in Jo is independent, strong personality, assertive, and analytical. Whereas Jo's feminine traits include affectionate, compassion, sensitive and warm. At first, Jo is depicted as boyish, she does not invest the role in domestic area otherwise she became the breadwinner of the family and disagree on marriage. However, beside the masculine traits, as the time goes by, she pictured as a woman that caring and full of love which include to feminine traits. Therefore, the mixed traits that occur in Jo influence in her relationship between her best friend, Laurie. She became unstable and confused about her own feelings.

Second, the writer notice that because of the mixed traits of Jo March, it causes the barrier in relationship between her and the main character, Laurie. This impact is not only happened to Laurie but it goes to both of them. The first one it affects to Laurie's disappointment after Laurie confesses about his feelings, he fell in love with Jo since the beginning, however Jo rejected him because she loves her freedom too much that no one can changed her mind. The second one is Jo's remorse, long after Laurie's confess she realized that she too fast to made decisions without thinking the consequences. In fact, she actually really cared about Laurie that she afraid to hurt him, this is relate to one of her

feminine traits which is affectionate. Jo feel alone after Laurie left her and indirectly want him come back to her, but fate says otherwise when Laurie ended up marrying Jo's sisters, Amy. And this has to do because she categorized as androgyny which both of masculine and feminine traits influence in her decision-making and her thoughts through her actions.

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