

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the world of film, particularly animated movies, gender representation often reflects society's views on characteristics deemed appropriate for men and women. Many of us grew up watching animated princesses portrayed as gentle, obedient, and often as characters in need of rescue. However, as times have evolved, this portrayal has begun to shift female characters have emerged who display traits typically associated with masculinity, such as courage, independence, and strong physical abilities.

One such example is the character Merida in the 2012 Pixar Animation Studios film *Brave*. Merida is not your typical princess; as a princess of a Scottish kingdom, she is skilled in archery, loves adventuring in the wilderness, and even refuses an arranged marriage tradition set by her family. At first, this research wondered, "Why is this female character portrayed this way?" But after exploring several studies on gender and media, this research realized this is not just a character style it is a form of identity expression that can serve as interesting material for studying masculinity.

The concept of masculinity itself is no longer considered exclusive to men. According to Connell & Messerschmidt (2018), masculinity is a social construct encompassing traits, behaviors, and attitudes culturally associated with male identity, yet it can be expressed by anyone regardless of biological sex. This means women like Merida can also exhibit masculine traits.

When researching previous studies on masculinity in animated films from 2016 to 2025, this research found several interesting works. Augustine (2021), in a study on gender semiotics in *Brave*, noted that Merida has traits that deviate from traditional female norms. Alexander (2021) also examined masculinity in lead female characters from the third era of Disney Princesses, including Merida. Unfortunately, most of these studies focus on comparing feminism and masculinity, so none have specifically explored Merida's masculine traits on their own.

Based on this background, this research felt it necessary to conduct a study focusing specifically on Merida's masculine traits. The goal of this research is to reveal the forms and functions of her masculinity, which this research hopes will contribute to the body of knowledge on gender and fictional characters in the future.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How are Merida's masculinities seen in *Brave* movie?
2. How are the functions of Merida's masculinities seen in *Brave* movie?

1.3 Objective of the Study

1. To describe the forms of masculine expression seen in the character Merida in *Brave*.
2. To explain the functions of Merida's masculinity in the story's development and the formation of her character identity.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This research focuses solely on the main character Merida in the movie *Brave*, with specific emphasis on her masculine roles and expressions. It does not cover other characters or aspects of gender representation beyond Merida's masculinity. The study aims to describe the forms of this masculinity and analyze its functions, using relevant gender studies theory to examine the data.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to benefit literature and gender studies students by enhancing their understanding of non-traditional gender expressions in cinematic characters. The findings can serve as a reference for analyzing gender roles in literary and visual works, and inspire further research on diverse representations of masculinity in media.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

This study operationally defines masculinity as the socially constructed traits, behaviors, and attitudes culturally associated with male identity such as physical prowess, archery skills, independence, courage, and resistance to tradition actively performed by the female main character, Merida, within the *Brave* movie script. Concurrently, masculinity's function refers to the narrative and structural roles these masculine expressions serve in shaping Merida's personal identity, driving the story's conflicts and resolutions, and challenging traditional gender norms within her kingdom.