

## MASCULINITY IN THE CHARACTER OF MARGO ROTH SPIEGELMAN IN *PAPER TOWNS* NOVEL

Silvy Wana Lestari, Surya Sili, Setya Ariani

English Literature Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences,  
Mulawarman University  
Pos-el: [silvyawana@gmail.com](mailto:silvyawana@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Woman and her position toward man in society are always interesting to be discussed. Woman is now labeled by femininity for years and often be associated with several characteristics such as gentle, caring, loving and inferior from man because of the gender stereotype formed by society. By this research, the researcher aimed to analyze the masculine traits of the female character, Margo Roth Spiegelman in *Paper Towns* novel. This research was a qualitative research and used content analysis as the data analysis technique. This research used Sandra L Bem's Sex Role Inventory as the indicator of masculinity in Margo's character in *Paper Towns* novel. The result of this research showed that Margo has masculine traits even though she is a woman and they appeared through three aspects of her character: physical, emotional, and behavioral.

**Keywords:** gender, gender stereotypes, masculinity, *Paper Towns* novel

### ABSTRAK

*Wanita dan posisinya terhadap pria di masyarakat selalu menjadi topik menarik untuk dibahas. Wanita saat ini lekat dengan label kewanitaan yang telah melekat selama bertahun-tahun dan sering dikaitkan dengan beberapa karakteristik khusus seperti lembut, perhatian, penyayang dan lebih rendah daripada pria dikarenakan stereotip yang melekat di masyarakat berdasarkan gender. Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti bermaksud untuk menganalisis sifat maskulin yang ada pada karakter wanita pada novel Paper Towns yaitu Margo Roth Spiegelman. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dan menggunakan teknik konten analisis sebagai teknik analisis data. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori dari Sandra L. Bem, Sex Role Inventory sebagai indikator dari sifat-sifat maskulin pada karakter Margo di novel Paper Towns. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Margo memiliki sifat-sifat maskulin meskipun ia terlahir sebagai wanita dan sifat-sifat tersebut muncul melalui tiga aspek yaitu secara fisik, secara emosi, dan secara tingkah laku.*

**Kata kunci:** gender, stereotip gender, maskulinitas, novel Paper Towns

### A. INTRODUCTION

Issue about woman has spread widely and become a common talk to discuss. It emerges in any sides of social politics, economics, culture and etc. Most of people face and accept this without further question. People do not notice this issue is real before they get to

the moment where they face that woman being topic of discussion. Woman's position in society relates to the word 'feminine' which people tend sticking to woman. According to Bertens, the word 'feminine' is a cultural construction; a design which has been built by society itself (85). It means that there is no certainty about what people know as 'feminine' beside people's opinion which is believed for long time and becomes a pattern. Thus, if there is a pattern created by people, then it means there is also an opportunity of that pattern to be shifted.

To understand the shifting of woman's position, it is important to understand the origin concept of woman's position first. Woman is generally related with her femininity adheres to herself for so many years as Paechter (2006) stated that "femininity or femininities are seen as ways of doing girl or woman," (258). Even though it is still possible to find woman with deficiency of femininity. That kind of woman's characteristic is the one whom people need to know more as the opportunity to change the pattern that has been built about woman's role. This woman's issue appears through the analysis of literary works. Literary work is enjoyed by people widely in the form of novel, poem, play, and movie. The stories in literary work themselves are the reflection of what is going on in society and reveal issues that are happening in real life. The specific issue which is searched by the researcher is the way woman changes the pattern already labeled by society to her; woman is labeled by femininity, so the researcher tries to challenge what has been accepted in the society. The researcher is curious to investigate further of masculinity in a woman's character. Masculine traits themselves have been mentioned by some experts including Bem (1971) that proposed 20 characteristics of masculine traits such as aggressive, dominant, forceful, etc. Those characteristics are expected to be found in order to determine masculinity in a woman's character.

There are many literary works provide strong female characters, *Paper Towns* novel by John Green is one of them. *Paper Towns* was first published in May 2010 and adapted into a movie in 2015 with the same title. This novel contains an interesting issue of the shifting of woman's role, described through the main female character named Margo whose character is a quite different from any other woman in usual. Mysterious is one word to describe what Quentin knows about Margo. No matter how long they become friend with each other, but there is something in Margo that Quentin feels really curious; it is also something that makes Quentin loves Margo so much. Margo is different from other girls outside.

To conclude, this research aimed to reveal the masculine traits of a female character, Margo, in *Paper Towns* novel. This research is expected to give more immense insight about masculinity's possession behind a female character in literary works. Also, it is hoped that the analysis result of this research could be manifested not only in literature study, but also in real life experience.

## **B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1. Masculinity**

The discussion about gender stereotype directly guides the researcher into two categories of gender; masculine and feminine. Masculine and feminine have each trait or characteristic as requirement for one particular gender to be included on masculine or feminin's group. By the word masculine, it spontaneously makes people think about all stuff related to men and it is not wrong indeed. Some experts also have noted their opinion about masculine and masculinity found in some studies.

Pleck (1981, 1995) in Brannon (1963) explained the concept of masculinity in the society at that time which was dominantly by his theory the Male Gender Role Identity. Pleck also added that particular concept unconsciously becomes problem not only for the individual, but also for the society. In simpler way, masculinity referred to male bodies was stated by Connel (2001) as he wrote “masculinity refers to male bodies (sometimes symbolically and indirectly), but is not determined by male biology.” (2). Then he augmented his idea by saying masculinity as a pattern or a shape in social activity related with men’s position determined by his gender as a man. Masculinity is also a point that differentiates men from women.

Since the definition of what masculinity is already answered by Pleck and Connel, the question of which circumstances masculinity leaves no answer. Years ago Berger et al (1995) on Beynon (2002) said that masculinity is cultural meanwhile ‘maleness’ is biological. Here cultural means that masculinity executed differentially depends on the culture where it belongs to; at different times in different circumstances in different places by individuals or groups. Berger’s idea is exactly similar with Dowd which stated “masculinity theory sees masculinity, in any form, as a social construction, not as biological given” (2008). It is indeed confirmed masculinity as truly engaged with social practices and regulate what men should and should not do and have in their perform and action. It was Ricciardeli & Williams (1995) formulized their theory about masculinity based on its characteristics. Brannon (1962) illustrated masculinity with characteristics as follow: strong, aggressive, bossy, confident, firm, sarcastic, forceful, rude, carefree, and feel superior which are definitely suitable with the characteristics of men.

Nevertheless, the indicators of masculinity proposed by Ricciardeli & Williams above are still possible to be found in female’s body. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) wrote on her book *The Second Sex* “They behave like men in a world without man.” (497). With mentioning the word “they”, Beauvoir meant women. It emphasizes that masculinity belongs to women’s body and appearance.

In conclusion, masculinity is an identity which is believed by our society engaged with men with particular characteristics. Masculinity in men is a cultural construction, different with ‘maleness’ which biologically or naturally exists since the men were born. Although it is only a construction, yet it is important for men to have masculine characteristics to be considered as men for their identity. Also because it is only a construction and influenced by environment, it still has possibilities to be found in place where it does not belong to, as well as masculinity in women.

## 2. Sandra L. Bem’s Sex Role Inventory

This theory was widely known as BSRI (Bem Sex Role Inventory) and was introduced by Dr. Sandra Lipzits Bem in 1971. BSRI was created differently with other theories which categorized men and women only belong to one sex-types either they are masculine or feminine. Bem looked a chance for individuals belong to both masculine and both feminine; which later she called as ‘androgynous’ (1955). BSRI contains 20 characteristics for each sex-typed with one additional row for neutral items or neutral traits. The concept of Bem’s androgynous individuals is similar with the idea of this researcher that indicates that there is masculinity inside a female’s character named Margo Roth Spiegelman. Bem’s theory about androgynous individuals claimed that there is chance for an individual to have both masculinity and femininity in his or her character without one of them being the mask of his or her identity.

Discarding the Bem’s androgyny theory, this research used Sandra L. Bem’s theory of Sex Role Inventory as the indicator to measure the masculine traits in Margo’s character in *Paper Towns* novel. In Sex Role Inventory theory, Bem gave 20 characteristics of masculinity,

20 characteristics of femininity and 20 characteristics of neutral character. Bem mentioned that “Masculinity has been associated with an instrumental orientation, a cognitive focus on ‘getting the job done’” (156). It means that Bem relates masculinity with ‘father’s role’; relevant with people’s belief that masculinity belongs to men. There are 20 masculine traits mentioned by Bem to measure masculinity in an individual. These characteristics later are the indicators for the researcher to characterize the character of Margo Roth Spiegelman as follows:

**Table 1.**  
**The measurement of masculinity and femininity based on Sandra L. Bem’s Sex Role Inventory (1974)**

<b>Masculine traits</b>	
Act as a leader	Has a leadership abilities
Aggressive	Independent
Ambitious	Individualistic
Analytical	Makes decisions easily
Assertive	Masculine
Athletic	Self-reliant
Competitive	Self-sufficient
Defends own beliefs	Strong personality
Dominant	Willing to take a stand
Forceful	Willing to take risks

*Source: Bem, Sandra L, "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology 42 (1974):155-162. Web. February 2017.*

Masculinity in Margo’s character is determined by those 20 characteristics of being masculine above. Those characteristics are not gotten simultaneously, but through the process of collecting around 200 characteristics of masculinity and eliminating them into only 20 characteristics which have positive and negative value. Bem also noted that this indicator is made not in the pursuit of judging certain sex-typed about how they should or should not be, yet it is only describing variation of people’s characteristics (155).

### **C. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research was a qualitative research based on Patton and Cochran’s statement (2002) that explained the aim of qualitative research is to understand some aspect of social life and generate words rather than number as its data for the analysis as well as what the researcher is going to do in conducting this research. Thus, this research was a qualitative research because the researcher attempted to understand an aspect of social life through this research; masculinity in Margo Roth Spiegelman’s character. Since masculinity cannot be counted or measured using particular formula, yet they are seen by observing the character, qualitative research is accurate in conducting this research. In the data processing, this research also fulfills the requirement of qualitative approach’s characteristics that producing words instead of number as the data for the analysis.

From numbers of research approach in qualitative research, this research used content analysis approach since the researcher analyzed particular content of particular text, *Paper Towns* novel by John Green. As stated by Cole (1988) in Elo & Kyngas (2008), “content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages”, so *Paper*

*Towns* novel is role as a written communication messages in this research. Content analysis is the right method to this research because it enables researchers to study human behavior indirectly for example is through the analysis of their communication (Fraenkel et al 2009). Also, the researcher used content analysis approach in order to examine meaning, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text (Zhang and Wildemuth). Content analysis produces subjective interpretation yet it is not instantly subjective. The researcher still follows systematic classification in the process of data analysis and considering reasons from other experts' opinion for the final interpretation (Hsieh and Shannon 2005 in Zhang and Wildemuth).

In conducting this research, the researcher focused on the issue of masculinity in a character of Margo Roth Spiegelman in *Paper Towns* novel. The researcher used Sandra L. Bem's theory as the indicator to indicate the masculine traits in Margo's characterization and specific theories from other experts to explain each indicator. The indicators themselves divided into three parts: physical characteristic, emotional characteristic and behavioral characteristic. At the end of this research, the researcher was able to discover the masculine traits that are owned and shown by Margo in this novel.

#### D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Masculine traits in Margo's character are found in each category; physical, emotional, and behavioral. There are 15 characteristics out of 20 as suggested by Bem (1974) that represent masculinity. They are masculine, athletic, ambitious, individualistic, aggressive, assertive, act as a leader, analytical, forceful, has a leadership ability, independent, makes decision easily, self-reliant, self-sufficient and willing to take risks. Other masculine traits which are competitive, defends own beliefs, strong personality, dominant and willing to take a stand are not found in Margo's character. From the three categories, Margo's masculine traits are more frequently seen through her behavior or through how she acted in her daily life. By her behavior, it can be seen that she has masculine traits when she interacts with Quentin. Moreover, she also could do certain activities that are used to be done by man such as running fast and climbing.

In the process of analysis Margo's masculinity, the researcher found an event when Margo shows two indicators of masculinity at once. It was when Margo argued with Quentin and Margo was so angry because Quentin appeared in Margo's hidden place without any kind of warning. Margo's action at that time was grabbing Quentin's shirt and it included on masculine on physical characteristic and also aggressive in behavioral characteristic.

From the 20 indicators of masculinity based on Bem's Sex Role Inventory, the researcher divided them into three categories: physical characteristics, emotional characteristics and behavioral characteristics.

##### a. Physical characteristics

This category consists of masculine traits that are owned and shown by Margo in the events of the novel through her physique and the ability of her physique. In this category, Margo has two characteristics of masculinity which is masculine and athletic. Masculine character is seen by one event when Margo and Quentin argued each other as shown in the data below:

**She spins around and grabs a fistful of my shirt and shouts into my face,**  
"Where do you get off showing up here without any kind of warming?!"  
(Green 283)

It shows masculine characteristics since masculine according to Cornell in Brannon (2004) is character that usually belongs to man or male. Grabbing shirt and screaming loud are kind of actions that are usually done by man instead of woman.

Beside masculine characteristic, Margo also has athletic characteristic related to her physique. There are several events on the novel where Margo shows the strength of her body as presented in the data below:

... **Then she was running all out toward the car**, and I had a foot on the accelerator and a foot on the brake, and the Chrysler felt at that moment like a Thoroughbred racehorse. **Margo ran so fast her hat blew off behind her, and then she jumped into the car**, and we were gone before she even get the door closed. (Green 48)

From Quentin's sight, he described Margo ran with high speed and forcefully until her hat blew off by the wind. Then she jumped to the car instead of entering the car properly. Margo's action –running so fast and jumping to the car- in that event is impossible if she does not have fit and strong body. The strength of her body was gotten because she liked to do some exercise that made her able to do such things. Miller proposed that there are several qualities belong to person with athletic character such as like to doing exercise as what Margo did in Jefferson Park as presented in the data below:

Margo didn't play any sports, **but she liked to run- I sometimes saw her running by herself** listening to music in Jefferson Park. (Green 56)

Based on the narration above, Quentin explained an activity that used to be doing by Margo which is running. Running is one kind of exercise which is usually done by individual which is fit and active physically. It is suitable with Miller's statement about one of qualities owned by athletic person which is like to do exercise for the body. Athletic characteristic of Margo is also shown in some events where she shows her ability in climbing tree as shown in the sample of data:

I watched her **climb up a tree and then lift herself onto the roof outside of her second-floor bedroom**. She jimmied her window open and crawled inside. (Green 81-82)

By the data above, Margo showed the strength of her body by climbing a tree and lifting herself onto the roof to enter to her bedroom in the second floor of her house. It is indeed needed a strong body to be able to climb a quite high tree and Margo is able to do that. She also could lift or bring her body by herself into her bedroom which is in the second floor of her house. That event did not happen just once, because in other event Margo told Quentin that she climbed up to Quentin's window so that she could do her plan. Climbing up through the window is not an action which everyone could do easily especially for a girl, but Margo succeed doing it without any difficulties seen from her explanation to Quentin. Her ability in climbing tree proves that Margo is an athletic person since she has strong and fit body to climb the tree by her own.

## b. Emotional Characteristics

This category consists of masculine traits which are related with Margo's way of thinking and feeling, including the way Margo's thought about what will happen to her in certain situation. There are ambitious and individualistic traits that belong to Margo in this category. Margo in one event in the novel shows that she is really an ambitious person. It happened when she and Quentin wanted to enter the Sea World in the middle of the night as the data:

“Yeah, so if that guy can make it in drunk, surely we can make it in sober. I mean, we're ninjas.” (Green 72).

Margo's utterance shows that she is so sure that they can succeed to achieve their goal at that time. It is suitable with the explanation of ambitious person from Barsukova (2016) who stated that an ambitious person is type of person who actively and consistently achieves the goals. It means that an ambitious person will try as hard as he/she can to achieve his/her goal.

### c. Behavioral characteristic

This category consists of several traits that can be seen in Margo's character through her behavior and how she acted in the novel. The masculine traits in this category are connected with what Margo does and does not in the events of the novel. Margo has aggressive, assertive, act as a leader and has leadership ability, analytical, forceful, independent, self-reliant, self-sufficient, makes decision easily and willing to take risks of masculine traits in this category. There was one event when Margo without permission put her stuff in Quentin's van and acted like that van was her own as presented in the conversation below:

“...Listen, that reminds me, **I took the liberty of putting some supplies in the back of the van earlier.**”

“What, like, before I agreed to all this?”

“**Well, yes. Technically yes.** Anyway...” (Green 31)

That conversation shows an aggressive behavior in Margo since it is suitable with the definition of aggressive as an “effort to claim status, precedent, or access to an object or territory” (Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology 30). According to the conversation, Margo designates an effort to claim an object as her authority which is Quentin's van. Margo's action at that time was she put all the stuffs they bought earlier in the back of the Quentin's van without Quentin's permission at first. Then when she was about to ask Quentin's permission she said “... **I took the liberty of putting some supplies in the back of the van earlier.**”, which signed that even without Quentin's agreement, she already put all the stuffs there. Quentin answered Margo in confusion and Margo replied again to emphasize her sentence before about the van. Thus in this conversation, Margo shows her aggressive behavior toward Quentin's van.

Then there are some events where Margo acted as a leader and had a leadership ability as shown in the sample of data below:

“We'll see,” she answered quickly, and then perked up and said,

“**Oh, hey, I'll handle this one. The thing about Jason's house is they have this crazy good security system. And we can't have another panic attack.**” (Green 47)

The conversation above was taken when they wanted to leave a fish for Margo's ex-boyfriend, Jason in his house. Margo did it by herself by saying **"I'll handle this one"** considering the fact that Jason's house has very good security system, so she did not want to bring them to any trouble by getting caught. Here, Margo was a leader who showed her responsibility of something. When she thought Quentin could not do the mission, then she would do it by herself. She also acted as a leader looking through her effort to make her and Quentin safe in the mission in Jason's house. By this situation, Margo showed her accountability to protect Quentin from danger's circumstances as well as Givray said that responsibility is part of a leader's duty (2012).

## E. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that Margo has 15 out of 20 masculine traits in her character in *Paper Towns* novel. The masculine traits in the character of Margo Roth Spiegelman in *Paper Towns* novel based on Bem's Sex Role Inventory theory are analytical, forceful, act as a leader, has leadership ability, independent, individualistic, assertive, ambitious, aggressive, athletic, willing to take risks, self-reliant, self-sufficient, make decisions easily, and masculine. Meanwhile, other masculine traits such as dominant, defends own belief, competitive, strong personality and willing to take a stand are not found in Margo's character. Margo's masculine traits are more often seen through her behavior and the way she acted in her daily life. She is also found reliable enough to do certain activity that usually belongs to man such as climbing up a tree.

The researcher recommends future researchers to do analysis using the same object of this research, Margo's character in *Paper Towns* Novel about how Margo's character is valued by female character. It is still needed to be analyzed whether the result of Margo's character and behavior that have been found in this research is different when she communicates and interacts with female character. Also, the researcher recommends for future researchers to analyze the factors; internal and external, that make Margo's character shows masculinity instead of femininity as a woman.

## WORKS CITED

- "Aggressive." *Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2001. Web. 8 March 2017.
- Barsukova, Oksana V. "Psychological Characteristic of Ambitious Person." *(JPMNT) Journal of Process Management – New Technologies, International* 4 No. 2 (2016): 79-80. Web. 5 August 2017.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Vintage Books, 2011. Web. 8 February 2017.
- Bertens, Hans. *Literary Theories: The Basics*. London: Routledge, 2014. Print.
- Bem, Sandra L. "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42 (1974): 155-162. Web. 10 February 2017.
- Beynon, John. *Masculinities and Culture*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002. Web. 9 February 2017.
- Brannon, Linda. *Gender: Psychological Perspectives*. 2004. Web. 8 February 2017.

- Connel, Raewyn. "Gender, Men, and Masculinities." *Quality of Human Resources: Gender and Indigenous People* (2001): n. page. Web. 9 February 2017.
- Dowd, Nancy E. "Masculinities and Feminist Legal Theory." *The Man Question: Feminist Jurisprudence, Masculinities and Law*. New York: New York University Press, 2008: n. page. Web. 9 February 2017.
- Elo, Satu and Helvi Kyungas. "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process." *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62 (2008): 107-115. Web. 25 February 2017.
- Givray S. Henry. *12 Distinguish Qualities to Define True Leaders*. Smith Bucklin Corporation, 2012. Web. 7 August 2017.
- Green, John. *Paper Towns*. London: Bloomsburry, 2008. Print.
- Miller, Anna M. "8 Signs You are Made to be an Athlete." US News: 2016. Web. 9 August 2017.
- Patton, Michael Quinn and Michael Cochran. *A Guide to Using Qualitative Research Methodology*. Medecins Sans Frontierers (2002). Web. 25 February 2017.
- Wallen, Norman E and Jack. R. Fraenkel. *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009. Web. 7 April 2017.
- Zhang, Yan and Barbara M. Wildemuth. "Qualitative Analysis of Content". Web. 26 February 2017.

