

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY DEPICTED IN PAULO COELHO'S *BRIDA*

Itsna Syahadatud Dinurriyah^{1✉}, Raudlotul Jannah²

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Jl. A. Yani 117 Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia^{1,2}

Article Info

Article History:
Received September 2022
Accepted February 2023
Published April 2023

Keywords:

the tradition of the sun,
the tradition of the moon,
witchcraft, gender

Abstract

This research is about gender studies in the tradition of the sun and the tradition of the moon, as depicted in Paulo Coelho's *Brida*. Both traditions are symbols of masculinity and femininity in witchcraft. Therefore, besides utilizing the concept of gender, this study also applies a semiotics approach to comprehend the symbols in the narration. This research is qualitative by using descriptive analysis since the data is collected from text inside the novel. The method is done by comparing the data in the tradition of the sun with the tradition of the moon that show male and female meanings and then analyzing them based on the symbols from a gender perspective. This research finds that masculinity and femininity in witchcraft initially shape gender inequality in society since witches claim the same opportunity, whereas society only admits the magician's intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the relationship between masculinity and femininity in witchcraft (witch and magician) as depicted in Paulo Coelho's *Brida*. The relationship between them emerges in the narrative since modern society claims gender equality. However, the image of the witch was initially not as fair as the image they received in the novel. Society preferred to accept the existence of magicians since they were men. It is related to masculinity. Masculinity is believed to be the configuration of gender practice that embodies patriarchy's legitimacy, which guarantees 'the dominant position of men and the subordination of the women' (Connell, 2005, p. 77). This male dominance occurs, for they are believed as powerful creatures who protect the female ones.

Meanwhile, femininity is only known as the terminology attached to women without a definite definition up to now. Therefore, Susan Brownmiller argues that femininity is an exasperation, a brilliant, subtle esthetic that was bafflingly inconsistent while demandingly concrete, a rigid code of appearance and behavior defined by do's and don't-do's (1984, p. 8). Moreover, femininity, socially, is always connected to a woman's nature. Thus, there is an unequal elucidation between masculinity and femininity. Meanwhile, masculinity stresses male practices that make his position 'higher,' more respected, and more intelligent than woman; femininity is conceptualized on her condition that cannot be changed or exchanged. Women have a nature of menstruation, pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding. That is, it is about position versus condition. However, because of this inequality, men can modify their position as masculine figures, whereas women cannot do any progress.

In *Brida*, Coelho introduces masculinity and femininity through the tradition of witchcraft: the tradition of the sun and the tradition of the moon. The tradition of the sun is believed as the path of all men (Coelho, 2008, p. 126). Magus, a magician, is the representative of this tradition. Meanwhile, Wicca, a witch, represents the tradition of the moon. It means there is gender division in witchcraft. This division does not allow the pupils of witchcraft to choose their preferred tradition. They learn the magic based on their gender.

Brida is a product of popular literature. Nurgiyantoro asserts that a pop novel is written to entertain the readers; it is produced to fulfill people's tastes (2018, p. 17). In Western society, popular literature is known as innovative, experimental, and theme free since the market is teenagers (Nurgiyantoro, 2018, p. 18). Therefore, the main character in *Brida* is a teenage girl. With this definition, a pop novel is considered a work that is not serious and is rarely researched. In this case, we hardly find any previous research on gender studies in this novel.

Two works related to *Brida* that we find are mentioned as follows.

The first is written by Daniel Raymond Siahaan (2016). The title of his writing is *Subordinations in Paulo Coelho's Novel Brida*. In his research, Siahaan stresses the use of subordinating language and the meanings in the novel. That is, this writing is linguistic research. Meanwhile, the second research is written by Elisabeth Christya Noviargarini (2013) and entitled *The Symbols Expressed in Paulo Coelho's Brida*. In her paper, Noviargini focuses on symbols used in the narrative, symbols of characters, and actions. Thus, Noviargini employs structuralism in her analysis.

Meanwhile, this research focuses on gender division and its relation to one another. The description of the characters and their characterizations are needed to explain the roles of masculinity and femininity, either socially or sexually. Judith Butler sees gender as forced human culture because of the influence of the hierarchy of heterosexuality (2006, p. xii). Heterosexuality itself is an attempt for men to reaffirm their male supremacy (Sergeant, 2015, p. 128). Thus, the hierarchy positions men as superior and dominate women. By these arguments, masculinity does not accept homosexuality since homosexuality is subordinated (Connell, 2005, p. 78); no masculine men want to be dominated.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In heuristic in this study, we employ the concept of gender study, particularly *Masculinities* (2005) by Raewyn W. Connell and *Femininity* (1986) by Susan Brownmiller. Connell and Messerschmidt focus masculinity on how manhood is practiced in society (2005, p. 836). They do not examine the male's ideal torso. In addition, Connell highlights that masculinity in the majority is hegemonic (2005, p. 77). This type leads men to be dominant over because of the effect of patriarchy (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 840). Connell also exposes that this masculinity must be heterosexual; none of the hegemonic masculines is dominated (2005, p. 78). Man's position in society must be higher because they have power and function as protectors.

Femininity, on the other hand, is the condition attached to women. It is a function but not a position. Therefore, Brownmiller argues that there is no fixed definition of femininity (1984, p. 8). It is only about what women can do and do not. There is an unfair position here. When men do not have any restricted rules for their actions in society, women have many social norms to apply. Women must follow social rules, from how they care for their bodies to how they socialize with others.

Thus, these two concepts are needed to understand the meaning of masculinity and femininity and the relationship between both. Then, the concepts are brought into the context of the tradition of the sun and the tradition of the moon. However, some concepts are challenged by the narrative since Coelho exposes the modern context.

METHOD

Despite discussing the inequality between masculinity and femininity, this study examines the reason for the division and simultaneously explores the relationship between these two genders. Therefore, to make this analysis, the descriptive analysis method is needed. The study takes the data from the narrative to be analyzed based on the concept utilized. The data are the concept of the tradition of the sun and the tradition of the moon. They are compared to each other to comprehend their characteristics. By knowing the types, gender division in the narrative can be explored. The narrative here is through dialogue, characterization, and character behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion of this study is divided into three themes: (1) Magus as the representative of masculinity – exposing Magus’ representation as a heterosexual masculine figure; (2) Wicca as the representative of femininity – highlighting the indications of the female nature and the symbols; and (3) the relationship between masculinity and femininity - attempting to understand the harmony between these two genders.

Magus as the Representative of Masculinity

The name of Magus is derived from an old English word that means magic. David J. Collins mentions a book entitled *Renaissance Magus*, which is about an invisible man in the tradition of ancient magic in Europe. This man was the one who connected at once separated magic and science (Collins, 2015, p. 3). That is, Magus was the man (and always a man) who could define the rational things in life; he could explain which one was logical and illogical.

In the novel narrative, Coelho describes magic as a bridge between the visible and invisible realms (Coelho, 2008, p. 9). The commoners only know about the visible world because, by that plain view, they can accept rationality. They only understand what exhibit in front of them. However, the person who understands magic will comprehend what is behind the invisibility. In fact, the invisibility can be understandable if people know the knowledge. Thus, knowledge is the key for a man to be a magus (magician). Cristina Masters remarks, “[t]he inscription of

technology with masculinity fundamentally constitutes technology as rational, objective and the source of moral knowledge claims” (2005, p. 122). That is, being masculine means being rational, objective, and knowledgeable. This statement strengthens that [M]agus is the representative of masculinity.

The character of Magus in the narrative is depicted as a mature man who lives in the forest to be united with nature. “His hair was grizzled, his skin burned by the sun, and he had the physique of someone used to walking in the mountains” (Coelho, 2008, p. 9). Physically, Magus is an attractive man that shows his masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt state that masculinity tends to reveal “configurations of practices that are accomplished in social action” instead of “a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals” (2005, p. 836). In the context of Magus, the novel narrative focuses on his physical appearance at first to emphasize his manhood. His muscularity shows that physically he is not a weak person. A strong man is easier to get more attention, particularly from women, because it shows their ability to protect. It supports the masculine principle that drives the ethos of superiority; they look straightforward, confident, and successful (Brownmiller, 1986, p.10).

Although the narrative first stresses Magus’s physical traits, his behavior is exposed later. His masculinity through his action becomes the main point in the novel; the tradition of the sun focuses on the action (Coelho, 2008, p. 123). In this case, Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe argue how masculinity represents the practice of male dominance and how this seeks to strengthen a man’s position in society (2009, p. 279). As a magician, Magus has this position in society. He is believed to have a big power that can change the wind's direction; his dominance also leads him to fall in love with another man’s wife (p.13). The second ruins his integrity as a teacher of magic. He is wrong in applying his dominance to others, particularly women. Male dominance is central to understanding the concept of masculinity. However, society itself provides the measure of the assessment.

The mistake Magus does is related to love; it is the first concept in the tradition of the sun (Coelho, 2008, p. 106). It means there is a contradiction in the concept. It collides with the idea that a man is masculine because of his rationality and the concept of love that pushes him to express his love to a woman, which is considered illogical. Showing his love for women can reduce his dominance over women. Thus, the meaning of love here can be physical; the expression of love is not verbal. A man needs love to validate his masculinity in terms of sexual engagement. Through this action, a man can dominate a woman.

Through this elucidation, it is understood that a man is considered a master of magic since he has knowledge that not everybody comprehends. The knowledge itself is something rational.

Thus, a masculine man is believed as the representative of logic. Being emotional shows his vulnerability (De Boise & Hearn, 2017, p. 782). A masculine cannot show his feeling, for it is irrational. In the context of Magus, he is masculine for his muscularity and power over nature. However, he loses his masculinity because he shows his emotion. In a masculinity context, love is not an utterance; it is the act to prove, particularly in the way heterosexual men do.

Wicca, as the Representative of Femininity

Like Magus, the word Wicca originated from an old English word, 'wicce' (Bergman, 2015). Recently, the word has changed to 'witch,' which connotes negatively. Witch is the embodiment of femininity that challenges or rejects all societal standards of women. Witch is considered too old, too arrogant, too sexually aggressive, too strong, and too wicked (Bergman, 2015). The last word is connected with the form of the word 'witch,' which has a negative meaning.

In Greek mythology, there was a legend about a woman named Hecate. She had a very big wheelhouse. She was associated with magic, night, moon, ghosts, sorcery, and light. However, from all associations, Hecate was more attached to the moon since it symbolized night and dark. Thus, it is logical that Wicca, a female, and a witch, is under the tradition of the moon.

Hecate, who had a big wheelhouse, is considered a woman who stayed away from society's standards. Having a big wheelhouse for a woman is out of the limit. It symbolizes Hecate's ability to possess a big thing that only a man can; it shows her independence. In addition, Hecate can see the invisible realm and expertly define it. This ability is denied by society since she is a woman. She cannot compete with a man; only Magus (magician) can have that intelligence. Chitralkha Baruah and Mini Thakur argue that the witch symbol strengthens the image of gender inequality and marginalizes women in a patriarchal society (2019, p. 209). That is, the negative image is always attached to 'educated' women so they do not compete with men and follow society's criteria of femininity.

Laura Mulvey states, "Woman displayed as a sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle. She holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire" (2009, p. 19). The position of being the object makes a woman unable to explore herself. She must also be passive in romantic engagement (Funnell, 2011, p. 467). Therefore, in another legend, *Vita Merlini* (1150), Geoffrey of Monmouth narrated Morgan le Fay, the antagonist in King Arthur. Le Fay was a witch who helped many people, but her love for Lancelot did not run well. She was rejected sexually. This story leads to the worse image of a witch because they fail in love. The truth is that many men avoid the knowledgeable women because it means they compete with

their spouse. They even think that women can dominate men if they are knowledgeable enough. If the women dominate men, they do not need men's protection and being independent (Brownmiller, 1984, p. 10).

In the context of *Brida*, Wicca is a single woman. She was in love with Magus in the past, but then they broke up (Coelho, 2008, p. 87). Her story is similar to Morgan le Fay. The difference is that Wicca does not feel pathetic and out of society's standard. She lives in a modern era in which people do not care about other's individual life. It means Wicca believed that having sexual intercourse is human nature, including women. However, she does not need to experience like other women to understand nature. Despite being single, Wicca teaches that in the tradition of the moon, there is a cycle of the moon: birth, life, and death (p.92). This cycle is a symbol of femininity. A feminine woman naturally experiences this cycle every month. She can give birth when the cycle stops. Giving birth means giving a life for a new life. However, when the cycle continues, she cannot give birth, meaning no new life comes (death).

This cycle, in the narrative, teaches women about time (Coelho, 2008, p. 9). All their activities are connected with time. Therefore, women are very good at memorizing. They can memorize the events in the past well. Then, this ability can affect women's emotions. This condition leads society to judge that women are more emotional than rational. Thus, if women are rational, they deny nature.

From the exposition above, it is understood that the unequal treatment experienced by women because of their ability to reach a similar position to men threatens masculinity. Man's position is threatened, whereas femininity stays safe because female intelligence does not harm women's nature. Women can still experience their cycle, although they are smart. It relates to the female condition that cannot be changed or exchanged.

The Relationship Between Masculinity and Femininity

Brownmiller highlights that masculinity and femininity are polar ends of the human continuum (1984, p. 10). Both genders are known as the opposite site. However, the novel does not put them in the different polar opposite. The first teaching in the tradition of the sun is love; love is the expression in human life to emerge the birth, life, and death. Thus, both need each other to 'create the new one.'

In another principle, the moon's tradition is considered night, dark, and mystery. All of them are related to something horrible. Women are mysterious. Therefore, the ones who can expose the mystery are men. Men who claim they are knowledgeable and rational can face the

darkness women deliver without fear. Nothing scares them because the more mysterious, the more curious they are.

The tradition of the sun focuses its teaching on space and time, and they think it is very logical. On the other hand, the tradition of the moon is accustomed to time; most of their activities are related to time. Thus, there is a similarity between masculinity and femininity in this case, although the application is different. Men use the time logically; meanwhile, women employ it emotionally. Therefore, women are considered more expressive than men.

CONCLUSION

Despite the differences between masculinity and femininity, these two polar need one another. Men are masculine since their power leads them to be dominant over women. They are believed as the ones who understand the mystery of the world. This condition happens because they like to work rationally. They can define the invisible realm so the commoner can comprehend its secret.

On the other hand, women, who experience the cycle of the moon, are believed as the ones who only know to work with their emotions. Thus, knowledge and science are strange in them. Furthermore, women's capability to be equal to men threatens men's position. Men are anxious if their position as the protector of women will vanish because of women's independence. However, these two polar should work together to create the next life in the world.

REFERENCES

- Baruah, C., & Thakur, M. B. (2019). Accusing women as witches: A gendered outlook. *The Oriental Anthropologist*, 19(2), 208–218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972558X19862397>
- Bergman, J. (2015). *A literary history of witches: Scaring men from time immemorial*. LITERARY HUB. <https://lithub.com/a-literary-history-of-witches/>
- Brownmiller, S. (1984). *Femininity*. Paladin.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Coelho, P. (2008). *Brida*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Collins, D. J. (Ed.). (2015). *The Cambridge history of magic and witchcraft in the West: From antiquity to the present*. Cambridge University Press.
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6), 829–859. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>
- De Boise, S., & Hearn, J. (2017). Are men getting more emotional? Critical sociological

- perspectives on men, masculinities and emotions. *The Sociological Review*, 65(4), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026116686500>
- Funnell, L. (2011). “I know where you keep your gun”: Daniel Craig as the Bond–Bond girl hybrid in *Casino Royale*. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 44(3), 455–472. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1540-5931.2011.00843.X>
- Masters, C. (2005). Bodies of technology: Cyborg soldiers and militarized masculinities. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7(1), 112–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461674042000324718>
- Monmouth, G. of. (1150). *Vita Merlini*. Global Grey ebooks. <https://www.globalgreybooks.com/vita-merlini-ebook.html>
- Mulvey, L. (2009). *Visual and other pleasures* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Noviargarini, E. C. (2013). *The symbols expressed in Paulo Coelho’s Brida* [Universitas Sanata Dharma]. <https://repository.usd.ac.id/8113/>
- Nurdiyantoro, B. (2018). *Teori pengkajian fiksi*. UGM Press.
- Schrock, D., & Schwalbe, M. (2009). Men, masculinity, and manhood acts. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35(2009), 277–295. <https://doi.org/10.1146/ANNUREV-SOC-070308-115933>
- Sergeant, A. (2015). Bond is not enough: Elektra King and the desiring Bond girl. In L. Funnell (Ed.), *For His Eyes Only: The Women of James Bond*. Columbia University Press.
- Siahaan, D. R. W. P. (2016). *Subordinations in Paulo Coelho’s novel Brida*. Universitas Sumatera Utara.