



Representation of Masculine Woman in *The Invitation* (2022)

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Abstract

*This research discusses the representation of masculine women in the film *The Invitation*, using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. We investigate how the representation of female masculinity is portrayed in the film through the meaning of denotation, connotation, and myth. Several concepts related to the research, such as gender studies, masculinity, woman, masculine woman, and semiotics, are used. This research uses a qualitative method supported by semiotic and descriptive qualitative research. The data collection techniques for this research include observation, literature review, and additional sources. The result of the research is the traits and attitudes of masculine women depicted through Evie's character. The masculine traits and attitudes such as daring to take risks, resilience, assertiveness, and responsibility are shown in Evie's character. In conclusion, Evie's character exemplifies a dominant, masculine female who challenges stereotypical myths. Therefore, possessing masculine traits is entirely acceptable for women. Film is a powerful medium that can highlight the representation of women overcoming adversity and challenging prevailing stereotypes. It further represents women's vital roles within both personal and societal contexts.*

Keywords: gender studies, Roland Barthes, semiotics, the invitation, masculine woman

Introduction

Women today are different from those in the past. They are no longer bound by social constructs that become gender issues. Gender issues are common around the world and are a global discussion. The definition of gender itself is the view of society on a male or female role

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that has its differences, such as differences in social roles, positions, responsibilities, and functions of each role, which result from cultural practices and existing social construction. Therefore, it is often the case that gender also changes from the habits, character, and behavior of the community according to what is mutually agreed upon in the rules of society [1]. So, views on gender are dynamic and can change according to the times and times, and the understanding of gender is based on social and cultural constructs, which can be altered and change the development and place where it occurs [2], [3]. One of the genders is masculinity.

Masculinity is a characteristic or role that is often attributed to men. Masculinity is gender traditional value of men's beliefs and actions that are produced and accepted by society and culture, and reproduced in social daily life [4]. Each region or culture sometimes has its own definition of masculinity. According to [5] stated that the concept of masculinity is characterized by particular cultural practices and behaviors. Traits and habits of masculinity constructs are associated with men as opposed to feminine in females. Whitehead and Barret in [5], the most general way, masculinity is a social construct that includes "the behaviors, languages, and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with men and thus culturally defined as not feminine." Courage, loyalty, and assertiveness are qualities that are intrinsic to the term "masculine," though these differ depending on cultural context. Raewyn Connel in [6] stated that 'The hegemony (dominance) of masculinity can be defined as a configuration of gender practices that ensures the dominant position of men over women', based on this concept, a strong male identity is characterized by actions that are distinct from those of the feminine. In the current social dynamics, masculinity has become a gender-neutral concept that can be owned by men and women.

Women have been exposed to different perspectives shaped by the environment, both in lifestyle and daily activities. In films, for example, which often show the boundaries were masculinity of men and femininity of women. Film reflects a social condition that takes place as a reality in society, and some of film concern a woman figure. Negative stereotypes are often shown to women where they are portrayed as minorities, subordinates who have a degree as if they are lower than men to discrimination in society [7]. These social restrictions are the result of gender stereotypes which usually link to these expectations in society such as femininity with

morality, physical attractiveness, consumptive, also domestic area, while masculinity with dominance, competence, productive, also money-makers [8], [9]. Women must be considered beautiful, graceful, must look gentle, empathy, kindness, and patience. While men are often associated with being mighty, having a strong physique, assertive, authoritative, and physical strength. Naturally, human beings have both feminine and masculine sides. Sometimes one side is more dominant. Men can have more feminine traits than their masculine side, and women can have more masculine traits than their feminine side. The masculine traits of women are often described as being independent, assertive, and strong [10]. People often use nicknames to describe these traits. For example, they use "sissy" to describe feminine men and "tomboy" to describe masculine women. With the development of the existing era, characteristics change and shift from existing genders such as masculine women who do not always adhere to existing social constructions. According to Christie et al. in [11] argues that masculine and feminine characteristics are becoming freer and no longer limited to traditional gender stereotypes. This gender issue, film as a media often shows depictions that represent women themselves. Therefore, representation of the masculine woman becomes interesting precisely because of how women are portrayed.

Traits and behaviors such as immaturity, sensitivity, weakness, excessive talking, fussiness, and other traits are often shown as representations of women in films. However, films also represent women's traits such as bravery, strength, and resilience, and these representations often suggest that film has power to influence perspectives. Representation is the production of meaning through language, which can reflect and imitate, impose to justify the existing, or construct stereotypes. Representation has two meanings according to Stuart Hall in [12], there are mental representations associated with person's thinking to abstract ideas and language representations associated with constructing meaning from abstract ideas. Representation connects three key elements: 'something' (the object or idea), the 'conceptual map' (how we understand and describe it in our minds), and 'symbol and language' (the means through communicated) [13]. In simple terms, representation works to produced and constructed through representation systems, the concepts in thought which exists in mind that makes someone know the meaning of something, and language which communicate the meaning [14],

[15]. Representation can refer to the way someone or something is portrayed in film to be understood as producing meaning. Then, the representation of the role of masculine women becomes its own attraction in an analysis of research material. In order to deepen this analysis, semiotic theory is used.

Semiotic analysis is a research method to interpret the meaning of a communication message from its surface meaning and deeper meaning. Sobur in [12] stated that the term "semiotics" is used to denote the scientific study of signs in a systematic way, with an emphasis on the characteristics of signs, the processes by which they are formed, and the way their significance is developed and transferred. Semiotics' objective aims to uncover the meaning behind signs and interpret their meaning to know how the communicator constructs a message from existing sign. Wibowo in [16] stated that semiotic focuses on signs. One literary work that uses a lot of semiotic signs is film. The usage of semiotic signs in film serves as a learning resource, considering the function of film as a media that conveys messages to the audience, thus shaping their interpretations and meanings [17]. There are many semiotics experts who have this study, one of them is Roland Barthes. Barthes semiotic analysis definitively examines signs and how they work based on Ferdinand de Saussure's theories on signs. Saussure's semiotics theory argues that sign is consist of signifier and signified. In Barthes semiotic theory, he divides into signifiers and signs through several stages: denotation which the first stage of the signifier and signified is visible to the five senses without further analysis; connotation which the advanced stage of the denotative meaning is hidden and need more analyzed; and myth which development of the connotation stage that frequently poses problems for society in certain ideologies. According to Barthes [18], semiotics also can be used for verbal. Then, this research that used semiotics approach related to this verbal is a film analysis entitled *The Invitation* 2022 directed by Jessica M. Thompson.

The film tells the story of Evie Jackson, a young woman in New York who has just lost her mother and now feels alone after the death of her only family member. She works as a freelance waitress to make a living. She is passionate and takes responsibility for her work. One day, she was a waiter at a promotion of a DNA test service company, and she gave it a try and discovered that she had a distant cousin in England from the noble Alexander family, her cousin. He invites

her to a lavish wedding at a deserted castle in the English countryside because Alexander asks for Evie's presence. Upon arrival, Evie accidentally dropped glasses from a passing maid. The head scolded the maids for incompetent work, and then Evie protected them by admitting it was her fault and took responsibility for helping clean it up. Afterward, Evie is welcomed with hospitality by a handsome and charismatic host, the groom, Walter DeVille. During Evie's stay at the castle, strange things happen around the castle-servants being reprimanded for trivial matters, servants disappearing, mysterious noises at night, a feeling that she is being watched, and the strange behavior she receives. It turns out that the wedding Evie attends is no ordinary wedding but an ancient ritual involving vampires. Evie is sacrificed as the third wife at the wedding to gain eternal life for Walter and abundant wealth for Alexander's family. Not only that but the servants are also used as sacrifices to offer fresh blood to the vampires. Evie, who had just found out she had been chosen as a wife, refused and ran away as hard as possible. Unfortunately, Evie is caught and initially accepts the marriage invitation, which turns out to be made to gain Vampire power only. After getting it, Evie must fight against Walter and his two wives and destroy everything with the help of the Vampire's weakness. With her cleverness and courage, she manages to turn the tables, destroy the castle, and kill Walter. At the end of the film, she seeks revenge against her cousin, the source of her suffering and nightmares.

According to the storyline, it challenges existing female stereotypes by portraying female character in a different view. Women also have an important role in society. While their role is often confined to the domestic area, women possess unique abilities and strengths that enable them to address challenges and conflicts effectively. Patriarchal culture imposes pressure on women, but they should not be held back. Female characters in cinema frequently defy social norms through their actions and resistance. In *The Invitation*, the female character displays remarkable resilience, defying societal norms and outperforming their male counterparts. The film's plot and conflict highlight the female character's exaggerated masculinity. Evie embodies this shift, becoming a symbol of female masculinity through her gestures, activities, traits, and characterizations. It raises a research question about how the representation of masculinity in female character is portrayed in the film *The Invitation*?

The research using semiotics according to Roland Barthes is frequently used by researcher

and used as a reference base to deepen and enrich the theory. For example, a notable study is “A Film Semiotics Study of a Representation on Duality Female Character” by Umaroh & Maulida [19]. Their research clearly shows that the female characters in the film *Inventing Anna* can have two characters: between visionaries or manipulators living in modern times. The female character must balance her strengths and weaknesses, forming a new reality with the risk of losing her identity. Another study, “Refresentasi Perempuan Maskulin dalam Film” by Yudha & Komsiah [20] is equally compelling. The results of this study clearly indicate that the female character in the film *Seperti Dendam, Rindu Harus Dibayar Tuntas* has masculine traits. The notion that masculine traits in women are problematic is a social construct that is not accurate. The film demonstrates that women can embody masculine traits, challenging traditional gender norms. This research shares common ground with previous studies, specifically the use of Roland Barthes' semiotics theory.

Method

In this research, the researcher uses a qualitative method with by describing and analyzing words from the collected data from the film. Qualitative methods can refer to research about a person's lives, lived experience, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations [21]. It means that the viewpoint of the researcher is important to answer the research questions by analyzing the data gathered from the film. The researcher analyzes the unit of analysis by using every reference related to the study. This analysis is related to the research question and objectives of study. The researcher tries to convey the answers to the research questions through the data analysis and relating it to the masculinity in *The Invitation* [22]. The research instrument is the researcher himself as the main subject to obtain qualitative data on film scenes through repeated screenings and to identify the masculine woman of main character contained in *The Invitation* film.

According to Andriani et al., in [23] stated that the methods used for collecting data are crucial in determining the quality of research, so adopting appropriate technology is essential to achieving research goals. The researcher then analyzes the data using a masculinity in semiotics

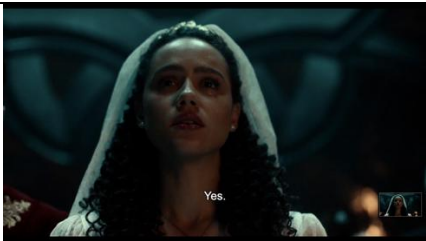
approach. In *The Invitation* film, the data is used for the verbal text, non-verbal, and the film scene. Roland Barthes' semiotics theory and masculinity are used to study the values of bodily masculine woman in *The Invitation* Film. At the end of the chapter, the researcher summarizes the analysis's findings. Supporting information for this lesson was gathered from several publications, websites, books, and other sources. The researcher uses qualitative data and relevant sources for analysis of this study. Descriptive analysis methods are used to examine this study. When assessing this research, there are many processes involved. First, research-related data will be gathered by watching the film, rewatching the scene video contents, and looking at the verbal, non-verbal, and film scenes. Second, the researcher uses concepts of masculinity to analyze the data. Next, the researcher applies Roland Barthes' semiotics theory to the analysis of masculine woman in *The Invitation* film, then defines it. The researcher finishes the analysis's findings in the final stage.

Result and Discussion

In analyzing the following data, researchers describe the meaning of the signs and markers of masculine woman from the main character using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory displayed in the form of a table containing signifiers, signifies, denotations, connotations and myths to represent female masculinity contained in the film scenes *The Invitation*. The several scenes that can illustrate and explain them in the table below.

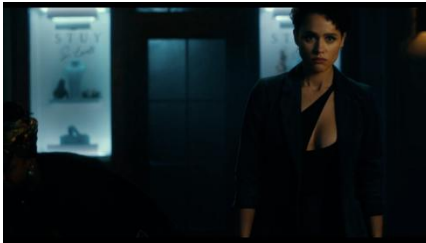
1. Female Masculinity: Dare to take risks

Data 1. (1:28:53 – 1:29:42)

Signify	Signifier
	In these scenes, Evie agrees to marriage proposed by Walter DeVille

	
Denotation	Connotation
Evie agrees to marry the vampire Walter De Ville which is signaled by Evie drinks his blood and the wedding dress she has worn.	Evie realized that with her human power, she could not defeat it all. So, she takes the risk of getting the power of vampire Walter deVille and then takes revenge with her new power. Her wedding dress also shows her feminine identity as a bride but contrasts with her behavior of taking risks as masculine.
Myth	
Women are associated with carefulness when taking risks, which is related to the social construction and stereotypes that exist in society. As a result, women often do not have enough daring to take risks and only obey or follow men's figures [24], [25]. Women who dare to take risks, of course, have courage, resilience, and a strong sense of self-confidence to face stereotypes.	

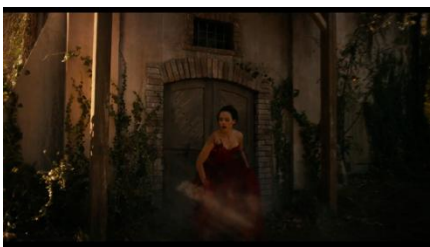
Data 2. (1:39:31 - 1:40:15)

Signify	Signifier
 	Evie wanted to avenge the bad behavior of her cousin.

Denotation	Connotation
Evie wants to avenge the bad behavior of her cousin for lying to her and putting her in the dire situation of being forced to marry a vampire. Evie's appearance is seen with short hair, wearing clothes that show her chest, makeup, and earrings.	Evie confidently sought to avenge the wrongs inflicted by her cousin, who had led her to a negative life experience. This revenge is not necessarily revenge, but for the long-term goal that when there is no other woman from her family, she will suffer the same fate as Evie. Evie's appearance, which looks masculine with her short hair, which is often associated with masculinity, contrasted with clothes that show her breasts and accessories as her feminine identity. Likewise, her gestures of confidence and courage to take risks for what she will do to provide a deterrent effect.
Myth	
Women are believed to be more cautious, avoidant, and afraid of taking risks from stereotypes and societal perspectives. These stereotypes often inhibit women's ability to make decisions and take risks effectively for themselves and their environment.	

2. Female Masculinity: Resilience

Data 3. (1:18:47 – 1:18:55)

Signify	Signifier
 	Evie tries to escape from the DeVille palace group
Denotation	Connotation

Evie concisely hides in the DeVille's freezer to try to escape the men of the DeVille palace with her red party dress. Evie quickly ran to lock the head maids from the outside with an ice pick when she was nearly detected.	Evie's toughness and bravery are fully displayed in this scene as she swiftly locks up an important figure from DeVille. Her face and gestures show her confidence and ability, through her intelligence, to lock up the objects she sees, not just run away or be scared. The dress is often associated with femininity, but her behavior shows her resilience against the conflict she had.
Myth	
Women are often stereotyped as more emotional than men [26]. This stereotype is often associated with resistance and reaction to a problem with emotion rather than intelligence, leading women to struggle to think rationally and quickly, hindering their ability to address their challenges logically.	

Data 4. (1:36:48 – 1:38:00)

Signify	Signifier
	In these scenes, Evie fights firmly to defeat the vampire Walter deVille.
Denotation	Connotation
Evie fights firmly to defeat the vampire by killing it through its weaknesses, such as stabbing and burning it. She murdered him in her wedding dress that she was still wearing.	The scene shows that Evie wants to kill Walter deVille by fighting with all her strength, which does not show her weak side. The wedding dress proves that she is a woman who can also fight male characters. Seeing Evie's seriousness, Walter feels cornered into looking weak, especially with the help of Evie, who knows

	the vampire's weakness.
Myth	
Self-protection from women is often considered taboo because women are considered weak and delicate feelings which often vulnerable as victims of violence [27]; in contrast, compared to those who can defend themselves, it is considered an act of violence.	

3. Female Masculinity: Assertive

Data 5. (00:15:15 – 00:15:30)

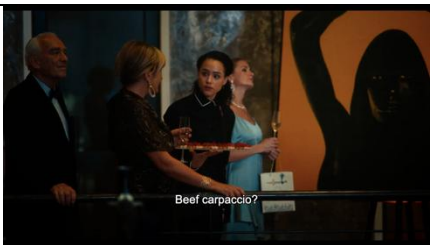
Signify	Signifier
	Evie confronted a man who was scold the waiter.
Denotation	Connotation
Evie confronts a man who turns out to be the head maid, and he is so angry that he insults the maids for the trouble Evie accidentally caused.	This scene demonstrates Evie's firm behavior toward anyone who insults others, even men. She faces the head maid, looks at him, and firmly tells him he is wrong for what he did, then presses him to apologize.
Myth	
Women in film are often seen as spoiled and unable to face existing problems on their own, leading them to seek assistance from a male figure [28]. However, when a woman faces a problem firmly, she is not just dealing with her own challenge but also challenging others in society.	

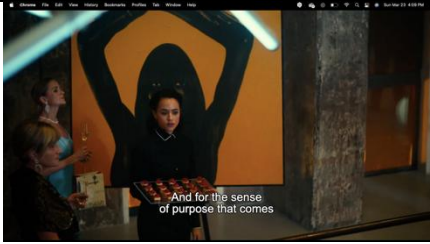
Data 6. (00:57:37 – 00:57:46)

Signify	Signifier
	Evie's finger was cut, and Victoria saw then sucked Evie's finger.
Denotation	Connotation
Evie's finger is cut and bleeding from the maid's accident, then Victoria sees and immediately sucks Evie's finger. Evie rejects instantly and is uncomfortable with her reaction.	This scene clearly demonstrates Evie's firm response to others' behavior, particularly regarding her finger or limbs, which she dislikes. Her body language and facial expression make it clear that she is displeased with Victoria's impudence.
Myth	
Women are often believed to lack the capacity to defend themselves when confronted with unwelcome behavior from others due to common stereotypes portraying them as inherently weak and helpless [27]. On the contrary, when women stand up against impudence with firmness and bravery, they are often praised and labeled as masculine.	

4. Female Masculinity: Responsible

Data 7. (00:03:44 – 00:03:58)

Signify	Signifier
	Evie works as waitress

	
Denotation	Connotation
Evie feels a sense of responsibility for doing her job as a waitress.	Evie takes responsibility seriously in her waitress job to fulfill her needs. She is doing her job with a gentle and humble gestures. She is also responsible for her appearance while she works, which is neat but not careless.
Myth	
Women are often believed to be irresponsible for what they do, whether it is in the workplace, which is seen as incapable of anything and can only be dominated by the patriarchy. Moreover, in patriarchal ideology, women are under the control of men to be in the domestic area, not the work area [14].	

Data 8. (00:14:52 – 00:15:05)

Signify	Signifier
	She accidentally drops glasses and immediately tries to help and apologize to the maids.
Denotation	Connotation
Evie also has a good sense of responsibility in her attitude.	Evie takes responsibility, which is reflected in calming the waitress without demeaning or scolding her.

Myth
Women often believe that their behavior is considered as emotional and irrational [29]. Women are dramatic and exaggerate things, as a result, women's emotions often make them stubborn and blame others for their mistakes.

In the film *The Invitation*, Evie is a figure who shows the traits and attitudes of masculine women. A sense of responsibility is one of her traits while doing her job and daily behavior with others. Then, this masculine female trait is further demonstrated by Evie with her courage in taking risks, assertiveness in interacting whether it shows the unsuitability of something for her, and resilience in fighting the existing situation as hard as she can. Based on the results of the analysis in the table above, it can be drawn a red string that the film *The Invitation* has resistance from social construction, as a woman can be a masculine figure with traits and attitudes that dare to take risks, assertive, resilient and have a responsible personality, not stick to the stereotype towards woman.

From the results, the representation of masculine women in the film *The Invitation* can be concluded that Evie's character shows a more dominant masculine female character and is able to break the stereotypical myths of society where women are often portrayed as character who always have to be feminine. Film serves as a medium of resistance against social constructs that allow women to dominate society.

The value we can take is *The Invitation* shows that woman fight stereotypes and face existing situations which makes the masculinity appear more dominant that leads to masculine woman or female masculinity. It highlights that society cannot always underestimate women. Film as a medium amplifies the depiction of women who do not always succumb to bad circumstances or conform to negative stereotypes about women.

Conclusion

In the film *The Invitation*, the masculine female character is denoted the masculine female character played by Nathalie Emmanuel as Evie, a brave woman who wants to attend her distant relative's wedding after being invited by one of her family. However, her family traps and tricks

her into becoming the bride of Walter DeVille, a vampire. She bravely resists and fights the forced arranged marriage of her extended family and vampire members, Evie's resistance results in her defeating the vampires. At the end of the film, Evie wants to take revenge on the family that has invited her. Evie's masculine behavior can be seen in the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the film. There is also a connotation of masculine women in *The Invitation* when the nature of Evie's character shows the masculine side of women, such as risk-taking, resilience, assertiveness, and responsibility in attitude and work. Female masculinity can be seen from the hidden meaning in several scenes that show and explain these masculine traits. In the film *The Invitation*, the myth of women is women are still considered feminine, which can only obey, cannot fight, surrender, irresponsible, weak, and not independent. This myth is then shattered by Evie's portrayal, which defies these stereotypes by demonstrating that women can own masculine traits. Her masculine traits are evident in her ability to fight and dominate the social environment around her. This depiction conveys that women can also make a significant contribution to their own personal and social lives. For future researchers, literary works offer a wealth of material to investigate more themes. This film can be analyzed more effectively through aspects such as social class, symbolism, or cultural influences.

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