

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The issue of gender is still the topic to be raised and adapted as the main theme for some literature or work of art such as songs, videos, or even movies. Gauntlett (2008, 51) stated that women's roles have more plurality and value. The history of movies in the past argued that female characters only become the supporting roles or, in other words, the helper or the assistant of the main character, which is commonly played by men. Linked with history, there had been a revolution in the history of women regarding the issue of femininity (Thom 2008, 2). An establishment and experience of womanhood are pursued to be productive. For instance, Todd (Todd in Thom 2008, 4) observed her study by taking a view of the lives of family, internal responsibility, and the agenda that existed around the workplace, also for leisure recreation. Selina marks the points of choices that happened in daily life, such as determining time and workplace, marriage decisions, and the proper time to also get married to the 'right partner' and companions living in society.

According to the finding by Todd in Thom (2008), it could be argued that in the past, the life of women choice somehow spun around marriage and stuff,

while if compared to men, men dealt with jobs and were free to choose what kind of life they get to have.

In reality, when it comes to the job field, the classification of job-based on gender is commonly known. There are already some jobs aimed at men and women, for example, being a pilot, a soldier, and an architect for men, as well as many more. The depiction of those kinds of jobs is usually seen from the different capabilities of physical appearance owned by men and women. Meanwhile, women are seen to do 'easier' positions such as being nurses, teachers, secretaries, etc. When it comes to women, the jobs that appear often deal with less logical thinking, require less physical strength, and more like nurturing or taking care of the surrounding.

There is a term found in Connell (2005, 74) called production relation. Production relation is a gender differentiation of labor that is well-known for assigning tasks and even extending into fine detail. This statement by Connell can be implied that in the job field, there is a distinction based on gender which is related to the task in a job.

The movie *Close* 2019 attempts to break those classifications by making women their main characters and do most of the 'men's jobs.' The way that this movie could attempt is by raising the issue of female masculinity portrayed by Sam, the female main character. The study about female masculinity by Judith Halberstam (1998) found that the determination of men and women is a result of sex. On the other hand, terms of masculinity and femininity are settled by the performance of the role, characters, and life experience. From that statement, it can be argued that both men and women can have or even perform femininity and

masculinity which depend on what role is more superior compared to one another. Halberstam (1998) said that female masculinity is a circumstance where masculine traits are being depicted by women's bodies instead of men's. Based on what Judith has mentioned, women can convey more of their masculinity performance and vice versa (Demanty 2019, 1-30)

A movie directed by Vicky Jewson titled *Close* 2019 is an original Netflix movie, and the genre is action-thriller. The movie premiered on Netflix on January 26th starring Noomi Rapace as the main character in the movie. The movie gained a 37% rating on Tomatometer and a 35% on audience score on the Rotten Tomatoes web. *Close* is a movie about a tough woman soldier named Sam, who is doing a great job in military service. For some reason, she has finished serving as a soldier and gets a job as a private bodyguard for a girl teenager named Zoe. Zoe is the heir of her father's company named 'Hassine Mining'. Sam is actually hired just for taking Zoe to the house near the company to discuss her inheritance, which is the company. After taking her to the house, Sam's job is actually done. But then, the situation gets tense when one night there are some intruders that terrorize the house and make Zoe the target of the execution. Knowing that there are intruders, Sam is called on duty to protect her client until the end of the day. Being attached to Zoe and as the only person for Zoe, Sam feels that she has to protect Zoe until the condition gets safer. From that little summary about the movie, it can be implied that this paper will put on focus on the way Sam is being a tough and fearless main female character who has the obligation to protect her client.

This movie attracts the viewers by serving a series of actions done by the female characters. The actor, Noomi Rapace, is apparently capable of doing her job as the main character of this movie. This movie receives some feedback which can be found on some websites. From the review, it is found that people noticed the role of action leader given to the female actress. As Sara Clements said on the Vague Visages website, Jewson's action picture contains all of the standard components of the genre: an adrenaline-pumping plot, with sequences that feature a strong blend of reality and violence (Clements 2019). While this may be sufficient for some, she also offers something else that is often absent in the genre: female characters who are truly written well are rare in fiction.

From the opinion of Sara, it can be acknowledged that the action-thriller genre of movies still lacks featuring women as the main character, since generally the action-thriller genre is owned by men. The review by Sara mentioned the plot of the movie and gave short characteristics of the movie's genre as well.

Another review comes from Rob Thomas from the website The Capital Times. He said that even though *Close* is not a perfect movie, it still gives Rapace, who played the main character of the movie, exposure as she should. Rob did mention the fact that movies which featured women both playing roles in front of and behind the camera are still uncommon (Thomas 2019).

According to Rob's statement, it is true that the movie *Close* 2019 has women figure in front of and behind the camera. As has been mentioned, this movie's main role is played by a female actress and produced by a female producer. *Close* 2019 apparently has its charm by highlighting women's involvement in an

action-thriller movie. Once again, this could be another sign of campaigning for women empowerment in the movie industry.

From both of the reviews stated, the argument could be that the movie *Close 2019* is an action-thriller movie featuring a woman as the main character who plays most of the action throughout the movie. The movie itself is produced by a female producer, which could strengthen the idea of encouraging any female worker or actor in the movie industry. As one of the movies with action-thriller as its genre, it is found that the amount of women's showcase for this genre still lacks compared to an action-thriller genre movie that has a man as its main character. The movie *Close 2019* has attempted to have women as the main lead for doing all the stunts instead of being a second person or the assistant. Thus, the significance of making *Close 2019* to be the object of this research is the fact that the main character who is played by a female actress can confirm that women could also be the main character and do all the stunts regardless of their gender, which also portrays the issue of female masculinity.

Close 2019 is an action-thriller movie produced by several production houses in the UK. The story's main theme is inspired by one of the top female bodyguards Jackie Davis, who is famous for her close protection service. Jackie herself has dedicated her close protection service for several famous celebrities such as JK Rowling, Nicole Kidman, and even for the royal family members. The movie *Close 2019* is basically talking about Sam who is a former soldier but then hired as a close protection officer for the heir named Zoe. The setting of this movie is taking place in Morocco. Jackie mentioned that the movie *Close* has a high-quality cast

since it could visualize the life of being a Close bodyguard for famous people or wealthy people (The Upcoming 2019). Also, she mentioned that the director of the movie, Vicky, had handed Jacquie the script before the movie to get the almost exact portrayal of having a life as a female bodyguard. In the same interview, as mentioned previously, Jacquie added that Morocco had been a challenging one, especially for women (The Upcoming 2019). Therefore, this study adds a brief reason behind taking Morocco as the setting of the movie *Close* (2019). The lawful framework for punishing violence against women in Morocco is still lacking (Zirari 2010, 267). Thus, it can be argued that somehow there can be found people who do violence toward women, yet there is a lack of punishment for the one who does the violence. In relation to the movie *Close* 2019, taking Morocco as the setting could support the idea of protecting and giving close protection services for women from women.

In one of the sections found in the report made by the British council on page 4, it is argued that the influence of cultural platforms has the probability of forming and challenging the world through their stories, and people who are involved in that field take part on making a clear relation between the stereotyped and sexist representation in major culture and the inequality treatment received by women in society. Several specific aspects affect the conveying of the common depiction of women and girls. Therefore, in the remaining deep-rooted gender gap in the production of UK's arts and media, women are commonly depicted with traditional gender roles, which can be sexist, focusing on appearance only, and leading to creating sexualized imageries (Dustin et al. 2016, 4). From the statement

drawn by the British council, this study understands that in the field of culture side, the British have been making women stick with traditional gender roles, which lead to the role that has several things to do with household and stuff. Thus, the movie *Close* (2019) could be one of the movies that can be one of media that comes from British production to challenge women's portrayal in UK's arts and media by showing the issue of female masculinity. The portrayal of female masculinity in this movie could be related to women's involvement in terms of employment. As this movie is inspired by a real portrayal of a female bodyguard's job of protecting the client, the top female bodyguard Jacquie Davis herself did mention in the same interview included before that this movie, *Close* (2019), could be one of the ways to encourage more women to be involved in this kind of job and become professional.

Gauntlett (2008, 2) argued that the media could show some situations and connections from various points of view, which is a part of the eternal charm of drama that people can see 'how the world works' in real life other than everyone's own. In this case, media could be a tool for representing some of the issues or events in society. Linked with the power media holds, the movie is one of the media that is considered to bring some impact to society. It is assumed that a movie could influence the audience or even society through its plot, issue, or theme that is featured in the movie. Furthermore, cinema can change the way people view some particular issues without necessarily leaving an impact on more stable constructs (Kubrak 2020, 2). From that argument, cinema has the ability to change the way people think without even having an effect on more stable constructs. In this case,

gender stereotype is the stable constructs that almost impossible to disappear in such a short time. Yet, cinema could help people switch their minds and start normalizing some switching stereotypes. Cinema might not eliminate the stereotype, but it could significantly affect how people view the issue of gender. Some movie creators believe that bringing up some specific issue will make the movie come out better and could be one way to criticize some issue that happened in a particular era or area.

As the era is enhancing, people have started to change their way of watching a movie by shifting to a more digital and modern style. Netflix is one platform that provides various movies with different genres and brings particular effects. Netflix is a platform that changed how people watch movies, which can be done through the old way by going to the cinema, watching VHS tapes or DVDs, and watching whatever was on live TV to online streaming (Morgan 2019). In the article, it is also mentioned that the biggest impact Netflix has affected in industries is in the film and TV industries. Netflix is actually providing not only movies but also some TV series. As mentioned before, Netflix provides various movies, including action-thriller movies. Action-thriller genre movie is a movie in which most of the scenes are about the physical fight, life survival, or battle. Since the genre requires physical strength and logical thinking, the movie's main character is commonly portrayed by a man.

Indeed, women could be featured as well in the movie. Yet, they usually become the second role or as the man's assistant. Therefore, in order to attend to their commitment to providing a high-quality movie, Netflix keeps producing some

kind of movie which implicitly contain some issue happening around society. Furthermore, Netflix has several movies which can show social issues such as female masculinity in *Close* (2019) movie, women empowerment in *Moxie* and the TV series *Queen Gambit*.

One of the issues that are likely to be featured is female masculinity, which is becoming this study's main issue.

As the era has been moving forward and modernization has become part of society, the issue of this gender stereotype seems still live in most people's life. The effort to fight the stereotype is getting larger done by people nowadays. People who have reached the awareness that all humans are the same and that there should not be a categorization based on gender use any media that can help to decline the gender issue and reach equality between men and women. As one of the media that plays a significant role in helping that goal to be achieved, movies have been trying to raise the issue related to gender and feminism. Nonetheless, the movie, which has an action-thriller as a genre, mostly features men as the main character and is responsible for all the masculine traits. That action supports the idea that leading an activity or making a decision, for example, is common for men and not for women. Women commonly appear in those kinds of movies as the assistant or helpers of the men. According to Bem's Sex Role Inventory, feminine traits, including tender, warm, sympathetic, and many more, should be shown more by women other than men (Siti Fatimah 2019, 408). Therefore, it can be argued that women are expected to show their feminine traits, which tend to help, nurture, and be obedient to men. On the opposite of that, there are already movies that portray women who show

more of their masculine traits rather than feminine traits, for example, Wonder Woman, Charlie's Angel, Captain Marvel, etc. Those movies are able to make women the main character who takes actions that are often done by men.

The idea of feminine and masculine traits, as Bühner's statement which is quoted in Kachel S et al. (2016, 2), stated that the construction of gender could only be measured using two items, which are "masculine" and "feminine." Those two terms are somehow limited by the existing standards requiring psychological characteristics, which typically suggest using a larger number of items. From that statements, society constructs some traits into feminine and masculinity, which proposes the idea that women should have the feminine while men own the masculine one. According to Bem's Sex Role Inventory, there is a classification of some masculine items and feminine items. The masculine items including act as a leader, being aggressive, ambitious, defends own self and many more. At the same time, the feminine traits include affectionate, feminine, gentle, and more (Siti Fatimah 2019, 408). The problem that happens in society is that when women show masculine traits, they will be labeled as lacking their value of women and try to compete with men. On the other hand, men who do have feminine traits will be labeled as being sissy or not 'the real men'.

This study acknowledges that the issue of female masculinity is depicted throughout the whole movie. Therefore the movie *Close* (2019) will be analyzed in this study using the theory of female masculinity by Judith Halberstam. Briefly, the theory of female masculinity proposed by Judith Halberstam stated that both men and women have their own feminine and masculine traits and also how masculinity

could be performed without the presence of the male body. Taking on that theory given by Judith Halberstam, this paper implies that women are able to show more of their masculine traits. Therefore, this study finds that the female masculinity theory by Halberstam can be applied to analyzing the phenomenon of female masculinity found throughout the movie. This research will analyze the issue of female masculinity by looking through scene by scene and then interpreting the meaning behind each scene using film semiology theory by Christian Metz. Since there will be some screenshots attached to this study that later will be analyzed, the approach of film semiology theory by Christian Metz is considered to be applied. Metz named the resulting 'paradigm of syntagmas' the *grande syntagmatique* of the image track (Buckland 2017, 23). The eight categories based on the large syntagmatic category by Metz are the autonomous shot, the parallel syntagm, the bracketing syntagm, the descriptive syntagm, the alternating syntagm, the scene, the episodic sequence, the ordinary sequence (Dewi et al. 2017, 21).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

From the background that has been stated before, this is the statement of the problem :

How does *Close* 2019 mark the representation of female masculinity portrayal in the movie industry?

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

According to the statement of the problems, this study finds the objective of the study as stated below:

Analyzing the existence of the issue of female masculinity performed by the main character throughout the movie.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is expected to examine whether the issue of female masculinity will be found in the movie with action-thriller as the genre. Furthermore, hopefully, this study can be used as a reference for future research regarding the issue of female masculinities or any other issue related to feminism.

1.5 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Female masculinity : A female masculinity is a masculine side that is shown by women rather than their feminine side. This kind of phenomenon is found in some women that show some masculine traits over their feminine side. When some women do various things or activities that are commonly attached to men, that would be called female masculinity. Halberstam said that female masculinity is a circumstance where masculine traits are being depicted by women's bodies instead of men (Halberstam 1998). According to Judith, a woman can show more of their masculinity trait and vice versa (Demanty 2019, 1-30)

Movie

: Gauntlett (2008, 51) stated that women's roles have more plurality and value. The history of movies in the past found that female characters only be the supporting roles or, in other words being, the helper or the assistant of the main character, which is commonly played by men. From that argument, the movie *Close* 2019 tries to break the boundaries that the main character can only be acted by men. Instead, this movie has women as the main character and the one who leads the plot.

Film semiology

: This study employ film semiology by Christian Metz Metz said, which named the resulting 'paradigm of syntagmas' the grande syntagmatique of the image track (Buckland 2017, 23). The eight categories based on the large syntagmatic category by Metz are the autonomous shot, the parallel syntagm, the bracketing syntagm, the descriptive syntagm, the alternating syntagm, the scene, and the episodic sequence, and the ordinary sequence (Dewi et al. 2017, 21). As this study takes a film

to be the object, therefore, this study will employ film semiology by taking a screenshot from the scenes in the movie, which later be analyzed through the theory and then explain the meaning behind every issue as well as depict the issue of female masculinity.

Gender Stereotype

: Recently, the parameter to measure gender stereotypes involved traits and attributes (Hentschel T, et al. 2019, 3). From that statement, it could be implied that the existence of gender stereotypes includes how men and women could be different based on their traits and what kind of attributes that following their traits. It leads to some examples of traits which are women need to be calm and gentle while men take the binary traits such as being stronger and tough.

Women Empowerment

: Women empowerment is an improvement related to the psychological, political, social, academic learning process, gender, and power taken from the perspective of the economy experienced by every single person and group of women. Women empowerment could be a

necessary process related to the process of development in the fields of the economic, social, and political status of women (Shettar, 2015, 13)