

**FEMALE MASCULINITY AS SEEN IN NADIA HASHIMI'S  
*THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL***

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining the Bachelor  
Degree in English Literature



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## A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

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I certify that this thesis is my work. I am completely responsible for the content of the thesis. Other writer's opinions or findings included in the thesis are quoted and cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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Saya menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqosyah untuk memenuhi sebagian syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatian yang diberikan, saya ucapkan terima kasih.

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## ***THE PEARL THAT BROKE ITS SHELL***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Masculinity is a male trait that is generally owned by men, while when formed in females it is called female masculinity. This research used the novel *The Pearl That Broke That Its Shell* as the main object. The novel tells how one of the main characters named Shekiba changed from the previous feminine must be forced to change to masculine (Bacha Posh) because of social compulsion. In addition, this research also describes how processes and impacts are formed on Shekiba after becoming masculine. This research uses qualitative methods and the Female Masculinity theory by Judith Halberstam to reveal the image of Shekiba's masculinity, this theory also has the same concept of masculinity without men explaining how masculinity can be formed in women. From the results of the analysis, it is concluded that Shekiba's masculinity is not innate but nurtured because her masculinity is formed not from birth but formed by several other factors. The masculinity shown by Shekiba is that she is tough, independent, courageous, strong, and has a man-like appearance that makes her look more like a man. Shekiba's masculinity is viewed from how society at that time viewed a person who can be said to be masculine. The impact of masculinity that was forced to Shekiba feel lost in her identity and made her feel like returning to normal life to become a more appreciated woman.

**Keywords:** *Masculinity, Female Masculinity, Bacha Posh.*

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**FEMALE MASCULINITY AS SEEN IN  
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Oleh: Marwa Ropi Jahidah

**ABSTRAK**

Female Masculinity adalah istilah dari sesuatu yang seharusnya terjadi pada pria tetapi dialami oleh wanita. Maskulinitas dianggap sebagai cabang maskulinitas yang ada pada pria karena memiliki sejarah sosial yang berbeda, makna sosial dan tidak terlepas dari budaya dan waktu. Penelitian ini menggunakan *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* karena memiliki masalah yang memiliki konsep sama dengan teori berjudul Female Masculinity yang diusulkan oleh Judith Halberstam. *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* bercerita tentang dua karakter utama bernama Shekiba dan Rahima yang harus berubah dari feminin menjadi maskulin dengan menjadi Bacha Posh (seorang gadis berpakaian seperti anak laki-laki). Peneliti menggunakan satu karakter dalam analisis bernama Shekiba. Maskulinitas Shekiba terbentuk karena paksaan dan tekanan yang berasal dari keadaan ekonomi, keadaan sosial, dan juga budaya tradisi sosial yang terbentuk di Afghanistan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan teori Female Masculinity oleh Judith Halberstam untuk mengungkapkan citra maskulinitas Shekiba. Dari hasil analisis, disimpulkan bahwa maskulinitas Shekiba bukanlah bawaan tetapi memelihara karena maskulinitasnya terbentuk bukan sejak lahir tetapi dibentuk oleh beberapa faktor lain. Maskulinitas yang ditunjukkan oleh Shekiba adalah bahwa dia tangguh, mandiri, berani, kuat, dan memiliki penampilan seperti pria yang membuatnya terlihat lebih seperti pria. Maskulinitas Shekiba dilihat dari bagaimana masyarakat pada waktu itu memandang seseorang yang dapat dikatakan maskulin.

**Kata kunci:** *Maskulinitas, Maskulinitas Wanita, Bacha Posh.*

**MOTTO**

**“Where there is a will, there is a way”**

Pauline Kael



## **DEDICATION**

Sincerely, I dedicate this graduating paper to my beloved parents. When the world closed its doors on me, they opened their arms for me. When people closed their ears to me, they both opened their hearts to me. Thank you for always being there for me.





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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

According to Wallek & Warren (1990: 30), literature is a creative activity and an art. Literature is formed by humans with a certain purpose intended by the author to the connoisseurs of literary works. While, according to Eagleton, literature is imaginative writing in the sense of fiction. Imaginative writing comes as a result of existing phenomena (1996: 1). Easten (2000: 12) defines a novel as the disclosure of the fragment of the human life (in the longer term) where conflicts occur, which eventually lead to changes in the way of life between the perpetrators.

*The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* is one of the novels that tells one of the phenomena in Afghanistan named Bacha Posh. Nadia Hashimi as the writer of *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* was born and raised in New York and New Jersey. Both her parents were born in Afghanistan and left in the early 1970s, before the Soviet invasion. Nadia Hashimi is a pediatrician turned novelist who draws on her Afghan culture to craft internationally bestselling books for adults as well as young readers. That is why *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* raises an issue and set the place where she was born in Afghanistan and the 1900s, which at that time Afghanistan still considers women are weak and men are stronger in many aspects of life. Men are higher and have many important roles especially in terms of economics. This condition makes

Afghan women are very much dependent on men. That is why having a son in a family is a pride to have a lot of access to help make work easier and help the family financially.

The importance of having a son in Afghanistan formed a new tradition formed specifically for a family that does not have a son. The family without a son has to change one of their daughters to become Bacha Posh. The importance of having a son is that it is considered to be able to ease the work and help the economy, therefore a new culture is formed namely Bacha Posh. Bacha Posh means *a girl dressed up like a boy*. According to the meaning, the function of Bacha Posh itself can be said as a substitute for families who do not have boys to make work easier and can help the economic situation of the family. Based on Nadia Hashimi as the writer said that Daughter into a young boy, they will cut off her hair, they will change her clothing, they will change her name give her boy's name, and reintroduce that child into the rest of the family and intrude into society as a young boy.

According to Sreeshambhavi in his journal entitled *self-created identity of Afghan girls due to Bacha Posh's practice* (2020: 3231), Bacha Posh is a term that originates from a local language which means *a girl dressed like a boy*. There are several factors associated with the system of bacha posh- an important element is to escape the social stigma that a family suffers and the pressure placed on families by the society, to bear at least one boy in every family. It is also generally believed that girls disguised as boys (bacha posh) bring good luck for the future generations of the family. While



according to Sabet (2018), in her article *Bacha Posh: An Afghanistan Social Tradition Where Girls Are Raised as Boys*, a bacha posh is the term used by parents without sons to refer to a girl who wears a boy's clothes. The Bacha Posh should cut their hair like men, changes their name to be more like men.

This tradition is experienced by one of the main characters in the novel named Shekiba. Shekiba was transformed from the feminine into the masculine by several factors that caused her masculinity to appear. Some of the factors that cause changes in character include social conditions, economic conditions, and also cultural traditions in the environment where Shekiba lives. The researcher is interested in using this novel because it raises the issue of gender where there is a forced change in character in one of the main characters caused by environmental factors. This change was formed because of the compulsion of environmental conditions that require Shekiba to survive by being a woman who was previously feminine to be masculine because of several factors. The researcher is also interested to analyze this novel because the story in the novel is based on the true story of most Afghan women.

As we know that masculinity and femininity are quite different. The connotation of the feminine is imagined as women who act calm, shy, taking care of the children and family. While masculinity is imagined as a power, a man who is strong and can do a lot of heavy works, such as taking care of the garden, cutting wood, bringing heavy things, etc. Shekiba's character in the novel is imagined as a feminine girl who can do the feminine job, but she has to change to be masculine (by doing some

masculine tasks) when she has to survive and also because of several factors that forced her Sher Shekiba to change to be masculine. She can do both feminine and masculine tasks when she has to survive. Judith Halberstam says that masculinity can not only be owned by men because of his appearance, but also can be owned by women, and vice versa (Halberstam, 1998).

Femininity and masculinity are the images constructed not based on sex. Based on Shekiba's story that women are not always identically feminine and men are not always identically masculine. Halberstam in her book entitled *Female Masculinity* (1998) introduces a new term of gender named female masculinity. Judith Halberstam in her book assumes that sex determines men and women. While masculinity and femininity are determined based on the role, personality, and experience, therefore both men and women can have femininity and masculinity, depending on which role is more dominant. We can say that female masculinity is a phenomenon in which women bodies do masculine performatives (Halberstam, 1998)

Based on the explanation above, which raises masculinity in women the researcher aims to show how masculinity happens to women. As Sedgwick argued that masculinity, it is not always about men (1985: 12). This means that female masculinity is something that should be experienced by men but also happens to women. This makes researchers interested in using theories that are following the above theme, researchers use the theory of *Female Masculinity* by Judith Halberstam to see how the image of masculinity in Shekiba as well.

The use of this theory is relevant because it is based on the above problem statement that there is a change in character from feminine to masculine by women. Based on the explanation above that makes the problem in this research is how masculinity that is common in men can form in the female body. This concept is following the theory used by researchers Female Masculinity by Judith Halberstam who has a concept of masculinity without men being formed in the female body. Therefore, the use of the theory is considered quite relevant to the problems in the novel.

### **1.2 Research Question**

From the explanation of the background study above, the researcher formulates the problem as follow:

How is Shekiba's masculinity portrayed because of the social and cultural coercion in the novel?

### **1.3 Objective Study**

In this research, the researcher aims to determine female masculinity by explaining the changes in the character of Shekiba from the feminine into the masculine by mentioning the masculine side which is shown by Shekiba.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this research is to prove the problem of gender equality in several areas of this world especially in the area that still upholds the patriarchal society. Therefore, it needs several pieces of evidence to know that the problem of

gender equality still exists by making the research this way. For the reader of this research, the result of this research becomes a reflection and gives benefits by providing more information and lesson about gender.

### **1.5 Literature Review**

The researcher found some research and journals with the same object material and the same study that applies the same theory about female masculinity. The results of the research are:

The first research is entitled “*Female Masculinity as Seen in Joy Movie*”, written by Rizqi Auliawati Putri at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta in 2014. The research focuses on one character called Joy and the researcher uses the Female Masculinity theory proposed by RW. Connell and Judith Halberstam. This research explains the masculinity of the main character Joy Mangano character in Joy's movie. Female masculinity in this research aims to show the equality between a woman and a man. The image of masculinity that sticks to Joy in this movie shows that she is powerful, independent, and dominant.

The second research is entitled “*Rahima Struggle against oppression as seen in The Pearl That Broke Its Shell by Nadia Hashimi*”, written by Desi Saras Mahdyawati at Sanata Dharma University, in 2020. This research focuses on one character Rahima and how Rahima struggles against the oppression that happens to Rahima. This research uses feminist theory and patriarchy theory as the main theory

to analyze the novel. The results of this study show Rahima's courageous character in taking action against the oppression of women in Afghanistan.

The third research is “*Representation of Woman and Politics of Identity Crisis in Nadia Hashimi’s The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*”, written by Roshni C. M.Phil. Pune Research an International Journal in English. Scholar Malankara Catholic College Kaliyikkavilai, India, in February 2018. The research tries to explore the issue of identity, throwing light on the Afghan customs and traditions like Bacha Posh and the laws which favor men and how the men neglect the multitudinous roles played by women. This journal tells more about how the politics and the culture in Afghanistan itself are based on the novel.

The fourth research is “*Afghan Narratives Portraying the Identity Crises: Interpreting the Pattern of Bacha-Posh in The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*”, written by Javeria Khurshid. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Humanities, in 2018. The research tells about the social culture that happens in Afghanistan. Bacha Posh is a culture that has been practiced since ancient times mainly in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The research attempts to show gender dysphoria, identity crisis, and marginalization among Afghan girls.

The difference in all research above to the research that the writer conducts is this research only uses the Female Masculinity theory proposed by Judith Halberstam as the main theory which has the concept of masculinity without men and focuses on female masculinity that happens to Shekiba. The theory used in this research is to

analyze one of the main characters of the novel named Shekiba, not Rahima. The issues raised in this research are also different from the research above because this research raises an issue that focuses more on the changing of one main character that experienced by Shekiba when she should live like a man after her mother's death and changes her habit and appearance from feminine into masculine.

### **1.6 Theoretical Approach**

In this research, the researcher uses the Female Masculinity theory proposed by Judith Halberstam as the main theory to reveal and explain the image of Shekiba's masculinity depicted in the novel.

#### **1.6.1 Female Masculinity**

The researcher uses the Female Masculinity theory proposed by Judith Halberstam as the main theory to reveal the image of the masculine side of Shekiba depicted in the novel. According to John Beynon (2002:2), Masculinity is always interpolated by cultural, historical, and geographical location. While according to Sedgwick (1985: 12) Masculinity, it is not always about men. This means, not all feminisms are only experienced by women, and not only masculinity is only experienced by men. Many are nowadays women who can be considered quite masculine, such as women activists who embrace ideology masculinity. However, Judith also states that female masculinity has been situated as the place where patriarchy goes to work on the female psyche and reproduces misogyny within femaleness. (1998: 24)

From the statement above, women can also be masculine and men can be feminine. Shekiba undergoes a change in character from feminine to masculine and the masculinity in Shekiba is masculinity categorized into masculinity without men. According to Judith Halberstam in her book entitled *Female Masculinity*, “it is crucial that masculinity does not belong to men, has not produced only by men and does not properly express male heterosexuality... what we call “masculinity” has also been produced by masculine women, gender deviants, and often lesbians” (1998:241). Judith Halberstam also argued in her book that “not only men who have the masculinity but women do”. From that statement, it can be concluded that the use of this theory is relevant to the problem that has been explained above.

As the researcher explained above, women also could have masculinity inside themselves. In correlation with masculinity, women are allowed to have those qualities. Betty Freidan state if everyone develops the assumption of having the masculine and feminine trait, there is no reason to consider women are less than men (Tong, 2009:36). According to Halberstam both men and women are equal and both of them can have masculinity inside themselves. In other words, female masculinity also discusses the equality between women and men. Judith Halberstam in her book assumes that sex determines men and women. While masculinity and femininity are determined based on the role, personality, and experience, therefore both men and women can have femininity and masculinity, depending on which role is more

dominant. We can say that female masculinity is a phenomenon in which women bodies do masculine performatives (Halberstam, 1998)

## **1.7 Method of Research**

### **1.7.1 Type of Research**

The researcher uses qualitative library research as the method of this research. Qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, symbols, and descriptions of things (Berg, 2001: 3). According to Strauss and Corbin, the qualitative method is a method of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical producers or other mean quantifications. It can refer to research about a person's lives, life experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feeling as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between nations (1998: 10-11).

The researcher wants to analyze *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* to reveal Shekiba's female masculinity in this research. Hence, the qualitative method in this research is used to seek the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, symbols, and descriptions of Shekiba's female masculinity as seen in *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* based on Shekiba's work, habits, action, conversation, etc.

### **1.7.2 Data Sources**

This research consists of primary and supporting data. The primary sources are taken from the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*. The researcher uses the indication that reflects the masculine side of Shekiba as primary data which are taken



from the dialogs, words, actions, signs, or sentences from the novel. The supporting data of this research are taken from some reviews, journals, websites, books, articles, and other critical works that are related to the novel and can be used to support the main data.

### **1.7.3 Data Collections Technique**

The researcher uses the observation research technique to collect the data. First, the researcher reads the novel *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* to be able to identify and describe the intrinsic elements of the novel such a theme, character and characterization, setting, and plot. After reading and identifying each element, the researcher sorts the data into some categories and eliminates the data which do not support the analysis based on the theory that the researcher uses. The categories of this research are consist of how the masculinity, the ambivalence of femininity and masculinity, and the evidence that shaped Shekiba's masculinity depicted in the novel. In addition, the researcher also collects some supporting data to make this research more detailed in analysis by marking the conversation or sentence from other characters as supporting characters. Last but not least, the researcher analyses the data based on the theory.

### **1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique**

The researcher uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the data. The researcher uses several steps in analyzing the data. First, the researcher finds those acts, signs, and myths that are indicating masculinity. Second, the researcher interprets them and applies the theory to emphasize the explanation. Third, the

researcher explains the relation of the data that has been found. The researcher also analyzes the supporting character from the novel as a supporting character and to support the completion of the data. In the last step, the researcher concludes the analysis.

### **1.8 Paper Organization**

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter consists of the background of the study, problem statements, objective of the study, significances of the study, literary review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter consists of the explanation of the intrinsic elements of this novel such as theme, character, characterization, setting, and plot. The third chapter consists of the analysis of the problem in this research using the Female Masculinity theory proposed by Judith Halberstam. The last chapter of this research is the conclusion of the research.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

#### **4.1 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the conclusion is written based on the analysis of the novel and the use of the Female Masculinity theory proposed by Judith Halberstam. The theory has the concept the masculinity without men, it is shown how masculinity can also happen to women. It means that femininity does not always belong to women and masculinity does not always belong to men. Judith's Female Masculinity theory states that her concept of masculinity is something that is formed not by compulsion, but because of self-desire or free will. In this case, some exceptions exist in Shekiba. Shekiba's masculinity is formed because of compulsion, not because of self-desire or free will. Therefore, several causes affect the psychological side that causes Shekiba to feel lost in her identity and made her feel like returning to normal life to become a more appreciated woman in a country that still upholds the patriarchal culture.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the masculinity experienced by Shekiba is not innate but nurtured by social construction including social-economic, socio-cultural, and also as an orphan, she must be able to survive in a patriarchal environment that considers women always in the lower class, Shekiba is forced to do this to be accepted in an environment that is harsh on women. The image of masculinity that sticks to Shekiba shows that she is independent, brave, has men's

strength, and also has a masculine appearance. This novel shows that women cannot be seen as weak people. It also proves that women can show their power as women, not merely their weakness as general people think.

Female masculinity purposes to show the equality between women and men. Moreover, masculinity in Shekiba does not remove her feminine side. She still can do feminine work and act like a feminine such as having a kid, taking care of the family, etc. The concept of Female Masculinity proposed by Judith Halberstam is also mentioned in Surah Al-Hujarat verse 13:

يَتَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْفَقَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

“O mankind, indeed. We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah knows and acquainted” (QS. Al-Hujarat [49], verse 13).

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that men cannot consider themselves better and higher than women because Allah creates humans the same, and what distinguishes who is higher between men and women is their piety to Allah. As explained in Surah AZ-Zariyat verse 56.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (الذاريات : ٥٦)

“And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me”. (QS. AZ-Zariyat [51], verse 56)

#### 4.2 Suggestion

After analyzing the data and the novel, the researcher realizes that this graduating paper still needs to be improved, especially how the analysis of Shekiba's character in showing masculinity is explained here. With the problem of genders such as masculinity and feminism that always develops over time, the researcher suggests the next researchers interested in analyzing the same object do research by identifying and conducting it more deeply and diversely. The other researchers can identify another matter by using other theories, such as Marxism theory, Feminism theory, Psychoanalytic theory, etc.

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