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Between Margins and Masks: Reconsidering the Androgynous Female as Victim or Agent

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ABSTRACT

The idea of androgyny has sparked significant discussion within contemporary feminist criticism, challenging the fixed and socially constructed notions of sex difference. Rather than viewing gender as an absolute binary, this concept invites a rethinking of identity beyond traditional classifications. Many feminist theorists regard androgyny as a means of resistance against rigidly defined gender roles, arguing that it creates a liberating space for women to reimagine their identities and experiences beyond the constraints imposed by societal expectations, regardless of their sexual orientation.

This paper examines the character of Lisbeth Salander in The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo to assess the positioning of the androgynous female as what Nils Christie terms the 'ideal victim'. By analyzing her representation, the study explores the extent to which an androgynous figure can resist or evade the power dynamics and normative value systems embedded in patriarchal society. It further interrogates Sandra Bem's assertions that androgynous individuals, compared to those with more conventional gender identities, tend to exhibit greater flexibility in gender roles, higher self-esteem, and increased effectiveness in both domestic and professional spheres. The analysis constructs a critical dialogue between Bem's portrayal of empowered androgyny and Christie's framework of victimhood.

Although considerable scholarship highlights the empowering potential of adopting an androgynous identity, this study aims to offer a critical intervention by suggesting that such an identity may, in certain contexts, such as that of the protagonist in the selected film, place the androgynous woman at a dual disadvantage. She finds herself unable to fully transcend the culturally entrenched gender binaries yet simultaneously fails to align with Nils Christie's criteria for the ideal victim. This liminal positioning results in a lack of empathy and emotional support from those around her, complicating her experience of agency and victimhood alike.

Keywords: *androgyny, androgynous female, ideal victim, feminist criticism, androcentrism, gender polarity, psychological androgyny*

INTRODUCTION

The idea of the androgynous mind, as proposed by Virginia Woolf, has been the subject of considerable critical debate since its emergence. While scholars such as Carolyn Heilbrun and Nancy Topping Bazin regard it as an ideal state of psychological balance, others, including Elaine Showalter, Julia Kristeva, and Daniel Harris criticize it for abstracting away from the physical body, neglecting core feminist concerns, or perpetuating patriarchal myths under a neutral guise. Anglo-American feminist theory similarly challenges traditional gender constructs, arguing that masculinity and femininity are socially imposed categories that should be deconstructed (Warren 17). Woolf's version of androgyny has also been critiqued for its focus on female experience, which, paradoxically, may reinscribe the very binary it attempts to transcend. However, Woolf envisioned androgyny as particularly empowering for women, offering a pathway to both

psychological autonomy and financial independence. Her emphasis on the "forgetfulness of sex" (Wright 8) does not deny the material reality of the sexed body but instead encourages a mode of thinking unbound by the limiting social expectations attached to gender. Understanding Woolf's intent with the concept is thus crucial to interpreting how androgyny functions, not as a universal ideal, but as a strategic reimagining of identity and freedom.

Building on this, Sandra Bem's psychological theory of androgyny actively contests entrenched gender polarization by promoting an identity that freely integrates both masculine and feminine traits (Bem 635). Bem's model similarly positions androgyny as a form of resistance to fixed social gender roles, emphasizing flexibility and balance. However, her concept has also faced criticism for its androcentric bias, privileging masculine characteristics and thus risking the reproduction of gender hierarchies even as it challenges them (Michelle 131).

Building on the foundational ideas of Woolf and Bem, proponents like Carolyn Heilbrun further develop androgyny as a deliberate form of resistance against socially imposed gender binaries. Heilbrun envisions androgyny not merely as a blending of masculine and feminine traits, but as a challenge to rigid sexual polarization, offering individuals the freedom to define their roles beyond societal prescriptions. Yet, while her perspective aligns with the liberatory aims of earlier theorists, it also faces criticism for its selective embrace of masculine qualities, raising important questions about how androgyny can realistically address the complexities of oppression and power. In *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, she defines androgyny as "a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned" (Heilbrun ix–x). Heilbrun argues that inherent differences between the sexes are minimal, with most distinctions being socially constructed and thus subject to change (Kania 100). Similarly, Krishnaraj in *Androgyny: An Alternative to Gender Polarity?* critiques the assignment of gender roles as a man-made, hierarchical construct designed to devalue one gender while elevating the other. This binary framework essentializes gender traits, ignoring the diversity that exists within genders themselves, such as the coexistence of strength and vulnerability among women or assertiveness and passivity among men. The concept of androgyny, by blending masculine and feminine qualities, challenges these rigid divisions and offers a way to free individuals from culturally imposed psychological constraints (Krishnaraj 10). Consequently, androgyny is understood as a psychological state aimed at liberating individuals from traditional gender roles (Warren 17). Importantly, this liberation does not imply that men and women become indistinguishable; rather, it suggests the potential for integrating the best traits from both sexes (Kania 99). However, Heilbrun's conception of androgyny has been critiqued for its reluctance to embrace traditionally masculine traits such as assertiveness, action, and even the use of violence. Critics argue that by rejecting these 'heroic' masculine virtues, Heilbrun's model fails to provide a practical framework for addressing real-world issues such as oppression, injustice, crime, and the misuse of violence against the innocent (Kania 94).

Building on the critique of fixed gender binaries, Sandra Bem's concept of psychological androgyny offers a more nuanced understanding of gender flexibility. Bem emphasizes that individuals need not be confined to traditionally masculine or feminine roles but can adapt their behaviors, whether assertive or nurturing, instrumental or expressive, according to the demands of different situations (Bem 155). Her development of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) provided a practical method to assess these traits, revealing that masculine and feminine characteristics often coexist within a single individual to varying degrees. This approach challenges the notion of strict gender dichotomies and underscores the fluidity inherent in human behavior.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In light of the topic above, the research article seeks to provide light on how androgynous women are portrayed, the difficulties they encounter, and how society views them. In addition to discussing new dualism and sex role transcendence, androgyny questions the psychological nature of men and women. By establishing a connection between Bem's conception of strong androgynous beings and Nils Christie's ideal victim, the study refutes Bem's assertions that androgynes, as opposed to sex-typed people, exhibit greater sex-role flexibility, have higher self-esteem, and perform better at home and at work. Bem's gender schema theory focuses on how society shapes gender stereotypes in people's thoughts from an early age, leading to children's development of ideas about what it means to be masculine and feminine. These people then make decisions based on these ideas and adjust their behavior accordingly. Bem uses gender schema theory to emphasize that these gender prejudices are culturally created rather than innate (Starr 567). She therefore views androgyny as a chance to appreciate and exercise flexibility, which is said to be a hallmark of androgyny, and to break free from the rigidity of culturally prescribed sex roles. A person exhibiting both assertiveness and compliance in a given situation demonstrates greater adaptability, leading to more balanced performance compared to individuals relying solely on traditionally acquired gender behaviors to address issues. Accordingly, Bem claims that people who are androgynous are healthier, more mentally stable, and better adjusted than people who rigorously follow socially acceptable gender stereotypes (Rowland 449).

To draw a meaningful connection between Bem's assertion that androgynous individuals exhibit greater psychological stability and Christie's concept of the "ideal victim," it is essential to first unpack how Christie characterizes victimhood. According to Christie, a person must be perceived as a legitimate and deserving victim in order to access support or recognition as such. This recognition depends either on the individual's capacity to voice their experience effectively or on the absence of dominant forces that might silence their claims (Long 346). This paper, therefore, undertakes a detailed analysis of David Fincher's film [1]*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, with particular attention to the character of Lisbeth Salander. Supporting the primary analysis are a range of secondary materials, including critical texts, academic articles, reviews, and discussions that address the intersecting themes of androgyny and victimhood as they are portrayed in the film.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

After losing a high-profile libel case against influential billionaire Hans Erik Wennerström, Mikael Blomkvist, co-owner of Millennium magazine, has a significant setback in his career at the beginning of the movie. Disillusioned, he leaves his job and withdraws to his house. Soon after, he is approached by wealthy entrepreneur Henrik Vanger, who wants him to look into the disappearance, and alleged murder, of his granddaughter Harriet Vanger, which has been going on for decades. Blomkvist will pretend to be a biographer recording the Vanger family's history in order to conceal the investigation's actual goal. Only after Henrik pledges to divulge negative evidence about Wennerström that could assist rebuild Blomkvist's reputation does he agree to handle the case. As the investigation proceeds, he collaborates with Lisbeth Salander, a talented researcher and hacker whose extraordinary abilities persuade him to hire her as his assistant. Due to her extremely traumatic past, Lisbeth Salander was placed under state guardianship and is legally considered incapable. She is sexually assaulted by her court-appointed guardian, who continues to abuse her in spite of the system put in place to protect her. As the inquiry progresses, Lisbeth slowly starts to feel a bond with Mikael Blomkvist, one of the only people she starts to trust after her previous betrayals.

[1] The movie is an adaptation of the novel *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo,* written by Swedish author and journalist Stieg Larsson. It was published posthumously in 2005 and translated into English in 2008.

She begins to imagine the potential of a new, more secure existence as a result of her increasing bond with him, which gives her a unique sense of hope and emotional security.

Lisbeth Salander's character offers a striking example of what it means to live with an androgynous identity. Her independence, emotional resilience, and refusal to conform to traditional gender roles reflect Sandra Bem's belief that androgynous individuals are often more flexible, self-reliant, and mentally stable. This paper draws on both Bem's perspective and Nils Christie's idea of the "ideal victim" to explore how Lisbeth fits, or fails to fit, into society's expectations of victimhood. To make this connection clear, it is important to understand what Christie means by an ideal victim: someone who, after being harmed, is quickly and easily recognized as a legitimate victim by others (Christie 18). He also identifies some of the purported requirements that must be met by an individual in order for them to qualify as a victim. He or she must be weak, to start with (e.g. women, toddlers, elderly). Second, she or he cannot be held accountable for being at the scene of the crime since they must be en route to complete a respectable assignment at the time of the crime. A victim, then, is a person who is exceedingly susceptible, either financially or physically, and ideally both. Furthermore, it is crucial that the victim be identified and proven innocent. Christie further outlines the traits of a perpetrator by stating that the offender must be large, evil, and unknown to the victim (Mirka 69-85).

One of the main characters in Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy and its movie adaptations, Lisbeth Salander, has emerged as one of the most recognizable heroines in contemporary fiction (Åström et al.). Her androgynous appearance and combative demeanor demonstrate a strong sense of post-feminist uniqueness in her portrayal. Because of this, she might be interpreted as a representation of feminist resistance, defying conventional notions of femininity and claiming agency over her identity (Fredriksson 62). Furthermore, society does not accept her as an ideal victim, as defined by Nils Christie, even though she is a direct victim of her recently appointed guardian's lust.

To better understand why Lisbeth's androgynous identity challenges her acceptance as a traditional victim, it is important to first examine how gender roles are culturally constructed and reinforced through socially sanctioned traits. The socially and culturally given characteristics that are expected of people based on their gender are basically what we mean when we talk about traditional gender roles. In many societies, these assumptions are generally accepted and ingrained. Cook lists some of these well recognized qualities in Psychological Androgyny, emphasizing the types of characteristics that are generally associated with both masculinity and femininity. According to him, "instrumental/agentic attributes like goal orientation, assertive activity, self-development and separation from others are marked as masculine whereas expressive/ communal traits like emotionality, selflessness, sensitivity and interpersonal relations are tagged as feminine" (472). Androgyny, on the other hand, refers to "an amalgamation of the masculine i.e. instrumental/agentic as well as feminine expressive/communal personality traits" (Cook 472).

Lisbeth challenges the phallocentric structure and patriarchal values of her society through her adoption of an androgynous identity. Though biologically female, she disrupts conventional expectations of femininity and masculinity by thinking and behaving in ways that defy gender norms; an observation highlighted in the film when someone remarks that *"she is different"*. Her appearance is a direct reflection of this resistance: from her unconventional wardrobe and spiked hair to her tattoos, piercings, and bold T-shirts, Lisbeth presents herself in a way that deliberately rejects traditional standards of feminine attractiveness. As Fredriksson notes, her distinct style openly subverts heteronormative ideals tied to female sexuality (65). Lisbeth also enters a professional realm traditionally dominated by men. She is a highly skilled computer expert and hacker, recognized as one of the best investigators in her field. In the film, she conducts background checks for powerful clients, including her work for Blomkvist, showcasing her technical expertise. Her proficiency with technology is particularly evident in a scene where she effortlessly bypasses

the heavy encryption on Blomkvist's computer. These abilities prove crucial in unraveling the mystery of Harriet Vanger's disappearance. Additionally, Lisbeth's assertive and vengeful traits, often culturally coded as masculine, further reinforce her androgynous persona. Her calculated response to her rape, where she secretly records the assault and later uses the footage to blackmail Bjurman, highlights her strategic thinking and ability to reclaim power through her technical skills. In doing so, she not only protects herself but also redefines the terms of agency and resistance within a patriarchal context. Thus, in Lisbeth's character, the masculine dimension of the female psyche, what Jung terms the *'animus'*, is particularly dominant, playing a significant role in her strong sense of autonomy, especially in her dealings with men. Jung suggests that the animus influences how women form their beliefs and engage with the opposite sex, shaping both their internal attitudes and external relationships (Stevens 206).

Nevertheless, society often perceives a woman's resistance to traditional gender expectations with disapproval. In her study *"Negative Portrayal of Androgynous Women in Contemporary Literature: A Study of Hamid's Moth Smoke and Shamsie's Kartography"*, Rukh explores how androgynous female characters who defy conventional gender appearances and behaviors, are depicted in patriarchal narratives. She argues that literature frequently rewards characters who conform to socially accepted gender norms, while individuals who challenge these expectations, particularly women with androgynous identities, are often portrayed in a negative or problematic light. Despite an unconventional portrayal, the analysis shows that the women are given morally reprehensible characteristics, and their freedom and independence are also unfavorably depicted. This strengthens the idea of how these women are viewed in a patriarchal culture. Additionally, it perpetuates the notion that stereotypically oriented men and women are normal (Rukh 4372). Additionally, it calls into question the liberating potential of androgynous beings as well as Krishnaraj's assertion that "reducing gender polarities, self can be freed from the prison of gender".

An examination of Salander's character also challenges Krishnaraj's notion of a 'free self' liberated from the confines of gender identity. Despite embodying an androgynous persona, Salander remains tethered to certain intrinsic aspects of her identity as a woman. While she deliberately adopts a non-traditional, un-feminine appearance to resist and subvert stereotypical gender norms, her emotional vulnerability surfaces through her developing feelings for Blomkvist. This emotional attachment reveals that, although she rejects conventional femininity outwardly, she is not entirely detached from the internal emotional responses traditionally associated with her gender.

Adopting a manly dress code not only demonstrates masculine characteristics but also overtly expresses opposition to male desire and the male gaze (Chandler, 105). But Lisbeth's masculine appearance, which she assumed to try ward off male attention and desire, doesn't work. In a patriarchal world, where men like Mike and his father rape and kill women because no one would miss them, Lisbeth is unable to avoid the male gaze despite being the antithesis of the patriarchy's favored, subservient damsel. For them, they are just "whores" and "just another girl". Her state-appointed legal guardian, who is tasked with Lisbeth's safety and financial support, also sexually assaults her. He defends his crimes by calling her a "cute" person when she acts "surly". The degree to which Lisbeth's androgynous status allows her to challenge or overcome the firmly ingrained patriarchal ideas around her is a significant question raised by this unsettling reality.

Lisbeth's introduction early in the movie serves as a clear example of how society views androgynous women. A male character worries that Mr. Dirch Frode would reject her because "she's different", even if he acknowledges her extraordinary investigative abilities. She quickly communicates this difference with her unusual appearance and unique demeanor. Her demeanor is mysterious and touch sinister. She does not say much, does not make long eye contact, and does not seem interested in light talk. This representation calls into question Sandra Bem's assertion that androgynous people are more likely to be emotionally stable

and psychologically balanced. Due to her appearance and demeanor, Lisbeth experiences social ostracization. She is portrayed as someone who is socially uncomfortable, has no friends, and acts strangely in public. She finds it difficult to trust others. Her persona also refutes Prakash's assertion that people who adopt androgynous identities exhibit significantly lower anxiety levels in social situations than people who support more feminine characteristics or portray themselves as undifferentiated. According to Prakash, reported levels of social anxiety decrease(s) as identification with a traditionally masculine gender role orientation increases (119). Lisbeth, on the other hand, appears to act somewhat clumsily in social settings. Her dialogue with many people in the film demonstrates this. Her behavior is peculiar; she only does jobs that interest her, ignores Blomkvist when he asks her not to smoke in the house, leaves in the middle of a conversation, and doesn't want to shake hands with others. In his work, "Reviving Androgyny: A Modern Day Perspective on Flexibility of Gender Identity and Behavior," Martin critiques the assumed link between psychological androgyny and greater flexibility that supposedly results in healthier psychological adjustment. He contends that this relationship requires more critical scrutiny, pointing out the lack of sufficient research to substantiate such claims. Martin emphasizes that there is inadequate evidence to support the idea that transcending traditional gender boundaries inherently leads to a more meaningful or balanced approach to life (Martin 594). Building on Martin's criticism, Woodhill makes a distinction between the positive and bad parts of androgyny, which further complicates the idea that androgynous people have a balanced identity. According to him, both men and women have a combination of good and bad qualities that affect the roles they play (Woodhill 23). As a result, an androgynous individual who combines characteristics from both sexes is likely to have both advantages and disadvantages. Thus, the oversimplified notion that an androgynous identity is intrinsically more balanced or psychologically healthy is contested by this viewpoint. Martin's and Woodhill's positions of having an unyielding personality are reflected in Lisbeth's character. She is a recluse who finds it difficult to get along with others and feels uncomfortable in social situations. Her inability to look someone in the eye also speaks to her unstable mentality. This viewpoint is essential to my research, which attempts to disprove the notion that an androgynous person is more mentally stable and capable of handling social issues with greater awareness and devotion.

In addition to the psychological aspect, Martin highlights the idea of identity androgyny, which moves the emphasis from merely displaying both masculine and feminine characteristics to feeling a connection to both gender groups. By suggesting that while embracing aspects of the other gender can provide additional social advantages and foster flexibility, strongly identifying with one's own gender promotes mental well-being, this dual identity perspective provides a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between identity and psychological adjustment (Martin 601). Since Lisbeth's androgynous identity aids in her acceptability and career in a field that has historically been controlled by men, this concept is especially pertinent to her character. When the job is delicate, her employer will turn to her. If she had looked more feminine, no one would have taken her seriously as a hacker and investigator since, in a patriarchal society, working with machines is not seen as a woman's role. Therefore, her androgynous identity, rather than a female type-cast identity, helps her land a position at a security firm and, as a result, achieve financial stability.

Furthermore, people's indifference for women who do not fit the stereotypical definition of a lady is further reinforced by the occurrence at the train station where a robber attempts to take away her possessions. Because Lisbeth became her own heroine, she exemplifies the idea of 'every man for himself', which is significant in this context (Henry 147). No one came to assist her. She chased after the robber and recovered her belongings, which is not something that would have been anticipated of a lady.

Lisbeth has several traits that are typically associated with men, like her skill as a hacker, her vindictive nature, her capacity to protect herself from assailants, her skill at riding a motorcycle, and her assured

handling of weaponry. According to a number of scholars, people who choose an androgynous identity frequently experience psychological and social advantages as a result of these male characteristics. However, this viewpoint calls into question the widely held belief that androgyny naturally produces a balance between feminine and masculine traits (Whitley 766). The way society views some attributes as favorable while labeling others as negative can be connected to the propensity to acquire masculine traits. For instance, typical feminine traits like self-criticism, heightened sensitivity, and reliance are frequently seen as undesirable since they may negatively impact a person's psychological health. Many people choose to embrace masculine features in order to boost their sense of value and confidence. But it is crucial to understand that not all masculine characteristics are positive; just as there are negative feminine characteristics, there are also negative masculine characteristics. Similar to positive masculine traits, positive feminine traits can also exist. Therefore, using strict, essentialist terminology to classify these characteristics is unduly simplistic. This insight prompted scholars to add four new elements to the concept of androgyny: desirable masculinity, undesirable masculinity, desirable femininity, and undesirable femininity (Ricciardelli 638). For instance, bossiness and sarcasm are perceived as unfavorable masculine attributes, whereas strength, confidence, and firmness are considered good. While anxiety, timidity, and over-emotionality are bad qualities, patience, sensitivity, and responsibility are viewed as excellent qualities on the feminine side. The decision of which qualities to exhibit ultimately rests with the individual.

Furthermore, the adoption of certain traits by an androgynous individual is not simply a matter of arbitrary choice; rather, it is shaped by the circumstances they face (Prakash 119). In Lisbeth's case, she leans more heavily on her masculine traits as a strategy to navigate and survive within a male-dominated society. Her troubled childhood and the State's declaration of her as legally incompetent have erased much of her official identity, reflecting a society that dismisses her existence as insignificant, thereby labeling her as insane and incapable of managing her own life. Consequently, she likely views embracing a masculine demeanor as a means to resist and potentially escape the oppressive treatment she endures. Adopting an androgynous identity, however, does not shield her from society's patriarchy. As permitted by the State, the guy who was supposed to be her guardian harasses and rapes her because, despite her masculine look, he still finds her 'cute'. Instead, he finds her more attractive because of her icy demeanor, which she uses to ward off any unwanted attempts. This fact supports the notion that, despite acquiring many masculine characteristics, your physiological composition is still that of a woman, meaning that your body may be exploited and manipulated in the same manner to satiate a man's sexual desires. Furthermore, it appears that her abuser finds her androgynous appearance and rebellious response arousing, which he interprets as an insult to his masculine ego. He criticizes her unconventional, daring appearance, is agitated by her body piercings, and inquires as to whether she finds her eyebrow piercing to be 'attractive'. He is obviously threatened and irritated by a lady who has been able to manage her life and pay her own bills since she was ten years old, as seen by their chat. He thus threatens to institutionalize her out of irritation and to appease his masculine ego. In addition, Bjurman inquires about her history of sexually transmitted infections and the date of her most recent HIV test to intimidate and humiliate her.

Despite enduring sexual assault, financial hardship, and extreme social marginalization, Lisbeth does not align with Nils Christie's concept of the 'ideal victim'. According to societal expectations, an ideal victim is someone who is perceived as weak, innocent, and deserving of sympathy. Lisbeth, with her fierce demeanor and unconventional behavior, does not visibly embody these qualities. As a result, those around her often fail to recognize her as a victim of her circumstances. Even Blomkvist initially sees her as a troubled and reckless individual, dismissing her struggles as the behavior of an unstable alcoholic. The roles of race and class further complicate this perception. As Krishnaraj emphasizes, addressing systemic barriers rooted in race and class is essential to dismantling the structures that uphold women's subordination (11). Lisbeth's experience, therefore, demonstrates that simply adopting an androgynous identity is not sufficient to secure societal empathy or justice. The several circumstances that led Lisbeth to embrace an androgynous

identity include her financial instability, her early orphanage, which left her reliant on the State's welfare subsidies, the treatment she receives from her legal guardian in particular, and society at large.

Analyzing androgynous body ideals is essential to understanding how androgynous identities are constructed and expressed. The body becomes a primary medium through which individuals assert their androgyny, challenging conventional gender binaries. This conversation is particularly relevant for cisgender individuals who view the pursuit of a non-stereotypical, androgynous body as a means of resisting the rigid dualism traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity. By redefining bodily norms, they actively disrupt societal expectations tied to gendered appearance. Cusack outlines the behaviors that cis people engage in to attain an androgynous body ideal in "A Black Slate Body". He categorizes these behaviors into primary and secondary sex traits, body weight and form, and gender expressions (438). The way Lisbeth expresses her gender through her hair, makeup, clothes, and physical changes can be used to analyze her character. According to Cusack, a person's clothing choices play a significant role in determining their androgynous identity. Lisbeth appears really masculine because she generally wears dark shirts and jeans throughout the film. She does wear cosmetics, but it has a gothic appeal and is also highly unfeminine. She also has short, disheveled hair. She also has numerous tattoos on her body and severe facial piercings. According to Kwan, bodily changes are an act of resistance meant to challenge patriarchal society's conventional ideas about women's beauty. Morgan refers to this excessive tattooing and body piercing as "a response of appropriation". Kwan supports these acts by referring to such actions as "micro-level acts" that don't call for coordinated group efforts (70). Thus, the ability to critically examine how society views women who defy conventional notions of body beautification is crucial to this discussion. In Lisbeth Salander's case, her perception by others is far from sympathetic. A critical link can be drawn between her extensive body modifications and society's refusal to recognize her as an ideal victim. Her piercings, tattoos, and unconventional appearance push her further away from the traditional image of the "ideal woman," which, as Christie suggests, is often essential for one to be seen as a legitimate victim. Despite enduring lifelong trauma, including state-sanctioned abuse and rape, Lisbeth is not met with compassion but rather suspicion and marginalization. Her androgynous identity, instead of shielding her, becomes yet another reason for her alienation. Denied societal support, she is forced to become her own protector. She not only exacts revenge on her rapist but also emerges as a rescuer for Blomkvist, ultimately defying both victimhood and the traditional masculine savior narrative.

However, when she begins to feel something for Blomkvist, we see that she has not been able to fully suppress her feminine inclinations and desires toward the opposite sex, and as a result, the 'animus' gets overpowered. This is a rebuttal to Woolf's assertion that androgynous people must think free from the biases and discriminations that society has associated with the body. Through an analysis of Lisbeth's character, the research dismantles this notion, suggesting that regardless of how much of an androgynous identity you may acquire through your conduct and clothing, one cannot think outside of the sex allocated by birth. Because it was natural and something she was born with, the main character of my selected film was also unable to resist falling in love with someone of the opposite gender. Her character is portrayed by the director as being unable to free herself from the demands of her body and her feminine inclination to fall in love with Blomkvist.

CONCLUSION

A thorough exploration of Lisbeth's character calls into question Sandra Bem's view that an androgynous identity leads to greater emotional resilience and adaptability. Lisbeth often appears socially isolated and emotionally guarded, making it difficult for her to connect with others. Furthermore, her situation does not align with Nils Christie's notion of the "ideal victim," as her experiences of trauma are frequently overlooked or met with skepticism by those around her. Her nonconforming appearance and demeanor

contribute to the lack of empathy she receives, reinforcing her outsider status. This positions her at a double disadvantage: she does not conform to conventional gender expectations, nor is she granted the compassion typically offered to victims. However, dismissing the advantages of androgyny in her life would be reductive. Her androgynous identity equips her with the confidence and skill set to thrive in environments typically dominated by men. It offers her a means to secure employment and gain financial stability, allowing her some autonomy in a world that repeatedly tries to sideline her.

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