

## Bravery and Boundaries: A Feminist Critique of Patriarchal Norms and Gender Roles In Brave

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*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."*

— Galatians 5:1

### ABSTRACT

This research examines “*Brave*” through the lens of feminist literary criticism, by using *Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler, it focuses on how the story addresses gender roles in patriarchal society and a mother daughter relationship, exploring the role of women in ‘Brave’ society. As a result **1)** Traditional gender roles are being forced therefore limiting women's freedom and reinforcing patriarchal authority. In this film Merida's behavior and actions do not follow the traditional gender roles or what they expected her to be, she was challenging it. **2)** The conflict between Elinor and Merida shows how traditional gender roles are passed down through generations. Elinor pushes tradition but Merida wants freedom, so this limits Merida's choices and identity. **3)** Merida's leadership style represents her willingness to have freedom and choose her own path. She also showed that she is brave to express her thoughts and feelings. These elements reflect the expectations that society expects women to be. This also shows that women have to be brave to get their freedom. This is important to encourage women and young audiences to understand about gender, identity, and power. We hope that future researchers can explore other animated films that portray resistance to gender norms and a conflict between mother and daughter.

**Keyword:** *Brave, Gender roles, Freedom, Patriarchy, Identity*

### INTRODUCTION

Literature and film influence cultural attitude, challenging the idea about gender and power. Additionally, stories have an impact on young audiences by using storylines that either reinforce or challenge the standards. For instance, gender roles have positioned women as subordinate, favoring marriage and submission over personal agency. The study focuses on how the film *Brave* brings up parental expectations and why Merida rejects the expected path for women. “*Animated films often*

*challenge traditional beliefs and influence how young audience members view ideas such as identity and gender roles”* (Sun, J., 2020). UNICEF data says that 51% of Bangladeshi women aged 20-24 got married before they were 18. It demonstrates that the media should help build autonomy and independence among adults.

An animated film titled “*brave*” was one of the most popular animated films that was aired in June 2012. This animated fantasy adventure was produced by Pixar Animation Studios which is directed by Brenda Chapman and Mark Andrews, and was also distributed by Walt Disney Pictures. This film was aimed at kids for the age of 6-12. One of the awards that were achieved by Brave is: won an oscar for best animated feature. Won an academy award for best animated feature film of the year. They also won the best edited animated feature film and many more. This film focuses on the life of a princess named Merida, where she was forced to act properly following the traditional gender roles. This story highlights Merida rejecting the traditional gender roles and life of freedom. Brave encourages the audience to rethink the constraints imposed by traditional gender norms. The film shows Merida as a strong and independent princess who refuses to be limited by societal expectations. This highlights the importance of self-determination and the bravery to go on with our own paths.

This film tells the story of a princess named Merida, a tough and independent woman who defies royal expectations. While her mother insists that Merida must act proper, ladylike, and prepared for an arranged marriage, following all the royal tradition roles. Merida refuses to be like that, instead she chooses a path of freedom. The film explores how Merida challenges the patriarchal norms. By disregarding the traditional gender roles. And not following what her mother instructed her to do but live freely. Merida rejects the social expectations that women are supposed to prioritize marriage and obedience over personal freedom. The story of Brave not only critiques patriarchal traditions but also reflects current societal struggles. Where women are still fighting for autonomy and equality. Merida’s rejection of arranged marriage and wanting for personal freedom resonate strongly with ongoing global discussions about women’s rights and gender equality.

In this research, Using Feminist theory *Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler. It is utilized to explore women's roles in a patriarchal society. Judith Butler's theory introduces the concept of gender as a social construct, making it challenging the traditional gender roles. Butler argues that gender is not performative but gender is produced and reinforced through repeated actions, behaviors and social expectation rather than being a fixed gender. *"Gender proves to be performance—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed"* (Butler, 1990, p. 25). This theory

critiques the difference between men and women. Stating that gender roles are fluid and shaped by cultural and historical context. Merida resists societal norms, by that gender identity is not determined but rather constructed through personal agency and defiance. It reflects Butler's argument that gender is a performance shaped by social norms, rather than a natural identity. In *Brave* Merida rejects traditional femininity where she refuses to be obedient and get married. Instead she chooses to be independent and self-determination, this reflects Butler's that gender can be reshaped. Therefore this film deconstructs rigid gender norms showing that women could define their true self outside the patriarchal expectations.

The Illusion of Empowerment A Feminist Analysis of Disney's *Hercules* brought feminist film theory to analyze and criticize the way gender is built in the film. It is argued in the publication that despite playing a strong role, Megara ultimately supports patriarchy, since real femininity is never shown. According to the research, *Hercules* still depicts many women characters as strong and independent, yet they get pulled into romance and remain under control of male forces. According to research on *Hercules*, Megara might look strong and self-reliant, yet she gives up a lot and loves a man more than anything. Similarly, the majority of Disney films depict women as strong but still remain traditional in nature, needing a prince or being defined by romance. In the film, *Brave* demonstrates the challenges of following patriarchal traditions. Looking at how *Brave* opposes the power of men in favor of women. While Megara from *Hercules* follows the traditional norms for women as time goes on, Merida from *Brave* does not let those norms decide her fate. Based on existing studies however, this study will also pay attention to Merida's relationship with her mother and. Will also focus on how the character counters patriarchy and defines her own identity, independent from men.

By looking at the *Brave* story using the lens of Feminist theory *Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler. This research will explore how the story *Brave* challenges the patriarchal system. But also critiques the traditional gender roles that limit women's choice and freedom. Merida defies forced marriage and rejects being a ladylike proper woman. Making her challenge the social expectations that are placed on women. Merida's journey represents that women should have control over their own lives. Instead of being forced to fulfill the roles and expectations. *Brave* serves as a reminder to be brave to reject social norms and assert one's identity. Also outdated expectations should not persist in real life. Merida's journey shows the pressure to conform to societal norms, as well as the importance of allowing women the freedom to pursue their own path. Encouraging society to support women's choices in real life.

## Binary Opposition

Autonomy	Duty
Merida's resistance against arranged marriage represents her fight for self-definition. <i>“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”</i> (de Beauvoir, 1949, p. 267)	Elinor expects Merida to follow these traditional expectations that are placed on women in patriarchal society. <i>“Patriarchy has no gender.”</i> bell hooks (hooks, 2010, p. 142)

### METHOD

This research used the qualitative method to analyze the animated film *Brave* that is directed by Brenda Chapman and Mark Andrews, guided with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. The theory by Judith Butler would find out the patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles from the film. The data was served in the form of a narrative style, making it suitable for describing, explaining and arguing how patriarchal norms manifest in the film. This research examines the role of women and challenges the patriarchal society.

Data collecting involves a close examination of *brave*, focusing on key themes of patriarchal norms, gender roles, and societal expectations. Examining the character, dialogue, and visual of the film. By analyzing the character, it helps us understand the relation to patriarchal expectations and resistance of traditional roles. Each dialogue that each of the characters said, it will also be analyzed to identify the key moments that reinforce or challenge patriarchal norms and gender roles. The visual analysis will focus on Merida's body expressions through activities such as archery and horseback riding. The symbolic contrast between her outdoor attire and elegant dresses. And the meaningful contrast of wild natural environments with the structured castle environment. This study scope focuses on patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles using the binary opposition of *Autonomy vs Duty*.

This study highlighted gender issues that appear in children's movies. In addition, the study assessed the presence of patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles in kids' media.

### DISCUSSION

#### 1. Gender roles

The story begins with a princess named Merida who lives in a castle with her 2 parents Queen Elinor and King Fergus. In the film it's showing Merida's childhood



flashback. It was the moment when her parents gave her a gift for her birthday, a bow and an arrow. Merida feels so happy receiving the gift and excited to finally practice bowing. But after that, something happens, a bear attacks them. But the scene is cut and it does not show us anything about what happens next. But after the scene gets cut, Merida says *“Some say our destiny is tied to the land, as much a part of us as we are of it”*. This landscape has the majesty and mystery of the Scottish highlands, which show the concept of connectivity between humans and nature. It captures the snow covered mountains, mist and shadows showing that there is a mysterious relationship between fate and heredity. By not showing the characters from the frame, the mountains here become the center of attraction. The film explores tradition, legacy and personal destiny. This reflects a traditional view of identity that is deeply rooted in cultural and societal norms. This perspective means that one identity is determined by societal expectations. However Merida here seeks to break free from the traditional norms. *“The semiotic disrupts fixed meanings, allowing for fluidity beyond patriarchal imposition”* (Kristeva, 1984). Semiotic here disrupts fixed meanings, allowing for fluidity beyond patriarchal imposition. This disruption offers a space for resistance and challenging traditional gender norms, just like Merida.

The film changes and it portrays her as a teenager now. Everyone expects her to be a beautiful princess, especially queen Elinor. Queen Elinor constantly tells her, teaching her how to be



a proper princess. This scene showing Merida and her family has wonderful light music with it, contains a good pleasant moment. In this scene it is making Merida as the center of the frame even though the camera is behind her. While surrounded by the gathering of clans, making Merida as the center of all those clans demonstrates the pressure

and rigidity of tradition. *“I’m the princess. I’m the example. I’ve got duties, responsibilities, expectations. My whole life is planned out,”* says Merida. This reflects that her whole life her identity is being shaped. *“when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice”* (Butler, 1990, p. 9). According to Butler gender is not an inherent truth but a construct that becomes independent. Leading to the idea of gender as a free-floating artifice. So Merida's role as a princess is a societal construct that dictates her behavior, choices, and identity, independent of her personal inclinations. After she finished talking about herself and her experiences. She now traveled to the mountain with her horse when she was



at last a teenager and she also sang a song as she worked. In this scene the wide shot shows Merida that she was on top alone on a tall cliff with a waterfall behind her. Showing how Merida is very brave to be outdoors freely by herself; besides, It also shows that Merida is wearing a green outfit, while showing her rebel attitude towards the rules her family expected her to be. The title of the song that she sang was *“Touch the Sky”*, and the song has an upbeat or adventurous vibe. The music gives an energetic, emotional and free vibe. *“I will ride, I will fly, Chase the wind and touch the sky”* is one of the lyrics that depicts Merida is communicating her desire to be free and to be herself.

When Merida gets back home, her family are all having dinner, while the camera captures Queen Elinor sitting properly at the table, reading something and surrounded with fancy foods. This shows that Queen Elinor is calm and follows the rules. Then Merida approaches them and places her



bow on the table. Even though the camera only captures half of her, it is seen her bright red hair and her bow, demonstrating a princess who stands apart from the norm, the princess that her mother expects her to be. Queen Elinor confronts Merida about putting her bow on the table. *“A princess should not have weapons, in*

*my opinion,”* says Queen Elinor to Merida. This describes that Queen Elinor wants Merida to behave like a princess, rejecting weapons, being gentle and embracing a marriage. *In this context, “Merida’s struggle is not merely with her mother, but with a patriarchal system that views her as a political pawn—a piece of property to be traded for peace among the clans”* (Streiff & Dundes, 2017, p. 122). Women are expected to follow the traditional roles and be the passive roles according to societal norms. But from Butler's perspective, gender identity is constructed through repeated performances. Elinor belief is a reflection of the performative acts expected of women to embody femininity, such as being graceful. However Merida's passion for archery and her desire to use weapons are challenging these norms. Showing that she is resistant to the expectations of her society. By asserting her agency and embracing masculine characteristics, challenging femininity and defying expectations.

Meanwhile Merida does not want to get married soon, she gets angry and starts talking to her horse. It shows the only person who will listen and



understand Merida is the horse. This scene is dark and the camera captures Merida's face being frustrated about the arranged marriage. It shows that she really wants to be heard and to be understood. She states to the horse that *“I want my*

*freedom*". It shows that she does not want people to limit her, instead she wants to be free. Judith Butler argues that *"Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being"* (Butler, 1990, p. 33). This statement tells us that gender is not something we are born with but something we repeatedly through our actions like our behavior, action, and appearances. When Merida wants to be free, she rejects all expectations placed upon her. Her desire is challenging the societal norms that are for women. This act of defiance aligns with Butler's idea that by resisting these imposed roles. The fixed gender identities are fluid and assert their own agency.

The day has come, to determine who will marry Merida. The 3 princes have to play a game and Merida gets to select the game so she chooses archery, because of the love she has with archery. When the 3 princes have completed their game, suddenly Merida appears and begins preparing with her bow. *"I am Merida, and I'll be shooting for my own hand"* Merida says fiercely before she shoots the arrow. The scene is captured using



white shot. Making Merida stand in the middle of the crowd, proudly holding her bow. With the soothing nature scenery in the background and also with her bright red hair. It demonstrates that Merida is the attention and the centerpiece of the scene. And this will attract people's attention directly to her. The framing of this scene highlights her independence and her determination to defy tradition. Everyone is shocked to see her shooting during the heated scenarios. Seeing Merida in this state, Queen Elinor comes up to her with a furious expression, she reinforces traditional femininity by expecting Merida to be *"ladylike"* and behave gentle and etiquette. However Merida rejects it by choosing archery, a masculine talent, asserting agency through action. Gender is not something one simply is, but something performed through action. Merida's act of shooting the arrow challenges the dominant expectations of femininity within her society. According to Connell (1995), the maintenance of hegemony involves the use of cultural symbols *"to establish the superiority of a particular version of masculinity"* (p. 77). Archery, traditionally coded as masculine, functions as one such symbol, and by claiming it for herself, Merida disrupts that hierarchy.

Queen Elinor feels furious about her, and gets into an argument with Merida. From Merida impressions and Queen Elinor, it shows that they are furious with one another. The scene's dark lighting also conveys the sense that it is currently a serious one. Queen Elinor is enraged that Merida cannot live up to her expectations. She expects Merida to act like a princess; instead, she acts as she

pleases. Meanwhile Merida is upset at her mother for preventing her from being what she desires. Since they are both mad at each other, Merida suddenly breaks her family's request. Queen Elinor



becomes increasingly angrier after she destroys their tapestry and hurls her bow at the fire pit. *"You're a princess. I expect you to act like one."* Queen Elinor says before throwing her bow to the fire pit. This scene does not show any character but it only shows the fire pit and the burning

bow. The fire represents anger between Merida and her mother. And it focuses more on the flames which are wild and intense just like Merida's emotions after seeing her bow get burned. Here, Queen Elinor upholds the traditional gender norms that are expected of women. Merida's resistance to these expectations is her choosing archery and desire to forge her own path. Beale (2015) noted that Merida *"disrupts the traditional romantic teleology"* of Disney by prioritizing *"self-determination"* over a husband (p. 115). Merida disrupts the performative cycle, gender identity and the potential for individuals to redefine their roles beyond societal constraints.

## 2. Autonomy vs Duty

Queen Elinor is teaching Merida how to be a proper princess, she teaches her that being a princess should act proper, kind, and gentle. And most importantly Queen Elinor states *"and above all, a princess strives for... Well, perfection."* Queen Elinor is holding a pointer stick and seems super focused and serious, giving an official lesson. She is teaching Merida what it means to be a princess,



not just in behavior, but in duty like understanding political alliances, preparing for marriage, and basically learning how to act like a future queen. Merida is sitting down in front of her, surrounded by books. Her posture is kind of slouched, her face cannot be seen fully in this frame, her body language says it all she is bored, frustrated, and disconnected. Moreover, she is not

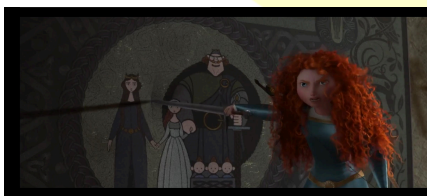
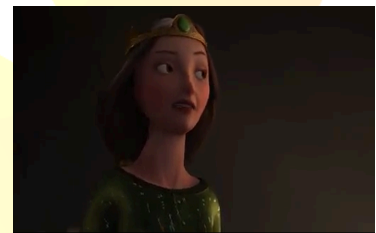
interested in this kind of life at all. Merida and her Mother, Queen Elinor are portrayed to be the example of battle between freedom and duty. Merida, as a princess, is expected to be the ideal royal daughter, elegant, reserved, and poised, and to be married for love but for the sake to unite the kingdom. Queen Elinor is standing in front of a big old map, pointing at different parts of the kingdom. Queen Elinor explains the gender norms by saying, This tells and explains one of Judith's quotes Judith Butler (1990) critiques such structures when she states, *"Any feminist theory that restricts the meaning of gender in the presuppositions of its own practice sets up exclusionary gender norms within feminism"* (Butler, 1990, p. 5). Elinor's idea of perfection is not natural, because she

spends her whole life as a child living according to gendered expectations until she grows up and becomes the “*proper Queen*”. These acts are not a reflection of her inner self, but the results for complying and following what society considers “*proper*” for women and is learned and maintained through cultural repetition. Merida resists this order by refusing to comply with the same cycle, instead she seeks her freedom to live her life without any societal pressure.



After the dinner scene where Merida and Elinor have an argument about the arranged marriage, Merida leaves the dining room and goes to her room. Elinor catches up with her, and finds Merida playing with her sword. Elinor without further ado tells Merida about the story of the ancient kingdom. How a the king divides his kingdom into 4 parts and gives it to his children, but the eldest wants to rule himself, following his own will and the kingdom is ruined. Elinor says if it is not just a story, and she also says “*Legends are lessons.*” This dialogue reflects how hereditary legends are often used as learning tools, especially in social norms and moral lessons, which in the context of the film, are patriarchal. But through Merida challenging the linguistic and narrative structures that have been set. Merida does not want to submit, and she wants to rewrite her own “legend”, refusing her destiny to be dictated passively. And Judith Butler's quote strengthens this analysis with her quote “*Disrupting linguistic norms disrupts the very fabric of power.*” (Butler, 1990, p. 212). Merida disrupts linguistic norms, making “legend” a tool to fight for her right to freedom.

When Merida and Queen Elinor fight because Merida refuses to do what her mother has said. She says, “*I'll never be like you! I'd rather die than be like you!*” On the surface, this line appears to contradict her resistance, but it actually expresses a deeper truth. Merida is not rejecting her mother, but she is rejecting the disappointment of her mother. She admires Elinor's strength and knowledge but she does not want to be like her. This scene shows the obedience and defiance, showing Merida loves and respects her



mother but also refusing the roles that are must follow. Butler (1990) highlights this when she writes, “*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency, part of the pleasure and giddiness of the performance*” (Butler, 1990, p. 137). This demonstrates that gender is performed across time rather than a solid identity. Elinor’s identity as queen and mother is a learned one, and she expects Merida to follow her.

Elinor firmly said to Merida firmly “*Merida, it is time for you to learn your place,*” This reveals how deeply roles are internalized. Butler stated that

*“Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction ‘compels’ our belief in its necessity and naturalness”* (Butler, 1990, p. 190).

Elinor enforces these norms not out of cruelty, but because she has been taught to believe in this necessity. The expectation that Merida must “*learn her place*” is a result of generations of enforced norms masquerading as nature.

A powerful transformation happens when Elinor, after being turned into a bear, is physically stripped of her voice, power, and symbolic role. This transformation forces her into a restricted space where she can no longer perform the role of queen or enforcer of tradition. Without the ability to speak or command, Elinor experiences vulnerability and She is placed in a position of disempowerment that challenges her identity. When



Elinor turned into a bear the film shows that they are spending time together catching fish and playing with water as time passes by. Elinor grows a new perspective and a better understanding of her daughter Merida and because of this transformation Merida says to her mother, “*You’ve*



*changed.*” On the surface, this is a simple acknowledgment of growth. On a deeper level, it shows the undoing of a rigid gender role and the creation of a new understanding between mother and daughter. This explains one of Butler’s ideas. Butler (1990) notes, “*The possibilities of gender transformation are to*

*be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a deformity, or a parodic repetition that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction”* p. 192. Butler explains that identity is not fixed but performative and open to revision becomes evident in this moment of mutual recognition.

### **3. Leadership, Language, and Patriarchal Resistance**

After a series of events where Merida defies the custom of betrothal and causes her mom, queen Elinor to transform into a bear, she returns to the castle to prevent further conflict through the



clans. The clans are on the verge of war due to the disrupted marriage arrangements. In this tense moment, Merida bravely steps forward and speaks to gather the clans. Merida pushes for change by saying things like, *"Our kingdom is young... We've each got to be brave enough to write our own stories."* This moment reflects her belief that *"We need a new way to govern,"* Merida also expresses her feelings about how people can choose their own fate and break traditions. Merida shows the qualities of a leader by challenging traditions and prioritizing freedom and personal decisions. However, her leadership also risks social rejection because it conflicts with traditional expectations of femininity. *"Prejudice toward female leaders... [stems from] the inconsistency that people perceive between the requirements of the leader role and the requirements of the female gender role"* (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). This mismatch does not just create bias; it also shows that Merida's leadership is a form of resistance within a strongly controlled power system. As Judith Butler said *"The framework of power is deeply embedded in social structures, making deviation an act of defiance"* (Butler, 1990, p. 195). She makes strong decisions, such as refusing a marriage, rejecting the idea of looking feminine and moreover rejecting patriarchal leadership by seeking independent management. By refusing to show behavior that conforms to expectations of femininity, Merida engages in behavior that challenges the social accountability of gender, since to "do" gender is to act under the risk of gender assessment (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 136). However, it is important to consider that *"true empowerment in Disney films often remains an 'illusion' when the female lead is still ultimately defined by her relationship to the male characters"* (diSessa, 2020, para. 12). This suggests that while Merida appears to lead, her identity and the conflict itself are still bound by the patriarchal requirement of responding to male suitors. In this scene, Merida is seen as a center, speaking in the middle of a crowd of men. The color of the video is also made a little orange and warm, giving a tense impression and showing Merida's courage.

Different from Elinor who shows great leadership and upholds tradition, this is a contrasting difference. At the scene of appointing a suitor for Merida, every clan introduces their sons, who plan to have a marriage with Merida later. Then, conflict happens, Queen Elinor shuts the chaos with words that explain the importance of unity and the importance of complying laws. She expresses the idea that



*"The clans must have an alliance."* and this reflects her deep concern for political stability and her commitment to protecting peace through tradition. Elinor's leadership is shaped by long standing customs and gender expectations. As Judith Butler writes, *"The heterosexual matrix naturalizes the binding of biological sex, gender identity, and desire into a coherent, socially enforced unity"* (Butler, 1990, p. 151). The quote shows that old ideas of gender are built into our ways of living and affect how people and groups interact. Queen Elinor wants the family to form alliances through marriage which reflects how this behavior keeps patriarchy and order. In addition to guiding the country politically, she wants to support a society where women's and men's duties according to gender and family are clear and in place. In arranging Merida's marriage to another clan, Elinor represents Butler's idea of the "heterosexual matrix" because it helps keep male authority and the familiar culture in place.

When Queen Elinor says *"I am the queen. You will listen"* also reflects a traditional authority that is different from Merida's charismatic leadership. Queen Elinor received her position as an inheritance, not separated from the clan structure. Queen Elinor automatically has a strong adherence and belief in the rules, traditions and social hierarchy that have been passed down from generation to generation. As Judith Butler notes, *"Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced."* (Butler, 1990, p. 10). Butler's point is that gender results from societal practices and ideas and influences how people are judged and how power is applied. Queen Elinor gains her position because her culture creates certain rules for women and defines who can lead which she meets. Her authority comes from both her family and the cultural standards that press a queen to maintain law, customs and order. While Merida desires an intimate and personal style, Elinor approaches leadership in a way that reinforces the current gender roles of her society. When Merida gives a speech, Merida gives encouragement to see and face their own destiny. She says, *"We are free to write our own story, follow our hearts."* Merida tries to encourage people to open their eyes, trying to make others aware and deepening. To make others aware and question the rules and expectations that society places on them, especially regarding gender. *"There is no reason to assume that gender also ought to remain as two. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex*



or is otherwise restricted by it.” (Butler, 1990, p. 30). Butler critiques the traditional gender, which assumes a direct mimetic relationship between biological sex and gender identity. By challenging this, Butler says that individuals could perform and express their gender identities. Just like Merida, Merida rejects the idea that gender must mimic biological sex. Instead Butler advocates that gender is more fluid and performative.

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, this research shows that the film *Brave* represents the dynamics of gender roles and forms of resistance to the patriarchal system, explained by Judith Butler in her feminist theory. Merida begins her story as a princess oppressed by tradition, unlike the typical princesses that society and tradition envision. She doesn't wish to appear ladylike; instead, she rejects marriage and brings traits often belonging to men. As tradition decides what Merida can or cannot do, the same goes for the gender roles assigned to her. Coupled with her mother's action of holding on to traditions and hereditary system of government, Merida is further cornered in her struggle for independence. By her forwardness and being a rebel among the pack of clan leaders who are conventional, Merida shows a strong denouncing of patriarchy, and challenges people to do as they wish. This story illustrates how women should be left free to decide their own future in life without being compelled to acquiesce in tradition, and anything can be changed if one has gigantic will power and guts, even to change traditions and conventions.

In general, this film provides inspiration for women out there who have the same fate as Merida to make a change. The story in this film teaches that gathering courage is the most important step to create equality and justice that must be fought for. This study highlights the importance of discussing gender in media, both academic and social contexts. The goal is not to critique but to inspire a more inclusive and progressive approach to storytelling in children's media. Challenging the persistence of patriarchal norms in contemporary narratives.

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