

Tresdin the Legion Commander's Female Masculinity in IceFrog's *Dota 2*: Video Game
SCRIPT

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the portrayal of Female Masculinity on a female hero in *Dota 2* video game: Tresdin the Legion Commander. The theory used in this research is the idea of Female Masculinity which was firstly conducted by Judith Halberstam in 1998. Qualitative method is used in this research using the script of *Dota 2* video game as the source of data. Through this research, it is found that Tresdin the Legion Commander is eligible in all of the Female Masculinity's categories. They are Butch Realness, Male Mimicry, Femme Pretender, Fag Drag, and Denaturalized Masculinity.

Keywords : masculinity, female hero, video game

A.INTRODUCTION

Masculinity is usually identified with males, whereas femininity is always connected with women. The conventional gender roles display the masculinity with a gorgeous face, bravery, power, independence, leadership, power, courage, heroism, and a powerful body. On the other hand, female is identic with the traits of a lovely lady, emotional, dependent, docile, respectful, and sensitive character. Judith Halberstam in her book *Female Masculinity* debunks this long-held concept of masculinity.

Female Masculinity is the concept where masculinities or masculine traits do not only exist in men but also in women. Halberstam contends that women may be **masculine** in both physical and behavioural ways (1998:241). The portrayals of masculinity in general and female masculinity in particular can also be found and seen in literary works.

A literary work is an imaginative work that depicts human existence in society in a way that the general audience may enjoy and understand. The author documents the outcomes of these creative leaps via a range of techniques and media. Drama, poetry, short story, and novel are all examples of literary works. Pradopo (1994, in Cahyaningsih, 2015) points out, literary works themselves serve as a representation of the world and human life. Literary works are divided into three kinds. They are Poem, Prose, and Drama. While the conventional dramas are performed in stages, theatres, and even presented in forms of videos such as movies and short

movies, the writers choose video game as a resource of this study. According to Parker (2013), it is possible to conclude that video games, at least first-person ones, may be viewed of as a type of theater or film, and hence qualify as an art form.

There are many known genres of games nowadays as Cășvean (2018) states, such as Massively Multiplayer Online Role Play Game (RPG), Strategy, Real Time Strategy (RTS), Action, even Erotic, and so forth. Among many video games available today, the research writers choose *Dota 2* as the object. *Dota 2* is originally adapted from its first (original) generation, DoTA, which was originally a modification created by IceFrog for the game Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos and its expansion entitled The Frozen Throne. IceFrog is the original creator of the original Defense of the Ancient (DoTA) and is the lead developer of *Dota 2*. The game was developed and distributed by Valve Corporation in collaboration with IceFrog as the creator of the first generation of DoTA.

Many attempts have been initiated and done by Valve Corporation in order to draw more players to play *Dota 2*. Several features to improve player's gaming experience are also added to the game such as in-game cosmetic items, utterances for each heroes, hero's lore, and hero's characterization and sometimes comic about particular hero. *Dota 2* universe is a fictional fantasy world where there are many races live together concurrently such as, golem, giant, dragon, and of course human. There are also two genders in *Dota 2* universe; male and female. Heroes in *Dota 2* are also divided into two genders; Male and female heroes.

Gender has been the subject of heated debate in recent years and continue to be an intriguing issue for future research. Gender studies are also utilized within the gaming community to better understand games and improve everyone's gaming experience. Miller and Summers (2007) had a study on a variety of gaming media generated in the United States that could impact players' perceptions of gender roles. Men are more likely than women to become main heroes and prominent characters, to use more kinds weapon, to have more powers and ability, and to indicate more muscular and stronger body, according to research findings.

Female characters are frequently presented as secondary characters, typically dressed in more appealing armor, sensual, innocent, and revealing clothing than their male counterparts. To better comprehend the portrayal of gender in drama, particularly in this research, the writers choose a video game character as the basis of this research. Video game and literature, despite their apparent dissimilarity, are inextricably connected in terms of narrative and literariness (Medjahed & Messoudi, 2018), and among many video games that are available to play and to get access to in 2022, the writers choose *Dota 2* as the source of this research.

According to introduction above the purpose of the research is to find out the portrayal of Female Masculinity of the character Tresdin the Legion Commander from Dota 2 video game. Theory used in this research is Female Masculinity which is first developed by Judith Halberstam. she developed the idea of Female Masculinity when she discovered the distinction in drag king contest that were popular in America at the time.

B.RESEARCH METHOD

The writers conduct a qualitative method since all of the data used is in form of written material and images. The sources of the data are from the official website of Dota 2 video game, Dota 2 official Fandom website, and the video game client accessible through Steam Website as the official distributor of the game.

C.FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In order to best find out the portrayal of Tresdin the Legion Commander's Masculine traits, the research writers use theory of Female Masculinity by Judith Halberstam (1998). There are five categories of Female Masculinity according to Halberstam. They are Butch Realness, Femme Pretender, Male Mimicry, Fag Drag, and Denaturalized Masculinity.

1. Butch Realness

In order to qualify in this category, a character has to have the appearance of a male. The character Tresdin the Legion Commander does qualify for the category. Her characterization has at least one sign in term of masculine in her physical appearance based on the lore and the comic of the character.

The sign of masculine trait in Tresdin's appearance is that she shaves her head clean as seen on the comic published online by valve entitled Tip of the Spear (<https://www.dota2.com/tipofthespear/>).

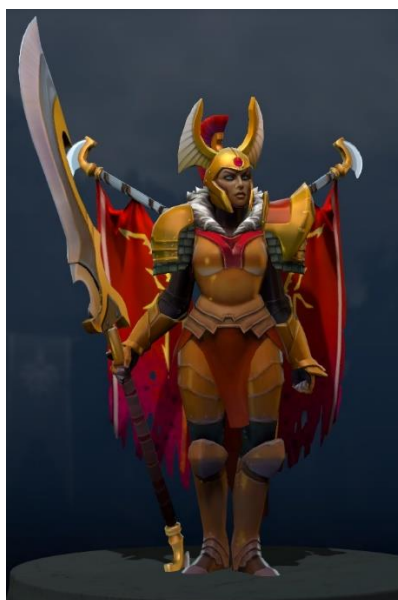
Image 1: Tresdin's Shaved Head



Retalack (1999) in his journal entitled *Razors, Shaving and Gender Construction: An Inquiry into the Material Culture of Shaving* states that shaving for women represents and embodies the same gendering function. It means that shaving the head implies an attempt to mimic the masculine attribute for woman. Moreover, it shows as a fashion statement. A man is somewhat more masculine than the others who do not shave their heads. As opposed to having shaved head, females with long beautiful hair are viewed as the most feminine ones (Weitz, 2001). Futher, Weitz (2001) states that, the general idea of female attractiveness embedded in American society is to have curly or wavy and blonde in addition to having long hair.

Second sign of Tresdin's masculine appearance is that she wears full body armor when she goes into battles. This can be seen in her hero page inside the *Dota 2* game client:

Image 2: Tresdin Wearing Full Body Armor



The image above clearly shows that Tresdin the Legion Commander wears full body armor from head (helmet) to toe (shoes). Even her both hands are protected by gloves. The only thing that is not covered with armor is her face.

When it comes to video game, be it single player, multiplayer, offline, or online video game, female characters most of the time are presented wearing more revealing armor or cloth than male characters. This is echoed by Liu in 2019 in his dissertation entitled *Gender Representation in Video Games*. Liu (2019) says that Male characters are typically depicted as "regular" and completely dressed, whilst female characters are depicted in exposing clothes on the same screen. Character Tresdin, on the other hand, wears a full body armor, implying that she has the appearance of a male character.

2. Femme Pretender

In this category, a character has to have the ability to perform masculine things in order to qualify. The character Tresdin the Legion Commander does qualify for the category as the data has at least one sign in term of masculine in her actions, based on the lore and the utterances of the character. Despite showing some feminine traits such as being rumored to be in love with a male character, the character Tresdin has the tendency to get involved in battles. This can be seen in this following quotation:

Of once-mighty Stonehall's military strength only the Bronze Legion, led by the indomitable Commander Tresdin, was near enough to answer the call of battle.
(dota2.com)

and these following utterances are said by character Tresdin in-game:

“To battle!”
“Ah! The rush of battle!”
“The battle is ours! Victory is assured! This one is in the bag!”
“If they want war, then we shall give it to them!”
“I've come to put an end to hope.”
“Fight me!”
“I come to conquer!”
“They will be overrun!”
“Victory will be ours!”
“Retreat? Hah! Never heard of it.”(dota2.fandom.com)

According to Micheletti, et al (2018), warfare is more common in men. By always being interested in engaging battles, Tresdin the Legion Commander has shown that she is able to perform masculine things. It opposes the domestic aspects of women in general. Even right now, most people picture women as a second-grade member of society by putting demeaning standards toward them. These standards include the saying that women belong in the kitchen and even they are not considered to be good at leadership.

3. Male Mimicry

Based on the theory of Female Masculinity conducted by Halberstam in 1998, having been trained to act masculine is the key parameter for the character to pass as a masculine female. The character of Tresdin the Legion Commander does qualify for the category as a masculine female since the data has signs in Male Mimicry category.

Tresdin is a very well-trained hero. This trait could be proven by the fact that Tresdin holds the title of Legion Commander. From the digital comic developed by Valve itself entitled

Tip of The Spear, Tresdin herself states how she would become a commander of the Bronze Legion after she had gone through some practices.

“So, you killed the commander and took his place?”

“of course not. I was a fifteen-year-old girl. They beat me to death and threw me in the pit. But I wasn’t ready to die. So, I crawled out and stowed away. Dug latrines. Groomed horses. Stirred gruel. Practice my spear work.”
(<https://www.dota2.com/tipofthespear/6-7>)

The quotation above shows that, prior to becoming the commander of the legion, Tresdin had been through some kind of hardship, training, and practices, supporting her masculinity.

Matondang (2020:216) in her Journal *Women in Military Strategy: A Review of Women Emancipation and Protection* states that involving women in resolving conflicts is considered effective to achieve peaceful resolution. Matondang (2020:216) also states that strategically, women can utilize their abilities to establish relationship with women in the area of conflict leading to an eventual peace. On the other hand, Tresdin being a masculine person who she really is, she only wants to win the battle however it may be. This is seen from the following image:

Image 3: Tresdin Attacking on the Front Line



4. Fag Drag

Halberstam (1998) explicitly states in her/his book entitled *Female Masculinity* that in order to pass as a masculine female in this category, a character has to have an attitude of admiring or copying the stereotypical gay male community fashion style. This fashion statement includes thick mustaches and queer biker appearance with tight leather clothing.

The character Tresdin the Legion Commander explicitly shows signs of being Fag Drag. In two of her utterances, which can be found in dota2.fandom.com, Tresdin clearly shows her admiration toward mustaches through quotations “Nice mustache.” And “Defend your Mustache!” (dota2.fandom.com).

Those quotation are proofs that Tresdin obviously admires the mustaches on other male heroes. Tresdin says those both lines the first time she meets any allied male heroes with mustache or attacking any enemy male heroes with mustache respectively.

In addition to liking mustaches, Tresdin also shows slight admiration toward mounts. In a fantasy world, mounts are equivalent to the modern day’s transportation mode, including bike. Tresdin admiration toward mounts can be seen from utterance such as “I like your mount.” (dota2.fandom.com) which said by the character herself in-game.

The character Tresdin The Legion Commander says that she likes the mount on other character the first time she meets allied heroes, male or female who rides a mount into battles. This proves that Tresdin can pass into the category of Fag Drag in Halberstam’s *Female Masculinity* (1998).

Image 4: Tresdin’s Nose Ring on Her Right Nostril



Image 4 above shows Tresdin wearing a nose ring as one of her facial accessories even when she is not wearing her head piece and armor. It means even when she is not in an active battle, Tresdin is shown to keep the nose ring on. It implies that she wears the nose ring on daily basis. A'malia in her research entitled *Fashion dan Identitas Diri Waria* (Eng: *Shemale's*

Fashion and Self Identity) in 2010 states that a shemale, as one of the gay community's member, sometimes wears a nose ring as an additional accessory.

5. Denaturalized Masculinity

The idea of Denaturalized Masculinity necessitates a theatrical look that is more than Butch Realness, but it also investigates alternative masculinities to those portrayed by Male Mimicry. Simply put, the category of Denaturalized Masculinity requires a woman's ability to act dramatically with clothing and accessories. This is done to investigate various masculinities that emerge as a result of Male Mimicry. In other words, they must look more theatrically than when they represent in the category of Butch Realness.

Image 5: Tresdin's Two Red Banners on Her back

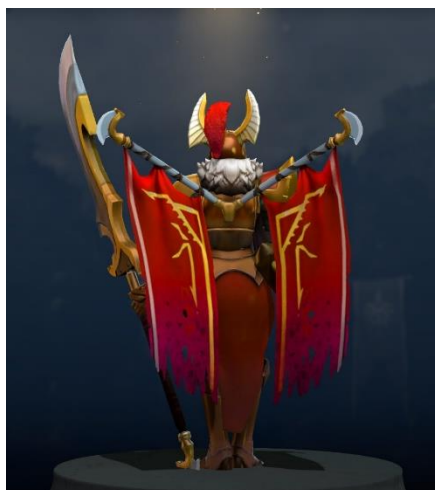


Image 5 shows Tresdin wearing two red banners. The banners are attached to what seemingly two poles protruding from her back of her armor in addition to her already full-bodied armor. Looking further into it, according to Askew *et al* in their journal entitled *Limitations Imposed by Wearing Armor on Medieval soldiers' Locomotor Performance* (2011), a typical armor worn in the 19th century weighted about 30 to 50 kilograms and cover the whole body. If anything is implied by the journal conducted by Askew (2011), it is that any extensions present other than the already full-bodied armor can be considered theatrical. In this case, those two banners on Tresdin's back can be considered theatrical, remembering she is one of the playable characters in *Dota 2* video game.

A. CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that Tresdin is masculine female character. This can be clearly seen from Tresdin qualifies all the categories of Female

Masculinity. The first portrayal of Tresdin's Female Masculinity is Butch Realness. This can be seen from Tresdin wearing full body armor and using sword as her main weapon of choice, which resemblance the armor and the weapon a male warrior character would wear and use. The second portrayal of Tresdin's Female Masculinity is Femme Pretender. This can be seen simply from Tresdin doing masculine things such as going into battles willingly and being the commander of a legion where normally only men would be able to do so. The third portrayal is Male Mimicry. This can be seen from Tresdin being the Legion Commander. Being a commander suggests that Tresdin has gone through some training and practices. The fourth portrayal is Fag Drag. Tresdin adores mustaches and mounts. In addition to adoring mustaches and mounts, Tresdin is also seen wearing nose ring. The fifth and the last portrayal of Tresdin's Female Masculinity is Denaturalized Masculinity. Through Denaturalized Masculinity, Tresdin is seen to show more theatrical performance than other character normally would. By wearing two banners on her back, Tresdin's appearance stands out supporting her Denaturalized Masculinity.

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