

## Independence and strong-willed traits on Quinn as main character in *Wolfsbane* webtoon

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how a female protagonist, Quinn, is constructed through “masculinity” in the webtoon *Wolfsbane*. Using a qualitative, descriptive-analytic approach, it analyzes 11 panels from the prologue through episode six, combining textual dialogue and visual design. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen’s social semiotics, the study interprets representational, interpersonal, and compositional meanings (e.g., angle, salience, framing, color, and symbolic attributes) to trace how the narrative positions Quinn as an experienced werewolf hunter. The findings indicate that Quinn consistently displays independence and strong-willed determination—traits conventionally coded as masculine—through her attire, weapons, gaze, and forceful language. While traces of femininity remain, they are marginal compared with the dominant portrayal shaped by harsh training and her inherited mission.

**Keywords:** *Wolfsbane (webtoon); female masculinity; gender representation; multimodal discourse analysis; social semiotics; Kress & van Leeuwen*

### INTRODUCTION

Gender has been a social construct that has been shaped by a community's society and cultural heritage, and it has served as the framework for what has been determined to be suitable and inappropriate behavior for both men and women. As a result of this framework, women are subjected to more domestic labor conditions, whereas men are subjected to more public sphere. Gender refers to the social, cultural, and psychological characteristics that are associated with males and females in specific social circumstances. (Lindsey, Linda L. 2015).

This demonstrates how gender actually serves as a barrier, impediment, and limitation to both feminine and masculine conduct. Men are stereotyped as either masculine or feminine before they are even born. According to MacInnes and Beynon (2002: 2), men's ideals of appropriate behavior, appearance, and dress are what gave rise to the concept of masculinity. Through Kress and van Leeuwen semiotic lenses, this study will uncover a fresh level of masculinity in female characters and serve as a resource for further study. Additionally, it will give the data required for further study.

In consequence, this research examines one of the webtoons entitled "Wolfsbane" written by Ryan Cady, which has an issue about how the masculine qualities in a woman. This webtoon describes masculinity traits that the female characters develop within the story progression. The story of Quinn's (the main character of the story) entire life is dedicated

to surviving and slaying werewolves. After her father's death, she needs to become someone strong, a heroine (webtoon 2019).

Quinn comes from a long line of werewolf hunters. She is unable to finish off a rabid werewolf in time, which leads to the family of an innocent young girl dying. Quinn's father uses strict training methods, but he gives her the skills she needs to stand a chance. She's out of the specially made silver bullets that have been passed down from generation to generation. Her father prepared her for many things, but he never gave her advice on how to raise a child in such an environment. (Likewise, 2022).

This study aims to demonstrate how Quinn, the main female character in *Wolfsbane*, portrays masculinity traits and how patriarchal notions of what it means to be dominant and masculine for men can also apply to women. It attempts to use gender as the conceptual framework, which aids in the analysis of the data, to show how Quinn, the main female character, develops masculinity traits.

## **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research deploys a qualitative method in which the data that emerged from this study is in descriptive form (Creswell, 2014). This study using a descriptive design analytical methodology to analyze the data such as pictures, symbols, and text from panels of *Wolfsbane* webtoon.

Gender is constructed socially by the society who assumes what roles, activities, attributes, and behaviors that are belonging to boys, men, girl, and women (Mayer and McHugh 2016). The general understanding of gender differences are that they are a central aspect of patriarchy (Holmes 2007). As a general public point of view, we create the ideas of gender based on the opinions that are conveyed on subjects considered either naturally masculine or feminine (Pearce, 1976).

Masculinity or manliness is a set of attribute, behaviors, and roles associated with men and boys (Shehan, Constance L. 2018). They are formed through a long social and cultural process. Hence, the meaning of masculinity is not always fixed, meaning it can be changed and interpreted differently according to those who felt it. The gender structures in general or society characterize behaviors into a specific masculine and others as feminine (Connell 2001). This conception of masculinity cannot be modified and will always be a concrete thing. This concept also cannot be removed from the patriarchal system that has been around since long ago. A system of social structures and practices where men dominate oppresses and exploits (Walby, 2014: 28). This concept of masculinity, at an abstract level, has a clear distinction between men and women; men, should be dominant, strong, intelligent, rational, and active while doing things, while women should be submissive, weak, passive, intuitive, emotionally driven, and usually more communicative while doing things (Connell, RW 2001).

R. Murray Thomas (2001) said that according to gender feminist, the traditional feminine traits (as seen in the table below) is far more superior than the traditional masculine

character and gender feminist does not suggest the development of combined traits on one person.

Masculine	Feminine
Strong willed	Gentleness
Ambitious	Sensitive
Initiate	Modest
Courageous	Supportive
Assertive	Empathy
Independence	Humility
Rational	Sacrifice
Emotionally control	Compassion
	Tenderness
	Nurturance
	Intuitiveness
	Unselfishness

(Thomas, R. Murray 2001)

A method of social semiotic analysis of visual communication was developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), it was based by social Halliday's social semiotic, creating a detailed framework of multimodality, assigning representational, interpersonal, and compositional meaning to images. by using van Leeuwen visual social semiotic, the researcher can interpret the visual clue given by the *Wolfsbane* webtoon author.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data for this study include Masculinity traits of female main characters from the publication of the prologue chapter of the *Wolfsbane* webtoon until the release of the sixth chapter consisting of 11 panels. Data are gathered from both visual and textual sources. The data is examined using Gunter Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic theory to define the meaning of the visual text (panel) in order to present the portrayal of feminine masculinity. The merging of visual and textual texts reveals meaning representation as an assignment of the panel's representational, interpersonal, and compositional meaning.

Quinn describes her lifestyle panel 1 using particular characteristics. Quinn is the protagonist of this story. The panel Quinn was positioned in the center of the frame and became the major focus since it is important to convey Quinn's characteristics is dark-skinned and has scars on her face. She wears and loves Kevlar; a heat-resistant and strong synthetic fiber that is normally spun into ropes or fabric sheets that can be used as such or as an ingredient in composite material components, and it is commonly used to make bulletproof vests or a racing tire (DuPont, 2007).

## Independence



Panel 1. Quinn Characteristic (Wolfsbane webtoon prologue, 2019)

Men typically behave independently because they are conscious of the conventional assumption that men possess superior physical and psychic abilities versus women. Quinn, a lady, exhibits this habit in the angle of the panels below, when she will speak negatively about werewolves.

Despite being a female, she does not wear something like a high-heels that female usually wears, she wore a pair of hunting boots; her hunting boots is an ankle-high boots that is usually reserved for men-only use while hunting in the wilderness. According to Reilly & Barry (2020), by the twentieth century, thin high heels were associated with femininity and "alluring investment." this means that Quinn, despite being a female gender, she nonetheless portrays some of the masculinity traits or at the very least develop them.

Quinn is a hunter who hunts werewolves; as a hunter, she wears hunting outfit and carries a gun. Kress and Van leeuwen (2006) stated that compositional features in a multimodal text need an understanding of layout aspect for the page in order to determine which of the visual and verbal aspect could reach a sense of understanding of the whole unit. This means that before utilizing compositional analysis to study this panel, we must first understand its visual and linguistic components. Information value, salience, framing, and modality are distributed through composition by the visual element and its visual relationship. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

Quinn's panel 1 shows a symbolic attribution process with the symbolic between carries and symbolic attribute, and it shows the carrier receiving meaning and identity (Kress and leuween, 2006). The trees in the panel's background symbolize

strength and growth, which further exemplifies Quinn's busy way of life. The claw scar on Quinn's lips indicates that she has previously engaged in combat with a werewolf while being intimate with the creature and prevailed; this represents the stereotypically male traits of strength and courage. Because Quinn wore a lot of red, a color associated with passion, danger, and bravery (Thomas 2001). (Heller 1948). Green, a hue linked to peace and hope, is another color that covers Quinn.

A low angle and a medium shot are used by Quinn in panel 1 to establish an uneven connection and public distance with the readers. Quinn is seen to be peering down at the viewer. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the models and features typically look down on the reader. Following that, the signals, words, and objects of the visual and written text work to establish a concept in our minds of Quinn's character, with the purpose of representing her as someone who is superior and someone who stares down on us readers. The gun she had strapped on her back is a gun with long barrel, or a rifle; a gun that could only be used by a seasoned hunter or a very experienced one, meaning that the gun she uses is symbolizing her experience in the field of hunting.

The author tries to demonstrate that Quinn is a female who lived in a harsh condition, a condition where she needs to hunt and defend herself from werewolf, by showing her hunting outfit, gun, and the panel's background filled with trees. This is done after analyzing the compositional and classificatory process on panel 1, where Quinn is representing an experienced hunter who felt herself to be unequal and superior towards the reader. The author provides details that the researcher felt were important to mention, like her state, the background of the panels, her attire, and her pistol seen at the rear (. Kress and Leeuwen 2006).

### Strong willed



Panel 7a. Quinn expresses her strong willed (Wolfsbane webtoon episode 3, 2019)

In panels 7a and 7b, Quinn is shown walking up to the werewolf. While moving through the woodland, she takes a peek at the werewolf. Her hair was tied up, and she was donning her hunting jacket. Panels 7a and 7b fall under the category of narrative structure because they depict the represented participant in terms of

generalized action or reaction that can elicit a response from the reader, and they do so in a way that uses the direction of one or more represented participants' glances and an eyeline to create a vector (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006). The represented participant is Quinn herself who become the focal point in these panels. Quinn's gaze in 7b is her vector. There are two components within reactional process; reactor and phenomena. One who engages in looking behavior is a reactor. It can be human or an animal that resembles a human being. "The participant at or which the reactor is looking" is referred to as a phenomenon (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006). In these panels, Quinn is the represented participant who is also the reactor, reacting to the phenomenon in which she sees the werewolf, her target.

When there is only one actor in an image, that person is the actor (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006). Action process and reactional process - Action processes are those in which the actor must have a vector that came or formed the vector themselves. Reactional processes - Those in which an eyeline, such as a glance, by one or more of the participants, forms a vector connecting those participants. This process differs from the Action Process in that the vectors are formed solely by the gaze of one of the objects in the image.

Quinn's actions and reactions in panels 7a and 7b, where she first sees the werewolf and says, "I'm going to kill you," are represented by her vectors. In panel 7b, Quinn was walking through the woodland in her hunting jacket in quest of the werewolf. This produces a transactional image in which the actor, in this example Quinn, and her intention to communicate her rage to the reader are linked by the vector, in this case her glance and the words "I'm going to murder you."

Quinn is positioned as the represented participant in panel 7a, in the center of the panel, and she is also the represented person in panel 7b, however only her eyes and gaze were displayed. The author intended for Quinn to command the reader's attention in panel 7a, yet she depicts the werewolf as a supporting character. Additionally, her eyes and focus were depicted in panel 7b as she looked at the phenomenon in panel 7a. The writer made sure Quinn, her sentiments, and what caused these particular feelings to arise were the focus of these panels.

Salience is used to attract the reader's attention. It can be seen on both panels that the represented participant was displayed in the middle of the panels with large size. She became the main participant in panel 7a with a werewolf in the background as a phenomenon or event. Her darker green colored hunter jacket is seen to be blending with the darker background color of the forest. Her hair is seen tied up to make sure it does not obscure her while she is hunting werewolves. She also becomes the main focus in these panels, especially her gaze on panel 7b that almost covers the entire panel. The darker part around her eyes was drawn by the author to describe her focus on the werewolf in panel 7a; the readers are demanded to give a reaction because of the emotion emitted by Quinn. Also, the text frame on 7b is placed in the middle to highlight the feelings that are released by the represented participant. It was not to take the attention away from the represented participant, but it was to get her feelings across to the readers. The word "I'm going to kill you" is placed in the middle to emphasize the identity of the represented participant; Quinn as a hunter hunting werewolf and is seeing a werewolf in front of her.

According to Thomas (2001) Table of masculine and feminine traits, ambitious and Strong Language is a Masculine trait that could define someone to be masculine or feminine. Quinn's uses of strong language such as the word "kill" and "will" indicated her masculine side and that she is infuriated by the werewolf, she is determined to kill it. The color red we saw in the text bubble further confirms that she uses a very strong language. In addition, we see her staring intensely towards us readers, making us feel the same rage she felt towards the werewolf.

The frame lines that existed in panel 7b are used by the author to accentuate the emotion emitted by the represented participant. By using frame line on the panel, it separates the represented participant and the object; creating separate information which is her emotions. Through this panel, the represented participant wants the reader to receive somewhat different information; the reader sees the represented participant's emotion towards the phenomenon, which becomes the focus of attention on the panel 7b, while the represented participant sees a werewolf, which is the target of her hunt.

## CONCLUSION

As the main female protagonist, Quinn has been seen with masculine traits that is known in Thomas R. Murray (2001) Table of Masculine and Feminine traits, but there is a panel that display the hereditary feminine traits Quinn has, this gives the reader a sense of certainty that she has her feminine side, but it is miniscule in comparison to her masculine traits. Furthermore, her masculinity traits come from how she was raised, by a single father who only know how to hunt werewolves, and it is set as her main traits, her masculinity grows with her mission to hunt all werewolves and to continue her father legacy. And the portrayal of masculinity in female character also happened to Adrienne, at first, she was a timid, gentle, and sensitive feminine character, by the time she was trained by Quinn, she started to develop masculine traits.

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