

**REPRESENTATION OF THE MAIN CHARACTER'S MULTIPLE  
IDENTITIES IN KRISTIN HANNAH'S *THE WOMEN*: A  
POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS**

**THESIS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM**

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IDENTITIES IN KRISTIN HANNAH'S *THE WOMEN*: A POSTCOLONIAL  
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**THESIS**

Presented to:

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.)

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**MALANG**

**2026**

### STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that thesis entitled "*Representation of the Main Character's Multiple Identities in Kristin Hannah's The Women: A Postcolonial Analysis*" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person responsible for that.

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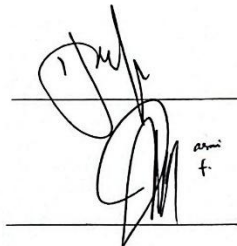
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**MOTTO**

*“Long story short, I survived”*

Taylor Swift

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents for their unconditional love, endless prayers, and unwavering support throughout my journey. I also dedicate this work to my lecturers and academic advisors for their patient guidance, valuable knowledge, and sincere dedication in assisting me to complete this study. Lastly, my deepest appreciation goes to my family and my friends for their constant encouragement, support, and for bringing color and meaning into my life during this process.

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The research was completed as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining a *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.) degree in the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Throughout the process of writing this thesis, the researcher realizes that it would not have been accomplished without the valuable support, guidance, and encouragement from various parties. Therefore, the researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to:

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Malang, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026



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## ABSTRACT

**Khotimah, K. (2026).** Representation of the Main Character's Multiple Identities in Kristin Hannah's *The Women*: A Postcolonial Analysis. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor: Hafidhun Annas, M. Hum.

*Keywords: Multiple Identities, Hybridity, Postcolonial*

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This study aims to identify the multiple identities of the main character, Frankie McGrath, in the novel *The Women* by Kristin Hannah, as well as to analyze how these identities are constructed through hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence within the context of the Vietnam War. This research employs a literary criticism method with a sociology of literature approach. The data were obtained through close reading of the novel and analyzed using Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) postcolonial theory. The findings reveal that the main character possesses five multiple identities, which are as a daughter, a military nurse, an invisible female veteran, a trauma survivor, and a healer and advocate for female veterans. These identities are not fixed; rather, they are continuously constructed throughout her life. Bhabha's concepts are manifested in the construction of the main character's multiple identities, highlighting the dynamic and contradictory nature of identity. These concepts demonstrate how identity is continuously shaped through the interaction between war experiences, cultural encounters, and social rejection. In conclusion, Homi K. Bhabha's concepts play a significant role in explaining the construction of Frankie McGrath's multiple identities. This construction develops dynamically over time, reflecting the complexity of her position as a female veteran. This study contributes to postcolonial literary studies by enriching the understanding of female veteran identity as a construction that is often marginalized in historical and cultural narratives.

## ABSTRAK

**Khotimah, K. (2026).** Representasi Identitas Ganda Tokoh Utama dalam Novel *The Women* Karya Kristin: Sebuah Analisis Pascakolonial. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Hafidhun Annas, M. Hum.

*Kata Kunci: Identitas Majemuk, Hibriditas, Pascakolonial*

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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi identitas majemuk tokoh utama, Frankie McGrath, dalam novel *The Women* karya Kristin Hannah serta menganalisis bagaimana identitas tersebut dikonstruksi melalui hibriditas, mimikri, dan ambivalensi dalam konteks Perang Vietnam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kritik sastra dengan pendekatan sosiologi sastra. Data diperoleh melalui pembacaan mendalam terhadap novel dan dianalisis menggunakan teori poskolonial Homi K. Bhabha (1994). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tokoh utama memiliki lima identitas majemuk, yaitu sebagai seorang anak perempuan, perawat militer, veteran perempuan yang tidak terlihat, penyintas trauma, serta penyembuh dan advokat bagi veteran perempuan. Identitas-identitas tersebut tidak bersifat tetap, melainkan terus dikonstruksi sepanjang kehidupannya. Konsep-konsep Bhabha termanifestasi dalam konstruksi identitas majemuk tokoh utama yang menyoroti sifat identitas yang dinamis dan kontradiktif. Konsep-konsep ini menunjukkan bagaimana identitas tersebut terus dikonstruksi melalui interaksi antara pengalaman perang, pertemuan budaya, dan penolakan sosial. Sebagai kesimpulan, konsep Homi K. Bhabha berperan penting dalam menjelaskan konstruksi identitas majemuk Frankie McGrath. Konstruksi ini berkembang secara dinamis seiring waktu yang mencerminkan kompleksitas posisinya sebagai seorang veteran perempuan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian sastra poskolonial dengan memperkaya pemahaman mengenai identitas veteran perempuan sebagai konstruksi yang kerap termarginalkan dalam narasi sejarah dan budaya.

## مستخلص البحث

**خاتمة، ك. (2026).** تمثيل الهويات المتعددة للشخصية الرئيسية في رواية كريستين هانا "النساء: تحليل ما بعد الاستعمار. أطروحة البكالوريوس. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة الإسلام المولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانغ. المستشار: حافظون. عناس، م. هم

الكلمات المفتاحية: هويات متعددة، هيريدتي، ما بعد الاستعمار تهدف

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يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحديد الهوية التعددية للشخصية الرئيسية، فرانكي ماكغراث، في رواية "النساء" لكريستين هانا وتحليل كيفية بناء هذه الهويات من خلال التهجين، والتقليد، والتردد في سياق حرب فيتنام. تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهج النقد الأدبي مع نهج علم الاجتماع الأدبي. تم الحصول على البيانات من خلال قراءة معمقة للرواية وتحليلها باستخدام نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار لهومي ك. بهابها (1994) تظهر النتائج أن الشخصية الرئيسية لها خمس هويات متعددة، وهي فتاة، وممرضة عسكرية، ومحاربة قديمة غير مرئية، وناجية من صدمة، ومعالجة ومدافعة عن المحاربات القدامى. هذه الهويات ليست ثابتة، بل تستمر في البناء طوال حياتهم. تتجلى مفاهيم البهايا في بناء الهوية التعددية للشخصية الرئيسية، مما يبرز الطبيعة الديناميكية والمتناقضة للهوية. تظهر هذه المفاهيم كيف تبنى هذه الهويات باستمرار من خلال التفاعل بين تجارب الحرب، واللقاءات الثقافية، والرفض الاجتماعي. في الختام، يلعب مفهوم هومي ك. بهابها دورا مهما في تفسير بناء فرانكي ماكغراث للهوية التعددية. تطور هذا البناء بشكل ديناميكي مع مرور الوقت، مما يعكس تعقيد موقعها كمحاربة قديمة. تساهم هذه الأبحاث في دراسة الأدب ما بعد الاستعماري من خلال إثراء فهم هوية المحاربات القدامى كبناء غالبا ما يتم تهميشه في السرديات التاريخية والثقافية.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the introduction of the study, which are background of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations, and definition of key terms.

#### A. Background of the Study

Today, identity is one of the most discussed topics in cultural and social studies. Identity is not merely an individual possession, but is constructed through social interaction, cultural values, historical experiences, and power relations. According to Homi K. Bhabha, identity is not fixed, pure, or stable, rather, it is a hybrid construction formed through negotiation in the "in-between" space where different cultures, histories, and social forces meet. Bhabha (1994) explains that identity is shaped by contact, conflict, and interaction between different cultural positions. Therefore, identity is fluid and constantly changes according to the social and cultural contexts in which a person lives. This view is also supported by Yadav (2023), who states that identity formation is a continuous process throughout life and is influenced by interactions among people and the societies in which they live.

There are also many components of identity including gender, nationality, cultures, work activities, and world views. All of these elements play an interplay and

contribute to a complicated self-concept. An individual could, for example, be a female, a citizen of a specific nation, a professional worker and a cultural community member (Pires, 2024). All these identities are in fact constituting an overall identity of a person in society. People have different social positions and thus usually live with the kind of identities that this entails, multiple identities being a condition in which people may have several identities at once. Such identities can be multiple, shared and sometimes conflicting, depending on which social context a person comes from and might be involved in. This complexity becomes more evident when gender roles are involved, as women's identities are often constructed and limited by dominant social expectations and representations in cultural narratives (Rahayu, 2011). Therefore, identity can never be monolithic or carved out and needs to be considered as a socio-dynamic, multi-faceted process being shaped by structures and experiences of social life (Yadav, 2023).

Identities are even more complex in periods of emergence of social conflict, war and historical trauma. War can also have a deep impact on personal and social identity, as one experience very extreme environments, culture shock, and social change (Mutlu, 2020). Of course, there are lots of other examples, as veterans often have a complex interplay of complicating issues regarding reintegration into civil society upon returning to it, particularly if their war-trauma is not acknowledged or accepted by the broader population. In literary works, these conditions are often portrayed through marginalized perspectives, particularly women, whose roles and

experiences in conflict situations are frequently overlooked or subordinated within male-dominated narratives (Rahayu, 2010). Furthermore, contemporary literary studies also highlight how female characters challenge traditional representations and construct new identities that resist cultural limitations and stereotypes (Rahayu, 2022). This situation is more complicated in the case of women in war when they may suffer from gender stereotyping and social marginalization. The narratives of female war veterans are underrepresented in history, literature, and media, particularly regarding conflicts in the second half of the 20th century (Vitti, 2024).

The Vietnam War is one of the historical periods when this can be seen more clearly-because of its impact on the politics and society of the world. We heard of thousands of women during the war, particularly nurses and medical staff, but whose contributions to the war narratives were neglected. When they went back home, many female veterans felt socially rejected, suffered from psychological trauma and had problems reconstructing their identities (Sabaliauskienė, 2024). The experiences of women show how gender, war and national ideology create complex contestations of identity. Therefore, it is significant to examine the identity construction of female veterans in order to understand how marginalized groups working through their position in history and society (Bennamate, 2024).

Such complicated questions of identity also appear in literature, which will sometimes stand in for social realities and cultural experiences. Literature is no longer just stories of fiction but it also illustrates the social environment, ideological conflict

and history from a given society. Literary texts may be comprehended in terms of the sociology of literature as cultural texts that show and critic contemporary social phenomena (Altun, 2023). In this way, novels can provide insight about identity of individuals and groups, as well as the way in which social construct like gender norms, political ideologies, and historical trauma shape identity. In Indonesia, there are several studies that demonstrate the way literary works are often used to depict of a social ideology such as the dynamics of gender roles in society and literary work depicting of social identity in society (Purnomo, 2023; Senen et al., 2025). As such, the analysis of literary texts can offer a more meaningful insight in the representation of identity problems in the symbolic field of a specific culture.

One novel that explores the struggles with identity is *The Women* (2024) by Kristin Hannah. She is an American novelist of historical fiction novels that cover women's history during major historical events. Her first novel, *The Nightingale* (2015), about the hardships endured by French women in the Second World War came to international recognition. Many of Hannah's pieces can be written from a historical perspective and from her personal point of view as she strives to capture the multimedia approach of drawing readers in with emotion and a historical perspective. This clearly shows that as a writer, Hannah's work is based on historical research and personal narratives, with the result that the interplay between reportage and emotionality brings to vivid life the image of the women she writes about, with an attention paid to historic sensibility. *The Women* is based on interviews with female Vietnam veterans and military archives, a history that has been overlooked in general history.

The novel is about a young girl, Frankie McGrath, who joins the U.S. Army as a nurse in 1966 during the Vietnam War, in a conservative military community in California. Frankie, eager to prove her courage and heroism, offers to join the military and serves her country in Vietnam, to see and hear the horrors of war as she works in military hospitals in Chu Chi and Saigon. Her problems are not over after the war. Frankie's post stint experience in the California is one of rejection, unrecognized as being loved, and emotional wounds. Frankie can't get others to listen to her story and she is dealing with serious issues including psychological distress, drug addiction, and a problem with her identity. Through the support of her other nurses and her personal reflection, over time Frankie is able to come to terms with her wartime experiences and starts to form and rethink herself (Saeed & Rasheed, 2024).

An account of the experience of women's war, as described in *The Women*, is of particular interest because the perspective is very seldom given voice in historical and literary representations of war. In addition to the war itself, this novel reveals the individual tragedy of women's lives in war and postwar years, and never forgets to berate a society that largely overlooks women's roles in history's most important events. In addition, this story connects personal experiences with social issues such as gender inequality, wartime trauma, and efforts to appreciate the group of female veterans who have been forgotten (Ullah et al., 2025; Ranti, 2025). Through emotionally resonant storytelling, Hannah presents a narrative that challenges male-centered narratives of war.

In analyzing identity problems of the main character in this novel, this study uses postcolonial theory, specifically the hybridity concept of Homi K. Bhabha (1994). Postcolonial theory focuses on the effects of colonialism and imperialism on both the power dynamics and the creation of self-representations in texts. In this context, hybridity notes the creation of mixed and volatile identities which are the result of cultural contact, conflicts in history and power dynamics. When an individual has been culturally involved in what can be termed as "historical trauma," he or she is likely to have a hybrid identity made up of several cultural influences and social identities (Bhabha, 1994). Within a narrative on war, one wonders, how do characters negotiate their identities between their personal experiences, national ideologies, and social expectation? When reading war narratives, one question to ask is how do characters react to their identities between personal experiences, national ideologies, and social expectations?

This idea of hybridity is a fundamental concept with which to comprehend Frankie's transformation of identity in *The Women*. During the Vietnam War, her experiences come on the horizon, leading her to encounter cultural experiences, traumatic events, and ideological conflicts that change her sense of self and how she feels within society (Gheytsi, 2023). Frankie is a woman war veteran who has located herself in a delicate region of cultural tensions surrounding gender, nationality and wartime experience. She matures from a naive young woman who is pro-war to a one who is critical of the official lines on America's military engagement. It is a change of identity, as Bhabha puts it, a hybrid identity created by the process of negotiation,

dealing with one's personal trauma, cultural interaction, and political realities (Zhao, 2024).

*The Women* has been the subject of many previous studies from various theoretical angles. The novel was analyzed by Ullah et al. (2025) and Gusfitrianti et al. (2025) in a different perspective by applying the existentialist feminist theory, in which the focal point of the analysis was the existence of a feminine woman and the struggle for female against patriarchal structure in the novel. The female characters in their studies make an effort to assert themselves and call out this oppressive system. Rashid et al. (2025) and Goel (2025) differed in their personal look at the pathetic condition of the protagonist in this novel as they took the route of trauma theory which points to the psychological effects of war and the development of PTSD among the protagonist.

While these studies offer important glimpses at themes of feminism and trauma, an analysis of the postcolonial aspects of forming identities, especially hybridized multiple identities, in the context of imperialist war is not fully explored. Sharma (2025) and Sikander et al. (2024) have explored hybrid identity in war narratives in other work related to postcolonial studies, but such discussions have mainly focused on South Asian literary contexts. In the same vein, Indonesian literature has been the subject of study in the works of Rahmawati et al. (2025) and Kamil and Nisa (2024), while studies of different literary works like *The Island of Missing Trees* and *The English Patient* respectively, are studies of postcolonial identity which carried out by Iqbal et al. (2023) and Uddin and Anwar (2024). These studies demonstrate the importance of postcolonial theory and identity in literature, however, they do not focus

specifically on the intersection of gender, war, and hybridity in American fiction about the Vietnam War.

Thus, there is a need for a postcolonial understanding of the representation of female veteran subjectivities in modern war literature in American culture. Less attention has been paid to the process of identity change as a postcolonial process, specifically to the development of multiple identities which become hybrid in the context of the experience of imperial war.

In light of this, the novelty of this study is that it seeks to identify the multiple identities of female Vietnam veterans by examining them in a postcolonial context as hybrid within the context of Kristin Hannah's *The Women*. This study attempts to explain how gender, nationalism, war experiences, and social rejection work together to create the complicated nature of the main character's identities by utilizing Bhabha's theory of hybridity. Beyond this, the work adds to the wider debate on how minorities and previously unexplored stories of female veterans are portrayed in wartime discourse. This is not only a literary criticism that is enriched by, but also makes the importance of acknowledging women's role and identity in historical and cultural narrative of war clear.

#### B. Research Question

1. What are the multiple identities portrayed by the main character in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*?

2. How are the main character's multiple identities constructed in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*?

#### C. Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this research contributes to postcolonial literary studies by applying Homi K. Bhabha's concepts to contemporary American fiction about the Vietnam War, particularly in relation to the multiple identities experienced by a woman. Practically, the findings of the study may improve public knowledge of the female veterans' condition and assist in activism led by organizations such as the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation. Academically, this study fills a gap in research on the works of Kristin Hannah, while encouraging further research on the representation of women's voices in war literature.

#### D. Scope and Limitation

This study is limited to a textual analysis of *The Women*, focusing on the main character, Frankie McGrath, through postcolonial theory by examining the representation of her multiple identities. It also explores how these multiple identities are influenced and shaped by hybridity, based on Homi K. Bhabha's concept. It does not include comparative analysis with other novels or empirical interviews with veterans. Its scope is limited to the novel *The Women*.

#### E. Definition of Key Terms

##### 1. Identity

Identity refers to the way a person understands and represents the self in relation to culture, history, society, and power. According to Homi K. Bhabha (1994), identity is not fixed, pure, or complete. It is formed through negotiation in the in-between space where different cultural meanings, social positions, and historical experiences meet. Therefore, identity is always unstable, changing, and shaped by interaction with others.

## 2. Multiple Identities

Multiple identities refer to the condition in which a person has more than one identity at the same time. These identities may come from gender, nationality, family, profession, social class, culture, and personal experience. In Bhabha's view, multiple identities are not separate and fixed categories, but are produced through cultural contact, conflict, and negotiation. This means that a person can carry different and even contradictory identities at once because identity is hybrid, fluid, and never fully complete.

## 3. Hybridity

Hybridity is one of Homi K. Bhabha's key concepts in postcolonial theory. According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity refers to the formation of identity through the mixing, crossing, and negotiation of different cultural values, histories, and social positions. Hybridity shows that identity cannot be understood as pure or singular because it is shaped in the space between different cultural forces. In this study, hybridity is used to explain how the main character's identities are formed through war

experience, gender expectations, social rejection, trauma, and the struggle for recognition.

#### 4. Representation

Representation refers to the act of depicting reality, ideas, and identities through language, symbols, images, or other forms of media. According to Stuart Hall (1997), representation is not merely the act of reflecting reality, but an active process of constructing meaning through signifying practices. This means that representation is important in determining how certain people, identities, and experiences are portrayed in literary texts and society.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, the researcher discusses about the approach, theory, and concepts applied in this study. The approach, theory, and the concepts used in this chapter have been selected because they are directly applicable in analyzing identity issues in literary texts emerging from particular social and historical settings. Identity in literature is not regarded as a static notion but a construction of power dynamics, histories, and cultural encounters. Thus, concepts that highlight the processual and unstable nature of identities dominate this chapter.

#### **A. Sociology of Literature Approach**

Sociology of literature approach is a critical reading that focuses on the connection among literature and social circumstance in which the literature is created. This perspective on literature sees it as a cultural "text" in which literature is linked to the social context in which it has been produced, but it may also be viewed as a reflection and representation of social reality, and occasionally as a critique of it. Literary works are thus intimately tied to social, cultural, political and historical patterns that affect the process of writing and the literary work produced. Literature is thus not simply the creations of individual imagination but is moulds, framed and limited by the larger social factors that impact on society as a whole, on the ways in which stories are told, and on how characters are represented (Naikoo & Wani, 2024).

The academic basis for the sociology of literature dates back to the writing of René Wellek and Austin Warren (1949) in *Theory of Literature*. To them, literature is a “representation of life”, that is, literature is often a reflection of the problems, conflicts and values of society. According to this view, literature is a passive and unemotional integrator of social realities that becomes a product of narrative that can be interpreted and analyzed. Literary texts allow students to see how certain social issues, including class conflict, relations between genders, political ideology and cultural identity, are represented and interpreted in a specific social context at a given period of history. Accordingly, literature is not only considered an expression of art but can be viewed as cultural document in preserving the trace of social life in a certain era and place (Fitriyah et al., 2025).

Moreover, sociology of literature approach also highlights that the selection of characters, themes, and plot structures, the creation of conflicts, and all literary elements could be a product of the background of the author as well as the circumstances in which the work is written. The writer's own experience, beliefs and observations of society inevitably make themselves apparent in his or her writing. Consequently, literary works often contain implicit or explicit criticism of social realities. From this perspective, literature can materialize ideologies, power system and other social conflicts, which affect the human being and the community's life (Deliani & Rosliani, 2021).

However, the sociology of literature was extended once more by the work of Alan Swingewood (1972), who encouraged attention to the social structures which frame literature. He believes it is important to analyze literature within the context of the society that creates and uses it. He argues that literature can serve as a way to depict social conditions, expose social injustice or perpetuate dominant ideas in society. In addition, he emphasizes that literature is an interaction between the text and readers who then interpret the text in accordance with their own social background and culture. This is an interactive relationship between literature and society, whereby literature is influenced by and influences society (Altun, 2023).

Three different approaches to a sociology of literature are also mentioned by Swingewood (1972). This first view sees literature as a social document that captures and exposes (real-life) experiences. The second view focuses on the author's role and the social ascribed roles in relation to the texts. The third viewpoint is an interpretation of literary text received and read by readers in a given social context. Through these perspectives, a research approach from sociology of literature can be used to examine the role of literature in society and its interest in generalizing the broad social dynamics of society (Altun, 2023).

Further it is recognized that works of literature can be used to discuss ideas and agendas around nationalism, cultural identity, gender roles and power relations as part of the sociology of literature. Yet, when it comes to issues of dominant social narratives in literature, alternative perspectives will be presented or voices of marginalized

groups, neglected in the mainstream, will be listened to. In this respect, literature serves as a platform for studying and analyzing social issues and the social identity that is contested within complex social networks (Naikoo and Wani, 2024).

Therefore, this study applies the sociology of literature approach in analyzing the social experiences of female veterans after Vietnam War in *The Women* novel. Seeing the novel as a piece of cultural text in addition to a fictional narrative, the novel here is explored not only as events story of war but as a cultural text demonstrating the historical and social conditions of women involved in the war. The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship between the narrative of a literary work and the social environment around it in order to gain insight into how factors such as gender discrimination, war trauma and social rejection can shape the character of the main character in the context of a narrative.

#### B. Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is a critical theory designed to explore the cultural, political and psychological impact of colonization and imperialism. The emphasis of the theory is the construction of identities, cultures and representations in colonized and colonizing societies as the work of colonial power structures. Postcolonial studies aim to shed light on the ways in which colonial histories continue to shape social relations, cultural stories, systems of knowledge, and more. Postcolonial theory is heavily applied in literary studies, it aims to explore the experiences of the postcolonial, cultural

encounters and power relations between various groups within the text (Bahtiar et al., 2023).

Many famous theorists like Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha have contributed to the development of postcolonial theory. All these scholars have made major contributions to theories concerning the long-term consequences of colonialism for identity and culture. For example, Frantz Fanon (1963) highlighted the importance of the psychological impact with regards to the colonial dominance. Fanon maintained, in his texts, that the trauma endured by both the colonized and colonizing subject is an intense psychological trauma, resulting from colonialism. In the colonial system, people are often conditioned to accept the hierarchy of races and cultures, resulting in conflicts over identities and feelings of isolation (Tang et al., 2024).

Edward Said (1978) developed the notion of Orientalism, where he introduces the critique of the history of the Western societies in which the East has been, and continues to be, represented as exotic, backward, and inferior. Said claimed these images were not made to "describe" the colonized country, they were designed as a colonial justification. Developed through books, journal articles and culture, the West developed a narrative in which it sees itself as superior and colonized societies as "the Other." In this criticism, cultural representation is included as an important factor in perpetuating colonial power structures (Rezk, 2024).

The postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak is often connected with the question of marginalized voices, especially the previously voiceless subjects of colonialism. In the Sontheimer's most famous quote, "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak questions scholars to reflect on how certain groups are often excluded from the dominant narrative, particularly colonized communities and women. One of her areas of focus is on reading and writing the marginalized (Parashari, 2015).

Apart from these views, there are several concepts that have gained prominence in postcolonial studies as developed by Homi K. Bhabha (1994), include hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. Bhabha makes the point that colonial encounters do not neatly demarcate colonizer-colonized binaries. Rather, they create intricate cultural dynamics that create hybrid identities. Hybridity is a term used to describe the creation of new cultural formations based on the fusion of various cultural qualities. Such identities can shift, be divided, and continuously negotiated (Susen, 2020).

Further, in recent times, postcolonial writers have indicated that the consequences of colonialism do not end with the colonized. Colonial people can also suffer from identity conflicts when coming into contact with other cultures in the colonies, as can people of colonizing cultures, as Robert Young (2003) maintains. They also feel frustrated and may find a cultural dislocation, moral dilemma and psychological confusion when dealing with foreign cultures in foreign settings. The consequence is that their identities can be split and unstable (Shakun et al., 2024).

Ashcroft et al. (2013) also concur that colonial encounter, as explained here, involve complexities of power relations that have impact on both sides of the colonial relation. People from colonial cultures who engage in imperial work, like colonial administrators, soldiers or missionaries, can often suffer from cultural shock and identity crisis in response to being in unfamiliar environments and cultural settings. These experiences can often disrupt and challenge their previous thoughts and ideas of national identity differences, cultural superiority and social differences (Parashari, 2015).

The postcolonial then sees identity as a process, as a happening, as a thing that is created through experience, culture and unequal power. The concept of identity is not made in response to a fixed, static, or singular object, but one that is continuously negotiated and created through encounters with a variety of social processes. McLeod (2013) maintains that the subject in postcolonial contexts is frequently cast in a "in between" that involves them in the simultaneous existence of two or more cultures, with simultaneous historical memory. This condition creates fluid, ambiguous and shifting identities (Hilal, 2023).

Postcolonial theory is a field of literary analysis that enables literary scholars to discuss the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism and imperialism in literary works. Colonial history and its works, literature, often display the very hidden tensions and ideological wars and identity conflicts. Authors can mimic the reactions of individuals to colonial power structures, culture and cultural displacement and history

and history trauma through narrative (Ashcroft et al., 2013). Therefore, literary works are significant for gaining insight to the human factor of history and politics of a certain event (Kravinskaya & Karavaeva, 2023).

In this study, the postcolonial theory is employed to examine the portrayal of identity formation in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*. The novel brings to life experiences of female American veterans in the Vietnam War, an imperial struggle of culture, ideology and historical trauma. This study uses postcolonial perspectives, and focuses especially on Bhabha's concepts as a way to explore the protagonist's transformative identity as a product of the war, cultural contact, and social marginalization she encounters. From this theoretical perspective, this research seeks to shed light on the novel in which multi-layered identities are being demonstrated due to the experiences of imperial wars and femininity. This research examines the novel in terms of this theory to reveal multi-layered identities presented in the novel as a result of the experiences of imperial wars and gender.

Although Bhabha's concepts were originally developed in the context of colonial and postcolonial encounters, several scholars have extended their application beyond traditional colonial frameworks to examine identity formation in contexts of cultural displacement, ideological conflict, and social marginalization (Sharma, 2025; Iqbal et al., 2023). This study follows that scholarly trajectory by applying Bhabha's concepts to the experience of a female American veteran in the Vietnam War. While Frankie McGrath is neither a colonized subject nor a colonizer in the classical sense,

she experiences a form of cultural displacement and identity negotiation that is analogous to colonial hybridity. The Vietnam War itself was an imperialist project that produced ideological conflicts, cultural encounters, and power struggles that shaped the identities of those involved, including the women who served as military nurses. Furthermore, Frankie's identity is subject to the pressure of dominant.

### C. Identity According to Homi K. Bhabha's Concepts

In postcolonial theory, Homi K. Bhabha views identity as something unstable, negotiated, and shaped by cultural contact. Identity is not fixed, pure, or complete because it is formed through the meeting of different cultures, histories, meanings, and power relations. Bhabha (1994) argues that identity is produced in an in-between condition, where the subject does not fully belong to one single cultural position. Therefore, identity is always open to change, contradiction, and reconstruction.

Bhabha's concept of identity rejects the idea that a person can be understood through one stable category. In postcolonial contexts, identity is shaped by unequal relations between dominant and marginalized cultures. These relations create tension because the subject may be influenced by more than one cultural system at the same time. As a result, identity becomes fluid and complex. To explain this process, Bhabha develops several important concepts, namely hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence.

#### 1. Hybridity

Hybridity is one of the central concepts in Bhabha's postcolonial theory. According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity refers to the formation of identity through the contact and negotiation between different cultures, values, histories, and power relations. Hybridity shows that identity is not pure or singular because it is shaped by more than one influence. A hybrid identity is produced when different cultural meanings meet, overlap, and create a new form of identity.

In Bhabha's view, hybridity also challenges dominant cultural authority. Dominant power often tries to create fixed categories, such as colonizer and colonized, self and other, superior and inferior, or center and margin. However, hybridity disturbs these boundaries because it shows that identity cannot be contained within one clear category. The hybrid subject exists between different positions and therefore reveals the instability of dominant meanings.

Hybridity does not simply mean the peaceful mixing of cultures. It can also involve conflict, tension, and contradiction. The hybrid subject may experience uncertainty because identity is shaped by different and sometimes opposing cultural forces. Therefore, hybridity explains identity as a process of negotiation rather than a final or stable result.

## 2. Mimicry

Mimicry is another important concept in Bhabha's postcolonial theory. According to Bhabha (1994), mimicry refers to the process in which the colonized or marginalized subject imitates the values, behavior, language, or identity of the

dominant power. However, this imitation is never complete. Bhabha describes mimicry as "almost the same, but not quite." This means that the subject may appear similar to the dominant culture, but difference always remains.

Mimicry is ambivalent because it can support dominant authority and disturb it at the same time. On one hand, mimicry shows the subject's attempt to follow or resemble the dominant culture. On the other hand, because the imitation is incomplete, it exposes the weakness and instability of dominant power. The dominant culture wants the subject to become similar, but not fully equal. This contradiction makes mimicry a form of both control and resistance.

Through mimicry, identity becomes unstable because the subject is placed between resemblance and difference. The subject may look similar to the dominant identity, but the difference that remains makes the identity incomplete and uncertain. Therefore, mimicry is useful for understanding how identity is shaped through imitation, power, and resistance.

### 3. Ambivalence

According to Bhabha (1994), ambivalence refers to the condition in which a subject has two opposite feelings, meanings, or responses at the same time. It appears because colonial and postcolonial identities are never fully stable. A subject may accept and reject the same culture, authority, or identity simultaneously. This creates tension and contradiction in the process of identity formation.

Bhabha (1994) argues that ambivalence is important because it shows that dominant power is never completely secure. Dominant culture may try to control the

subject, but the subject's response is often divided. The subject may desire recognition from dominant authority while also resisting its control. This divided response makes identity uncertain and constantly negotiated.

Ambivalence also explains why identity cannot be reduced to one simple position. A person may feel attachment and alienation, pride and shame, acceptance and rejection at the same time. These contradictory feelings do not cancel each other. Instead, they become part of the subject's identity. Therefore, ambivalence reveals identity as complex, divided, and unstable.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this chapter, the researcher explains the research methods used in this study. It is divided into four parts, which are research design, data sources, data collection, and data analysis.

##### **A. Research Design**

In this study, the researcher uses literary criticism with sociology of literature as the approach by following postcolonial theory using hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence by Homi K. Bhabha because they are relevant for examining identity as something unstable, hybrid, and constructed. Bhabha's concepts help explain how identity is formed through cultural contact, social conflict, power relations, and historical experience. Literary criticism is the process of interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating literary texts (Gillespie, 2010). This shows that literary criticism is the activity of understanding and assessing literary works. This study is intended to provide an in-depth understanding of the context of Frankie's multiple identities as depicted in Kristin Hannah's novel, *The Women*. This method allows the researcher to explore and explain in detail how Frankie's identity changes and develops throughout the story. Using postcolonial theory with Bhabha's concept of hybridity, this study examines how the combination of cultural and social experiences shapes Frankie's identity and the complex identity negotiations she experiences in the novel. Therefore, the theory and

these concepts are suitable for analyzing how the main character's multiple identities are constructed and negotiated in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*.

#### B. Data Source

In this study, the researcher selected the data from a novel entitled *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. This novel was published by St. Martin's Press in New York, United States, on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024 which has 480 pages. Data sources was obtained in PDF and printed book formats. The data source was taken from various sentences contained in the novel. In addition, the researcher collected, analyzed, and described the data based on postcolonial theory through the concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence from Bhabha (1994). The data used were in the form of phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, including direct quotations, character descriptions, descriptions, and dialogues in the novel *The Women* (2024).

#### C. Data Collection

The researcher collected data from Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* (2024). The data were taken from sentences, phrases, paragraphs, and dialogues in the novel. The researcher followed several steps in collecting the data:

1. The researcher read the novel carefully to gain a deep understanding of the content in the novel and focus on parts that show the identity of the main character, Frankie McGrath.
2. The researcher identified important paragraphs, including narratives and dialogues that related to identity.

3. The researcher selected, highlighted, and took notes of the data quotations.
4. The researcher categorized the data to choose which data supposed to answer the first research question and the second research question.

#### D. Data Analysis

The researcher took several steps to analyze the data:

1. The researcher interpreted the data that already collected from sentences, phrase, and dialogues in the novel that relate to identity.
2. The researcher analyzed the main character's multiple identities and how they are constructed in the story through Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence.
3. The researcher summarized the findings from the data analysis of this study.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings and discussion of the study. The researcher examines the data collected from Kristin Hannah's novel with the title *The Women* to answer the two research questions that already mentioned in Chapter I. The first question discusses about the multiple identities of the main character, Frankie McGrath, meanwhile the second question discusses about how those identities constructed in the novel, based on Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of postcolonial framework (1994).

#### A. The Multiple Identities of Frankie McGrath

Frankie McGrath in *The Women* does not have a completely stable or singular identity. Her identity continues to evolve in the novel based on social norms, expectations, experiences during the war, and her influence on various cultures. According to Bhabha (1994), identity is not something fixed but constantly created and reconstructed as a result of the history and social relationships we live in. In this study, there are five multiple identities have been identified for Frankie in the story, which are a daughter, the military nurse, the invisible female veteran, the trauma survivor, and the healer and advocate for female veteran.

## 1. Identity as a Daughter

### Datum 1

*“Twenty-year-old Frances Grace McGrath knew what was expected of her tonight. She was to be the very portrait of a well-bred young lady, smiling and serene, any untoward emotions were to be contained and concealed, borne in silence. The lessons Frankie had been taught at home and at church and at St. Bernadette’s Academy for Girls had instilled in her a rigorous sense of propriety.”*  
(Hannah, 2024, p. 1)

The above quote shows that Frankie’s identity at the beginning is shaped by family, religion, and social norms in Coronado Island, California. By this we get to know that the girl grew up with very high expectations about being feminine, docile, and well-mannered. Therefore, her identity does not depend on anything that Frankie chooses for herself but it depends entirely on the social standards and values prevailing then. This means that she cannot live by her own rules and beliefs because there is no other way for her except to meet other people's expectations. By saying that "*she knew what was expected of her*," we can say that social expectations become the key elements which shape her identity. There is no need for commandments, as she knows perfectly well how she is supposed to act. So, her identity is under internal control, as she knows everything that she should do.

"*The very portrait of a well-bred young lady*" suggests that Frankie's identity is seen as something that should be presented. The idea of a portrait connotes stillness, controlledness, and something produced in order to be shown to others. Similarly, Frankie is supposed to portray herself as graceful, composed, and respectful in society. Thus, her identity as a daughter is determined by appearances because she needs to

represent her family through proper behavior, expression, and emotions. Hence, her social value is dependent upon not who she is but rather how she presents herself.

The words “*Smiling and Serene*” demonstrate the type of femininity that is expected of Frankie. Every effort will be made to make her calm even when she might be worried, frustrated, unhappy or uneasy. It shows her that a woman’s true emotions aren't as significant as social acceptance. The phrase, “*contained and concealed, borne in silence*” is even stronger. Frankie's feelings are dealt with in a secretive way, and silently. Being a “*good girl*” in her world involves the ability to be acting emotionless and to not upset the social structure. Her voice is under her control, not natural. All of these institutional structures are contributing to the development of this disciplined identity: home, church, and St. Bernadette's Academy for Girls.

As Bhabha interprets, it reflects in this quote the dominant culture's attempt towards an identity that is fixed and stable. Frankie is put in one box, the box of the respectable Catholic girl that is obedient, proper, silent and feminine. In Bhabha (1994), the construction of a sense of identity brought by the belief of “*natural*” identities is revealed in the repeated rules of and social controls over a naturalized identity. So, it is not a free or complete identity for Frankie, it is an identity which is always fixed by family, religion, and patriarchy. This identity is crucial as it is the one that will suffer the greatest trauma upon Frankie's entry into the other cultural world of Vietnam and her development as a more hybrid self.

## Datum 2

*“Teacher. Nurse. Secretary. These were acceptable futures for a girl like her.”* (Hannah, 2024, p. 5)

From this data, one can conclude that there is restriction placed on who Frankie is because of societal expectations of her. There is no physical force exerted on Frankie to adopt these roles, but rather there is the expectation that a proper woman makes proper choices when it comes to career paths. The three careers mentioned, which are teaching, nursing, and secretarial work, are presented more as socially acceptable choices rather than individual ambitions. The use of short sentences creates an effect of a list as if Frankie’s destiny is predetermined even before choosing her career path. Her social environment only gives her certain choices because she is *“a girl like her”*, which means a respectable young woman from a conservative family background. Thus, gender, social status, and family background work together to define her identity.

The phrase *“acceptable”* describes that this not only means possibility, but also hints at social approval. If there are some futures that are acceptable, then there are also not. Therefore, this quote shows that Frankie's identity is not only influenced by what she is required to do, but also by what she is not allowed to imagine. Duties related to leadership, danger, risk, public power, or military heroism are out of the accepted norms for women. Even the nursing profession which becomes an important part of Frankie's identity, initially is considered acceptable because it was in line with the traditional view of women as caregivers.

This represents the fixed categories created by dominant cultural authority. According to Bhabha (1994), dominant culture tries to make identity stable by placing people into clear positions. In Frankie's case, the dominant culture places her inside the category of respectable womanhood and gives her only certain futures that support that category. When Frankie goes to Vietnam as a military nurse, she steps outside of these social boundaries. She created another identity by taking on roles that did not follow traditional rules for women.

## 2. Identity as a Military Nurse

### Datum 3

*"At the Army recruiting station, she finally heard what she wanted to hear: Sure, ma'am. The Army Nurse Corps needs nurses. We could ship you right out after Basic. Frankie signed her name on the dotted line, and just like that, she was Second Lieutenant Frances McGrath."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 12)

This quote represents the first change of Frankie's identity. She was a firm believer in the Vietnam War and turned into an active volunteer of the Army Nurse Corps, which was quite a change from the feminine role she had been conditioned to at home. Once she has signed the paperwork she becomes "*Second Lieutenant Frances McGrath*," a military officer with an official title that is indicative of her position, responsibility, and involvement in the military. The title has an identity which is not dependent on being married, beautiful, or of a good family. For the first time Frankie has a system that allows her to be applauded for her act and duty, rather than just for going through the motions and looking the part. Just like that represents the outer label's speed of change. One signature, and Frankie crosses from a private realm defined by family expectations to a public one made up of military service.

But this isn't cost-free. Other military branches, like the Air Force and Navy, do not offer Frankie chances, and she decides to enlist in the Army due to many reasons. This indicates that even her decision-making is constrained. She wants to use her help but her choice was dictated by military provisions, as a woman. There is freedom but it comes with restriction of women.

It is a moment which proves to mark the start of Frankie's mixed heritage. She comes into a man dominated game field, but still maintains her own character of fawning girl. Now, she is a woman molded and influenced by domestic roles, with an officer prepared to act on the battlefield. Bhabha's theory (1994) suggests that hybridity starts forming when various identities between different systems of power and meaning begin. The nickname Frankie causes her to become caught between the feminine realm as embodied in Coronado and the masculine realm of military life. The new name given to her leaves her uncertain of who she is becoming, as she can no longer be defined by a single direction, neither purely as a woman nor as a man.

## Datum 4

*“As she’d told her mother repeatedly, she was going off to war, but not really, not like the men on this plane. She wouldn’t be on the front lines, wouldn’t get shot at. She was going to Vietnam to save men’s lives, not to risk her own.”* (Hannah, 2024, p. 18)

The comment says how Frankie's old perspectives about gender roles still play a role in her new profession as a military nurse. Although she leaves for Vietnam, she separates her experience from the men. The phrases *'but not really'*, *'not like the men'*, and *'wouldn't be on the front lines'* indicate that Frankie thinks there is a distinction between war experiences of men and nursing experiences of women. She believes that men have to fight in one place to protect from dangers, whereas the women help fight in another place which is less dangerous.

This belief only further demonstrates Frankie's lack of understanding about what her military identity represents. She decides to enlist in the Army but her perception of herself continues to be that of a lady who takes care of others. This gender ideology is evident in the words *“to save men's lives not to risk her own.”* She considers herself to be useful and patriotic, but not one that would be thrust on the battlefield. So, her name is in the process of transformation. On the one hand she physically approaches the battlefield but on the other hand, she has also internalized a protected worldview from Coronado.

The quotation here also sets the tone for the reader to anticipate what they will see is the loss of that faith. Frankie finds out that, in Vietnam, being a nurse is risky and dangerous. She will be under pressure, treat severe injuries and hear gunshots which haunt her. There is a tiny balance between saving someone else's life and taking

the risk for one's own life. Her identity as a nurse is much more complex than what she expects. It will not be just a woman who will care for others as a care taker, but a combat nurse who will perform her duties in the violence of war.

In Bhabha's perspective, this speaks to the tensions of hybrid existence, both within American culture itself (intra-cultural), where femininity and military service collide, and between American and Vietnamese cultures (inter-cultural), where opposing worldviews clash in the context of war. Frankie attempts to separate two categories, men as fighters, women as helpers. In Vietnam, though, these categories are blurred and challenged. Hybridity manifests, according to Bhabha (1994), when the boundaries of culture are no longer clearly set. Frankie is a soldier-nurse, an identity that merges feminine care and masculine combat, a subject that is simultaneously fully feminine and fully masculine.

### 3. Identity as an Invisible Female Veteran

#### Datum 5

*“They saw her, coming their way in her skirted Army uniform, and thrust their signs at her, as if to convince her. Someone spat at her. ‘Nazi bitch,’ one of the protesters yelled.”* (Hannah, 2024, p. 167)

The fleeing from Frankie's military identity when she joins back to California in this quote. The society does not consider Frankie as an individual with her experience in Vietnam. They only focus on her uniform and unleash their anger against her about the war on her. Spitting has meaning, it is a political rejection made publically humiliating. It demonstrates that Frankie's return is not given with dignity, but rather criticized as an error. She is not regarded as a life-saver, she is a symbol of violence.

Frankie's identity is contrasted with the insult '*nazi bitch*', used against her in a harsh manner. She was giving up a lot to travel to Vietnam, thinking she was helping veterans and serving her country. Yet, society is against her and considers her an enemy, a criminal. It illustrates the power of public narratives over personal ones. The political label imposed on her overshadowed her genuine identity and service as a nurse. Her identity is stripped away and replaced with a criminal label. The contradiction in society regarding Frankie is also evident through the symbol of the '*skirted army uniform*'. The uniform signifies that she is in the army, yet the skirt signifies that she is a woman. Together, they represent a contradiction that society fails to comprehend. Frankie is seen as a citizen in uniform, but not recognized as a rightful veteran. This is where her invisibility starts, she is seen, but never truly recognized.

From Bhabha's perspective, this demonstrates the power relations of dominant narratives in defining and naming the subject. Hybrid subjects, according to Bhabha (1994), disrupt the fixed meanings that dominant culture attempts to impose. Frankie is a female nurse, a veteran, and a woman, yet society only saw her as a hated military figure. Her hybrid identity is not accepted because she does not fit neatly into existing categories. This denial illustrates the violence of society's refusal to recognize identity shifts that occur between categories.

## Datum 6

*"Alone out here, she saw the way people stared at her. First there was a widening of the eyes, surprise at seeing a woman in uniform, and then the narrowing of mistrust or outright disgust. A few looked right through her, as if she weren't there."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 168)

This quote explains how Frankie is 'invisible' in society. People were surprised that they were about to see a woman in military uniform. In this shock, the gender stereotype that soldiers and veterans are male is exposed. But Frankie botched all of this. She is a woman, yet her uniform lets you know that she is part of the military world. There is not a clear class for it in society, and people react in confusion.

The shock then escalated to being a *"mistrust or outright disgust"*. This indicates that Frankie's differences are not benign. When they come to find out that she is not what they thought they were looking for as a woman who deserves to be helped or as a veteran who deserves to be helped, they make a negative judgment. She senses, suspects and feels when she intrudes on her boundary. The meaning of a woman in uniform during the Vietnam war is not a one that society is comfortable with. She is too military to be a deserving woman, and too feminine to be a deserving veteran. The final is *"looked right through her, as if she weren't there,"* which shows the most extreme erasure. Frankie is not only rejected, her existence is denied her. It is not as humiliating when it lacks the qualification of being in a public display. The points of her devotion, trauma and sacrifice are not challenged, they are ignored. This lack became one of the biggest scars in both her life and her postwar life because she is not able to build her new identity without the understanding and recognition of those around her.

Frankie's invisibility reveals what Bhabha calls a “*failure of dominant culture*” to accept hybrid identity. Bhabha (1994) argues that stable categories are required to sustain dominant authority, but Frankie's identity transcends these categories. She is simultaneously a woman, a veteran, a caregiver, and a war survivor. As she cannot fit into the dominant culture, she is erased from dominant narratives. This reveals how hybridity exposes the limits of cultural authority, as Frankie's life makes clear that 'veteran' is an incomplete cultural construct if it does not include women.

#### 4. Identity as a Trauma Survivor

##### Datum 7

*“The smell of burning flesh. Someone is screaming. I run forward, crying for help, trying to see through the smoke. There’s a baby in my arms, burning, her skin blackens and falls away. I am holding a pile of bones ....”* (Hannah, 2024, p. 170)

The quote above shows that Frankie is traumatized from her experiences on the battlefield resulting in a new identity, namely as a trauma survivor. This identity is seen through the signs of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), nightmare experiences, flashbacks, and finally involvement in addiction. Detail words such as “*smell*”, “*scream*”, “*smoke*”, “*burning*”, and the sound of helicopters also flowing gunfire explain that the experience of war lives on in her body and mind. She does not remember Vietnam quietly, but she seems to relive it. The phrases like “*I run*” and “*I am holding*” make nightmares feel real, as if the war happened again.

The image of the burned baby in the quote also reflects the moral and emotional burden of the trauma experienced by Frankie. As a nurse, Frankie goes to Vietnam to

save people, but the nightmare brings her into a situation where lives cannot be saved. This leads to guilt, helplessness, and fear. The baby's body was also linked to an allegation she heard on her way back to California, where the society referred to Vietnam veterans as 'baby killers'. In Frankie's mind, the accusations of society and her trauma is interrelated. War is not only outside of her, but also part of her inner identity. This identity makes her difficult to return to identity as a proper daughter or an ordinary nurse. According to Bhabha (1994), identity formed through disruptive encounters cannot return to a pure original state. It shows hybridity as a lived contradiction, she is at home and not at home, civilian and war survivor, present and still trapped in the past.

## 5. Identity as a Healer and Advocate for Female Veterans

### Datum 8

*"Frankie taught them the healing power of words and the joy of finding quiet. Peace, at least the beginning of it, was the goal. ... The beautiful, unexpected by-product of helping other women was that Frankie found her own passion again, her own pride. She loved this place fiercely, loved the life she'd forged in the wilderness."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 350)

The quote above explains that Frankie's identity in the last is formed through the process of recovery and the discovery of a new purpose in life after a difficult time due to PTSD and addiction. Instead of going back to her past, she builds a new identity by establishing a farmhouse in Montana as a shelter for female Vietnam War veterans.

It shows that Frankie's recovery occurs through helping other women. She does not heal first and then become a healer. Instead, the healing process and helping occur simultaneously. The phrase *"the healing power of words"* is directly at odds with the

silence that once shaped Frankie's life in the past. When she was young, she was taught to hold back and hide her feelings. As a veteran, she was asked to forget her experience in Vietnam. As a survivor of trauma, she hides behind the words "*I'm okay*". But in the farmhouse, words become a tool to release pain, not to cover it.

The phrase "*peace, at least the beginning of it*" describes the healing process is not presented as something simple or completely completed. Trauma is not erased by Frankie, and the women do not suddenly become immune to the experience of war. Instead, they begin to find peace through conversation, listening to each other, and being understood. This makes the healing process more realistic by portraying recovery as something that takes place gradually. Thus, Frankie's identity as a healer is not based on total healing. Instead, her identity is built from the use of her real and painful experiences and also her experiences to understand and support others. The "*unexpected by-product*" of helping another woman is that Frankie regains her "*passion*" and "*pride*". It shows that identity is not formed through isolation, but through social relationships. She reinvented herself by building a community where other women could also rediscover their identity. The life she "*forged in the wilderness*" shows that this identity was the result of effort, struggle, and independence. This is not the identity that her family expects for hers, but rather the identity she creates after experiencing suffering, loss, and survival.

From Bhabha's perspective, this final identity shows the productive potential of hybridity. Bhabha (1994) argues that hybridity can produce new meanings from

experiences of displacement and conflict. Frankie's identity as healer and advocate will not exist without her earlier identities as daughter, military nurse, invisible veteran, and trauma survivor. She does not choose one identity and reject the others. She brings them together and turns them into a new purpose. This is why her final identity is hybrid, it transforms silence into speech, trauma into care, and invisibility into collective recognition

#### B. The Construction of Frankie McGrath's Multiple Identities

After identifying the multiple identities of Frankie McGrath, this section discusses how those identities are constructed in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*. This discussion answers the second research question, which focuses on the process of identity formation. The analysis uses Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial concepts, namely hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. These concepts are used to explain how Frankie's identities are formed through cultural contact, gender expectations, war experience, trauma, social rejection, and the struggle for recognition. In this section, Frankie is not treated as a character with one fixed identity. Instead, her identity is understood as something that changes when she moves from one social and cultural space to another.

## 1. Hybridity in the Construction of Frankie McGrath's Multiple Identities

According to Bhabha (1994), hybridity refers to the formation of identity through the meeting and constructing of different cultural meanings, social positions, and power relations. Identity is not pure or fixed because it is shaped by more than one influence. In Frankie's case, hybridity appears when she moves from the protected domestic world of Coronado into the violent military world of Vietnam. Her identity becomes mixed because she is no longer only a proper daughter, but also a military nurse who enters the space of war. This condition creates an in-between identity because Frankie carries the values of femininity, family honor, patriotism, and military service at the same time.

### Datum 9

*"As she'd told her mother repeatedly, she was going off to war, but not really, not like the men on this plane. She wouldn't be on the front lines, wouldn't get shot at. She was going to Vietnam to save men's lives, not to risk her own."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 18)

At the beginning of this passage, Frankie's identity is still in an early stage. She is already going to Vietnam, but she still understands war through the gender values that she has learned from her family and society. She believes that men are the real participants in war, while women only support them from a safer position. The phrases "but not really" and "not like the men" show that Frankie does not yet see herself as a full part of the war. She separates her own role from the role of male soldiers because she thinks that her duty is to save lives, not to risk her own life.

However, this belief becomes unstable as soon as Frankie enters the military world. Although she joins as a nurse, she still moves into a war zone where death, violence, fear, and national conflict are present every day. Her identity can no longer be understood only as a young woman from Coronado who is expected to be protected and proper. At the same time, she also does not fully fit the masculine image of the soldier. This makes her position hybrid because she stands between two different social meanings: the feminine role of caregiver and the masculine space of war.

Through Bhabha's concept of hybridity, Frankie's identity is constructed in the crossing of these different meanings. Vietnam becomes the space where her old identity and new identity meet. She brings with her the identity of a daughter, a woman, and a nurse, but the war changes these identities by placing them inside a violent military setting. Therefore, Frankie becomes an in-between figure. She is not only a traditional woman, and she is not simply a male soldier. Her identity is formed between gender expectation and military reality.

Datum 10

*"As bad as it had been in 'Nam, as frightened and angry and betrayed as she'd often felt by her government and the war, she'd also felt alive. Competent and important. A woman who made a difference in the world." (Hannah, 2024, p. 165)*

After Frankie has experienced Vietnam, her hybrid identity becomes clearer. Vietnam is not described through one simple meaning. On one side, it is connected with fear, anger, betrayal, and suffering. Frankie sees the brutality of war and also feels disappointed with the government and the political system that sent young people into

violence. This experience destroys the innocent patriotic belief that she had before leaving home.

At the same time, Vietnam also gives Frankie a sense of strength and importance. The words "*alive*," "*competent*," and "*important*" show that the war allows her to discover abilities that her earlier social world did not fully recognize. In Coronado, Frankie is expected to become a polite daughter and later a wife. In Vietnam, she becomes a person whose work matters directly to the survival of others. She makes decisions, treats wounded soldiers, and becomes useful in a place of crisis.

This contradiction is central to hybridity. Frankie's identity is not built from comfort or stability, but from the meeting of opposite experiences. Vietnam wounds her, but it also gives her a new awareness of her own capability. She feels betrayed by the war, yet she also feels that she has made a difference. Because of this, her identity as a military nurse cannot be reduced only to trauma or only to pride. It is a mixed identity that contains pain, courage, disappointment, and self-worth.

From Bhabha's perspective, this hybrid condition shows that identity is produced through conflict and negotiation. Frankie does not return from Vietnam as the same woman who left Coronado. The war changes her understanding of herself and her place in the world. She becomes both a victim of war and an active subject who has gained competence through it. Therefore, hybridity constructs Frankie as a woman whose identity is formed through contradiction rather than through one stable category.

## 2. Mimicry in the Construction of Frankie McGrath's Multiple Identities

Mimicry, according to Bhabha (1994), is the process in which a subject imitates the values, behavior, or identity of the dominant power, but the imitation is never complete. Bhabha describes mimicry as "almost the same, but not quite." Mimicry shows both resemblance and difference. It may appear as obedience to dominant power, but it can also disturb that power because the imitation exposes the limits of dominant identity. In Frankie's case, mimicry appears in her attempt to follow the ideals of proper femininity, patriotism, and military service. However, because she is a woman, her imitation of these dominant ideals is never fully accepted by society.

### Datum 11

*"Twenty-year-old Frances Grace McGrath knew what was expected of her tonight. She was to be the very portrait of a well-bred young lady, smiling and serene, any untoward emotions were to be contained and concealed, borne in silence."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 1)

Before Frankie enters the military world, she is shown as a young woman who understands what her family and society expect from her. She must become *"the very portrait of a well-bred young lady,"* which means that she has to perform the ideal image of respectable femininity. She must smile, remain calm, hide her emotions, and endure discomfort silently. Her identity is therefore shaped by social performance.

The word *"portrait"* is important because it suggests that Frankie's identity is something arranged for public display. She is not encouraged to express her full self. Instead, she is expected to imitate the image of the proper daughter. This imitation

reflects mimicry because Frankie follows the dominant social standard of womanhood. She resembles the ideal woman that her family and upper-class society want to see.

Even so, this imitation is not complete or natural. The need to conceal emotion shows that the identity of a proper young lady is produced through control. Frankie must silence parts of herself in order to fit the role. This means that her early feminine identity is already unstable. It depends on repeated performance, not on true freedom. Through Bhabha's concept of mimicry, Frankie's proper identity becomes "almost the same" as the ideal image of womanhood, but not fully complete because her inner self cannot be entirely contained by that role.

This moment also prepares the later conflict in her identity. When Frankie chooses to go to Vietnam, she moves away from the silent and decorative role expected of her. Her later identity as a military nurse shows that the image of the well-bred young lady cannot fully define her. Therefore, this datum shows how mimicry constructs Frankie's early identity while also revealing the limits of that identity.

#### Datum 12

*"At the Army recruiting station, she finally heard what she wanted to hear: Sure, ma'am. The Army Nurse Corps needs nurses. We could ship you right out after Basic. Frankie signed her name on the dotted line, and just like that, she was Second Lieutenant Frances McGrath."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 12)

Another form of mimicry appears when Frankie joins the Army Nurse Corps. Frankie no longer only imitates the ideal of proper femininity. She now imitates the dominant national ideal of patriotic service. By signing her name at the recruiting station, she enters the military system and receives an official rank. The name "Second

Lieutenant Frances McGrath" gives her a new public identity that connects her with authority, discipline, and service to the nation.

Frankie's decision is influenced by the belief that serving the country is honorable. In this sense, she tries to follow the same patriotic ideal that is usually attached to men in her society. She wants to prove that women can also serve and contribute to the nation. Her action shows a desire for recognition because she wants her life to have meaning beyond the limited domestic future expected for her.

However, her mimicry of military identity is incomplete. She enters the Army, but she enters as a nurse, not as a combat soldier. She receives a rank, but society still does not view her service in the same way as male service. This reflects Bhabha's idea of mimicry as "almost the same, but not quite." Frankie becomes similar to male soldiers because she wears the uniform, goes to Vietnam, and serves in the military. At the same time, she remains different because her gender and professional role place her outside the dominant image of the soldier.

This incomplete imitation exposes the gender bias in the military narrative. The nation needs women like Frankie to serve as nurses, but it does not fully recognize them as war participants. Therefore, mimicry constructs Frankie's identity as both included and excluded. She is inside the military system, but not fully accepted by the cultural meaning of military heroism.

## Datum 13

*"You think it means nothing when a woman, a nurse, goes to war. You think it's glorious that your son goes to war and embarrassing when your daughter does." (Hannah, 2024, p. 178)*

The failure of society to accept Frankie's mimicry of patriotic heroism can be seen in her conflict with her father. Frankie has followed the national ideal of service. She has gone to war, worked under pressure, and risked her emotional and physical safety. Nevertheless, her father does not value her service in the same way that he values male military service. A son who goes to war is treated as glorious, while a daughter who goes to war is treated as shameful or embarrassing.

The contrast between *"son"* and *"daughter"* is central to this datum. It shows that the meaning of war service is not neutral. It is shaped by gender. When men enter war, their action is connected with honor and heroism. When Frankie enters war as a woman and a nurse, her action is treated as less important. This shows that the dominant patriotic identity is open to women only in a limited way.

Through Bhabha's concept of mimicry, Frankie becomes "almost the same, but not quite." She imitates the patriotic role of the soldier, but her imitation is rejected because she does not match the male image of war heroism. This rejection does not only hurt Frankie personally. It also reveals the weakness of the dominant narrative itself. If national service is truly honorable, then Frankie's work should also be honored. The fact that it is not honored shows that the dominant idea of heroism is controlled by patriarchal values.

In this moment, Frankie's identity is constructed through conflict with family and society. She claims that her service matters, while her father represents a social view that denies women full recognition. Her words challenge that view directly. Therefore, mimicry becomes not only imitation but also resistance. By showing that she has done what society praises men for doing, Frankie exposes the unequal system that refuses to give women the same respect.

### 3. Ambivalence in the Construction of Frankie McGrath's Multiple Identities

Ambivalence refers to the condition in which a subject experiences two opposite feelings or meanings at the same time. In Bhabha's theory, ambivalence shows that identity is never fully stable because the subject may accept and reject the same identity, culture, or authority simultaneously. Ambivalence is important in understanding Frankie's identity because her experiences create contradiction between pride and pain, duty and betrayal, belonging and rejection. Frankie's identity is negotiated through these contradictions because she cannot completely accept or completely reject the meanings attached to war, service, family, and nation.

Datum 14

*"How on earth had she thought she belonged here? That she had something to offer men who were grievously wounded? She'd been as much help as a candy striper."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 36)

Frankie's ambivalence appears strongly at the beginning of her work in Vietnam. Before entering the war zone, Frankie believes that she can help and that her service will be meaningful. However, when she faces the reality of badly wounded soldiers, she begins to doubt herself. The question *"How on earth had she thought she*

*belonged here?"* shows that she suddenly feels out of place in the same space that she has chosen to enter.

The comparison to "*a candy striper*" is also significant. A candy striper is usually associated with simple hospital volunteer work, not with serious military nursing in a war zone. By comparing herself to this figure, Frankie reduces her own ability and feels that she is not prepared for the violence around her. This shows a clash between her imagined identity and her real experience. She wants to be a useful military nurse, but the war makes her feel powerless.

Bhabha's concept of ambivalence helps explain this divided condition. Frankie both desires and rejects her new identity at the same time. She wants to belong in Vietnam because she wants to serve, but she also feels that she does not belong because the reality is more terrible than she expected. Her identity as a military nurse is therefore not formed immediately. It is negotiated through fear, shame, and self-doubt.

This moment is important because it shows that identity construction is not a simple movement from weakness to strength. Frankie must pass through uncertainty before she can become competent. Her ambivalence becomes part of the process by which she learns to understand herself in the war. Therefore, this datum shows identity negotiation as a painful process in which Frankie struggles between the woman she thought she was and the nurse she must become.

Datum 15

*"There are no women in Vietnam, dear." "There are, sir. I did two tours."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 175)

After the war, ambivalence appears in the way society recognizes Frankie's identity. Frankie knows from her own experience that women served in Vietnam. She has lived through two tours and carries the memories of war in her body and mind. However, society denies this reality through the statement *"There are no women in Vietnam."* This denial places Frankie in a contradictory position: she is historically present, but socially erased.

The word *"dear"* makes the denial even more meaningful. It sounds polite, but it also reduces Frankie's authority. The speaker treats her as someone who does not know the truth of war, even though she is the one who has directly experienced it. This shows how patriarchal society controls the story of Vietnam by deciding whose experience counts as real. Women's service is pushed outside the accepted history of war.

Frankie's answer, *"There are, sir. I did two tours,"* becomes an act of identity negotiation. She does not accept the identity imposed on her by society. Instead, she speaks back and claims her experience. Her reply is short, but it directly challenges the dominant narrative. She forces the listener to face the fact that women were present in Vietnam, even if the public memory of the war tries to erase them.

Through Bhabha's concept of ambivalence, this moment shows the tension between invisibility and recognition. Frankie is both denied and self-assertive. She is

positioned as absent by society, but she insists on her presence. This contradiction makes her identity unstable, but it also gives her a space to resist. Therefore, her identity as a female veteran is negotiated through the struggle to make erased experience visible.

#### Datum 16

*"I'm proud of my service, Dad. It's taken me a long time to say that. I'm proud, even if the war never should have happened, even if it went to hell."* (Hannah, 2024, p. 365)

Frankie's mature ambivalence toward her veteran identity is shown when she finally says that she is proud of her service. This statement is important because Frankie has spent a long time feeling ashamed, rejected, and damaged by her experience. By saying that she is proud, she gives value to her own work as a nurse and accepts that her service matters.

Nevertheless, her pride is not simple patriotism. Frankie immediately adds that *"the war never should have happened"* and that *it "went to hell."* These words show that she does not accept the political meaning of the war. She can honor her own service while still condemning the war itself. This is a very important distinction because it shows that her identity is not limited to being either a proud patriot or a wounded victim.

This statement reflects ambivalence because Frankie holds two truths together. She is proud of the lives she tried to save, but she is angry about the war that created so much suffering. She recognizes her courage, but she does not romanticize the violence. Her identity as a veteran is therefore negotiated between pride and criticism,

service and trauma, love for the people she helped and disappointment with the system that sent them there.

From Bhabha's perspective, this divided meaning shows that identity is never completely stable. Frankie does not solve her past by choosing one side and rejecting the other. Instead, she learns to live with contradiction. Her statement to her father also becomes a demand for recognition because she speaks her truth openly after years of silence. Therefore, this datum shows that Frankie's veteran identity is reconstructed through the acceptance of complexity.

Based on the analysis above, Frankie McGrath's multiple identities are constructed through hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence. Hybridity shows how her identity is formed between different roles and meanings. Mimicry shows how she imitates dominant ideals of femininity, patriotism, and military service while exposing their limitations. Ambivalence shows how her identity is negotiated through contradiction, especially between pride and pain, presence and erasure, service and criticism. Therefore, Frankie's identity is not fixed or singular, but fluid, hybrid, and continuously constructed.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents conclusions from the findings that have been discussed in the previous chapter and provides suggestions for further research, particularly for studies that explore multiple identities and how hybridity influences and shapes them in literary works.

#### A. Conclusion

For the purpose of this research, the findings are based on the analysis discussed in Chapter IV. This research shows that the main character's multiple identities are represented through the concepts of Homi K. Bhabha (1994), which means that identity is not fixed but always changing. Furthermore, the analysis shows that the main character has multiple identities, which are a daughter, military nurse, invisible female veteran, trauma survivor, and a healer and advocate for female veteran. Her multiple identities can exist at the same time and sometimes contradict each other, showing that identity is not singular. The character also goes through changes that challenge dominant views and cannot return to one original identity. This research also shows how multiple identities are constructed by hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry, or what Bhabha (1994) refers to as hybrid identities. In this process, the character's identities are not settled in one clear form. They keep being negotiated through different social and cultural influences. The character's identity changes because it is formed through contact, conflict, and experience. This point supports the use of Homi K.

Bhabha's concepts in reading multiple identities in literary works. It helps explain how identity can move between different social and cultural positions, especially within a postcolonial context.

#### B. Suggestion

This research may be useful for other researchers who study multiple identities through Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial framework in literary works. It offers a reference for reading how identity appears in a text and how it changes when social and cultural influences shape a character's life. The findings of this study can be developed further by using other novels, authors, or cultural backgrounds. A wider object of study may open another view of multiple identities. Other characters and perspectives can also be examined, especially to see how postcolonial theory works in different social contexts. Future studies may use other theories or approaches in discussing identity. Interdisciplinary perspectives, for example, can help show how identity is shaped and represented in literary works from more than one perspective.

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## CURRICULUM VITAE



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