

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the study, statement of the research problem, objectives of the study, significances of the study, and scope and limitation of the study

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature represents and pictures out various aspects of life. According to Wellek and Warren (1956: 3) literature mirrors and expresses life that is even more ambiguous. Related to previous statement, it means that literature come up from the events happen in the society. In literature, It is obvious that the author's ideas in a work can be very influential to the readers' mindset.

Nowadays, many kinds of literary work can be seen such as novel, poetry, and drama. In this study, novel is chosen to be analyzed. According to Gill (1995), novel is a world especially made in words by the author and one of the forms of literary works which has been popular for centuries, even today. It means that novel is expression of the author's feeling which is revealed by the words and it can be containing some information about history and social condition at that time.

Apart from the fact that the novel is an expression of the author's feelings that reflect the people in society, another main characteristic of this genre is that the novel tells a story. Most novelists focus on the tension between individuals and the society in which they live. They also tell and describe social life in society. Novel is a storytelling process with many details on every page, and usually expresses human values (Peck and Coyle, 1986:102). Generally, novels can portray the reality of daily life, hence they can be used as a document to study issues in society.

Gender is a never-ending topic to discuss, although many studies on this subject have been published. There are many studies that discuss gender issues and until now gender is still the focus of research that gets attention to be discussed. According to Butler (1990) gender is not a noun, but it is also not a free-floating set of attributes that the substantive effects of gender are performatively produced and imposed by the practice of regulating gender coherence.

For Butler, gender is an act that is repeated within a very rigid framework that freezes over time to produce the appearance of essence, a form of natural being. There is no real and permanent gender identity. Everything is shaped by repeated expressions and representations until a gender identity is formed. Butler also argues that identity is incoherent and impermanent. Identity is the result of constantly evolving performance. Therefore, gender indicates that a person's identity is never stable. Gender identity can be determined by the performativity of sexual conversation, performance in appearance and physique, as well as performativity in sexual activity (Butler, 1990).

The novel written by M.E Girard, *Girl Mans Up*, was chosen as the data source in this study. *Girl Mans Up* is written by a Canadian writer known as M.E Girard and published by HarperCollins in 2016. M.E Girard is a Canadian novelist and ICU nurse. *Girl Mans Up* is the debut work of M.E Girard, this novel is a young adult genre. The novel won the Lambda Literature Award for LGBT Children and Young Adult Literature at the 29th Lambda Literature Awards in 2017. It was also a shortlisted finalist for the American Library Association's William C. Morris Award and the Kobo Evolving Writer Award in 2017.

Girl Mans Up tells about the life of Penelope Oliviera who struggles to get freedom in choosing her life path. This novel begins with a 16-year-old teenage girl who experiences inner turmoil with her sexual identity. Then all of that was opposed by her family and environment. She also received a lot of bullying and was shunned by her friends because she looked like a boy. She had a hard time

knowing how to be an adult when she could not even classify her gender. Meanwhile, Penelope has a romantic relationship with same-sex partner, Blake, which makes it difficult for Pen to maintain control over her gender identification.

In this regard, the phenomenon of lesbianism has become a major topic in today's society since it emerged in the nineteenth century because before that period, lesbianism was a taboo subject. Lesbians are homosexual women or women who experience romantic love or sexual attraction to other women.

There are several reasons why researcher are interested in analyzing this novel. First, the researcher considers that analyzing this novel through Queer Theory is an interesting challenge to do. Second, the novel *Girl Mans Up* has not been analyzed using Queer Theory. Third, the novel *Girl Mans Up* raises an interesting issue about the long journey or process of a person who wants to become what he wants to be even though he has to break the norms of society. Another reason is that there is a change in the story's gender behavior when the main character starts to become a lesbian due to previous experiences from her family and environment. There are many quotes that the researcher got from her novel, one of them.

"I imagine myself dating every girl in this school at some time."(Girard, 2016:12).

The quote above is an example showing Penelope getting excited because she imagined she was dating a girl at her school. This kind of action is related to Butler's theory of the Queer in "Gender Trouble" who performs actions and gestures that show the main character's attraction to the same sex. So in this study the researcher used Judith Butler's queer theory to analyze the main character's gender problem. Researcher use this theory because Judith Butler revealed that the queer theory is a forum for people who have other sexual orientations, such as lesbians, namely women who like other women.

This study aims to determine how lesbianism is described by the main character in the novel *Girl Mans Up*. Researcher want to see how lesbianism

which is still the subject of discussion today is reflected in a literary work, a novel. The author is interested in analyzing lesbianism because the phenomenon of LGBT and also lesbianism is certainly increasing from time to time and leaves pros and cons in society.

Previously, there are several researcher who analyze different novels by using theory of queer . The first researcher is Putri Dwi Annisa with a research entitled "*An Analysis of Spongebob Squarepant's Selected Episodes: A Study of Queer Theory and Gender Performativity*", (2015). The second researcher is Desy Ayuningtyas & Chandraningrum with a research entitled "*Gay In Will Grayson, Will Grayson Novel By John Green And David Levithan (2010): Queer Theory*" (2017). The third researcher is Purwati with a research entitled "*An Analysis of Gender Identity in David Ebershoff's the Danish Girl*" (2018). The fourth researcher who uses queer theory is Miftach Khairani and Siti Norma Nasution with a research entitled "*Lesbianism as Portrayed in Clare Lydon's This London Love*", (2020). The last researcher is Galih Lutvianto with the research title "*Ennis Del Marr'S Fluid Gender In Annie Proulx'S Brokeback Mountain Short Story*" (2014). Those people use the same theory to analyze characteristic of the main character of each novel and film. While, this study is going to analyze the portrayed, the factors cause and the effects of the main character being a lesbian in M.E Girard's novel *Girl Mans Up*.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the research background, this research will discuss about Penelope's Character Journey as Described in M.E Girard's Novel *Girl Mans Up*. Then, the problem is established as the following questions, they are:

- 1) How is lesbianism portrayed in M.E Girard's novel *Girl Mans Up*?
- 2) What do the factors cause Penelope become a lesbian in M.E Girard's novel *Girl Mans Up*?

3) What are the effects of lesbianism experienced by Penelope in M.E Girard's novel *Girl Mans Up*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of writing this thesis is to find out the answers to questions related to research problems, namely:

- 1) To Describe the potrait of lesbianism in the novel *Girl Mans Up* by M.E Girard.
- 2) To explain the factors that cause Penelope's become a lesbian in M.E Girard's novel *Girl Mans Up*.
- 3) To explain the effects Penelope's become a lesbian in M.E Girard's novel *Girl Mans Up*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide two advantages, including theoretical significance and practical significance. With the advantage of theoretical significance, the researcher hopes that this research can broaden the reader's knowledge and understanding of the problems hidden in each novel, especially in the novel *Girl Mans Up* by M.E Girard. The researcher uses Queer theory to analyze this novel, so the researcher also hopes that every reader who reads this study can get more information about what is the theory of Queer proposed by Judith Butler in her book entitled *Gender Trouble*.

As for the practical significance, this study can be used as a reference in discussing the study related to literature and queer theory.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study uses Queer theory as the main subject in the analysis. The researcher considers the scope and limitations to make the research more focused and structured so that it does not go out of the scope of the discussion. The scope

of this study is homosexual literature, especially about lesbianism. The limitation of this research is the storytelling of the characters and the author's narration in the novel *Girl Mans Up* which shows the portrayed, the factors cause and the effects of lesbianism in the main character in the novel.

