CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter will discuss several points to support the study's focus. There are about five points that must be exposed in this chapter. First, to start digging up information on how the writer wants to make a thorough explanation of the research topic is in the background of the study, making questions about the study is in research questions, the purpose and the meaning of the writer is doing this research is in objectives of the study and significance of the study points, and last point is scope and limitations of the study to shorten what the writer meant by this research.

1.1 Background of the Study

As living creatures in the world, human cannot be separated from their own group that needs the interaction. Each individual must have the personality to reveal their sense of self to others. People are formed and valued by the norms or standards of society and by their own purposes, since everyone needs their own desires to be able to achieve in life (Revelle & Scherer, 2009). It indicates that an individual's personality comprises the time and space patterning of feelings, behavior, cognition, and desires of their mind. These can identify the sexual orientation of individuals by valuing the patterns.

Concerning identity, humans are one of the cases that are able to think critically about anything existentially to set the norms in the world. In connection with the issue nowadays, especially surrounding gender and sexuality, demonstrate how individuals may experience conflict between their personal desires and the expectations required by the main issue of social norms. Conversely, being gay or homosexual was such an implicit issue that nobody discussed in the past (Boasquevisque et al., 2023). Tyson (2011, p. 237) asserts that many disciplines of the sex and sexuality topic have been omitted just a few scholars' discomfort and overlooking of the essential dimensions of

study. Therefore, this paper serves as an enrichment of the sexuality topic regarding gender and queer presence in literary works.

Literary work is a kind of human work that holds an writer's views, ideas, and beliefs. It implies the social and cultural context of how humans live. Not only that, but it also defines the beauty of writing. Susanto et al. (2024, p. 187) assert that literary work can be said to be a form of recreation by the writer with the use of language as the medium, by looking at a problem that occurs in real life. In keeping with its name, literary works have been described as creativity and the human mind with beautifully captivating words. One of the areas of particular interest in literary works is the study of human beings, such as in queer studies, which is used to describe how individuals express their sexual feelings in many ways. Thus, a novel is one of the literary genres in literary works that will be used in this study, specifically the novel entitled *Young Mungo* by Douglas Stuart, which employs a concept of queer study.

Queer studies is indeed merely related to feminist studies and gender studies, but it is not exactly called a branch of feminist studies because it has emerged from and intersects with both. Historically, queer studies itself is basically sharing a common critique of traditional assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality. While feminist and gender studies laid the groundwork for analyzing gender as a social construct, queer studies expanded this critique by challenging fixed categories of gender and sexual identity (Jagose, 1996, p. 3). The development of queer theory emerged during a period when scholars were critically examining the social construction of gender and sexuality. As Hartman (2018, p. 81) reinforces that queer serves as an identifier, encompassing any variety of experiences that extend what has been socially and politically accepted as normative categories for gender and sexual orientation. Both feminist and gender studies provided the theoretical foundation for questioning traditional binaries such as male and female or masculine and feminine, creating a rational space where queer perspectives could later emerge and challenge fixed understandings of gender and sexuality.

However, queer studies is not accurately described as a mere branch of feminist studies. While it shares feminist concerns about power, identity, and social inequality, queer studies extends beyond them by specifically challenging the very notion of stable sexual and gender identities. The ways that dominant ideas of sexuality support the heteronormativity idea that masculine activities are connected to gender norms (Butler, 1990). Traditional gender norms often associate masculine behavior with men and feminine behavior with women, while simultaneously expecting masculine men to be attracted to feminine women and feminine women to be attracted to masculine men. These expectations reinforce the assumption that gender expression and heterosexual attraction should naturally correspond with one another. Any adjustments that deviate from these standards are treated differently and seen as inferior, unusual, or inappropriate. It critiques the heteronormative assumptions that underpin many cultural and social structures, pushing the discourse further than the feminist framework alone typically allows.

In essence, queer studies can be understood as both emerging from and intersecting with feminist and gender studies, while developing its own distinct critical perspective rather than being subordinate to either field. It borrows theoretical insights from both fields while also contributing new perspectives that question the limits of gender-based analysis. Separately from queer, gender is frequently constructed as a stereotypical basis with men as a position to earn a living for the needs of their families, while women must take care of their children and do housework (Brannon, 2017). Feminism focuses on the deconstruction of patriarchal systems that have been built and shaped in society. This intersectional relationship highlights how queer studies continues to expand the broader field of gender inquiry by emphasizing fluidity, performativity, and resistance to normative categorizations.

One theoretical framework within queer studies is Sedgwick's closet theory. This theory, introduced in her seminal work entitled *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), explains how the concept of the closet operates as a central metaphor for understanding modern sexual identity. Sedgwick (1990, p. 3) argues that the closet is not merely a

private space of secrecy but a social and cultural structure that governs what can be known or hidden about an individual's sexuality. It reflects the unstable tension between knowledge and ignorance, where a person may know that they are attracted to someone of the same sex, but their family or friends may not know about it. At the same time, those around them may suspect their sexuality but choose not to ask directly. Through this framework, Sedgwick reveals that the binary of being in or out of the closet does not resolve oppression but instead exposes the pervasive power of heteronormativity in shaping identity and desire.

The epistemology of the closet itself intrigues the study of someone's sexual identity, typically in literary works. For example, a character who hides their same-sex attraction out of fear of social rejection or discrimination can be analyzed through the analysis of the closet, as their identity is continually negotiated between concealment and disclosure. It creates structure for gay oppression, demonstrating a continuous tension between knowledge and ignorance, and rigid binaries of in or out. Sedgwick (1990, p. 70) emphasizes that the closet is not merely about secrecy but about the social regulation of what can be spoken and what must remain unspoken. The act of concealment and revelation becomes a central drama of modern sexuality, shaping both personal identity and public discourse. In literature, this tension often appears through characters who must navigate visibility and silence within oppressive environments. Sedgwick (1990, p) also asserts that heterosexuality depends on the existence of the closet to define itself, making queerness an essential yet denied part of cultural meaning. Thus, the closet functions as both a site of repression and a space where queer subjectivity is formed and negotiated.

Published in 2022, Douglas Stuart's *Young Mungo* explores secrecy, desire, and queer identity within a heteronormative society. The novel narrates the bildungsroman story of Mungo Hamilton, a sensitive laboring class boy growing up in 1980s Glasgow, Scotland. Trapped in a violent environment shaped by poverty, sectarianism, and rigid masculinity, Mungo struggles to find tenderness and belonging amid chaos. His secret relationship with James, who raises pigeons, which symbolizes freedom and escape,

offers him a fleeting sense of safety and love, yet their romance must remain hidden due to the community's embedded homophobia in Glasgow society. Alongside this forbidden love, Mungo endures the emotional burden of a broken family, which is a neglectful mother and a domineering brother, Hamish, whose exaggerated masculine behavior reinforces societal expectations that deny vulnerability. Stuart's storytelling combines tenderness and brutality, reflecting the harsh realities faced by many queer youths. Because of its powerful themes and authentic voice, the book quickly attracted literary critics and readers alike.

Young Mungo (2022) novel portrays the experiences of queer individuals living within a strongly masculine society, where same-sex desire is often met with silence, prejudice, and violence. The novel explores how identity, masculinity, and love intersect within this hostile social environment. Through the protagonist's journey, who is Mungo Hamilton, the novel challenges gender and sexuality stereotypes. Stuart's work stands as a significant contribution to contemporary queer literature, continuing the legacy of empathy and representation he began in *Shuggie Bain*.

Several enthusiastic writers have managed the enhancement and the expansion of the impactful topic is needed for the writer as a contribution to the recent study. One of the analyses that has been conducted is entitled *Queering Infrastructures of Romance* by Hartl et al. (2023). Discussing romance and intimacy in *Young Mungo* by relating it to *Romeo and Juliet*. Carolin (2025) focuses on the relationship between *Young Mungo* and Stuart's *Shuggie Bain*. Other studies have discussed queer desire, identity, and the closet in different literary works. In a different research entitled *Ephemeral Intimacies and Queer Temporalities: Reframing Power, Desire, and Identity in André Aciman's Call Me by Your Name* by Biradar (2025). It examines desire and identity in *Call Me by Your Name*. Another study utilized the closet idea is entitled *Topology of the Closet* by (Boucai, 2021). The study argues the closet in *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds* and *Teleny*. Lastly, another study that employed a theory of closet is entitled *Reinterpreting Heroism: A queer Lens on Madeline Miller's The Song of Achilles* by Tamba et al. (2025). The writers also explore queer

relationships in *The Song of Achilles*. It is decided that the writer's recent study examines the closet theory in a novel entitled *Young Mungo* that has existed, considering to fill the gap of the topic that has not been discussed yet.

Consequently, the writer requires to investigate Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of the closet according to the sexuality understanding regarding the knowable and unknowable of the main character from the *Young Mungo* novel. Not only that, but the closet theory by Sedgwick is also used in the study to examine the ambiguous zone between recognition and denial, which is central to how heteronormativity operates in the novel. The main character is a one of a kind character in the novel that is capable of performing sexual identity in the story by looking at the action in every single story of himself. Thus, the closet theory is applied by the writer since it allows one to go further into the subject matter selected for this study.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the writer attempts to provide the following answer to the research question:

1. How are Mungo's secrecy and desire seen from dimensions of the closet?
2. How do secrecy and desire shape the construction of Mungo's queer identity?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the statement in the research question, this study has two primary objectives, such as:

1. This study aims to explore the representations of secrecy and desire in *Young Mungo* (2022) through the dimensions of the closet.
2. This study aims to examine how secrecy and desire contribute to the construction of Mungo's queer identity within his coming-of-age process.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, the novel provides a compelling depiction of queer experience within a laboring class, heteronormative society, making it an ideal source to explore how the mechanisms of secrecy and disclosure shape identity. This study highlights how Mungo's concealed sexuality and his struggle for self-expression reflect broader cultural anxieties surrounding masculinity. It also provides insight into how the closet functions not only as a private space of protection but as a public structure that regulates knowledge, visibility, and power. Therefore, this study deepens the understanding of how contemporary literature continues to engage with queer theory to expose the effects of social stigma nowadays.

Practically, a bunch of people witness or regulate society norms with a heteronormative ideology as a standard. It might provide the clash of sexual diversity, which possible influence the conflict between people. Regardless of religion, we must show some respect and love to each other with different ideologies for the reason we as human beings. For that reason, this study could raise awareness of each person's unique sexual condition by focusing on closet theory. Furthermore, it is hoped that the data in this study will be able to enhance understanding and provide motivation for Universitas Trunojoyo Madura's English Study Program students, as well as the Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences and other academic associates. Not only that, but the readers also may gain a clearer perspective on the common ground between gender, class, and sexuality in post-industrial, especially in Scotland.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study uses the closet's theory as the grand theory to maintain study focus from the novel *Young Mungo* by Douglas Stuart. In this research, *Epistemology of the Closet* textbook by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) is employed through closet theory. It is employed with the goal of examining how the main character specifically perceives and responds to the life and society against and secure him, that is presented in the novel.

The limitations of this study focused on the information provided by the writer's

narration and the characters' utterances regarding the actions and reactions of the main character, since Douglas Stuart's *Young Mungo* is employed as the main source of the data. The data collected was then analyzed using the related theory, which gives the answer to the research questions of this study. Additionally, because this study involves the use of literary theory, the explanations are only relevant to the literary study and not the linguistic one.