

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Literature is a piece of written text. It is usually defined with additional adjective such as “artistic” (Klarer, 2004). The major kinds or genres of literature are fiction, poetry, and drama (Klarer, 2004). These genres consist of imaginative and creative texts which are considered artistic. It is a representation of experience, which makes the readers feel as though they are experiencing the events themselves and not only the characters. One of the most popular literatures is novel.

Novel is as a work of fiction. It is a prose with more than 40 thousand words. It consists of multiple chapters, with each chapter focusing on one purpose. The length of novel makes it easier for the author to develop his or her story, especially when the topic is complex or sensitive. Some of the complex or sensitive topics are gender, religion, and racism. As the topics or the problem faced by the characters are considerably real, in which readers can relate to, novel becomes a popular literature.

One novel that discusses about gender is the modern Canadian novel titled “Girl Mans Up” written by M-E Girard. The novel follows a 16 year old Portuguese-Canadian girl named Penelope, called Pen, who preferred to look and behave like a boy. Her close friends, Colby and Tristan, and older brother, Johnny, did not mind her appearance, though her parents did and wanted her to look and behave like a girl. She also had a crush on a girl named Blake who Colby wanted

to sleep with. Her situation got worse when she knew that there was something wrong between Olivia and Colby, making their year-long friendship fall apart. Pen eventually decided to “man up,” stop befriending Colby, and live with Johnny.

The term “man up” is a figurative language. It does not mean being a man as it would if taken literally. The phrase means being brave and face one’s problem. However, the use of “man” in the phrase is considered sexist. It implies that being brave is exclusively men’s trait. Pen, the main character, used this phrase a few times throughout the novel. In the end, she stayed a girl and became brave, facing her problems herself instead of running away from them. This term shows that one of the topics of the “Girl Mans Up” novel is gender.

The author of the novel, M-E Girard, is a Canadian feminist who is a mother and a registered nurse. She is a Lambda Literary Fellow, a writer who attends the Writer’s Retreat for Emerging LGBTQ Voices held by Lambda Literary to study in a safe and welcoming community along with other writers, in 2013 and 2015. She is interested in the concept of gender and the meaning of being a queer girl. In addition, her Portuguese-Canadian girlfriend, Melissa Silva, was the inspiration for the character Pen. She was the one who told Girard about Portuguese culture.

As the novel is about Pen being a girl who did not look like a typical girl, this research is focused on gender. The concept of gender has been argued by Judith Butler in her gender theory. According to Butler (2007), sex and gender are both socially constructed. The biological and cultural differentiation of sex and gender means that sex is what a person is born with whereas gender is socially constructed. Butler argued that sex is also socially constructed as it is unclear how

sex was determined to be either male or female. Another reason is the use of “male” and “female” which are also used for gender. She also argued that if sex and gender are considered different, gender cannot be said to be affected or be the result of sex. This means that, for Butler, there can be more than two genders.

Butler explained that gender is built off language, both verbal and non-verbal (D.K. Publishing, 2019). The way a person speaks along with his or her physical activity and physical appearance create the person’s gender. She explained that creating and maintaining one’s gender is done by the repetition of acts. This repetition is called performativity. Gender performativity is the repetition of behavior that creates gender identity. However, performativity does not mean one can choose what gender to perform. Gender performativity only shows how people repeating certain behavior is seen as showing their gender identity.

In the “Girl Mans Up” novel, the gender performativity can be divided into two types: gender conforming and gender nonconforming. Gender conformity means the person’s behavior follows gender norms. Gender nonconformity, on the other hand, means the behavior does not follow gender norms. Furthermore, their gender performativity affects their lives. The effects are mostly negative. It is not only their gender nonconformity that has negative effects, but their gender conformity as well.

A lot of literature is based on real life, which means there are real people who experience the conflicts that can be found in literature. However, not everyone has the privilege or even good people around to talk about his or her

problems. Having a book or any writing that shows characters dealing with the same problems can help the person feel better. One problem that can be hard for people to talk about is anything related to gender, especially about gender as an act or gender performativity. The people who do not conform to gender norms can feel better reading about similar people. Others who do not understand about the problem can learn through literature as well. These are why discussing about gender, especially gender performativity, in literature is important.

There have been some researches using Judith Butler's gender theory. Tuo and Liu (2022) analyzed gender performativity in "The Cleft" novel written by Dorris Lessing. The novel is about an alternative of human origin, when there were only women. There were two groups: the Clefts (women) and the Squirts (men). The research analyzed the gender performativity of the two groups. The researchers focused on three dimensions: ritual, language, and theatrical.

Another research on gender performativity is the research by Ahmadi Asl et al. (2019) which analyzed gender performativity in "Gone Girl" novel by Gillian Flynn. The novel is about a woman deceiving people by faking her death to save her marriage. The researchers analyzed how the gender of some of the characters was built from doing certain actions. They focused on the gender performativity of three female characters in the novel: Amy Elliott Dunne (the main character), Maureen Dunne, and Margo Dunne.

The two researches above used Judith Butler's gender theory, same as the present research. The data source is also same as all use a novel, although they are three different novels. Despite using the same theory, the focus is different. The

first research focused on gender performativity in three dimensions, the second focused on the actions that built the gender of three female characters, whereas this research will focus on two types of gender performativity by the female characters and the effect of their gender performativity. Analyzing the effect makes this research different.

As mentioned above, this research is conducted to find and classify the types of gender performativity and their effects to the female characters in the “Girl Mans Up” novel written by M-E Girard. The approach used is feminist approach. The gender performativity theory by Judith Butler is used to analyze about gender in the novel. Based on the focus, this research is therefore titled “The Analysis of Gender Performativity Reflected in ‘Girl Mans Up’ Novel by M-E Girard: Feminist Approach.”

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Based on the background above, there are some problems regarding to gender that can be found in the data source. The problems are as follows.

1. The types of gender inequality in modern Canada portrayed in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.
2. The reflection of toxic femininity in modern Canada in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.
3. The effect of toxic femininity towards females’ health in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.
4. The effect of lesbianism to the treatment of the main character in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.

5. The types of gender performativity in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.
6. The effect of gender performativity towards females’ lives in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

The research problem should be limited in order to focus on the main problems only and to have deeper analysis. Based on the problems identified above, the research problem is limited as follows.

1. The types of gender performativity in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.
2. The effect of gender performativity towards females’ lives in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.

1.4 Formulation of the Problem

A research is done to find the answer of the research problem. In order to make the problem researchable, the problem should be formulated into research questions. Based on the limitation above, the research questions that will be answered in this research are formulated as follows.

1. What are the types of gender performativity in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard?
2. What are the effects of gender performativity towards females’ lives in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard?

1.5 Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research are the purpose of conducting the research.

Based on the formulation above, the objectives of this research are as follows.

1. To identify the types of gender performativity in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.
2. To discover the effects of gender performativity towards females’ lives in modern Canada reflected in “Girl Mans Up” novel by M-E Girard.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The significance of the research is divided into two types, theoretical and practical significance.

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the researcher hopes that this research can give more knowledge about gender and gender performativity. This research adds more insights by discussing about the types and effects of gender performativity. By using the feminist approach, this research can also contribute to feminist literary criticism.

2. Practical Significance

The researcher hopes that practically, scholars or researchers can use this research as a reference for future research. The readers hopefully can understand more about the importance of showing various genders in literature. This research can also show that the gender performativity theory is valuable in literary criticism.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Feminist Approach : A literary approach based on feminism, which is the social movement and ideology that fights for the equality of rights and opportunities for women and men. It is the approach used when talking about gender inequality or gender-based problems, such as political and psychological oppression of women. (Barry, 2017)

Gender : A socially constructed state of being masculine or feminine based on speech and physical appearance. It is typically divided into two based on the division of sex, male and female. Society expects people who are born with male reproductive organs to appear masculine and people who are born with female reproductive organs to appear feminine. (Butler, 2007)

Gender Performativity : The repetition of behavior that creates the illusion of one's gender. It does not mean that gender is a performance in which an individual can choose which gender to perform anytime. It is the repetition of stylized acts constrained by gender norms to maintain patriarchy and heterosexual matrix. (Butler, 2007)