

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of research as well as the research questions and the purposes of research. It also presents a brief explanation of the research method and other aspects which are related to the research.

1.1. Background

Gay is not a modern phenomenon; it had existed since the early history of mankind and has been turning into a controversial issue in almost around the world. The existence of gay people has been considered as a disgrace in the society. This could be seen by imprisoned gay authors or banned literary works which raise gay issues; therefore as time goes by, the movement of gay emerges through literary works as a rebellion of notorious issue of itself. It has been the subject of attention from the law, religion, the scientific community or the media. In literary world for instance, the occurrence of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) could be seen as a theme in literary works nowadays. Thus, there are various gay literary works not written only for adult but as well for children and young adult or adolescent who are in the age of 10 – 21 (Vandergrift, 2007).

Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence edited by Marion Dane Bauer is a book, a collection of young adult short stories which raises various issues on gay people. There are about sixteen short stories written by different authors and illustrated in a colourful world of homosexual that is encountered by various adolescent characters. Some of the characters have family members or friends who are gay and some of them are attracted to people of the same sex or question about their own sexual orientation.

According to Kanner (2002), a distinctive literary genre which is defined through young adult gay and lesbian fiction appeared in 1967 and its existence in literature is reinforced by the dominant social values and mostly underlined a simple plot with problem to overcome or because homosexuality stereotypically has received so much attention as a “problem”, only some that penetrate social criticism.

Young adult gay and lesbian fiction has gone through an improvement with some intention of the author for the young adult gay and lesbian literature. In addition, Jan Goodman (1963) has summarized the author’s intention of young adult gay and lesbian literature: (1) the stereotype of gay which is seen as a “problem” and a number of features of gay people could be seen as stereotypes in young adult fiction, (2) the threat of psychical danger and death also may appear in fiction, for example being gay or lesbian has a relation of psychically in danger or life-threatening so that gay or lesbian character may live with harm or tragedy, (3) the threat of loneliness and unhappiness is also seen in young adult gay fiction.

The gay and lesbian characters live lonely, miserable and unhappy life, which are illustrate by the loss of friends, loss of occupation, loss of relatives, loss of community or end in isolation and it seems that children and young people should not fall into the influence of gay people, (4) the distrust of gay people as a role model in communities and it is depicted in fictions in which the gay or lesbian character is a teacher, (5) AIDS also appears in young adult literature that educates the readers of the dangers and problem related to AIDS (Kanner, 2002).

Related to the point mentioned above, this study focuses on the analysis of how gay identity is performed in young adult fiction. The object of the analysis is a collection of young adult short stories entitled *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence* by Marion Dane Beaur. Selected short stories (*Am I Blue?* written by Bruce Coville, *Winnie and Tommy* written by Francesca Lia Block, *The Honorary Shepherds* written by Gregory Maguire and *Three Mondays in July* written by James Cross Giblin) from *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence* are chosen due to the fact that those stories represent the issue of becoming gay and performing gender in a contemporary young adult world.

In accordance with that notion, the study analyzes the novel in the perspective of Queer Theory and Judith Butler's 'Gender Performativity'. Butler (1990) mentions that sexuality is not an essential personal attribute but an available cultural category. She also argues that gender and sexuality are "performative" discourses. They are all about acts and only secondarily about

states of being, who is recognized and categorized by social categories rather than essential attributes.

Thus, by analyzing the stories in the perspective of Queer Theory and Gender Performativity, supported by other relevant theories concerning social and gender issues, it is expected that performing gender by the adolescent characters can be carefully analyzed.

1.2. Scope of the Research

In doing the research, a limitation to the research is significant to avoid the excessive analysis on information and data that is irrelevant to the main topic of the research (Semi, 1993).

This research is limited to the examination of performing gender by the young adult characters in a collection of young adult short stories *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence* edited by Marion Dane Bauer. The phenomenon of gay identity is presented in the form of actions and discourses performed by the characters. Therefore, this research investigates the gender performance in four selected short stories (*Am I Blue?* written by Bruce Coville, *Winnie and Tommy* written by Francesca Lia Block, *The Honorary Shepherds* written by Gregory Maguire and *Three Mondays in July* written by James Cross Giblin) that are in relation with performative acts and destabilizing gender.

1.3. Research Questions

From the preceding explanation above, the study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What performative acts construct the characters' identity in the selected short stories?
2. What destabilized gender as shown in the selected short stories?

1.4. Purposes of the Research

Based on the research question, the purposes of this research are as follows:

1. To reveal the performative acts that construct the characters' identity in the selected short stories.
2. To discover the factor(s) that destabilized gender as shown in the selected short stories.

1.5. Significances of the Research

This study is particularly interesting, in that, it elaborates how gender is performative instead of "owned". In addition, the study may contribute to the development of the content literary analysis that focuses on gay and lesbian literature to see how they are voiced and represented in Young Adult Literature.

The study explores gay characters, so that the study hopes to help the reader to have a better understanding about gay people rather than likely to view

through stereotypical thinking and have courage to face other group of people who are simply seen as “different” people.

Regarding the study is as well focused on young adult literature, the study assists parents to help their children to feel safe enough to talk about their feelings and what their wish for and as Marion Dane Bauer said, “for all young people in their search for themselves.”

1.6. Research Method

The study applies descriptive analysis which is qualitative method. The purposes of qualitative design are to understand a phenomenon in context-specific settings to understand a social or human problem in a complex holistic picture formed with words, to understand the meaning of events, situations, and actions (Hoepfl, 1997 and Cresswell, 1994). According to this method, the data processes in this research are collected from journal articles, books and literature related to the problem being investigated. The primary data of this research is the collection of young adult short stories entitled *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence* edited by Marion Dane Baeur and the secondary data will be gained from reading related issue of *Performing Gender*. The data will be analyzed using framework of Queer Theory and Gender Performativity, primarily those proposed by Judith Butler.

1.7. Clarification of Terms

a. Young Adult Literature

According to Stallworth (1998), Young Adult Literature is considered as reading, both fiction or non-fiction books which reader is a group of individuals who are between the age twelve to twenty years old. Young people are most likely to view books as pleasurable thing and they most likely to become readers if they are introduced to literature which contains of plots similar to their life experiences, interesting themes, young adults as the main characters and communicative language as their own language (Bushman & Bushman, as cited in Stallworth, 1998). In other words, young people are motivated to read literature when there are characters and situations reflecting their own.

b. Gender

According to Kate Millet (as cited in Bressler, 2006), gender is a socially constructed thing and it is determined by society. A culture constructs meanings of gender by investing biological sex, in other words gender represents social rules of being male or female. Thus, it defines the meanings of masculinity and femininity (Wood, 1994).

c. Queer Theory

According to Gauntlett (1997), Queer Theory is a set of ideas related to the view of unfixed identities and it cannot determine who one is.

Basically, it has potentially interest in race, defining choices, norms, masculinity and femininity as well as challenges the concepts of sexual identity, gender and sexual differences and examines bisexuality, cross-dressing, gay marriage and other issues (Bressler, 2006).

d. Gender Performativity

Gender Performativity was first stated by Judith Butler in her book, *Gender Trouble*, it is an act of doing and a process of becoming. The theory is based on the distinction between sex and gender. People do acts and express themselves. She explains gender is “a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame” (Salih, 2002, p. 63) which means people have to perform right gender otherwise they will be disapproved by society. Butler (as cited in Dobie, 2009) explains that identity is performative means that what an individual does in particular times determines gender and identity. In addition, identity is moving among possibilities. She also states that social action is needed to revise the norms and the binary

e. Performing Gender

Performing Gender is derived from Butler’s theory of gender performativity. People express themselves to show their identity and what people do in certain times can determine their gender and identity (Butler, as cited in Dobie, 2009). Salih (2002) mentions that people have to

perform themselves according to values or norms since those who do not do it correctly will be disapproved and punished by the society itself.

f. Destabilizing Gender

According to Wood (1994), a culture contains of structures and practices that support a particular social order by legitimizing certain values, expectations, meanings or patterns of behaviour. In other words, culture creates values and these values examine for instance, the meanings of gender. Culture creates “appropriate” values for framing masculine or feminine behaviour. With the work of Kate Millet (as cited in Dobie, 2009), Judith Butler argues about gender itself. There is various range of attitude and behaviour of human, but society defines choices into the male and female which continues to the traditional binary of masculine and feminine. As mentioned previously, Butler mentions that identity is performative means that what an individual does in particular times determines gender and identity.

1.8. Organization of the Paper

The research paper will be organized as follows:

Chapter I : Introduction

This chapter consists of the introduction which provides the information on the background, scope of the research, research questions, purposes of the research, significances

of the study, research method, classification terms and organization of the paper.

Chapter II : Literature Review

This section consists of Previous Researches and the theoretical reviews that are relevant to the present study, queer theory and gender performativity, as well explanation about gender and young adult literature as well the synopsis of the data which contains of four selected of the short stories.

Chapter III : Research Method

This part deals with the methodology of the research. It consists of research objectives, research procedures, data source, data collection, the data analysis and framework as well data presentation of the research.

Chapter IV : Findings and Discussion

After collecting the data, this part reports the result of the research. This chapter contains the research findings and discussion of performing gender.

Chapter V : Conclusion and Suggestion

This chapter presents all the conclusions and suggestions for further research.

Chapter VI : Appendix

Chapter VII : References