

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the general description and the background of the study. It covers the background, research question, aims of the study, the scope of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, classification of related terms, and the organization of the study.

### 1.1 Background

Many literary works have raised the issue of identity. One of them is the novel entitled *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) by Ursula K. Le Guin which brings an issue of gender identity. It tells the story about Genly Ai, a man from Terran, who has a mission in unifying planets for Ekumen (the organization of united planets). He has to go to Gethen planet which is populated by androgynous societies. The first society lives in a nation called Karhide, where Ai first arrives in the planet. The story continues until the main character tells the country where the second society lives, Orgota.

The theme of the novel above becomes the background of the study. As a novel which brings the theme of gender, this novel has an appealing factor, which is the setting. It distinguishes the novel from other novels with the same theme which set on Earth. This novel by Le Guin twists the situation and it puts the gender which is considered as the normal gender as a minority in another planet. As a man who comes from a planet which recognizes dual gender, he feels the need in identifying and understanding the gender of Gethen's society because it is different from what he has ever encountered.

From the background above, it can be seen that identity is considered essential for most of the societies in the world. The idea is defined by Gilroy's statement, which is:

“We live in a world where identity matters. It matters both as a concept, theoretically, and as contested fact of contemporary political life.” (as cited in Woodward 1997: 301).

The concept of identity, theoretically, can be described as how one sees oneself, whether personally, how one wants to be identified in the society, or how others perceived oneself as an individual. The elements of self-concept can include social status, ethnicities, gender, sexualities, etc. In addition to identity, the term of contested fact can be used either in a single form or in conjunction with gender, ethnic, class, regional, religious, professional, and national affiliations (Schwartz, 2001). For example, when one says, "I am brave". One defines oneself as a brave person because one acknowledges an experience which defines one as a brave person. As a contested fact, the concept of "brave" is:

“... influenced by self-relevant knowledge , the tool we use to make sense of experiences, and the processes that construct, defend, and maintain this knowledge” (Eipstein, 1973; Higgins, 1996; Markus, 1977 as cited in Oyserman 2001: 500).

In reference to Gilroy's statement, both of the concepts above include gender as one of the elements which construct identity. There is a notion set by Butler in her book *Gender Trouble* about the construction of one's identity by one's performances; one's identity is constructed by what each individual does constantly (Butler 1990 as cited in Culler 1997). As a result, for example, a man or a woman is considered to be one because of some actions which relate to one specific gender.

There are two sets of gender believed by most of the societies: feminine and masculine, as stated by Woodward (2004: 44):

“Our second claim was that the way we construct our identities was strongly influenced by a set of often rather stereotypically feminine and masculine characteristics and traits that we often associate with gender categories, with women and with men.” (Woodward, 2004: 44)

It means that, each individual can only relate to one single gender, either feminine or masculine. It is considered taboo for most societies when one does not refer to any gender above or one who is blurred/mixed into the typical of both gender. It shows that one's identity, particularly gender

identity, is constructed both culturally and socially. Therefore, it raises questions about the attribution of gender in society.

The study of gender, as one of the key issues in determining identity, has been emerging lately to criticize the idea of gender attribution. Gender studies emerged from the development of feminism. The studies discuss gaps between the established belief of the binary between masculine and feminine. The critical approach is supported by Richter (1433-1434 as cited in Brizee and Tompkins, 2013) who states that the binary opposition set by Cixous and Derrida can be analyzed as a patriarchal construction which sees the positives of masculinity and the negatives of femininity. As a critical approach that is formed from the study of feminism, gender criticism is heavily influenced by feminist critical thinking which concerns with the behavior of the patriarchal society that treats women as a second gender.

There are some studies which apply the approach of gender studies in literature. The studies discuss gender ambiguity of particular characters in novels. The first study, titled *Retrospective Sex: Rewriting Intersexuality in Jeffrey Eugenides's Middlesex* which was conducted by Carroll (2010), examined the representation of intersexuality/gender ambiguity of a hermaphrodite character, Cal Stephanides, who identifies himself as a male. Carroll found the narration of the story was still based on heteronormative assumptions which reinforced the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality. The second study, titled *The Theme of Androgyny in the Work of Virginia Woolf* done by Slee (2013), discussed the idea of androgyny by Virginia

Woolf through her writing: *Orlando*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *A Room of One's Own*. The study used Butler's Gender Trouble (1999) as the theoretical framework and discussed critically the idea of androgynous to discover the representation of androgynous by Virginia Woolf.

Unlike the previous studies which deal with gender identity and androgynous theme in novels which set on Earth, this present study examines the issue of gender which sets in a different kind of society in another planet. The investigation focuses on the construction of androgyny through the androgynous characters in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) by Ursula K. Le Guin which are presented by a main male character (narrator). Gender criticism approach

proposed by Bressler (2007) is used as the theoretical framework to see the perspective of the narrator towards the androgynous characters. The approach is used to explore the concept of androgyny presented in the novel as a gender identity.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The study is guided by one main research question in order to make the study have more specific elaborations:

- How are androgynous characters presented by the narrator?

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

The aim of the study is:

- To explore the construction of androgyny presented in the novel by the narrator

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

This study is limited to see the perspective presented by the main character (narrator) towards the major androgynous characters in the novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1976) by Ursula K. Le Guin. The descriptions which are presented by the narrator about physical appearance, verbal communication, and some other general descriptions are then analyzed to see the concept of androgyny as a gender identity portrayed in the novel.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Androgynous theme or gender issues in literature is not a new issue. There are some authors who bring these themes into their novel, whether as the main part or as the subpart of the story. For example, a novel entitled *Middlesex* (2007) by Jeffrey Eugenides is a novel which tells a story of a man who has female traits and how he deals with it. The other novel is a novel by Steve

Brenzenoff entitled *Brooklyn, Burning* (2011). The novel is about the main character named Kid who does not identify oneself as a male or a female.

However, the themes of androgynous in the novels above are set in the real world and are made as it happens around the society. Back in 1969, Ursula K. Le Guin brings the androgynous theme in her novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* which is set in another space and time. The setting of the story takes place in a planet called Gethen. It offers the idea where the entire members of the society are androgynous or gender ambiguous. The element which makes this novel interesting is the narrator of the story is a man, named Genly Ai, who comes from a planet which recognizes masculine and feminine as gender identities. The result of the study is expected to enrich the perspective of how people see androgynous as one of gender identities and contribute in the progress of gender studies in literature.

## **1.6 Research Methodology**

The study employed gender criticism approach proposed by Bressler (2007) because it aims at exploring gender in the production of literature and how it affects both the internal and external elements of literature.

### **1.6.1 Data Collection**

The data are in written forms as the textual evidence(s) portrayed in the novel. The novel entitled *The Left Hand of Darkness* 1976 edition is used as the primary source of the study, gender criticism approach proposed by Bressler is used as the theoretical framework and other related data to support the study.

### **1.6.2 Data Analysis**

After the data were collected, then, they were analyzed using several steps, as follows:

1. From *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the major androgynous characters are divided into two categories or types to see how the androgynous characters are constructed.

2. The descriptions of major androgynous characters by the narrator were selected. The descriptions consist of the description about physical appearances, verbal communication/speaking manner, behavior, and general gender description from each major androgynous characters.
3. The categorization and the selection of types and descriptions of major androgynous characters were analyzed to see how the major androgynous characters presented by the narrator.
4. The gathered data were outlined and were analyzed to discover the findings of the study.
5. The findings of the study are discussed using the concept of androgyny by Carlson (1995), gender presentation in Young Adult Fiction by Bucher and Hinton (2010), and Performativity theory by Butler (1990), and other related theories and sources to answer the research question and to make conclusion of the conducted study.

### 1.7 Classification of the Related Terms

There are some terminologies involved in the study. Here are several terms that need to be clarified:

1. **Sex** is a biological classification. (Woodward 2004: 44)
2. **Gender** includes social attributes associated with being a woman or a man in a particular society (Woodward 2004: 44). Gender characteristics can change over time and the characteristics were different across cultures.
3. **Gender Identity** is what a person, and a person who wish to be identified as. Sometimes, one person will refuse being identified as a particular gender in the society.
4. **Feminine/femininity** and **masculine/masculinity** refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman in society. (Burke, Stets and Pirog-Good 1988; Spence 1985)

5. **Androgyny/androgynous** is the blending of masculine and feminine traits.  
(Carlson, 1995)

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

The study was organized into five chapters, as follows:

Chapter I: This chapter presents the general description and the background of the study. It covers the background, research question, aims of the study, the scope of the study, significance of the study, method of analysis, classification of related terms, and the organization of the study.

Chapter II: This chapter discusses theories used as the framework in the study to explicate the issues of Young Adult Fiction, Identity in Young Adult Fiction, Identity, Gender, Androgynous, and Gender Studies.

Chapter III: This chapter consists of research methods and the data presentation of the research. It covers the research questions, the research subject and the context, the research procedure, the data collection, and the data analysis.

Chapter IV: This chapter presents the analysis, findings, and discussions of the present study. From the analysis, it is found that there is two types of androgynous: masculinized and feminized androgyny. There are also differences in the presentation of those two characters by the narrator.

Chapter V: This chapter presents the conclusion of the study which was based from the findings and discussions in the previous chapters. This chapter also presents suggestion for further study on text analysis.