

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Korean idols are popular lately around the world. They appear in many dramas, TV shows, music shows, and also advertisements. It seems that their existence spreads around the world, not only in their own country, South Korea. According to a book published by Korean Culture and Information Service (2011), “The Korean Wave: A New Pop Culture Phenomenon”, the spread of Korean Wave is divided into three steps.

First, Korean wave born was within the period 1997 to early 2000s. There are many countries, such as China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, knowing about Korean. H.O.T was the singer group which well-known in that period, along with the drama called *What is Love*. Second, it was when Korean wave grown up, in the middle of 2000s. During that period, the spreading area reached Japan, China, and Southeast Asia. In this period, the most popular about Korean is the drama. *Winter Sonata* and *Dae Jang Geum* (*Jewel in the Palace*) are the popular dramas in that time. Then the last one is when Korean wave settled, it is after the late 2000s. The most popular is idol group singers. In this period, the Korean wave spreads in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Middle Asia, Europe, and America. (p. 20-33). The development of Korean wave above shows that South Korea becomes popular today through the dramas and music.

Korean wave spreads fast through internet. As the Korean idol group singer becoming so popular now, the Korean agencies use YouTube as the media of promotion. The idol group singer's teaser videos (the short version of the official music video) and their official music videos are uploaded to each agency's account on YouTube. As the spreading of its popularity, people get to know more about Korean idols through some websites that provide and share about Korean dramas, programs, and gossips. One of them is [www.allkpop.com](http://www.allkpop.com). This website provides and shares information related to K-Pop and K-Drama in English. Even though there are many idol groups become popular, the Korean drama (K-Drama) is not totally vanished. For the K-Drama fans from outside Korea, there are many websites that provide streaming option for them, such as DramaFever.com and DramaCrazy.com. Those websites also provide the English subtitle for the dramas. However, the internet has the main role as a bridge between foreign K-Pop fans and South Korea, and it means that distance is no longer a barrier. (p. 46-55).

The popularity of Korean idols spread through the internet as mentioned above. In other word, Korean idols use internet as the media to spread their popularity. The internet used for spreading the news, official music videos, and also the dramas to outside the country itself, South Korea.

Fans, fandom, and fan fiction are interrelated. Because of admiring an idol, people can claim themselves as a fan of an idol. Then they begin to look for some people who have the same interest with the same idol to gather and share everything about it. That is called as fandom. In his

journal, *Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching*, Jenkins mentions that:

“Fandom” is a vehicle for marginalized subcultural groups (women, the young, gays, etc) to pry open space for their cultural concerns within dominant representations; it is a way of appropriating media texts and rereading them in a fashion that serves different interest, a way of transforming mass culture into a popular culture.” (1988, p. 87)

As the writer observe from K-Pop fans, from a group of K-Pop fans in Surabaya called KLOSS, they usually do many things in order to express their love and support towards the idol by collecting the idol’s albums or dramas, merchandise, gathering with other fans from the same interest, reading and writing fan fictions. There are many things that fans can do for their idol. The previous researcher, Vedarari Sustenti (2011) also said that there are many English forums discussing about Korean entertainment. From these forums, people can find news, schedule, or pictures of their favorite idol. In these forums also, people can share anything related to their idol such as fan fictions, fan videos, or fan arts (p. 5). Nevertheless, in this study, the writer only focuses on fan fiction.

There are many definitions of fan fiction since there are also many studies about fan fiction. The definitions are the following:

“Fan fictions in the general sense are texts created as pseudo-sequel to a book, comic book, *anime*, television series or a movie, which is not created by professional writer but amateur authors, i.e. fans. Fan fiction’s characters are usually the same than in the book or film that they are based on; also, the setting might be the same (although not necessarily), and the fan fiction authors usually adds new storylines.” (Viies 2005, p.162-163)

There is also other person that gives definition of fan fiction as the following:

“Over the years, fans have produced an impressive body of fiction about their favorite TV shows, films, novels, video games, and the like. This writing, known as fan fiction, features characters, settings, concepts, and/or plot elements of the writer’s chosen source texts.” (Van Steenhuyse 2011, p. 2)

Rebecca Black also gives her definition of fan fiction. In her journal entitled *Language, Culture, and Identity in Online Fanfiction*, Black stated:

“Fan fiction is writing in which fans use media narratives and pop cultural icons as inspiration for creating their own text. In such text, fans imaginatively extend the original plotline or timeline (such as writing a story about the birth and childhood of Death Vader), create new character (such as introducing a villain who turns out to be the love child of Captain Kirk and an alien leader from a fabricated planet), and/or develop new relationship between characters that are already present in the original source (such as crafting a text around a budding romantic relationship between Harry Potter and Hermione Granger).” (Black 2006, p. 172)

In conclusion, the definition of fan fiction is a text or story written by fans, using their favorite characters from certain TV shows, films, novels, comic, *anime*, and video games.

According to Anik Lachev, someone who is a fan of a show, that person will also involved in the fandom, which then leads them to know and interested in reading or writing fan fiction. (Lachev 2005, p.85) In many countries, fan fiction is popular among fans. It is because fanfiction is like a way to express their feeling, what they want about the idol, and what kind of story that they want their idol undergo. Just like playing games, such as *The Sims*, by writing fanfiction, the author picks the characters, characteristics, plot, and setting by writing it. In other words, fanfiction is like written

games played by fans, either as author or readers. In writing fan fiction, the author usually bases the plots on the original stories, but changes some parts and adds things, such as changing the relationship between the characters. (Patricia da Silva, C & Eliseo BR 2011, p. 1)

Today many young people use internet in their daily life. Reading and writing in the internet also can make communities, which can connecting the writer and the reader (Sefton-Green 2003 p. 79). The authors of fan fiction usually write a fan fiction and post it in their own blogs, fanfiction websites, such as FanFiction.net, asianfanfics.com, Winglin, Livejournal, or even in their own Facebook notes, in order to share their writing and looking for a feedback. Many of those fans consider as popular author. It is proved by the number of comments, like, and subscribers they have. From the posting-feedback activities, the author and the reader can share their idea or thoughts. Sometimes the author make a poll, let the reader choose how they want the story goes in the next chapter or the author make a fan fiction based on a reader's request. This is supported by Viires, as she states in her journal, *Literature in Cyberspace* (2005) that:

“... in fan fiction, readers directly interfere in the writing process with their comment. ... Here, readers can also suggest the possible development of the story and the character they would like to read more about.” (p. 167)

The way fans create a story about their idol with their own idea is interesting, because fans have many different ideas to write fan fiction. That is also the other reason why fan fiction is popular among fans. Because of this, the writer is interested to have a research about fan fiction.

There are many kinds of stories in fan fiction, such as *yaoi/yuri* (homosexual fan fiction), genderswitch, and straight fan fiction. *Yaoi* fan fiction is a fan fiction which contains male-male relationship between two members of a boyband or idol. Nevertheless, this study will focus on genderswitch fan fiction. Genderswitch fan fiction is a fan fiction which contains male-female relationship yet with the same pairing as in *yaoi* fan fiction. The difference between *yaoi* and genderswitch fan fiction is that the gender of one or more of the character in the latter fan fiction changed or switched into female, so that it can be called as male-female relationship yet with the same pairing. While in *yaoi* fan fiction, it is obvious that it is just male-male relationship or homosexual story.

In *yaoi* fan fiction, there are certain couples that usually paired in fan fiction. For those fans who can not bear the homosexual stories yet like the pairing, may choose genderswitch fan fiction. They re-imagine the couples as male-female relationship by switching the gender of the *uke* role. In *yaoi* fan fiction, there is a term to differentiate the role of each person that had been paired. *Seme* is the one who holds a role as the ‘man’ in the relationship, while *uke* is the one who holds a role as ‘female’ in the relationship. Therefore, in genderswitch fan fiction, the character that his gender is being switched is the one who holds as *uke*. In his essay, *Rewriting Gender and Sexuality in English-Language Yaoi Fanfiction*, Tan Bee Kee states:

“Yaoi features the *seme/uke* concept, which comes from Japanese. The *seme* (*semeru* means “to attack” in Japanese) is the character in a yaoi pairing who penetrates the other in homosexual anal sex whereas the *uke* (*ukeru* means to receive and has a connotation of

passivity) is the receptive partner. *Seme* and *uke* roles in pairing are usually fixed. Besides being sexual roles, the term “*seme*” and “*uke*” often reflect corresponding gendered attributes. *Uke* are usually shorter (the “height rule”), prettier and more vulnerable than the *seme*; in other words, presenting physical and emotional attributes socially constructed as feminine or female.” (Kee 2008, p.133)

The interesting point of analysing genderswitch fan fiction is the switching gender in the story, and how the fans, as the author of gender switch fan fiction, describe the one whose gender is being switched as female. It is not easy to write a story and imagine a character, which is actually male, as female in the same time.

In Korean society, according to Elizabeth Choi (1994, p. 192), in the traditional Korea, women are dominated by men. Their lives bound by the seven arbitrary “evils”, that are failure to give birth to a son, disobedience to parents-in-law, talkativeness, stealing, jealousy, adultery, and hereditary disease. Yet it was changed in the Silla and Koryo period. In those two periods, women gain the equality, even in Silla period, there were three women who became the queen and the queen-mother often acted as representative for the young king, take an enormous political influence and power (p. 192). While during the Koryo period, women have interaction with men outside the house was not something wrong. Moreover, during both periods, women have the same position as men in the society.

However, when the Confucianism came during the Yi dynasty period, the society maintained in a strict authoritarian system based on hierarchical order. It means, human relationship was ruled based on social class, sex, generation, and age (p. 192). Precisely, during this period, the equality between men and women did not exist. Choi argues that during Yi

dynasty period, the changes in traditional system came from the country's contract with the Western ideas along with its responses to foreign domination. Because of the current situation, there were many women who joint with other women activists and joined independence efforts. Thus, in post-1945, women gained the equality. They were allowed to participate in education and economy field. Yet it did not mean that women are fully equal to men. The men's dominance was stand still at that time. Hence, women have the double role, as women who work outside, they have to work as hard as men, while as an individual women still had to take care of their family. This situation remains the same until now.

Hence based on the current situation given above, the writer wants to find out about the character of Sungmin as female depicted in the fan fiction. The author of fan fiction must have some points of how the idol's character is like. It can be how the idol, whose gender is switched from male to female, act or what are his behavior that makes him look feminine. In this study, the idol whose gender is being switched from male to female is Sungmin.

Sungmin is a member of Super Junior (South Korea's boy band). He is the one who has the image of pretty boy in Super Junior (from a video *Let's Learn about Sungmin*). He is known for his cuteness that acknowledged by Super Junior fans, Everlasting Friends or ELF. Once in the *Intimate Note* reality show, his fellow members, Eeteuk and Heechul said that he has a delicate and shy personality. They even mention that Sungmin is feminine.

Moreover, in some genderswitch fan fiction, Sungmin is depicted as female, not as his true self which is a male. Because of this situation, the writer interested to do a research about how the fans describe Sungmin character as female in genderswitch fan fiction. The writer argues that there is a transition from masculinity to femininity in genderswitch fan fiction. The transition from masculinity to femininity happened when the real character, the idol, is a male in real life while he is described as female in the genderswitch fan fiction. It is interesting to know whether there is a trace of Sungmin's male characteristic in the female character on genderswitch fan fiction or not. If there is a trace of his masculinity or his male character in the female character, it means that in writing Sungmin's character, there are several characteristics used that is considered as Sungmin's habitude. Nevertheless, if there is no trace of his masculinity in the female character, it means that the author has her or his own concept of woman applied in Sungmin's female character in the fan fiction. That is why this study is worth to discuss.

Because of the popularity of Asian idols, especially Korean idols, this study will also focus on Super Junior fan fiction, especially in KyuMin couple, which stands for Kyuhyun and Sungmin, two members of Super Junior, a Korean boyband. The reason why the writer chose Super Junior and KyuMin for this study is because Super Junior is a well known boyband in Korea. They won Golden Disk Award (2012) on the category of Popular Album Award and Disk Album of the Year (cited from [http://kpopwave.iainsmsn.com/awards/27goldendisk/en/last\\_winner.aspx?#mai](http://kpopwave.iainsmsn.com/awards/27goldendisk/en/last_winner.aspx?#mai)

[n menu](#)) In the other award program, MNet Asia Music Award (2012), Super Junior also won the award on the Best Global Group-Male category (cited from <http://mama.interest.me/history?type=winner2012#>). Another reason that strengthens the first reason is that in asianfanfics.com (AFF), the genderswitch fan fiction mostly about Super Junior.

KyuMin chosen because this pairing is the most popular pairing for fan fiction in asianfanfics.com. As the writer searched in the website, in the latest story with genderswitch label, there were many fan fictions from January to December 2012. The total of fan fictions within that period is 76 genderswitch fan fictions, with 56 Super Junior genderswitch fan fictions and 34 of them is using KyuMin (Kyuhyun-Sungmin) as the pairing in the story. In order to make the study more focus, the writer chooses to focus on one website and one pairing, KyuMin in asianfanfics.com, to this study.

<b>The Most Popular Korean Idol</b>	<b>The Number of Genderswitch Fan Fiction</b>
Super Junior	56
SHINee	10
TVXQ	10

**Table 1:** The most popular Korean Idol and the number of genderswitch fan fiction they have according to AFF

According to Henry Jenkins idea of textual poachers, the work of fan fiction is considered as poach or borrowing the character from the media to re-imagine those characters in their work of fanfiction as the consumption and make their own version of story with the characters that they know from the media. (Jenkins 1992, p. 24).

To support this study, the writer used some references from books and journals. This study will focus on some genderswitch fan fiction in

asianfanfics.com, website which contains many fan fictions about Asian idols. The reason why the writer choose this website is because this website contains only fan fictions about Asian idols because in FFN (FanFiction.net), there many kinds of fan fictions from different interest.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background posted above, the study of genderswitch fanfiction in this thesis is worth to analyze. There is the following statement proposed in this study :

- How do the fans rewrite the character of Sungmin in Super Junior genderswitch fan fiction as a female?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

This study aims at reaching the objective that is expected. The following objective will be answered according to the questions proposed in the statement of the problems. The objective is to find out how the fans, as the fan fiction writers, describe Sungmin's character as female in Super Junior gender switch fan fiction.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The aim of this study is to make people know that there is a kind of genre in fan fiction, that is genderswitch. Because many people only know

about slash/homosexual fan fiction, heterosexual fanfic, and self-inserting fan fiction. Besides, people also know how discourse of gender also emerge in fan fiction which is commonly known as a story to enjoy.

Then, the significance of this study divided into three: for society, for cultural studies, and for the researcher. This study is expected to contribute some benefits, as for the society, this study may help people to be aware and understand that there is a discourse about gender emerges in fan fiction, which is a text that usually being enjoyed by the readers from many ages. Fan fiction emerges in online media which can be accessed by people easily. By the content of gender, even homosexual or heterosexual story, fan fiction is no longer considered as a text that is read just for entertaining the readers, yet can become a discourse of gender and sexuality.

Then, for cultural studies, this study is expected to add more knowledge about fan culture, that fans do not always show their feeling about their idol through some actions; such as attending the concert, fan meeting, make some works like clipping all news related to their idol, buy the albums or CD/DVD original of their idol's drama or reality show, make some fan videos, and any other things, yet fans are also show their feeling through fan fiction, a work of writing with their idols as the main characters. It shows that fans actually do many things as a fan. This is interesting for cultural studies to analyze about fan culture that is obviously popular today. In addition, the English Department of Airlangga University there is a subject called Celebrity Culture. Then it will be interesting to add more

subjects, for example Fan Culture, therefore the student who has interest in fan culture can learn more about it.

The last of the significance of this study is for the researcher. Through this study, the researcher wants to introduce the fans' work of writing which actually not only writing for a light reading in the break time, but also writing fanfiction can be a text which worth to analyze because it contains many aspects, such as culture, gender, and stereotype. The benefit for the researcher is that the researcher can learn more about her interest of fan fiction, fans, and gender in the process of writing this study.

## **1.5 Organization of the Study**

This thesis have five chapters; introduction, literature review, methodology, analysis, and conclusion. Each chapter consists of several topics to explain more about the chapter. First chapter is introduction, which provides the information about the object of the study and short explanation about the whole thesis. This chapter is divided into six subtopics; background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, organization of the study, and definition of key terms.

The next chapter is literature review which contains theoretical framework and review of related studies. The theoretical framework explain about what theory will be used in this study, which are Jenkins textual poachers, Sun Jung's Korean masculinity, and Korean women by

Elizabeth Choi and Marian Lief Palley. Then the related studies subchapter is a review about the previous studies that is similar to the study that the writer takes.

Next, chapter three will discuss about the methods use in this study. There are four topics to discuss in this chapter; research approach to the issue of the study, scope and limitation, technique of data collection, and technique of data analysis. In this chapter those topics will be explained clearly.

The fourth chapter contains analysis of the study. This topic will show the findings and discuss it. The last chapter is conclusion which is the summary of the analysis of the study.

## 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

*Fan fiction* Fan fiction is writing in which fans use media narratives and pop cultural icons as inspiration for creating their own text. In such text, fans imaginatively extend the original plotline or timeline (such as writing a story about the birth and childhood of Death Vader), create new character (such as introducing a villain who turns out to be the love child of Captain Kirk and an alien leader from a fabricated planet), and/or develop new relationship between characters that are already present in the

original source (such as crafting a text around a budding romantic relationship between Harry Potter and Hermione Granger). (Black 2006, p. 172)

*Genderswitch* a male-female relationship which usually has the same pairing as yaoi fanfic yet switching the gender of one or some characters so that the gender of those characters will be different with their gender in reality, it is according to the story in asianfanfics.com

*Seme* a male character in boys' love who is older, taller and more experienced than the *uke*. From "*semeru*" means "to attack, to assault." (Levi, McHarry & Pagliassotti 2008, p. 261)

*Uke* a male character in boys' love who is smaller, shorter and less experienced than the *seme*. (Levi, McHarry & Pagliassotti 2008, p. 262)

*Asianfanfics.com* a website that contains various fan fiction about Asian idols.