

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Gender is not merely about sex. In fact, gender and sex are not the same things. Sex is something that due to the natural genital of human being and it consists of male and female. On the contrary, gender is something that is socially constructed and consists of masculine and feminine. Thus, people's gender does not always depend on their natural sexuality since gender is influenced by the social environment where the people live.

Throughout history, women are considered facing the marginalization of heterosexist culture and patriarchy since in the power relation, the interest of women are subordinated to the interest of men (Jenainati, Groves 4). Not only in power relation, but also in sexuality, the heterosexist culture limits women sexual relationships only on heterosexual. This lesbian as a same sex relationship is excluded from the normal conception of the society.

According to Lesbian and Feminist historians such as Lilian Faderman and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, the specific time when the categorization of sexology created a specific identity of lesbian time when the categorization of sexology created a specific identity lesbian was in the late nineteenth century (Jaffreys 2). As Jaffrey stated that in 1897 through *Sexual Inversion*, Havelock Ellis, a sexologist, created the influential stereotype of lesbian in Britain (3). After the emerging of sexology construction towards identity of homosexuality, the

existence of lesbian is questioned. It also made an impact to the construction of gender and sexuality of women until the present days.

According to Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration (16). The statement above gives the clear explanation about how performativity affects someone's gender. For instance, a woman who acts as man such as brave and tough is considered as masculine. This gender is different from her natural sex in which she is considered as female. As a result, she is identified as the masculine woman. This masculine appearance is later becoming her identity.

That condition as the example above happens a lot in the real life of human being. For instance, the appearance of drag queen and male impersonator in opera or movie, in which those people acts or behaves as the different being from their natural sexual being. As the result, they are identified as feminine man or masculine woman. Therefore, in *Gender Trouble*, Butler also adds that as the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an "act," as it were, that is open to splitting, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of "the natural" that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status (187).

Besides appears in the real world of human being, the representation of gender performativity can also be found in some literary works. In this modern era, especially, there are some novels that that contain the story of performative

gender and identity. One of the novels that contains such story is Sarah Waters' *Tipping the Velvet*.

*Tipping the Velvet* is a novel that is written by Sarah Waters. It is about a girl named Nancy Astley who fell in love when she was eighteen with Kitty Butler, a male impersonator of a comedian show in Canterbury Palace of Varieties. Nan often comes to her show until one day, Kitty Butler realizes that the girl has been her secret admirer. Therefore, she invites Nan to be her dresser and they become a pair of very close friends. Then, the girls decide to move to London. The girls become a lesbian couple and work for a producer named Walter Bliss in a comedian show. Nan also becomes a male impersonator with her famous stage name, Nan King.

However, their happiness is broken because one day, Nan finds Kitty making love with Bliss in their chamber. Devastated and heartbroken, Nan runs away from her life in the music halls and live alone. She sets herself up as a male prostitute (or in the story so-called renter), until one day, she meets Diana Lethaby, a rich woman who then picks her to live together. However, there is an incident with Diana, forces Nancy to leave her. Then she meets a socialist and feminist named Florence and her brother Ralph. With them, Nan finds happiness and falls in love with Florence. Her love for Florence even makes her forget Kitty. In the end of the story, Nan refuses Kitty's offer to come back with her and Nan decided to build her relationship with Florence and she is sure that Florence is the true love she has been waiting.

The interesting story about homosexuality makes this novel won Lambda Literary Award for Lesbian Fiction in May 28 2000. Sets in Victorian era, Waters writes the love story of Nan Astley in a very beautiful language. The way she describes the performative gender of Nan Astley is also extraordinary so that the reader could understand why she experiences the transition of her gender identity.

From here, the writer is interested in analyzing the quality of Nan Astley and Kitty Butler's love story. Using the theory of lesbian continuum by Adrienne Rich, the lesbian relationship of Nan Astley and Kitty Butler is going to be analyzed.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of the study, the writer states the statement of the problem as:

How is the construction of lesbian continuum illustrated in the relationship of Nan Astley and Kitty Butler in *Tipping the Velvet*?

## **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

Based on the statement of the problem, the objective of the study is:

To uncover the lesbian continuum of Nan Astley and Kitty Butler's in *Tipping the Velvet*.

## **1.4. Scope and Limitations**

This study points on the issue of lesbian continuum that appears in literary work. The object of this thesis is a novel by Sarah Waters, *Tipping the Velvet*; a story about a lesbian woman who lives in the nineteenth century named Nan Astley or Nan King who seeks for true love. Although Nan was born as a girl, her social environment influences her gender to be a masculine woman and happens to be the 'man' in her every relationship. Since the entire novel contains of Nan's feeling and thought as the main character, the writer will focus only on Nan's character and her affair with her first love Kitty Butler. This relationship is chosen since it has many influences toward Nan Astley's life as a lesbian. Using the concept of lesbian continuum by Adrienne Rich, the lesbian relationship through the relationship of Nan and Kitty's is going to be analyzed. Other characters, that are only become Nan's co-characters, are not included as the object of analysis.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

What the writer expects from this thesis is; it can help the reader to understand the concept of lesbian continuum that is represented in *Tipping the Velvet*. This story of a lesbian couple is interesting since the drag king of the main role, Nan Astley influence the quality of her love relationship with Kitty Butler. Through this analysis, the writer hopes that the reader will get the profound comprehension about performativity both in the real life and in literary work as the product of social environment. In other words, this thesis is expected to help the reader seeing the issue of lesbian relationship that is related to someone's identity.

## 1.6. Theoretical Background

This study would be focus on the relationship between Nancy and Kitty, on how they illustrate the bound between them, both physical and psychological. This makes their relation even stronger, not only for desire of sexual intercourse, but also for a strong emotional relationship. Concerning with that issue, the theory that the writer is going to use for academic analysis is the lesbian continuum by Adrienne Rich. As she wrote in her essay that lesbian continuum is not as simple as desire intercourse or sexual experience, but it can embrace wider forms of women intimacy and intensity (648). The forms of women intimacy and intensity could be many things as she stated:

“If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support if we can also hear in it such associations as marriage resistance”

(648-9)

Moreover, there is a double-life characteristic which appears in the emergence of lesbian continuum. This is a condition where women share their life both become as heterosexual women and also as lesbians (Rich 659). Within the double-life experience, woman will engaged to both sentimental and erotic friendships. These friendships makes them keeping woman with woman relationship.

## 1.7. Methods of the Study

Close reading is the most appropriate and the most important method in order to do the analysis, because the essential source comes from the novel. After

that, the writer tries to seek out how the lesbian continuum being performed by the main characters; Nancy and Kitty. Besides of Nancy and Kitty are the main character of the novel, the main intention of the writer chooses these two, because their story determines the plot of the novel. The fact that Nancy and Kitty have been in love since the very first plot of the novel makes the plot even complicated and even more interesting. Besides, the story is not as simple as lesbian relationship; these two main characters invite the reader to be drawn more deep into their strong bound. Therefore, the focus of analysis is on those two main characters. Last but not least, the writer makes the data classification and selects the data that can be relevant with this thesis, which are lesbian relationship. Then, the data will be analyzed using the theory of lesbian continuum by Adrienne Rich.

Also, to help the analysis even smoothly, the writer would seek some information through library research including the literary works discussed, some books, and other references that of course, relevant to this study. Source from internet would be included in order to seek from international level of academic journals that have been done by precious researchers.

### **1.8. Definition of Key Terms**

**Gender** : A social identity of a person which does not depend on his or her natural sex being.

**Male Impersonator (Drag King)** : It is a specific act that requires artists to act and dress like men. This act usually done by women, due to the means of this act is for comedy.

**Identity** : A thing that is identical with someone and makes him or she becomes different from any other person.

**Lesbian** : A woman who has sexual and emotional interest to any other woman rather than a man.

# **CHAPTER II**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**