CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the study, the statements of the study, the objective of the study, the limitation of the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Narratology refers to both the theory and the study of narrative and narrative structure and the ways that these affect our perception (Phelan, 2010). Narratology is applied retrospectively as well to work predating its coinage. Its theoretical lineage is traceable to Aristotle (*Poetics*) but modern narratology is agreed to have begun with the Russian Formalists, particularly Vladimir Propp (1928).

Feminist narratology began in the mid-1980s, as its name suggests, from within the domain of narratology. It was from within the midst of these debates and changes that the concept of feminist narratology emerged with Lanser's seminal paper (1986) bearing that name. Feminist narratology cannot be understood as a single, unified entity. The original concept was forged from two distinctive fields and the subsequent studies have been described as eclectic (Mezei, 1996). However, at this point in its development, the multiplicity it might embrace is more expansive and increasingly necessary. In this pluralistic re-envisioning, feminist narratology has become thoroughly postmodern, and in line with the postmodern feminist theory projected by Fraser and Nicholson (1990) (Page, 2006). They describe this as

comparativist rather than universalizing, attuned to changes and contrasts rather than covering laws, and which would replace unitary notions of woman and feminine gender identity with plural and complexly constructed conceptions of social identity, treating gender as one relevant strand amongst others. However, despite the political motivation that impels such multiplicity, this must also guard against the fragmented separatism that ignores possible points of commonality between groups (Page, 2006). Like the metaphor of a tapestry used by Fraser and Nicholson (1990), postmodern feminist narratology is made up of many strands which may not only be differently coloured but also have points at which they cross and combine. It is only as they are woven together that the overall picture of feminist narratology can begin to be formed (Page, 2006).

Common to all of these is the assumption that female alternatives are characterized by narrative difference from the 'male plot', and that these differences are manifest in the sequential ordering of the narrative patterns. This results in a binary opposition between the male and the female alternatives. For that reason, Page argues for a more comprehensive approach to feminist narratology that not only looks beyond its existing boundaries in terms of data, theory and discipline but also brings this multiplicity together in the belief that synthesis can be productive.

In 2006, Ruth E. Page proposed a feminist narratology theory derived from postmodernism theory. Hence, the parts of feminist narratology brought together in her book are diverse in terms of their disciplinary orientation and subject matter,

ranging across media, historical period and theoretical terrain. According to Page, although her analysis consistently underpins the use of narrative theory and the understanding of gender throughout the study, feminist narratology, which she calls as a unifying principle, also opens up the possibility of multiple variations. Page applies, throughout her research, flexible categories over fixed sets and has refined existing models by adding to the narratological distinctions that already exist. This reworking of narrative theory includes the work of Robert Longacre's (1983) anatomy of plot enhanced by its alignment with the more fluid and plural framework of Michael Hoey's culturally popular predictable patterns (2001) for literary texts.

According to Longacre's outline, Peak marking should predictably occur in an episode-like unit that corresponds to the Climax or Denouement in the notional structure of plot (Longacre, 1983 cited in Page). This marking includes rhetorical underlining, concentration of participants, heightened vividness, change of pace and change of vantage point or orientation. Then, Hoey's work on written discourse analysis provides a useful comparison with Longacre's structuralist approach.

Combined with Longacre's theory, Hoey's model is a useful starting point both for narratological criticism and for reflecting on narratology itself. Hoey's analysis is wide ranging and attempts to account for a variety of text types. The aspect of his research used by Page is what he describes as culturally popular patterns of organization. Hoey points to the more specific set of expectations a reader might have as a more generalized set of expectations which are shared across a range of

texts. These patterns act as a kind of template for the reader, and follow patterns that occur so often as to become predictable. The patterns that Hoey goes on to describe such are Problem-Solution, Goal-Achievement, and Desire-Arousal are akin to the action structures that readers draw on when processing narrative (Giora and Shen, 1994 cited in Page) and parallel aspects of structuralist plot models. It provides the means by which the analyst may discuss particular texts, for example, considering what situations are constructed and understood as 'problematic', which participants are able to articulate desires, achieve goals, solve problems and so on. Perhaps more generally, a feminist perspective might take Hoey's observation that certain patterns occur with great frequency while others do not and then ask why this might be so and what this might reflect about the ideological values in a given culture.

In order to apply the theory, this study uses a novel as the corpus to be analyzed. The novel is entitled *Lady Susan* by Jane Austen. *Lady Susan* tells a fiction story of a woman deceiving people around them to make a fortune for herself, creating drama just for the excitement. This novel is an epistolary novel which uses letters to tell the narrative. The reason why letters are perfect for this is because letters are personal in a way that is different than the ordinary prose form; an author delves into their characters' minds and motivates the letters from there.

This novel has a fascinating main character, a woman regarded as the most accomplished coquette in England who only strives after her own happiness. Lady Susan has an agenda that is clear in every single letter she writes. The reason that this

character is crucially important is that Austen allows for a female character to be utterly despicable while also charmingly attractive when usually this role is laid aside for men, for example Mr. Wickham in *Pride & Prejudice*. He is a charmer but has a character that is rotten to the core, taking advantage of young women for his own gain. Austen allows these characteristics to exist in both men and women, rather than uplifting women as paragons of virtue and men as corrupt by nature. Reginald de Courcy is a character very similar to Elizabeth Bennet. Both have their prejudices set and then completely overturned, only that in Reginald's case he is deceived and has to change his mind again. Austen writes all of her characters in this novel as human, which means that may they be male or female, they still have both good and bad sides in themselves. For example, Mrs. Vernon, one of the kindest characters in *Lady Susan*, is still a gossiping woman with very strong prejudices against a woman she knows nothing off. Similarly, Lady Susan isn't alone in her ways but has friends with similar interests. Not a single character in this novel is "perfect" or, necessarily, deserving of praise.

The letters also allow Jane Austen to get her message across. What *Lady Susan* shows is how much people depend on talking to each other about each other in order to have something to do. Jane Austen was able to capture the emptiness and boredom that was pervasive in the higher and middle classes and she ironically criticises this by filling this emptiness with anticipation for balls, gossip after the balls, marriage plotting and reputation breaking. *Lady Susan* is all about this emptiness which the eponymous main character fills by playing with others.

As the corpus, *Lady Susan* by Jane Austen is considered by other researchers as one of feminist stories, this research is aimed to examine and analyze what kind of feminist narratology techniques are used by the writer to be able to deliver her notion regarding the point of view of gender.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

There is a research question which is going to be discussed in this study:

How are feminist values of the postmodern feminist narratology technique portrayed in *Lady Susan* by Jane Austen?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are to investigate feminist narratology techniques used in *Lady Susan* by Jane Austen in order to see narrative forms and functions used by Jane Austen to establish feminist authority and deconstruct the male consciousness, to study narrative structures and strategies in the context of cultural constructions of gender, to draw attention to the work of women authors that had been neglected in earlier studies, and to help contribute to the study of feminist narratology, developments of which has only been over the last three decades

1.4 Limitation of the Study

This study will discuss about the feminist narratology techniques used in Jane Austen's *Lady Susan* by elaborating the aspects of the writer's narrative strategies

and skills in using narrative forms and patterns, particularly in terms of the plot structure.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that the study can help the reader examine and analyze feminist narratology techniques used by a writer from United Kingdom. The readers hopefully can get a better understanding about what strategies and skills in writing narrative literature are used in order to establish feminist authority and deconstruct the male consciousness. Thus, the readers can understand more about how the female writer composed their stories to spread her notion.