

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In Indonesian society, women are commonly defined as those who have beauty in terms of physical appearances regardless the fact that all women are beautiful no matter how and no matter what. Subsequently, there appears a standard to classify whether or not a woman can be regarded as beautiful; she should have weight no more than 50 kilograms, long hair, bright skin, 5 cm smile and so on and so forth. That is why many women who do not fulfill the standard desperately work hard to achieve the standard of beauty that is actually created by men. At the end, it might be said that women here experience something injustice in their life.

In relation to the standard of beauty created by men above, the term *beautiful* itself becomes ambiguous in meaning. The word *beautiful* varies from one country to another depending on the perspective of the people who try to define what *beautiful* actually is. Here, women again become the victims of something which is created by men in the society. In addition, women do not only become the victims but they are also confused with anything related to what is regarded as beautiful. Therefore, what is called as *beautiful* is actually subjective since as mentioned before, the term *beautiful* itself carries ambiguous meaning.

The standard of beauty, on the other hand, is merely one of the many problems faced in women's life. Actually, there are still many problems of life faced by women in the society. For instance, in Indonesia, women generally

cannot get an education as high as men can, wives cannot be carrier women if their husbands do not let them to be, young girls are usually not allowed to drive vehicles by themselves, and many more. However, the most significant injustice experienced by women in all over the world seems to be that subjective thing called *beautiful*, and this is what the study is all about; it investigates the stereotypes of women in terms of physical appearances portrayed in the novel *Beauty Case*.

The reason why this study takes novel as the subject of the study is because novel is quite representative in portraying women in terms of their physical appearances and any other phenomena exist in a society. Furthermore, the problematic side of being human is usually expressed in literary works such as poems, short stories, novels, etc. As anonymous (year unknown) states, literature is a verbal art, which explore what it means to be human from the inside. And Lye (1997) asserts that art is not eternal and timeless. Art, whether it is in the forms of literature, film, or theater, is situated, written and read at particular times. In fact, whenever the literature comes from, the variety of human experience with its problems will arise and make us realize that such problems are close with our daily life. With that in mind, any forms of injustice towards women could then be reflected in literary works, and the issue of stereotypes of women's physical appearance could automatically be portrayed through literary works, in this case novel.

In accordance with the topic of the study that is the stereotypes of women's physical appearance portrayed in the novel *Beauty Case*, feminist literary criticism is employed in this study. Since feminism views that men and

women are equal to each other and so far fights for fair rights between men and women, it is then safe to say that feminist literary criticism is beneficial to criticize a literary work such as a novel. Hence, in this study, the writer is interested in studying the issue of stereotypes of women's physical appearance portrayed in the novel *Beauty Case* by adopting feminist literary criticism as the analytical framework of the study. In addition, the novel that becomes the subject of this study is written by a female author named Icha Rahmanti. It is her second novel published in year 2005. The central issue in the novel is about women and beauty that makes the novel becomes quite booming in Indonesia.

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

To reveal the portrait of stereotypes of women's physical appearance in the novel *Beauty Case* written by Icha Rahmanti, the study employs liberal feminist literary theory. The reason is because the theory wants to liberate women from an oppressive gender role that is from the roles which are used as reasons to give lower positions, or not at all, to women both in academy and society (Tong 1998). Moreover, Tong (1998) continues that in the view of liberal feminists, gender equality forces us to make rules of game which are fair and to assure that neither men nor women will be systematically disadvantaged. With that in mind, by adopting liberal feminist theory to analyze Icha Rahmanti's novel *Beauty Case*, the study should reveal how the novel positions women characters in it which will then show how women are portrayed in the novel in many aspects, including in how their physical appearances are portrayed, if not stereotyped.

Furthermore, there are several reasons why the study takes Icha Rahmanti's novel instead of the other popular authors' novel as the subject of the study. The first reason is because Icha Rahmanti is famous for her bravery in writing; This book is really fun to read, courageous, and the most important thing is truly inspiration for the girls on how to be an elegant smart female (Tommy Cokro, 2005). In other words, she is never afraid to express anything that she has in mind into her writing although, as a matter of fact, it is not in accordance with Indonesian traditional norms and values. Another reason is because Icha Rahmanti's works are all adults-oriented and almost all of her works contain the element of feminist.

Meanwhile, the study takes Icha Rahmanti's novel entitled *Beauty Case* instead of her other works is because the novel *Beauty Case* is her Second-published novel. In addition, the story of the novel itself is quite controversial in the sense that it contains many elements of beauty that becomes a public issue when it was published by 2005. Thus, the novel *Beauty Case* is interesting to read and is challenging to study.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The research is an analysis on Icha Rahmanti's novel entitled *Beauty Case*. It focuses on the issue of physical appearances especially concerning with beautifulness.

1.4. Research Questions

In concluding the analysis, the following question was employed:

How is beautifulness, as the issue of physical appearances, developed in the novel?

1.5. Objectives of the Research

Based on the background and the research question above, this research was aimed at finding out how beautifulness as the physical appearances issue is developed in the novel.

1.6. Research Procedure

The research conducted based on descriptive method. As Nazir (1983) states that a descriptive method is a method used in the researches of an object, a set of condition, a system of thought, and an event which takes place at the present moment. It describes and gives the example related to the research procedure, and also present the data the way they are.

In conducting the research, these are following steps in analyzing the data:

1. Reading the novel of *Beauty Case* written by Icha Rahmanti repeatedly in order to fully understand the issue of body image presented in the novel.
2. Taking notes of the sentences related to the issue of body image in the novel and analyzing them. Those sentences were placed into a table in order to categorize them based on acceptable and unacceptable physical appearances and then were analyzed through the theory of identity and difference.

3. Analyzing the construction of physical appearances developed in the novel by means of Phelan's narrative theory.
4. The research was summed up by discussing the societal factors that might cause being beautiful is an advantage or disadvantage.

1.7 Clarification of Key Terms

- **Novel** (from French *nouvelle*, "new") is an extended fictional narrative in prose. Novel is 'a fictions prose narrative or tale of considerable length in which characters and actions representative of the real life of past or present tomes are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity' (Oxford English Dictionary).
- **Physical appearance** is the way one's body looks or seems to other people.
- **Liberal feminism** refers to a belief maintaining that men and women are alike in important respect and that women should have the same economic, political, professional and civic opportunities and rights as men have (Wood 1994).
- **Patriarchy** refers to systems of male ideology and social structures that were created by masculine individuals (Wood 1994).

1.8 Organization of the Paper

Chapter I (Introduction)

This chapter contains Background of the Study, Reasons for Choosing the Topic, Scope of the Study, Research Questions, Objectives of the Research, Research Procedure, Clarification of Key Terms and Organization of the Paper.

Chapter II (Theoretical Foundation)

This chapter describes the theory provided to support the analysis and also various literatures that have to do with the analysis of the study.

Chapter III (Data Analysis and Discussion)

This chapter consists of discussions of the study.

Chapter IV (Conclusions and Suggestions)

This chapter describes the conclusions and suggestions of the research findings.

