

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, the reasons for choosing the topic being analyzed in the study, the scope of the study, the question raises in the study, the aim of the study, research method, research procedures, clarification of the key terms and finally the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Thirty-three thousand American women told researchers that they would rather lose ten to fifteen pounds than achieve any other goal...More women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than we have ever had before; but in terms of how we feel about ourselves physically, we may actually be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers. (Naomi Wolf, 2002:10)

Since 1990s, media such as magazine and television define the ideal body of women which is “the youthful body of the sylph, personified by the model Kate Moss” (Carson in Gamble 2001:118). This media description on women’s slenderness puts pressure on women. Therefore, it is not surprising, if women obsessed on being thin since it becomes the ideal concept of beauty as it is mentioned in the excerpt above. Later on, this idea makes another issue about eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia in order to get an ideal body emerged.

Women are always associated with slender body. This idea is constructed by the society related to the gender difference between men and women, as it is

stated by Gayle Rubin (cited in Prabasmoro 2006) that the oppression towards women regarding their body in the patriarchal culture is because of gender or sex distinction. Sex is considered as biologically determined while gender is socially constructed. Therefore, women and men are associated with the characteristic such as feminine and masculine.

In relation to the idea above, that is the reason why the idea of slenderness is always associated with feminine characteristic which women should possess. It is because “the slender body is a gendered body for the subject position of the slender body is female” (Bordo cited in Barker, 2000:253). She also emphasizes that “slenderness is a contemporary ideal for female attractiveness so that girls and women are culturally more prone to eating disorder than men” (2000:253). Thus, women suffer from eating disorder in order to achieve the ideal body because slender women are considered as beautiful and attractive.

This subject around women’s body becomes one of the major issues for the feminist critics, especially in the third wave of feminism which concerns with the representation of women’s body in particular culture such as popular culture. Naomi Wolf (2002) in her book *The Beauty Myth* mentions that women are confronted with the idealized concept of female beauty which is political. It is believed as one of the ways to maintain the patriarchal system. The concept of beauty today is also the remaining ideology to control women by male-dominated culture, since women today have the same access as men to the professional careers, education and many other fields.

Therefore, it is an interesting study to conduct, especially in the field of literary studies because literary works such as novel usually reflects the condition of the society. Thus, in analyzing the issue of female body image in the particular culture, this study will be framed within the feminism theory which interrelated to the popular culture. The novel analyzed in this study is a young adult novel which portrays female concept of beauty in terms of body image entitled *Life in the Fat Lane* written by Cherie Bennett.

1.2 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

This study is conducted by the writer for some reasons. Firstly, it is because the subject of the study is young adult literature which “portrays adolescents negotiating the social and sexual standards of the dominant culture” (Younger, 2009). The concept of beauty is one of the subject matter that is often portrayed in this literary genre. Therefore it is interesting to study a novel *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett as one of the young adult novels with an issue about body image as the concept of beauty for women. Secondly, this novel offers an interesting subject to be analyzed of how women are subconsciously oppressed by the society to have an ideal body. This concept of beauty, then, becomes a way to oppress the women (Wolf, 2002). Along with this idea, it is interesting to conduct a study of this novel which tries to reveal the portrayal of women in terms of industrial body image.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The research provides an analysis of the portrayal of women in terms of industrial body image. The term body image in this study is related to the concept of beauty in the novel. The study will be limited to analyzing this portrayal of women in the novel entitled *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett.

1.4 Research Question

This study is guided by the general question as follows:

How do women portray themselves in terms of industrial body image?

To be more specific in this study, the term *body image* is related to the concept of beauty in the novel *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett.

1.5 The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to draw the portrayal of women in terms of industrial body image related to the concept of beauty in the novel *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett.

1.6 Research Method

In this study the qualitative approach is chosen to analyze the text, because of its capacity in examining the hidden information, so that it will give the information more detail compare to quantitative approach. It is in line with the

idea stated by Bodgan and Taylor (cited in Wiratmo and Gifari 2008) that qualitative method is a research procedure which results in descriptive data in the form of written words or spoken from people or behavior that can be observed.

The qualitative data is chosen because the writer believes that it is the most appropriate method to conduct in this study about portrayal of women. As Miles and Huberman (1987:15) state that:

Qualitative data is in the form of words rather than numbers, they are attractive and source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations

So, from the explanation above this qualitative data is able to describe the data about portrayal of women in terms of industrial body image in the novel in more detail because of its capability in obtaining rich explanations.

This study also uses qualitative method as it applies in many feminism researches. It is because qualitative method is considered as multi-methods which involve a certain relevant social phenomenon related to the research. For instance in the study of literary works which involves the author and the culture of the works (Ratna, 2004). In this case the portrayal of women in terms of industrial body image is closely related to the concept of beauty that is constructed in the popular culture as the result of the Industrialization.

Another method applied in this study is a descriptive method which is useful in describing the facts and phenomenon (Ratna, 2004). Thus, descriptive method is employed for the purpose of the study in describing the existing phenomenon in the text.

Finally, the method used in this study is an approach of feminist literary criticism. According to Goodman (cited in Sofia, 2009:20) that feminist literary criticism is an “academic approach in literary studies which apply feminist theory and thought in analyzing the literary texts”. Hence, this criticism is employed to analyze how women are portrayed in terms of industrial body image in the novel based on the feminist theories.

1.7 Research Procedures

The technique of this research will engage through the following steps: firstly, reading the female images in the novel entitled *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett. Secondly, making the table of content analysis which describes the character’s encounters with the other characters, events or ideas in the novel about the issue occurs in the novel. The purpose of making this table analysis is to analyze and give textual evidences which are needed for the research. After that, analyzing the textual evidences and presenting the data of analysis framed by the related theories to answer the research question. Lastly, discussing the findings and drawing conclusions.

1.8 Clarification of the Key Terms

1. Concept: An idea or a principle that is connected with something. (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2000). In this study the term concept relates to the idea that the characters of the novel have in mind about the beauty in the text.

2. Beauty: the quality of being pleasing to the senses or to the mind. (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000). In this study the term beauty refers to the physical appearance of the characters in the novel.

3. Body image: one's personal perception and judgment of the size, shape, weight, and any other aspect of her body that relates to body appearance (Maine and Kelly 2005:4). In this study, this term refers to women's perception towards their body appearance from the characters point of view in the novel *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett.

4. Industrial Body Image: one's personal perception and judgment over her body appearance that has been influenced and defined by the industry. In this study, this term is related to the issue in the novel *Life in the Fat Lane* by Cherie Bennett that the writer tries to reveal.

5. Feminist literary criticism: feminist literary criticism is an academic approach in literary studies which applies feminist thoughts in analyzing the text (Goodman cited in Sofia, 2009:20). In this study, the term feminist literary criticism is related to the feminist thoughts which concern with women's right, interests and issues such as discrimination, stereotyping, oppression and patriarchy as it appears in the novel.

1.9 Organization of the Paper

The paper of the study will be organized into five chapters as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction; This chapter contains the background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, scope of the study, research question, aim of

the study, research method, research procedures, clarification of the key terms, and also the organization of the paper.

Chapter II: Theoretical Foundation; this chapter contains an explanation the theoretical framework that is relevant to the present study. The feminism literary criticism is employed to analyze the text.

Chapter III: Research Methodology; this chapter contains the methods of how to analyze the data provided. The approach used will be the qualitative and descriptive methods.

Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion; this chapter contains the result of the study after conducting the research and obtaining the necessary data that is depicted including the analysis of the data using the theoretical framework.

Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions; this chapter contains the researcher interpretations of the research finding in a form of conclusions and suggestions.