

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

When people talk about the ideal, they will have different criteria in deciding what ideal is. Some will consider physical appearance as the first criteria for being ideal. Some others might say that the intellectual aspect is first criteria for being ideal.

The differences in defining how someone is perceived as an ideal man/woman make it possible to have different types of what constitutes ideal. Based on Longman dictionary (2001) idealized derives from the word idealize which means to imagine or represent something or someone as being perfect or better than they really are. From the definition, it can be said that somebody becomes ideal when other people think that he or she is perfect than others. For example, celebrities are always considered to be perfect than others.

The ideal can be found anywhere. Media has a big role in spreading out the idea of idealization. With the help of the media, society has influenced what is perceived as the ideal body figure, shaping the way adolescent females feel about their own bodies (Freedman, 1984, as cited by Bissell,

2002). On television, for example, there are so many advertisements which show one similar portrayal of a family. Another example, in girls' magazine, lots of tips are given in making a girl more beautiful. Magazines in different societies depict the ideal female body differently. For example, Latin magazines portray the ideal body as more curvaceous when compared with American magazines. Meanwhile, Australian magazines portray the ideal body as more voluptuous when compared to Japanese magazines. Therefore, we can infer how a man or woman is ideal from what we see in the media.

This paper is aimed at analyzing how social constructs ideal. Through this kind of exposure, people, especially teenagers, become imitations of the ideal. For example, when teenagers want to imitate Agnes Monica's "Harajuku" style, they will then buy similar clothes, shoes, and accessories. To do this they will need lots of money. Therefore, it can be said the idealization is a commodity. We do not only find this phenomenon in media but also in literature. In this research, I investigate "Me versus High Heels". It is a teen literature written by Maria Ardelia.

1.2 Reason for Choosing The Topic

The study about children and teenage fiction is not considered serious and scientific. It is something trivial. The experts even say so. They think that

studying them is just like handling kids who are considered “small” by adults. (Sarumpaet, 2003, as cited in Safrina, 2006)

Children and teenage fiction, just like another fiction, can be studied and explored by using various perspectives and theories. Moreover, children and teenager fiction might play an important role in influencing children and teenagers as the readers than another common fiction for the adults. Children and teenager fiction, according to Hunt (1994) as cited in Safrina (2006), is a powerful fiction, it cannot be neutral, or trivial because children and teenage fictions are often written by adults who position themselves as children and teenagers.

Children and teenager fiction are basically different because they have different readers. Teenagers have authority in choosing and buying their books which they like. On the other hand, parents usually choose books which they think good for their children. Teenagers relatively do not depend on their parents' choice. They can buy what they want.

The novel “Me versus High Heels” is a teenager literature. Teenager literature or teenage fiction is fiction that relates to young people in the 13-17 age groups, dealing with everyday life of teenagers. Relationship is a huge topic within this group.

Based on Literature for Today's Young Adults, Nilsen and Donelsen, as cited in Safrina (2006), mentioned seven characteristics of teen lit; 1) teen-lit writer who write by using teenagers perspective, parents who don't play a role so that teenagers succeed by using their own ways, 2) teen-lit tends to be fast, 3) teen-lit includes various genres and topics, 4) teen-lit involves characters from different culture and ethnics, 5) teen-lit generally contains optimism, there are characters who make great effort in order to reach their goals, (7) novels which present emotional aspect successfully which is considered important by teenagers.

"Me versus High Heels" novel tells about a girl who admires a boy named Arnold. Arnold, therefore, becomes a representation of idealized boy in the text because he was adored by two different types of girls. Through this novel the researcher attempts to reconstruct an idealized boy for teenage girls.

1.3 Research Question

This study is expected to answer the following questions:

1. How does a boy become idealized in the novel?
2. What meanings can be derived from the ideal representations?

1.4 Aim of Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the representation of an ideal boy in a novel and to discuss and analyze the meanings which might underlie the idealized representation.

1.5 Research Method

In this paper, the novel would be analyzed by employing representation theory in which it is in the link between concept and language which then facilitates us to refer to the real world of objects, people or events or indeed to imaginary worlds, fictional objects, people and events.

Using qualitative approach as the basic framework of this study, the descriptive (Nazir,1998) used to make descriptions in which in the textual evidences are sketched systematically, factually and accurately. The result of reading reveals textual evidences presented in the form of categories, which then analyzed based on their form, content, and the context they occur.

According to Ratna (2004, p.46) a qualitative research is a research that use interpretation in a descriptive method. Meanwhile, descriptive method is the method to find tendency, facts and situations accurately and systematically (Riyanto, 2001, p.23).

To make this study more comprehensive and reliable, the novel as the main source of research is completed by several related sources from other books and on-line articles.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

In order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding some terms used in this chapter are clarified as follows:

1. Based on Oxford dictionary (1995), ideal is an idea or standard that seems perfect, and worth trying to achieve or obtain.
2. To Idealize is to consider or represent somebody or something as being perfect or better than they really are (Oxford Dictionary 1995)
3. Based on The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary representation is to represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination; to place a likeness of it before us in our mind or in the senses.
4. Based on The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary to represent also means to symbolize, stand for, to be a specimen of, or to substitute for.
5. According to Hall (1997) representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

Chapter I: Introduction

In this section the researcher explains the background of the study. It includes background, reason for choosing the topic, research question, aim of study, research method, and clarification of terms and organization of the paper.

Chapter II: Theoretical Foundation

This section provides the theoretical foundation related the study

Chapter III: Data Presentation

This chapter presents research procedure and data presentation.

Chapter IV: Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher presents analyses and discusses the data.

Chapter V: Conclusions and suggestions

In the last chapter, from the discussions in the previous chapter, the researcher draws some conclusions and some suggestions for further research.