
Beauty Myth in Fat Chance, Charlie Vega: A Novel by Crystal Maldonado

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Abstract

This study is entitled “ Beauty Myth in Fat Chance, Charlie Vega novel by Chrystal Maldonado”. This study used one of the literatures objects that was novel entitle Fat Chance, Charlie Vega. This novel described how the beauty concept was portrayed and how the main character rejected the beauty myth concept that judged women based on their appearance. This study used Naomi Wolf theory in her book The Beauty Myth which revealed how beauty myth oppressed women and encouraged women to not fall in beauty myth. The purposes of this study were to find out what the definition of beauty in the novel was and to find out how the character inside the novel rejected the beauty standard inside the novel. Furthermore, to interpret this study, the writer used qualitative data as the approach of the study which the date was taken from dialogues and narratives inside the novel. The results of this study shared the beauty concept oppressed women that women have to be slim to be called beautiful and another result showed how character rejected the beauty standard by doing self-love. In addition, the main character realized as time goes by that beauty was not always defined as slim. Self-love and fat-acceptance were the keys for women to feel beautiful.

Keywords: *beauty myth, fat-acceptance, qualitative.*

A. Introduction

Psychoanalysis is a theory that discusses the nature and development of human personality and aims to analyze characters and plots in literature. Abrams (1999) states that psychological criticism in literature deals with a work of literature primarily as an expression, in an indirect and fictional form, or the state of mind and the structure of the author’s personality. Furthermore, Corey (2008) also points out that psychoanalysis aims to reshape the structures of individual characters through the reconstruction and discussion of past experiences and the analysis and reinterpretation of those experiences. However, it is difficult to achieve because the emergence into consciousness is extremely painful when ideas and memories result in extremely high anxiety levels, particularly in existence.

This study analyzes *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig, published on August 13, 2020. The writer chose this novel because the author sees many moral messages

that can be taken in a work of fiction and many examples of quotes referring to the existential crisis in *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig (2020). After all, in this novel, there are many moral messages in life. The phenomena that occur in this novel are fascinating because they are spiced with non-mainstream fiction. In addition, this novel also provides a unique reading experience where in a work of fiction, readers can also take stories that are becoming self-help so that the reader can add insight and how the reader thinks about something. Moreover, *The Midnight Library* won the Goodreads Choice Award for Best Fiction Category 2020. Besides, Matt Haig is an English novelist and journalist who wrote fiction and non-fiction for children and adults in the speculative fiction genre. He also won many international awards, including; Nestle Children's Book Prize, Blue Peter Book Award, and Sefton Super Reads. After the explanation above, the writer is interested in analyzing existential crisis in *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig to be the title of the thesis entitled "Existential Crisis in Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library* Novel".

B. Method

In this study, the writer used qualitative data as the approach to present the data that the writer analysis. According to Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009) qualitative data was a method to interpret the data using words based on the phenomena in our surrounding. This qualitative approach was used to answer the statements which were how is the concept of beauty dispatched in *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega*? And how does the main character reject the concept of beauty in *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega*? The data was taken from novel. Novel is book full of words rather than numbers. In this study, writer used the data source which was taken from dialogues and narratives in *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega* novel by Crystal Maldonado. In addition, to support the data source, the writer used journal articles, books, and other internet sources. To collect the data, the writer read the novel repeatedly more than five times while marking the quotations from dialogues and narratives that suit the issue. Then, the writer identified the issue which was found in the novel. After that, the writer searched the theory which related to the issue. Last, the writer interpreted the issue in essay form. After finding the data, the writer analysed the data, then used qualitative-descriptive method to present the issue found in *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega* novel by Crystal Maldonado according to Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* theory.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Representation of Beauty Myth

The beauty myth is different from one country to another but the only same thing about the concept of beauty is about physical appearance. Generally, the definition of beauty refers to Western women. Most of Western women have pointed nose, tall body, white skin, and slim. Then, the concept of beauty myth is slim adapted globally. Women' ideal physical appearance to be called beautiful is thin. Then people glorify the concept of beauty is thinness. It also can be seen inside the novel that people seeing thin women as a beautiful creature. People mock women whose body is plus-sized.

As in the novel, fat girls will get bad treatment just because their body does not fit the beauty myth. Then, the body is categorized as beautiful is slim. It can be seen in this quotation which says, "*Titi is so beautiful. Petite and thin*" (Maldonado, Fat Chance, Charlie Vega, 2021, p. 118). It proves inside the novel, women who are categorized as beautiful is just like Titi. These days, the definition of beauty always refers to the outer appearance. The outer appearance that most of media like Television, Instagram, magazines, describes is thinness. This beauty symbol now is believed as the standard of beauty universally because the media spread it intensely. Because of that, most of people who are asked the definition of beauty will refer to slim body. As in this novel, Charlie is insecure about her body and she feels not beautiful enough if she is compared to her thin friends. The quotation above shows the definition of beauty refers to physical appearance. It is because the line "petite and thin" show about outer appearance which not every woman has. It means the concept of beauty in this novel is someone who is small and slim. It is confirmed in the line "Titi is so beautiful." Then, the quotation below strengthens the fact that beauty only belongs to slim women.

Then, the next data shows that beauty myth always revolves on women physical appearance. As Charlie, the main character feels insecure about her body and she envies her best friend body which she thinks beautiful. It can be seen in this following quotation, "*She's tall and thin and everything looks good on her and it'd completely unfair.*" (Maldonado, Fat Chance, Charlie Vega, 2021, p. 4). The quotation here proves once more that the concept of beauty only shows about physical appearance. It proves in the line "everything looks good on her" which means what her best friend wears never fail to look beautiful. It also shows discrimination on fat women because the fashion industry only sells beautiful clothes for slim women only. It makes Charlie feel so sad that as a fat woman she cannot wear something cute. Meanwhile, Amalia, her best friend can wear everything she wants because the cute and beautiful clothes are for thin women. It makes her never look ugly in every clothes she wears because she is "thin and tall" in which her body will fit the clothes that the fashion industry made. It makes the main character envy in the line "and it's completely unfair" which indicates every fashion only looks good on women who have beautiful figures as thin and tall. Then, women who do not fit the beauty concept will reach the bottom of their inferiorities and will have negative thoughts about their body.

Then, these never-ending insecurities are planted in women's heads. It makes women believe that the definition of beauty always refers to thin bodies. As seen in the

following question, Charlie thinks that she is worthy if only she has thin body. The quotation says, “*I could be free if only I could commit to be thin.*” (Maldonado, *Fat Chance, Charlie Vega*, 2021, p. 22). The quotation here shows what Wolf says about the beauty myth that says beauty is used against women is right because in the quotation the main character can not be the best version of herself because the society plants the idea on her head that beauty belongs to thin women only. It can be seen in the line “I could be free if only I could commit to be thin” chains her soul to believe she is worthy if only she has body that the society likes. In this situation, the body that the beauty concept likes, is thin body. It proves once more what Wolf says about beauty is not really about physical appearance but it is more on women behaviour. It means beauty actually not about physical appearance but the society makes it women who obey what the society said is beautiful. It is all about women’s behaviour. Women’s behaviour that believes the beauty concept which says thin is beautiful. So that if they are not thin, they will feel ugly and do anything to fit the beauty standard which sometimes all they do are dangerous actions like doing surgery, liposuction, or using mercury products. In the other side, this behaviour of women will only give benefit for those who enter the beauty industries as diet supplement, fashion, whitening products, and many more.

2. Rejection Toward the Beauty Concept

The definition of beautiful for women these days are generalized into tall, thin, white, and blond. It can be seen in cosmetic advertisement on TV they picture the definition of beautiful women are those who are thin. Then, this propaganda creates situation where women believe that to be considered as beautiful, women need to follow what they see in the media. In skincare advertisement as example, women who does not categorized as beautiful usually having darker skin color. No boy pays attention to her. However, when she uses the whitening products suddenly every boy falls for her. This situation creates stigma that women who have darker skin color are not beautiful. In most of romantic movies where the main lead are fat women. The movie will show that nobody will love her. Of course, they do the diet because they think their body is ugly. When they get thin, they become beautiful women. Then, the guy who is not interested in her at the beginning, suddenly falling in love with her. It creates stigma that if women want to be loved, they need to be beautiful first and what considered as beautiful is thinness. Furthermore, in beauty contest too, they put thin women to be considered as beautiful according to men eyes as the judges. It makes women believe their value is only based on their appearance especially the thin body. It is one of the women oppressions that withstands women to have qualities.

However, women these days are more aware that beauty does not only focus on physical appearance. It can be from their good behavior, smart brain, or their interest on something they like. On social medias women spread the awareness that beauty can not defined by physical appearance only. It is against women oppression on their body. This movement is called feminism. Feminism is women movement to be equal as men and fight against everything that makes women inferior in men eyes. In this novel, the main character shows the feminism movement against women oppression

on her body by accepting their body as the way it is. Her act can be seen in the following quotation, *“I ended up finding feminism and the fat acceptance movement and I move on to write stories about girls of all sizes.”* (Maldonado, Fat Chance, Charlie Vega, 2021, p. 22). The quotation here indicates the main character, Charlie, rejects the concept of beauty standard which says women who are beautiful if only they are thin or slim. She is against women oppression that women’s body needs to be concepted by the society that patriarchy created by “finding feminism and fat acceptance movement”. It is because against patriarchy system is one of the feminism movements so that women can be happily be the best version that they want. In addition, “fat acceptance movement” is also part of feminism because this movement helps women to break free from chain that choke their neck that they need to believe that slim is beautiful by accepting the fat that they are not of those women and they should be proud of it. Furthermore, the line “I move on to write stories about girls of all sizes” shows how she rejects the idea of beauty myth that in novel, the main female character usually slim women. In her novel, she wants it to be different, she wants fat women as the lead character inside the novel. What she does, shows feminism, fat acceptance movement, and act of rejection toward the beauty concept.

Those are things that are not easy for women but these movement little by little will change women’s mind to not fall to the beauty myth. Instead, they will fight against it. It can be seen in the following quotation, *“I am endlessly surrounded by messages that tell me to love myself, to celebrate stretch marks and soft roll.”* (Maldonado, Fat Chance, Charlie Vega, 2021, p. 22). The quotation here shows the rejection toward the beauty concept because in line “I’m endlessly surrounded by messages that tell me to love myself” which indicates women these days are active to spread body acceptance by loving them selves first. It shows that women these days realize that their body are theirs. It does not belong to anyone else. This is why the line “celebrate stretch marks and soft roll” encourages women to not think stretch marks and soft rolls as weakness. It is more like support women to love their body even though the society does not think having stretch mark and soft rolls as beautiful.

Stretch marks are really normal and common situation for women to have it. They can not fade away easy so that is why the cosmetic product company make them look like a women weakness. In fact, most of women have it since puberty. It is normal not a sin that women have to hide. As what Wolf says women body and the texture of female flesh are not something that women should be disgusted of. It means women’s body, no matter what shape or size they have, are still beautiful and women need to accept their body even though they have “soft roll”. Soft roll is a sweet plump and round bread. In this quotation, it means lump on women body especially in the back. So, this quotation relates to what Wolf says that women should not feel gross about their body.

D. Conclusion

After analyzing “Fat Chance, Charlie Vega” novel by Chrystal Maldonado. The statements of the problem in this research are answered. The answer of the statements of the problem number one is the concept of beauty is represented as someone who has body like Amelia or Charlie’s mom which is slim. It shows that in this novel, the focus of beauty standard is seeing someone by their physical appearance only. It also tells that women are pretty or not according to how much fat on their body they have. For those who are not slim, they are forced to do the diet and they are bullied for having a plump body. The beauty concept that the society believes inside the novel that the word beauty is for thin women only makes the main character has insecurity at first. However, after meeting a boy who she likes, the statements of the problem number two is answered. The main character, Charlie Vega rejects the concept of beauty that when women want to be called beautiful, they should be slim first. She knows her worth is not by her appearance only but her smart brain and good personality that make her feel beautiful too.

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