

WRITING A CHILDREN STORY BOOK: ROSALINE THE BEAUTIFUL ROSE

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ABSTRACT

This project brings up an issue about beauty concept in a form of children's story book with fantasy genre for children at the ages of 12 to 15. The story shows some beauty concepts in the world through the main character's fantastical adventure. The main character of this story is a beautiful little girl who always wants to be the most beautiful girl wherever she is. The main character thinks that beauty will help her to gain attention from everybody, and she loves to be the center of attention. The beauty concept obsesses her very much because of the beauty hegemony that appears in her society. Then through the magical journey in the four countries, the main character learns that beauty is not something as simple as the way she knows about it before. The main character experiences the false consciousness of beauty concepts from the society conditioning. In the end of the story, the main character then realizes that inner beauty is far more important than physical beauty.

Keywords: beauty concept, hegemony, false consciousness, society conditioning, inner beauty

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is easy to find a lot of beauty products in any malls. Many beauty clinics and beauty salons also open in some streets in a city. It proves that people see beauty as one of the important things in life. Actually, it is normal for people to care for their outlook, but they do not realize that a concept of beauty can trap them into a dangerous obsession. National Geographic program called *Taboo* proves that through showing a man who work hard to afford some plastic surgeries, a woman who suffers from anorexia and bulimia, and a mother who pushed her cry baby to eat animal fat too much in order to obtain the beauty concept that they have in their societies (Geographic, *Taboo* Episode "Beauty", 2011). Besides National Geographic documentary program, International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS) issued a beauty obsession through a survey in 2013. This survey said that approximately 23 million people around the world had done an aesthetic plastic surgery (ISAPS, 2014). The American Society for Aesthetic Surgery (ASAPS) explained the difference between aesthetic plastic surgery and reconstructive plastic surgery. It says that reconstructive plastic surgery is a remaking for abnormal parts of body because of a trauma or accident, while the aesthetic plastic surgery is a normal tissue polishing for gaining a better appearance (Edwards, 2014). Therefore, those 23 million people who had done the aesthetic plastic surgery did it because they wanted to chase a beauty concept.

Through those facts, I can say that beauty concept can really trap people to chase it excessively and even in some dangerous ways. Beauty concept can also lead people to a consumptive behavior. Therefore, I think it is important to study more about beauty concept. Along with that, the example from National geographic help me to learn more about beauty concept for it shows that beauty can be very different from one country to another country. It shows that a beauty concept is actually relative. Then, if people do not learn that beauty concept is actually relative, they will blindly chase the concept of beauty that they believe. Therefore, through this project, I want to show an alternative beauty concept, which is the inner beauty that can help people to be free from beauty manipulation.

In particular, I think it is also important for children to learn about beauty concept even though this topic still seems hard for them. It is because the reality shows that a beauty concept can also trap children, like how article in Liputan6 wrote about a 9 year old girl who had done a plastic surgery to become as beautiful as her mother (Liputan6, 2013). Also According to Carl E Pickhardt Ph.D., the psychologist and the author of 15 parenting books, such as *Surviving (Your Child's) Adolescence*, in one of his articles, puberty comes in ages around 9 to 13, and it makes children have a speculation that their physical outlooks become an important aspect for social acceptance (Pickhardt, 2010). Therefore, it is good if they can learn this hard topic in a fun and exciting way through a literature for children before they grow as adults who are obsessed by beauty concepts.

With children's literature, children can have a fun and great adventure to learn some beauty concept and find the meaning of beauty. Children's literature is also a good media for people of any ages to gain an important message of beauty concept because some adults and teenagers also simply enjoy reading children's literature when the story and the plot are interesting.

Therefore, to make the story and the plot interesting, I choose to use fantasy genre. Through the adventure, readers from any ages will feel the excitement of traveling around the fantasy world. They will read and learn something that they never see before. The adventure in the fantasy world will trigger the reader's curiosity about what will happen next to the main character in different places with different people. An adventure can also help the older readers who feel tired of their daily activity to have an exciting escapism in a world that is very different from their fatigue world.

Another interest that the reader can find in this creative work is the background ethnicity of my main character for I will use the Chinese Indonesian ethnic. Through this background ethnicity, the reader will learn how it feels to live as a Chinese little girl in Indonesia. This background ethnicity is interesting because I rarely find a story about Chinese Indonesian character. Therefore, through this background ethnicity of my character, I want to show to the reader about some Chinese Indonesian traditions and ways of life.

Statement of the problem

Through this project, I would like to find the answer for some questions:

1. What is an alternative meaning of beauty?
2. What are the different concepts of beauty in some countries?
3. How will women be when a concept of beauty traps them?
4. Why is it important to learn about different concepts of beauty in the world?

In the context of the story, these questions become:

1. What is the alternative meaning of beauty for a child who is obsessed to be the most beautiful girl?
2. What are the concepts of beauty in some countries that are adapted from Indonesia, America, East Myanmar, and West Africa?
3. How will women who are obsessed with a concept of beauty be?
4. Why is it important for a little girl who is obsessed by a beauty concept to learn that different places have different concepts of beauty?

Purpose of the Creative Work

The purpose of this project is to show:

1. An alternative meaning of beauty that is beyond the physical appearances.
2. The different concepts of beauty in some countries.
3. Women's extreme behaviors when a beauty concept obsesses them.
4. The importance of learning about different concepts of beauty in the world.

In the context of the story, these statements become:

1. The alternative meaning of beauty that is beyond physical appearance, which is not limited by a beauty concept.
2. The interpretation of beauty in some adaptation countries based on Indonesia, America, Eastern Myanmar, and Western Africa.
3. Women extreme behaviors such as anorexia, putting an uncomfortable brass ring around their neck, and pushing themselves to eat the unhealthy animal fat excessively because of beauty concepts obsession.
4. The importance for a little girl who is obsessed by a beauty concept to learn that beauty concept is not something absolute and that inner beauty is more important than physical beauty through experiencing some different beauty concepts in some different places.

To answer the statement of the problem, I use some theories from Karl Marx about hegemony and false consciousness. Karl Marx uses the term hegemony for calling a condition where the higher class people, or the bourgeoisie, control society's life with a very smooth way that make common people in that society unaware with what really happen in that society (Koestler, 1967). I apply this theory in making two countries in the story that are adapted from America and Indonesia. For over a million people in America use most of their time with the mass media (Curtis, 2012) and in

Indonesia, people use their 9 hours/day for consuming the mass media through their gadget (Panji, 2014). Then, through the mass media the base controls the concept of beauty so they can produce some beauty products for the society to be consumed.

I also use the theory from B. F. Skinner about operant conditioning. B. F. Skinner (1976) said that, “the behavior is followed by a consequence, and the nature of the consequence modifies the organisms tendency to repeat the behavior in the future” (cited in Yount, 2003, p. 281). Therefore, the operant conditioning is a theory that says that organism involves in an environmental operation. In this environmental operation, organism finds a reinforcing stimulus that reinforces some previous behaviors called the operant to change. Because of this process, organism has a tendency to repeat the same behavior from current behavior that happens in the environment. Through this theory, I can apply the society as the reinforcing stimulus and the concept about beauty as an operant. Then, the beauty concept manipulation runs with this pattern: The society as the reinforcing stimulus strengthens the beauty concept as the opponent in human’s mind.

In the story, I apply this theory for making two countries which are adapted from Mauritanian tribe of West Africa and Kayan tribe of Eastern Myanmar. In Mauritanian, the concept of beauty comes from their social background for they believe that fat women are considered as the symbol of prosperity (Waterlow, 2013). It leads the women in Mauritanian feel beautiful when fat layers are all over their body. Then the reinforcing stimulus is the society stereotype about fat women, and the operant is the beauty ideology that comes as the effect of that stereotype. In Kayan, concept of beauty comes from their cultural tradition of putting heavy brass rings around their neck (Innes, 2014). They actually forget their true reason of putting those brass rings around their neck, but the long history process enables them to see it as their form of beauty and adapt it as their part of life (Innes, 2014). Then, the reinforcing stimulus is the tradition to put brass rings around their neck, and the operant is the beauty ideology that comes as the effect of that tradition.

Then, in creating the book, I use the theory of Children literature and fantasy genre from Pauline Dewan the writer of some guide books of children’s literature writing. According to Pauline Dewan (2014), Children’s literature is a literature that is made for children to educate them with some themes such as home, school, parents, siblings, grandparents, friendship, toys, pets and animals, holiday, magic, and imagination (Dewan, Introduction to Children’s Literature Classics, 2014). She also said that a fantasy genre is a genre that has a setting in a fantasy world and usually involve journeys and quests with magic in the center of the story. Fantasy world is the world where there are some different universal laws from the law in the real universe. In my story book, the reader will experience fantasy elements when the main character goes to some other countries with the magic pedicab (Dewan, The Fantasy Genre, 2015).

Then, I make this children story book based on the L.R. Buccieri & P. Economy in their book, *Writing Children’s Book for Dummies*, middle grade books are for children between 8 to 12 years old. It is consists of 96 to 156 pages in 5.5 x 8.5 inches size with few or no interior illustrations at all (Buccieri & Economy, 2005). In line with that, my children story book will be a middle grade book that consists of around 190 pages in 5.5 x 8.5 inches size with no illustrations. I choose this middle grade style because it is appropriate for my target readers who are 12 to 15 years old reader or as I have explained readers who are in the puberty period. Then, because the target market is older, the pages are also more than 156 to make the content more suitable for the target reader.

Also, I use the children literature style as in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl, 1964). *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* have more or less twenty five chapters with 6 pages in each chapter. Therefore, in my children story book, I write more or less 23 chapters with 5 to 10 pages in each chapter. I choose this style as my inspiration because many chapters and less pages in each chapter enable children to read it easily.

ROSALINE THE BEAUTIFUL ROSE CONCEPT

Theme

The theme of my creative work will be a journey to find the true meaning of beauty. As I have explained before, society is the one that shapes the concept of beauty in someone’s mind. It is not something absolute because the concept of beauty is socially constructed, so in one society, the concept of beauty may be very different from that of the other societies.

Plot

Rosaline Clarissa Lim is a 12-year-old girl. She is arrogant because of her beauty outlook. She always wants to be the most beautiful girl wherever she is. She cannot respect people who are in the lower status and who have different ethnicity from her. She also loves to bully her classmate who suffers for dwarfism disorder. One day Rosaline accidentally goes with a magic pedicab with the mysterious pedicab driver.

The magic pedicab brings her to the Liber City, Kyaphma, and Woestynlan. She tries to be the most beautiful girl in these places. Yet, all of her efforts to become the most beautiful woman only brings her sufferings. Her efforts do not make her become very beautiful, instead they cause her to become weirder and weirder because the beauty concept in one country to another country is different. When Rosaline is hopeless and giving up in chasing the beauty concepts, the pedicab driver takes her back to her homeland.

However, she cannot see everything the way it was used to be anymore. That makes her desire to seek for a pedicab driver who caused her to have the journey in those countries, but she could not find him. Then, when she goes back to her school, she meets her dwarf classmate again. Now she does not bully her anymore, instead she tries to befriend with her. Having befriended her, Rosaline learns more about a beauty concept, and she becomes a very kind girl who respects other people even when they are different from her.

CONCLUSION

Lesson learned

During the process of writing this children's story book, I have learned many important aspects in writing a story book through applying my knowledge into a long and plentiful practice. I see this writing process as a long and great practice because it is my first time working on a hundred pages story book from the first part until the last part of the story. Before, I only experienced making a short and simple children's story book without really thinking about its content. At that time, I only think about how to make an interesting story line, but through making this story book, I learn that there are some other important aspects besides the story line only. I learn about making a strong character, thinking about target readers' point of view, and considering about the relevance of my story with the reality which are very important in the process of writing a story book.

Future plans

In the future, I plan to publish this children's story book. Therefore, I will work on the details that I cannot do in this final project because of the time limit. I will ask some children in my target reader ages to read this children's book, and ask for their opinion, and critique. After that, I will do some revisions according to their opinion and critique. I will also think about some possible events or conflicts that I can add in this story book to make it more interesting and fun. I will also make sure this children's story book follows the writing rules so it is worth to be published.

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