Journal of English Literature, Linguistic, and Education
Vol. 4 No. 2, August 2023, pp (05-13) e-ISSN: 2721-3390

The Portrayal of Beauty Myth in *I Feel Pretty* Movie (2018)

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Abstract: The main object of this article is the movie script entitled *I Feel Pretty*. The purpose of this research are to find out the types of beauty myth portrayed by Renee as the main character in the movie and the influences of beauty myth on Renee in the movie. The researchers used the theory of beauty myth by Naomi Wolf to analyze the types of beauty myths portrayed by the main character in the movie. The theory of narrative and non-narrative by Boggs and Petrie was also used to analyze the aspects that influenced by the beauty myth of the main character in the movie. The method to analyze the data in this study is descriptive qualitative. To collect data, it was used two kinds of sources. The primary data of this study is taken from the movie script. The secondary data are taken from previous studies, books, journals, and other resource. In the results of this research, it was found the types of beauty myth portrayed by the main character namely beauty myth in work, beauty myth in culture, beauty myth in religion, beauty myth in sex, and beauty myth in hunger. It was also found the influence of the beauty myth on Renee as the main character, there are Renee's appearances and Renee's behavior. From the findings, it could be concluded that the beauty myth of Renee's life is complicated, both in her work and relationship.

Keywords: *movie script analysis, beauty myth, I feel pretty, Wolf, Renee*

How to Cite: Yuniarsih, I., Gemilang, A. V., & Prastanti. A. D. (2023). The Portrayal of Beauty Myth in I Feel Pretty Movie (2018). *JEELT (Journal of English Language and Language Teaching).*

INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are many standards of beauty propagated by the media, such as displaying the perception that beautiful women are women who have white skin, black hair, and slim bodies. This is based on the results of a survey issued by the ZAP Beauty Index 2020 which states that 46.7% of respondents think that the definition of 'beautiful' is to beautify the overall appearance or commonly called well-dressed, and 82.5% of respondents think that 'beautiful' is to have bright and glowing skin (ZAP, 2020). This perception makes women feel uncomfortable with their own bodies and it also is harmful because they are underestimated and difficult to accept if they do not suit the beauty standards that exist in their environment which are influenced by beauty myths.

Naomi Wolf stated the beauty myth is the quality of beauty that truly exists objectively and universally (2002, p. 28-29). The image of "beautiful" in women is built by the perception of society that spreads in all aspects of human life. Whereas, a journal from the London School of Public Relations (LSPR) entitled *"The Construction and Adoption of Beauty Standard by Youth Female as the Consumer of K-Beauty Products in Indonesia"* defines beauty as something relative, but some people define and create a perspective or stereotype of what is called 'beautiful' as often found in various media (2022). This phenomenon can be seen in literature because literature can represent social life. In line with Wellek and Warren's statement that literature is a social creation that uses language as its medium that represents life and social reality widely (1956, p. 89). One of

the literary works that can represent this phenomenon is movie. Bordwell and Thompson stated movies offer a valuable experience to their audiences, which can be disturbing, thought-provoking, confusing, or exciting (2015, p. 4). Thus, Movie is one of the media that gives perspective to the public about the beauty myth. A movie that is relevant to this research is *I Feel Pretty*.

In this study, researchers used three previous studies related to this study. There are "*The Analysis of Hierarchy of Needs of Renee Bennett as The Main Character in I Feel Pretty Movie Script"* by Syafira Rahmahsari, *"The Portrayal of Beauty Myth in Me Vs. High Heels Film by Pingkan Utari"* by Devi Anggita and Vela Dewi Meyrasyawati, and "*The Impact of the Beauty Myth on The Existential Freedom of Pecola in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye"* by Ratna Asmarani. The three previous studies have similarities, such as the research object, the theory used, and the research objectives. The first previous study uses the same object, which is the movie script of *I Feel Pretty* movie and uses the main character to be analyzed, although the topic of discussion and the theory used are different but provide an overview of how the main character in the movie is depicted. The second previous study uses the same theory, there is Naomi Wolf's theory of Beauty Myth, and the same research objectives. Devi's study uses narrative and non-narrative aspects for both research objectives. Whereas in this study, narrative and non-narrative are only used to analyze the second research objective, namely the influence of beauty myth to main character in the movie. The third previous study uses the same topic, which is the impact of the beauty myth on the main character in the movie.

Based on the previous studies and the description of beauty myths that exist in society through the movie, the researchers need to study beauty myths that have not been studied before. The researchers were also interested in discussing and studying beauty myths as a phenomenon that often occurs in daily life by using the *I Feel Pretty* movie. The researchers hoped that the results of this study can provide different perspectives and points of view of beauty myth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. *Art*

Tolstoy said art is a human activity that consciously conveys the feelings that they experience to others through external signs, and others are infected by those feelings and experience them as well (1995). Gordon Graham classified art into two kinds, there are visual art and literary art (2005): visual art and literary art.

2. *Literature*

Literature is a medium used to represent thoughts, ideas, and feelings. In line with Wellek and Warren, literature is a social creation that uses language as its medium that represents life and social reality widely (1956, p. 89). Wellek and Warren also stated literature is a creative art (1956, p. 3). Literature is formed from the representation of imagination or real life in a society that is found and experienced by the author. Rees in Shiddiqui stated that literature is writing that expresses and communicates feelings and attitudes towards life (2013). It means that humans and their lives are a source of ideas for authors to produce their works. Creatively, the authors create the idea with language and their perspective on phenomena in society into a literary work. Literary works can be classified into several forms, such as poetry, novel, poem, and drama. Each literary work describes human life based on the elements of literary works, such as plot, setting, and characters.

3. *Movie*

Movie is a moving picture recorded with sound that tells a story that is shown on television or in a cinema or theater (Hornby, 2005). A movie is created from

a creative process that comes from the imagination of a screenwriter who writes the script. Giannetti stated that movie scripts are literary products (2013, p. 376). Movie has a close relationship with literature because a movie must have a script or scenario and that script is written based on the author's imagination or the author's real-life like other literary works. According to Boggs and Petrie, movie communicates visually and verbally (2012, p. 3). Thus, the content contained in the movie is easily conveyed and accepted by the audience. A movie can also spread views about an idea, concept, or phenomenon that occurs in real life.

4. Personality Traits

The big 5 personalities or OCEAN are a theory by Costa and McCrae (1996) that simplified human's complex personality into 5 characteristics: (1) openness, (2) conscientiousness, (3) extraversion, (4) agreeableness, and (5) neuroticism. Edward and Richard in Mentari (2019) said Personality traits reflect people's characteristic patterns of thoughts, feeling, and behaviors. This helps to analyze a person's character such as how to behave, how to think, how to act towards others, and so on.

5. Character and characterization

Character is one of the intrinsic elements of literature. Abrams and Harpham stated that characters are people represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by readers to have definite moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities through inferences from what they say or dialogue and from what they do or action (2014, p. 48). Abrams and Harpham classified characters into two types: flat characters and round characters (2014, p. 48). Abrams and Harpham said that characterization is the way to build the uniqueness of a character (2014, p. 48). Boggs and Petrie divided eight ways to find characterization in a literary work: (1) Characterization through Appearance, (2) Characterization through Dialogue, (3) Characterization through External Action, (4) Characterization through Internal Action, and (5) Characterization through Reaction of Other Characters (2012, p. 50-52).

6. Beauty Myth

The concept of the beauty myth was raised by Naomi Wolf through her book *"The Myth of Beauty: How the Image of Beauty is Used Against Women*" published in 2002. Wolf stated that the beauty myth is the quality of " beauty" that really exists objectively and universally (2002, p. 12). The image of "beauty" in women is built by public perceptions that spread throughout all aspects of human life. This is in line with Wolf's statement, that what was considered ideal at that time was a thin Caucasian figure with full breasts, which was rarely seen as something natural and it was assumed by the mass media as well as by readers of women's magazines or filmgoers as something eternal and transcendent (2002, p. 2-3). Beauty myths experienced by women are divided into six types:

a. Beauty myths in the work environment/PBQ (Professional Beauty Qualification)

   Beauty in the work environment builds a system, the Professional Beauty Qualification (PBQ). Wolf stated that women's beauty in the work environment is nothing more than a symbolization of the informal currency prevailing in society (2002, p. 21). Professional Beauty Qualification (PBQ) makes beauty a must-have requirement to get a job.

b. Beauty myths in culture

   Beauty myths in culture are about stereotypes that are spread in society. The stereotypical image of beautiful women attached to society is influenced by magazines containing

beautiful female models. Wolf states that women's magazines followed the progress of women and the evolution of beauty myths that occurred at the same time (2002, p. 62).

c. Beauty myths in religion

Religion in beauty myths is not about faith and belief in god, but the women's deep belief that beauty is something very big. These rites make women adore beauty so that it creates fear. Wolf's statement that beauty in beauty myths is heaven or proof of grace, so the fat body is its soul, and the "ugly face" is hell (2002, p. 98).

d. Beauty myths in sex

Beauty myths about sex make women insecure in relationships with individuals and groups. Wolf said that beauty rites in beauty religiosity are related to creating women's guilt and suppressing women's sexuality (2002, p. 131-132).

e. Beauty myths in hunger

The beauty myth in hunger is the obsession of women who want to have a proportional body like the models in magazines or TV so they diet. As a result, women ignore important things that the body needs. Wolf stated that to fulfill the obsession to have an ideal body, most women die because of bulimia and anorexia (2002, p. 5).

f. Beauty myths in violence

The myth of beauty in violence causes women to harm themselves to achieve the ideal beauty formed in society. Women often harm themselves to get that beauty, in addition to dieting, women also often do extreme sports and get cosmetic surgery to achieve the expected appearance. Wolf stated that beauty myths cause violence to women through the hunger caused by their diets (2002, p. 218).

7. Narrative and Non-narrative

There is some aspect in the movie, such as narrative and non-narrative. According to Bordwell and Thompson, narrative means a series of events in a cause-and-effect relationship that occurs in time and space (2015, p. 73). In the narrative aspect, story and plot are needed to describe things that are not shown. On the other hand, Bordwell and Thompson said non-narrative or also known as *Mise- en- Scene* in movies is simply understood as everything that appears in the frame (2015, p. 113). Non-narrative is more related to the visual content of the movie and helps the audience understand the background of the story.

METHOD

In this research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative methods. Qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups give to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2018). The object of this research is the *I Feel Pretty* movie script. There were steps to collecting data: (1) watching the movie repeatedly while reading the script to understand the related content, (2) selecting certain parts in the movie script that are related to the topic to be analyzed, (3) reading other sources to add more information, and (4) classifying data based on the object of research. The researchers used notes to be an instrument of the research. After collecting the required data, the data is analyzed using several techniques to facilitate research in obtaining the conclusion; (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) verifying conclusion (Miles and Huberman, 2014, p. 10).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The types of beauty myth portrayed by Renee in *I Feel Pretty*

Renee Bennett is the main character in I Feel Pretty (2018). She is a woman who struggles with low self-esteem and is insecure about her appearance. She has always yearned to be beautiful in order to experience beauty privileges and conform to existing beauty myths. In this movie, there are several types of beauty myth portrayed by the main character. They are as follow.

Work / Professional Beauty Qualification (PBQ)

Professional Beauty Qualification (PBQ) makes beauty a must-have requirement to get a job. In Wolf's theory, PBQ started in the 1960s when most middle-class educated young women started working in the city and required young working girls to look sexy for their jobs. This shows that PBQ is very concerned with physical appearance to be a requirement in every job specifically for women. Wolf stated that women's beauty in the work environment is nothing more than a symbolization of the informal currency prevailing in society (2002, p. 21). Jobs that interact with the public require women to have an attractive appearance. Thus, when women are no longer attractive to the public, they will be eliminated as it happened to Renee as main character in this movie.

Renee and Mason, who are both fat, work at a cosmetics company, Lily LeClaire. Instead of being employed in the head office, they are employed in a weird Chinatown basement because they do not fit the job's requirements of their office, which need them to be good-looking. Professional Beauty Qualification (PBQ) makes beauty a must-have requirement to get a job. So, when women are no longer attractive to the public, they will be eliminated as it happened to Renee. It can be seen in the following citation.

Renee: "*Why does Lily LeClaire, like, hide us in this weird Chinatown basement? I'm so sick of it. Aren't you sick of this?"*

(I Feel Pretty Movie (7:51-7:56))

Renee was sick of working in the weird Chinatown basement. Due to the beauty myth that exists at LeClaire's headquarters, Renee and her friend are not considered to fit the requirements. One of the requirements are shown in this data.

Renee: *"The first face people see when they come to our office, in some ways, the real face of our beauty line"*

(I Feel Pretty Movie (16:16-16:21))

From these requirements, Renee and Mason are not considered to fulfill these requirements, which need employers to be good-looking. The priority is a beautiful face according to the standards of Lily LeClaire and a face that is attractive when people come to Lily LeClaire. Because of these requirements, Renee felt unworthy when she wanted to apply as a receptionist at Lily LeClaire.

Renee: *"Yes, it is the perfect job, of course I know that. I'm just... I don't even see a point in applying. I have no shot. Yeah. I'm not exactly the face they're looking for."*

(I Feel Pretty Movie (16:31-16:42))

The data above portrays the beauty myth in the work environment as proven by one of the requirements in Lily LeClaire which requires employers to have a beautiful and attractive face. So, this makes Renee and Mason work at the weird Chinatown Basement and feel alienated, and Renee who wants to apply to be a receptionist feels unfit to apply for the job.

Culture

Beauty myths in culture is about stereotypes that are spread in society. The stereotypical image of beautiful

women attached to society is influenced by magazines containing beautiful female models. Female models are used as the cover of women's magazines and are used as a standard of perfect female beauty. Wolf states that women's magazines followed the progress of women and the evolution of beauty myths that occurred at the same time (2002, p. 62).

I Feel Pretty is set in America. It can be identified from the Liberty Statue visible at minute 15.46. The Liberty Statue is one of the most familiar American icons worldwide, symbolizing the independence, freedom, and liberty of the United States of America. Thus, in this movie, the beauty standard used as culture is the beauty standard that exists in America.

A journal entitled American Beauty Standards: "Paling" in Comparison to the White Norm by Kristen Marrinan argues that American beauty standards have historically prioritized white, blue-eyed, slim, and young (2018). It means that society only considers and 39 prioritizes women who fit these beauty standards, one of which is slim. As portrayed by the following data.

Seller : *"Are you shopping for a gift?"*
Renee : *"Oh, no, just kind of browsing for me"*
Seller : *"Okay. Um…So sizing is a little limited here in the store, but you could probably find your size online"*
(I Feel Pretty Movie (04:27-04:38))

From the data above, the seller thought that Renee wanted to buy clothes for gifts while looking Renee up and down. Then when Renee said she wanted to buy for herself, the seller immediately answered that the clothes in the shop were very limited as if there were no clothes in Renee's size available while looking at Renee's body with an underestimate gaze. This shows that even in the aspect of fashion, the seller prioritizes the size from slim women's clothes without thinking about the big size from other women, thus making women who have bodies like Renee have to buy them at the online store. The culture in the beauty myth that builds the stereotypes based on slim models in magazines and some media as described in Wolf's theory that makes the guideline that slimness becomes a reference in terms of fashion.

Religion

Religion in beauty myths is not about faith and belief in God, but the women's deep belief that beauty is about appearance as society stigmatizes appearance as beauty. These rites make women adore beauty it creates fear. The belief in beauty rites removes women's confidence in their physical and psychological appearance. In line with 40 Wolf's statement that beauty in beauty myths is heaven or proof of grace, so the fat body is its soul, and the "ugly face" is hell (2002, p. 98). Women feel afraid if they do not fit the stigma of beauty that exists in society and really want themselves to be born beautiful.

Renee: *"I wish... I wish I was beautiful!"*
(I Feel Pretty Movie (19:57-20:01))

In this scene, Renee really expects herself to be beautiful like the stigma of society. The belief that beauty is something very big makes women want to be beautiful. Because of what Renee experienced, she feels that being beautiful is very useful and makes her life easier, so she really wants to be a beautiful woman and be able to feel privileged like other beautiful women. This is the meaning of deifying beauty because beauty carries many benefits and privileges, otherwise, if women are not beautiful they will be scared.

Sex

In this movie, the researchers found data showing that Renee who does not

fit the existing beauty standards makes it difficult to find a partner, unlike Mallory who easily gets a partner and feels loved. It can be seen on the following dialogue.

Renee : "*Does that kind of stuff happen all the time?"*
Mallory : "*What,him?"*
Renee : *"Yeah, like a guy, like, trying to hook up with you in a totally normal place?"*
Mallory :"*Yeah, I'm sure that happens to you all the time, too."*
Renee : "*Uh, no. That has literally never happened to me in my life."*

(I Feel Pretty Movie (17:50-18:53))

In the data above, Renee asks Mallory how it feels to be a beautiful woman who is always flirted by men at all places and times like Mallory. It means that Renee has never experienced love like Mallory. This shows that Renee's appearance, which is not beautiful like Mallory, makes her feel not as lucky as Mallory who can get into relationships with men.

Hunger

The beauty myth in hunger is the obsession of women who want to have a proportional body like the models in magazines or TV so they diet. Fat bodies are considered not beautiful so women are competing to be slim. Women are willing to endure hunger in order to maintain their ideal weight or lose weight to become ideal. As a result, women ignore important things that the body needs. Wolf stated that in order to fulfill the obsession to have an ideal body, most women die because of bulimia and anorexia (2002, p. 5). A slim body becomes a dream for women in achieving the ideal weight so that others can say that they are beautiful. In the movie, the beauty myth in hunger is portrayed in the following data.

Renee: *"And then what I realized is that I could eat whatever I want, and still look like this"*

(I Feel Pretty Movie ((01:07:47-01:07:52)

Based on the data above, Renee felt she could eat whatever she wanted without thinking about her body which she felt was already slim. Renee indirectly portrays that women who are not slim or want to 43 have a slim body and want to look beautiful according to the stigma of society cannot eat freely and must endure hunger. Women who want an ideal body cannot eat freely. As stated in Wolf's theory, if women have an obsession with having an ideal body according to beauty standards, they must refrain from eating.

2. The influences of beauty myth to Renee in *I Feel Pretty*

It was found several aspects influenced by the beauty myth to Renee, as the main character, there are appearance and behavior

Appearance

The Professional Beauty Qualification (PBQ) influenced Renee's appearance. PBQ makes beauty a must-have requirement to get a job. The public wants attractive things from women that can be seen directly. Jobs that interact with the public require women to have an attractive appearance. Renee works as a receptionist at a cosmetics company, Lily LeClaire. This requires Renee to look attractive so that the clothes and makeup she uses must look beautiful and attractive in accordance with the requirements and demands of her job, as portrayed in the following data.

Renee**:** *"Must be stylish and full of confidence. I mean... Maybe not full of confidence. The first face people see when they come to our office in some ways, the real face of our beauty line. Whatever."*

(I Feel Pretty Movie (16:05-16:24))

The data above shows the one of the requirements to apply for a job as a receptionist at Lily LeClaire is employee have to be stylish and full of confidence and also requires a real face of beauty because the employee's face is the first thing seen when people come to the Lily LeClaire office. This makes Renee have to follow these requirements and look attractive. So that her clothes and makeup must look beautiful and attractive in accordance with the requirements and demands of her job.

Picture 1

Behavior

Beauty myths influence women's behavior. Women who feel they do not fit the stigma of beauty in society will feel insecure and feel rejected. Renee is influenced by beauty myths in the aspect of behavior that makes her insecure. This is shown by the following data.

Renee : *"Whoa, whoa, whoa! You think I'm going to Lily LeClaire today? Oh, no, I am not going to Lily LeClaire. I promise you that, okay. I did not shower."*

Mason :"*You never shower."*

Renee :"*I never shower for work. Okay, I shower at night. When I shower is my business. I'm not going there."*

(I Feel Pretty Movie (11:05-12:05))

Based on the data, Renee strongly refuses to go to Lily LeClaire's headquarters. She refuses for various reasons not to go to Lily LeClaire. Renee was not confident to go there because she felt she was not beautiful while the employees at Lily LeClire's headquarters looked beautiful and sexy as shown in the data below.

Picture 2

Renee also felt insecure when she applied for a job as Lily LeClaire's receptionist. She felt she was not confident and felt inappropriate to work there.

Renee**:** *"Must be stylish and full of confidence. I mean... Maybe not full of confidence"*

(I Feel Pretty Movie ((16:05-16:14))

This lack of self-confidence makes Renee also feel that she did not deserve to be in a relationship with her boyfriend, Ethan. Her insecurity about her appearance, which she felt was not beautiful, made her feel like she did not deserve Ethan and wanted to break up with Ethan. Thus, Renee wants to break up with Ethan because she feels she does not deserve Ethan because she is no longer as beautiful as she felt before.

Renee **:** *"I'm not who you think I am."*

Ethan **:** *"And that's it? I think I…I think I deserve better than that."*

Renee **:** *"You deserve much better than this. You deserve much better than me. I'm sorry."*

(I Feel Pretty Movie (1:30:04-1:3 0:12))

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data using the theory of Naomi Wolf, Boggs and Petrie, several conclusions were made. First, five

types of beauty myths were found, namely beauty myths in work environment or Professional Beauty Qualification(PBQ), culture, religion, sex, and hunger. Second, the researchers found two aspects that were influenced by the beauty myth to Renee, namely Renee's appearance and Renee's behavior, especially her self-confidence.

From the results of this study, it was concluded that the beauty myth created Renee's life complicated, such as in her work and relationship. It was portrayed when Renee wanted to apply for a job at Lily LeClaire, PBQ made Renee feel that she did not fit the requirements because these conditions required a woman with a beautiful face. The beauty myth also makes Renee feel unworthy of love because she is not beautiful. From this explanation, it is very clear that the beauty myth is very difficult for Renee's life and takes away Renee's confidence.

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