

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the study

Problems cannot be separated from a human's life, it does not matter who you are, how old you are, what your profession is, what your status within the family is. Anyone may have a problem in his/her life. The problem that happens to someone can come from anywhere. As human beings people should be able to handle and face their problems by her/himself (inner conflict) with other people. Sometimes the problems that happen in his/her life may influence the way that person's way of thinking. No matter how bad or good the experience is, it could be a life lesson to prejudice something that has any connection with the experience itself. Talking about problems, they can come from every aspect. Even beauty, can also be a problem for women.

Beauty has a lot of meanings, beauty does not only bring pleasure, but also problem for some people. There is a quotation that is often heard which reminds us about how beauty is, not beauty as it is seen. The quotation is 'do not judge a book by its cover'. This quotation is very wise and famous. It represents that we cannot judge anything solely from the physical appearance, because not all the good and attractive appearances have good and attractive contents too. People usually look at the package first, and then they do not care about the function of the content and how it can satisfy

us. It is not only for the relationship between human and the world, but also among human beings. Since human beings are the most perfect creature on this world, they need to improve their performance to be better. In this case, improving oneself should be balanced with improving the outside and inner beauty. Most problem that makes ourselves better is that people are competing to repair their outside beauty but they do not care about their inner beauty.

Every person in this world have his/her own meaning of beauty. People have their own perspectives from the experiences that they got and it will depend on the characteristic of each person. The process of building or forming a perspective and conception of beauty to children lies on the parents' existence and influence, because the parents are the first role models for their children.

Related to outside beauty, the writer chooses a novel entitled *Outside Beauty* by Cynthia Kadohata. This story is about Shelby, a 13 years old girl, who is very close to her three sisters and her gorgeous, unconventional mother. Helen Kimura, Shelby's mother, has four daughters from four different men. Shelby and her sisters describe their mother as a 'sexpot', which means that Helen Kimura collects men and loans, spending money, and gifts of all kinds from all over the country. Sure, she is not a typical role model for her daughters, but she is not also has just pretty face and nail polish. She is confident and brave; she lives her life on her own terms, and her four daughters simply adore her. These girls have been raised outside the traditional boundaries. They know how to dodge problems in difficult situations and are able to

face and handle them. They do not, however, know how to function without one another.

There are some factors that make different perspectives about beauty from a single mother which leads her daughters to have different meanings of beauty. These different perspectives of beauty are formed by the mother's figure that is nurturing her daughters without working and getting some money from her boyfriends by highlighting her beautiful appearance, including the fathers of the daughters. The fear of getting married causes a single mother to have the principal that men are easily influenced by the beauty of a woman. Helen Kimura feels afraid to getting married because she is a person who always runs away from her problems. She enjoys gets money from her boyfriends without marry them. It is because when she feels uncomfortable with her boyfriend then she can leave them easily.

According to Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth*, beauty has made competition among women, so that women will be divided from one another. The ideology about youth and virginity are considered as beautiful in women since they stand for experiential and sexual ignorance. Aging in women is considered as unbeautiful since women grow more powerful with time, and since the links between generations of women must always be newly broken (Wolf 14). Therefore, beauty is identical with good looking without aging, looks younger than the age, and so on. That kind of perspective occurs in Cynthia Kadohata's novel, *Outside Beauty*. Moreover, the writer will analyze the meaning of beauty from an under aged girl's perspective that is formed by a mother figure who has different perspectives of beauty.

Cynthia Kadohata is a children's literature author, she has produced other best seller novels, the previous novel entitled *Kira-Kira* which also tells about two sisters' close relation, and from that novel Cynthia Kadohata won the Newberry Medal. The other novels of Cynthia Kadohata are *The Floating World* in 1989, *In the Heart of the Valley of Love* in 1992, *The Glass Mountains* in 1995, *Weedflower* in 2006, *Cracker!* *The Best Dog in Vietnam* in 2007. *Outside Beauty* showcases Cynthia Kadohata's unerring ability to explore the bonds that bind. Cynthia Kadohata is a Japanese American writer known for writing coming of age stories about Asian American women.

(<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/results.asp?WRD=outside+beauty>)

*Outside Beauty* takes place in America and some cities in America, such as California, Chicago, Arkansas, Iowa. As the writer of the thesis has said before, Cynthia Kadohata is a Japanese American author, so it makes sense if Cynthia Kadohata can depict how the American women's lifestyle are, even though there are some Japanese blood women in this novel, but they still live with American lifestyle.

There are two reasons why the writer chooses this novel. First, there is an issue about beauty inside the novel. Second, because the writer is interested in analyzing the main character, Shelby, who is portrayed as a girl who struggles more than her other sisters, and also because she has different meaning of beauty than her mother who goes against the usual norm 'like mother like daughter'. However, because the topic of the novel is about outside beauty and the novel is one of

children's literatures, therefore the analysis will focus on the meaning of beauty from the main character's perspective, Shelby. The writer also would like to find the causes of Shelby's perspective that has close relation with the figure of the mother in order to explore these issues more deeply through the analysis

### **B. Statement of the Problem**

There are some questions that lead the writer to analyze this novel to be more specific, which are:

1. What is the main character's perspective about the meaning of beauty?
2. How does the figure of mother influence the main character in defining the meaning of beauty?

### **C. Objective of the study**

Relating to the statement of the problem, the main aim of this thesis will be:

1. Figure out the meaning of beauty from an under age girl perspective in Cynthia Kadohata's *Outside Beauty* novel.
2. Figure out how the portrayal of Helen Kimura influence Shelby's perspective.

### **D. Significance of the study**

The writer is interested in making her study on the main character with a purpose that she will get a deeper understanding on literary work, especially the novel. Moreover, the writer hopes that this thesis will give contribution to the

students of literature in English Department who also have a purpose to analyze literary work. Particularly, for the readers of this thesis, it is hoped that they will get some valuable information and knowledge about how a young girl could form her definition of beauty from a portrayal of a single mother who has different definition of beauty.

Through this study, the writer expects that the readers will be interested in analyzing the main character in perceiving the meaning of beauty and finding out the issues from *Outside Beauty*. In this case, the main character is a 13 years old girl, and also the meaning of beauty from intrinsic perspective. Beside that, it is essential to let the readers know that an under aged girl can perceive the meaning of beauty by herself by the experience she has got. The time background of the novel is around 1983 and the story takes place in America.

### **E. Scope and Limitation**

The writer would like to analyze the perspective from Shelby in perceive the meaning of beauty. Actually there are many aspects that the writer can get from the novel, *Outside Beauty*, that are interesting to be analyzed. But, to limit the analysis, the writer will focus on the study of the main character, Shelby, who suffers sisters' separation from the caused by her mother's perspective of beauty.

In order to gain a comprehensive analysis, a scope and limitation will be determined in analyzing the novel. The object of the analysis will be a work of literature entitled *Outside Beauty* (2008) by Cynthia Kadohata. The writer would like

to limit the analysis based on the main character of the novel and focused on analyzing the meaning of beauty from the main character, Shelby, as the narrator of the novel.

In order to focus on the main character in this thesis, the writer uses the intrinsic approach suggested by Edgar. V. Roberts. Intrinsic approach is used to explore and understand the work itself. The intrinsic approach is focusing on the literary work in isolation from other aspects outside the work of literature. The approach is used to analyze the intrinsic elements of the work such as character, plot and conflict. It is used to know more about who the main character is, how the main character can create her own perspective about beauty and how the tragedy of her family's disorganize affect her perspective.

In some sections, the writer will explain about the other characters to support the main problem of the novel. Therefore, the writer finds that it is important to study the correlation between Shelby's character and other characters, such as mother, sisters and four fathers. It is important to get clear explanation of her perception about beauty in her 13-year-old age.

## **F. Theoretical Background**

According to Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature*, the starting point for work of literature itself, and the study of literature should in the first place, concentrate on the actual work (139). It means that to begin an analysis of a literary work, the first thing to do is discussing the intrinsic elements in order to give clearer

understanding about the literary work itself. The intrinsic element, including character, will be used.

In this study, the writer focuses on the main character Shelby, who is fighting for her perception with her sisters and mother about the meaning of beauty. The characterization is used to analyze the characteristic of the main character who is trying to speak out that her mother's perception about beauty is wrong and it keeps bringing sufferings to the sisterhood.

Furthermore, the writer uses *Beauty Myth* by *Naomi Wolf* and some perspective about beauty in general as the supporting background, because the novel also talked about the lifestyle of a woman who becomes a single parent for her 4 daughters from different father. The beauty myth uses to analyze the meaning of beauty, it is useful to find out what the beauty myth see in the problem of the main character

The *Beauty Myth* is using for the main theory background to analyze the beauty issue that is found in the novel. It is used to support the main character's perception about beauty. It is also useful for the writer to analyze the main character's meaning of beauty. For brief explanation about the main theory, beauty myth is a condition when the image of female beauty is functioned for political weapon against women's advancement. The beauty myth in some form as long as there has been patriarchy, the beauty myth in its modern form is a fairly recent invention (Wolf 10).

To support the character of the main character Shelby, a 13 years old, the writer uses Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development only for supporting



information. According to Erikson, 12-18 years old is adolescence, which is the basic conflict of Identity versus Role Confusion. In that stage, teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.

### **G. Method of the Study**

In writing this thesis, the writer will apply two basic techniques which are: data collecting and data analysis. Data collecting is obtained from library researches in which the writer gains information from various sources such as: literary books, essays, critics, dictionaries, encyclopedia and online library. Some relevant theoretical books are used to support the understanding about literary theories.

Nevertheless, the main source of the study is, of course, the novel itself. The writer elaborates dialogues, plots, actions, events, and conflicts that are found in the novel. The writer also browses many on-line sources to find additional information that can be used to support the discussion on the main idea. In analyzing the data, the writer of this study determines a descriptive analysis.

### **H. Definition of Key Terms**

*Beauty* : The quality of being pleasing, especially to be looked at, or someone or something that gives pleasure to the mind or senses and is associated with such properties as harmony of

form or color, excellence of artistry, truthfulness, and originality.

*Outside Beauty* : Things that people can see it without knowing who the person is, usually it is part our body, attitude, clothes which we are wearing, make up, and anything that represent good thing.

*Perspective* : a particular way of thinking about something, especially something that is influenced by some beliefs or experiences. (Cambridge 1053)

*Sexpot* : a woman who is sexually exciting or is very interested in sex. (Cambridge 1304)