CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In general, everyone will acknowledge a woman as a „beautiful‟ if she has fair skin, slim body, fashionable and has feminine personalities such as nurturing, calm and behave. We also often hear parents who told their sons to seek a wife that is beautiful, nurturing, kind and has sweet personalities. From those understanding, we can conclude that what our culture called "beauty" is based on both woman‟s body and woman‟s behavior.

However, in fact the images of beauty are also various depending on the geographic and the culture where the woman lives (Wolf 2002 p.12). Such as is in medieval Iberia. In this country, feminine woman is described as a long, blond hair or light-colored and hairless skin woman (Da Soller 2005 p.1-2) while in China, having porcelain-like skin is valued as a beautiful woman. Different from Iberia and China, scarification of the skin is a beauty process in parts of Africa. In other words, actually, there are many kinds of definitions of *beauty* in human culture because beauty is a construction that varies from culture to culture and changes over time (Frith, Shaw & Cheng 2005 p.1).

Mainstream media also has responsibilities about creating the definition of beauty. According to Wolf, before 1960 "good" and "bad" woman correspond with "nonsexual‟ and "sexual" but after the rise of pornography, "good" means "beautiful-(thin)-hence-sexual" and "bad" means "ugly-(fat)-hence-nonsexual." (2002 p. 163). The image of beauty motivates women to imitate what they see as

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ideal beauty. "These images (of beauty) provide social role models, appropriate and inappropriate patterns of behavior, style and fashion and a subtle impulse of imitating and identifying with certain identities." (Damean 2006 p.89). Nazarrudin says there are only two kinds of women in television, those are beautiful and very beautiful. Television creates a definition of beautiful woman, that is: slim, fair skin, black straight hair, fashionable, and continuously doing body treatment to look ageless. "Beauty" campaign in media, especially in television, implants „body worshipper culture" where a woman is judged by the appearance of their body, not by the skills that they have (2007 p.1). In short, in reality women believe in whatever media describe about beauty and imitates them as an effort to be beautiful.

Beside female"s body, *beauty* also requires female"s behavior if a woman want to be an ideal one. "Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive; while they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (Tyson 2006 p.85). Beauty pageant is the example of media which contributes to create "beauty" definition through their jargon: *brain, beauty, behavior*. Beauty pageant glorifies woman body and pick one definition of beauty: young, slim/slender, fair skin, flawless face, and has straight black hair. Beauty pageant also promotes and socializes that woman should have feminine character and refuse masculine character on woman (Sulistyaningrum 2011 p.4-6).

The culture where the woman lives creates rules for the body, what is allowed and what is not allowed (Bordo, as cited in Mochtar 2009 p. 180). The rules in

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culture where the woman lives dictate woman about how to become a „good‟ woman. The rules are named *beauty myth.* Beauty myth is about both of the woman body and behavior. Beauty myth of the woman body in Indonesia is defined as a woman with fair skin, long black straight hair, slim, and fashionable. *Kakawin Arjunawijaya,* an old fiction literature written by Mpu Tantular in 1365M from Java mentioned some definitions of behaviors of beautiful woman. *Kakawin Arjunawiya* states that beautiful woman is a woman who has melancholy eyes, is not active, her move is slow and calm, and covered her mouth with hand if she is laughing (Yulianto, as cited in Al Rashid 2010 p. 10). From those definitions, it can be concluded that beauty myth of woman behavior in Indonesia, since long time ago and some of those definitions are still believed until now, is defined as nurturing, calm, and submissive woman.

The „beauty myth‟ theory is proposed by Naomi Wolf. It is applied very successfully to the society, with support from media about beauty definition. Both male and female indirectly force the opposite sex to have the same personality as traditional gender roles told them. Many women try hard to gain acknowledgement from others that they are ideal and to become ideal they have to follow traditional gender roles. It fits with Tyson‟s statement that a woman is considered as a „good woman‟ if she obeys patriarchal rules, and she is a „bad woman‟ if she does not (2006 p.89). In other words, women must become feminine based on patriarchal society which is described in media; otherwise she cannot fulfill men‟s expectations about women. This situation often exists in our everyday lives. Woman is forced to be *beautiful* which fits with beauty myth

definitions about *beauty*. It makes woman have lack of choice (Wolf 2002 p. 272). Beauty myth weakens woman‟s performance and limits woman‟s movement. This condition makes the writer wants to raise beauty myth issue in her study. The writer wants to analyze deeply about beauty myth phenomenon and understand beauty myth from different perspective through the film entitled *Me Vs. High Heels.*

In films, people can observe how women really believe and apply beauty myth in their daily lives through the films because films portray real issues in our real lives. There are many Indonesian films which insert the idea of beauty amongst the main conflicts in daily lives through the main female character such as *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta (2002)* starring Dian Sastrowardayo as Cinta*, Heart (2006)* starring Acha Septriyasa as Rachel, *Cinta Pertama (2006)* starring Bunga Citra Lestari as Alya*, Ayat Ayat Cinta (2008)* starring Rianti Cartwright as Aisyah*,* and *Habibie & Ainun (2012)* starring Bunga Citra Lestari as Ainun. Those films describe main female characters as beautiful women who have „beautiful‟ body (all the actresses who play as main female characters are slim, have fair skin, flawless face, and have straight black hair) and have feminine traits on their personalities like weak *(Heart, Cinta Pertama, Habibie & Ainun),* submissive *(Ayat Ayat Cinta, Heart, Habibie & Ainun, Ada Apa Dengan Cinta),* nurturing *(Ayat Ayat Cinta, Habibie & Ainun)*, and emotional *(Cinta Pertama, Ada Apa Dengan Cinta).*

The actresses in the above movies are all beautiful; however those movies do not discuss beauty myth. The main male characters are coupled with the main

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„beautiful" female characters. While *Me Vs. High Heels* is different; this film really performs beauty myth issue as the main conflict to build the story in the film. *Me Vs. High Heels* focuses on a woman named Sasha who does not follow the beauty myth like the other women and because of that, she has trouble when she loves a man named Arnold. She cannot make Arnold falls in love with her because she is not an ideal feminine woman. The next scenes tell about how Sasha tries to become ideal feminine woman. *Me Vs. High Heels* is interesting because the film portrays *beauty myth* from different perspective and understands *beauty myth* with different ways.

Me Vs. High Heels is a 2005 Indonesian film starring Ayushita and based on the novel in the same title, *Me Vs. High Heels* by Maria Ardelia. It was directed by Pingkan Utari, he is also known as Nayato Fio Nuala, Koya Pagayo, Ian Jacobs, and Ciska Dopert. Pingkan Utari is a film director who has already directed more than 50 films since 2002 until 2013. Some of his works are categorized as Indonesia box office movie such as *Panggil Namaku 3X (2005), Cinta Pertama (2006), Ekskul (2006)* and many more.

This study focuses on how *Me Vs. High Heels* film portrays a non-feminine woman who tries hard to follow „beauty myth" and becomes a „good woman" in patriarchal society in order to gain acknowledgement as feminine woman. The main female character wants to become beautiful as an effort to gain attention from a boy named Arnold who is described as a man who loves a woman in feminine physical appearance and behavior. The film explores about the description of beauty myth and how Sasha, as the main character comprehends the

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beauty myth with her own ways. Therefore, the writer is interested to explore how beauty myth is portrayed in this film.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the study there are two main points to be analyzed in the movie:

1. How is beauty myth portrayed in the film?
2. How does Beauty Myth influence the main character „Sasha‟ in the film?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the context-dependency of the statement of the problems, the aim of this scientific study are:

1. To describe and interpret the portrayal of beauty myth in the film.
2. To analyze the influence of beauty myth toward the main character „Sasha‟ in *Me Vs. High Heels* film.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Concerning the objective of the study, there are three significance points from this study. Firstly, the study is expected to contribute valuable insight towards the study of feminism, especially in the beauty myth which introduced by Naomi Wolf. Secondly, this study is expected to give understanding about women in patriarchy ideology related to the believe of beauty. Thirdly, this study is aimed to give valuable contribution for English Department students of Universitas Airlangga, especially those who take cultural studies focusing on feminism issue as their major.

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1.5 Theoritical Background

The feminism theory used in this study is Beauty Myth theory by Naomi Wolf. Wolf‟s theory is discussing about how female is constructed to be *beauty* of feminine ideal. Female is oppressed but she does embody beauty in pleasure. Naomi Wolf also stated that „The quality called "beauty" objectively and universally exist. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men‟ (Wolf 2002 p.12).

This *beauty* description makes women have lack of choice (Ibid p.272), and according to Wolf, that is the problem. Women are always forced indirectly to be feminine figures which men expect. She argues that „The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men‟s institutions and institutional power‟ (Ibid p.13). It means that men are the one who take responsibilities to create the terms of *beauty* and women is the object of those terms. As Wolf said: " …‟ideal‟ imagery has become obsessively important to women because it was meant to become so" (ibid p.59).

As a whole, Naomi Wolf through her „beauty myth‟ does not resist that woman, including her, loves to be beautiful. She stated: „I am not attacking anything that makes women feel good; only what makes us feel bad in the first place. We all like to be desirable and feel beautiful‟ (Wolf 2002 p.271). She disagrees with women who always unhappy with their selves, woman who think that she is not ideal in this patriarchal society.

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Since the object of the study is film so the theory of film is also used. The theory consists of narrative aspect and non-narrative aspect of the film. The narrative aspect focuses on the character and setting of the film. The non-narrative aspect focuses on the character's costumes and color, make up, and performance.

1.6 Definitions of Keyterms

Beauty : Something that men give to woman who submitted her feminine role and were lucky. (Wolf 2002 p.173)

Beauty Myth : Ideal imagery of a woman (Wolf 2002 p.1)

Feminine : Construction of woman should be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. (Hoffstede 1998 p.7)