



**BEAUTY OBSESSION OF THE MAIN
CHARACTER IN SARAI WALKER'S
*DIETLAND***

A THESIS

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Bachelor Degree
Majoring Literature in English Department Faculty of Humanities
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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer honestly confirms that she compiles this thesis by herself and without taking any results from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3 and in diploma degree from any university. The writer ascertains also that she does not quote any material from other publications or someone's paper except the references mentioned.

Semarang, May 2018

Tuti Handayani

MOTTO AND DEDICATION

My success can only come from Allah.

Surah Hud 11:88

And say, "My Lord, increase in me in knowledge".

Surah Taha 20:114

The harder you work, the luckier you are.

Idol Producer 2018

*This thesis is dedicated to
all people who love me with their hearts.*

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WALKER'S *DIETLAND*

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Finally, I expect that this thesis will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about beauty obsession that affects characters behavior.

Semarang, May 2018

Tuti Handayani

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes a novel by Sarai Walker entitled *Dietland*. The novel is about an obese woman who is obsessed with being skinny to fulfill the beauty standard yet she has failed undergone any diet programs. The purpose of this study is to know how hard the main character's struggle in achieving her own beauty standard by examining the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel. The writer uses library and internet research in order to support the study. The intrinsic elements analyzed are character and setting. Moreover, the extrinsic elements analyzed are beauty obsession viewed from feminism approach using theories mainly from *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf. This study shows that in the end, the main character succeeds in finding her own beauty in a different way.

Keywords: obsession, beauty, struggle, diet

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini meneliti sebuah novel karya Sarai Walker yang berjudul *Dietland*. *Dietland* bercerita tentang seorang wanita obesitas yang terobsesi menjadi kurus agar dapat memenuhi standar kecantikan namun telah gagal menjalani berbagai program diet. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui seberapa besar upaya yang dilakukan oleh tokoh utama dalam novel untuk mendapatkan standar kecantikan dirinya sendiri dengan meneliti unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik. Penulis menggunakan metode penelitian pustaka dan internet sebagai pendukung penelitian ini. Teori intrinsik yang diteliti mencakup tokoh dan latar. Sementara unsur ekstrinsik yang diteliti oleh penulis adalah obsesi terhadap kecantikan menggunakan pendekatan feminisme dengan teori dari *The Beauty Myth* oleh Naomi Wolf. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa tokoh utama pada akhirnya dapat menemukan definisi cantik menurut dirinya sendiri dengan cara yang tidak konvensional.

Kata kunci: obsesi, kecantikan, perjuangan, diet

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Men and women have a very strong relationship. Their relationship is not merely for the reproductive relationship but it is more than that. Men need women and vice versa. In other words, men and women depend on one another. Yet, in society, women are always pictured weak and more dependent on men, *“Women, for example, are viewed as more emotional, gentle, understanding, and devoted, whereas men are seen as more active, competitive, independent, and self-confident”* (Denmark and Michele A. Paludi (eds), 2008: 207). This shows that society makes men look more superior than women. Men and women also have roles that help to create the stereotypes.

Men’s role as breadwinner is associated with intellectual intelligence. Meanwhile, women’s role as the angel in the house is associated with physical beauty. Thus, it becomes a priority that should be fulfilled. The ideas of how important beauty comes from the patriarchal system which makes women think it as an obligation. It slowly becomes a standard which is known as the beauty standard.

Basically, the beauty standard differs from one place to the others. One can be considered as beautiful in one place but not in another place. However, today society makes it look the same.

The artist's biographer, Fairfax Downey, described the Gibson Girl image that appeared, for the first time, in an 1890 issue of *Life*: "a tall, radiant being, her gaze clear, fearless and direct, her nose slightly and piquantly uptilted. Her lips fine-modelled and alluring. Her soft hair crowning a serene brow and caught up into a dainty chignon. The graceful column of her neck rising from the décolletage that barely concealed her delicately-rounded bosom. Her slim waist emphasized by the bodice cut of her gowns, gowns still with the vestige of a bustle and with full, smoothly-fluent skirts" (Kitch, 2001: 37-39)

Generally, women that cannot be like the description from the quotation above; slim with a fair complexion, will not be considered beautiful and attractive.

The meaning of the word beautiful remains unconcreted. There are a lot of articles and books which have been discussed on the topic. Donne states that beauty as follows,

There is a reason why we perceive something as beautiful: Physical human beauty is linked to evolutionary patterns, such as the scheme of childlike characteristics, or the advertence of the primary and secondary sexual organs. Other traits, like tanned skin or body weight, depend on our education and culture and so are changing over time. (Donne in Bertinetto, Fabian Dorsch and Cain Todd (eds), 2010: 88)

It can be concluded that beauty is revolutionary meaning that its definition changes according to time, place and education background. Hence, some of the people would say that beauty is actually in the eye of the beholder.

Walker, in her novel, *Dietland*, visualizes the beauty standard that is followed by people especially in America, effects on the daily life of a woman that always feels haunted by the society from being different from the beauty standard applied. The problems in the novel are very interested to analyze. The desire to fulfill the beauty standard makes the main character, Plum, in the novel get obsessed. Plum's beauty obsession and the way she overcomes it, seen from

feminism view, will be discussed in the thesis so this thesis will have the title *Beauty Obsession of the Main Character in Sarai Walker's Dietland*.

1.2. Research Problem

There are several problems that are analyzed in the novel, as follows:

1. How does beauty standard affect the main character in Sarai Walker's *Dietland*?
2. How does the main character in Sarai Walker's *Dietland* overcome her beauty obsession?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

Based on the background of the study and the research problem above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the intrinsic elements shown in the novel.
2. To analyze the cause and effect of beauty obsession the main character has.
3. To analyze the how the main character overcome the beauty obsession she has.

1.4. Method of the Study

The writer uses library research in order to gather information needed to support the thesis. George states that library research "*involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal/expert opinion on a research question; necessary component of every other research method at some point*" (2008: 6). The writer gathers information not only from printed books but also eBooks that are provided on the internet. Furthermore, the writer uses feminism approach to analyze the problem that the main character has with beauty standard.

1.5. Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of five chapters, in which each chapter is also divided into sub-chapters. The list below is how the writer will arrange the whole thesis:

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five parts: background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, methods of the study, and organization of the study.

CHAPTER 2 AUTHOR AND HER WORK

The short biography of the author of *Dietland*, Sarai Walker and the summary of the novel are represented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the writer explains theories that are relevant to the topics that would be discussed further in the next chapter. There are two elements to discuss the novel, those are intrinsic and extrinsic elements. In the theory of intrinsic elements, the writer explains what the characters and setting are. Hence, in the theory of the extrinsic elements, the writer explains the causes of beauty obsession by using feminism approach.

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses the analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel. The intrinsic elements discussed are the characters and the setting that build the whole story of the novel. The extrinsic elements discussed in this chapter are the causes that make the main character of the novel obsessed with a beauty standard and how she overcomes it.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the writer concludes and summarizes what has been discussed in chapter 4.

REFERENCES

CHAPTER 2

AUTHOR AND HER WORK

2.1. Sarai Walker's Biography

Sarai Walker received her MFA in creative writing from Bennington College and Ph.D. in English from the University of London. Her essays were published in the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, and the *Washington Post*. Moreover, she wrote articles for magazines including *Seventeen* and *Mademoiselle* before she became a writer and editor for *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in 2005. She also has taught writing and literature in several universities. *Dietland* is her first novel which is published in 2015 by Houghton Mufflin publisher. She is now living in Los Angeles and currently working on *Dietland* television series that will be aired in 2018. Besides her work on the tv series, she is also writing a tv pilot and working on her second novel.

Source: Retrieved February 3, 2018, from <http://www.saraiwalker.com/about/>

2.2. *Dietland* Summary

Alicia Kettle, the main character of the novel *Dietland*, is the real name of Plum Kettle. She has been fat for the entire of her life. When she is a teenager, she joins a diet program called The Baptist Program by Eulayla Baptist. In the middle of the program, Eulayla dies in a car accident and her daughter shuts the program down. Plum's hope is gone.

In the college year, Plum starts to join another diet program called Waist Watcher. Yet, the program fails for her. At the same time, Plum begins to be close to a boy named Tristan, but she is rejected causing her taking an anti-depressant. The failures of the diet programs make Plum decide to have gastric bypass hoping that her life would change.

Plum worked as the person who replies the mails for Kitty Montgomery, a senior editor in a popular teen magazine, *Daisy Chain*. Her life starts to change when a weird woman, Leeta, follows her everywhere. The woman leaves a book for Plum entitled *Adventures in Dietland* by Verena Baptist, Eulayla Baptist's daughter. The one Plum thinks who ruins her expectation.

Plum meets Verena eventually. Verena offers Plum with \$20,000 to reconsider her surgery and to follow The New Baptist Program. She accepts Verena's offer. Verena gives Plum five tasks that Plum should complete. At the beginning of the program, Plum is not confident for the result because she only thinks of the money. The first task of the program is withdrawal: Plum should give up taking the anti-depressant. She is unsure because she always takes the medication every day but she does it anyway. Plum gradually gives up the medication. As the result, she feels sick as the side effect of the withdrawal of the anti-depressant, but she manages to overcome it.

The second task is confrontation. Plum should defend herself from any harassment that she gets from people. She should take an action instead of just ignore the bullies. She doubts herself to do the task since she does not want to be

the center of attention: she does it eventually. It is hard but she feels relieved after defending herself.

The third task is makeover. Plum meets a former celebrity, Marlowe Buchanan, who guides her makeover. Plum is taught to be confident with herself. All this time, Plum always wears black dresses to hide from society but Marlowe forces her to try on some more cheerful outfits. Plum cannot help but obeys what Marlowe says even though she is really embarrassed. At last, she can accept the makeover and enjoys it.

Task fourth of the program is blind dates. Verena says to Plum there are four men that will have the blind date with Plum. Heartache is the reason why Plum takes anti-depressant and she never has any date after that. Plum accepts Verena task and meets the four men. No one is good for her. She also gets rejected but at least Plum is ready to open her heart again and to forget the man in her past.

The fifth, the last task, is disconnecting and reflecting. The last task is the hardest task for Plum. She should stay in an underground apartment without light from outside. The underground apartment has everything that Plum needs to live in, except mirror to prevent Plum from looking down at her own reflection. In the apartment, there is a room that is full of screens that show porn videos which are connected to a porn site. Plum is not convenient to watch those videos, but it is a part of the task. Plum should reflect from the videos. After days in the apartment, Plum goes up with a different point of view for her happiness. In the end, Plum gets the money that Verena has offered and the happiness she is looking for.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1. Intrinsic Elements

This chapter contains the theories of intrinsic elements that are important as the foundation for building the story. There are a couple theories that will be discussed in the intrinsic elements, those are the characters and the settings.

3.1.1. Characters

According to Barnet, a character is "*a figure in a literary work or the personality of such a figure*" (1989: 37). The character in literary work is the person who has the personality which represents a figure of a human being in the real world. There is another definition of character by Potter, as follows,

Characters are basic elements in much imaginative literature and therefore they merit the considerable attention paid to them. When critics speak of a character, they mean any person who figures in a literary work, not particularly a peculiar or eccentric one; sometimes a given character does not actually appear but is merely talked about (1967: 443).

The characters are not only the figures who are often shown and talked about in a literary work but also the figures who are rarely shown. All characters in a literary work are important elements in building a story.

3.1.2. Setting

The setting is one of the most important things in a literary work since it shows the elements in which the story happens. Meyer states,

The setting is the context in which the action of a story occurs. The major elements of setting are the time, place, and social environment that frame the characters. These elements establish the world in which the characters

act. In most stories, they also serve as more than background and furnishings. If we are sensitive to the context provided by setting, we are better able to understand the behavior of the characters and the significance of their actions (1990: 107).

From the quotes above, it can be explained that setting is able to visualize the actions of the characters. Generally, settings have a correlation with the culture that affects the characters' behavior. Furthermore, Holman explains the definition of each of the setting elements: the setting of place, time, and social environment.

The setting of the place is *"the actual geographic location, including topography, scenery, and such a physical arrangement as the location of the windows and doors in a room"* (Holman, 1992: 453). The setting of place in a story could be a real place which is on a map or just a fiction which the author makes up. The author of literary work sometimes makes a story happen in the real place to make the story more realistic.

Meanwhile, the setting of time *"determines the time or period in which the action takes place, e.g., epoch in history, season of the year, etc"* (Holman, 1992: 453). The setting of time is usually shown by the author of the literary work by writing the exact time. Some authors choose to give the readers hints like what clothes that the characters wear, what gadget that characters use, etc.

Holman also states that *"setting of social background is the general environment of the character, e.g., religious, mental, moral, social, and emotional condition through which the people in the narrative move"* (1992: 453). The setting of social environment is a really important aspect of a literary work making the readers understand what actually happens in the society.

3.2. Extrinsic Elements

This study uses feminism approach to analyze the character's obsession with beauty standard. The author uses the theories mostly from *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf and other theories from various feminism theorists in order to support the main theories.

3.2.1. Identity

Identity is one of the important elements that an individual must have. Identity functions to distinguish one individual to another. It shows who or what the individual is. Tajfel and Turner in *Social Identity Theory* say that an individual does not just have a personal selfhood, but multiple selves and identities associated with their affiliated groups. A person might act differently in varying social contexts according to the groups they belong to, which might include a sports team they follow, their family, their country of nationality, and the neighborhood they live in, among many other possibilities (1986: 7-24.)

Wolf gives a more specific statement of a woman identity, she states that *"most urgently, women's identity must be premised upon our "beauty" so that we will remain vulnerable to outside approval, carrying the vital sensitive organ of self-esteem exposed to the air"* (2002: 14). From the quotes stated, it can be concluded that most woman's identity is judged by her physical appearance which has no strong relationship with the real identity that a woman has.

3.2.2. Femininity and Interpellation

All people are born with their special natural characters including a woman. Those natural characters can be called as masculinity and femininity, *"the terms*

masculinity and femininity are simply cognitive constructs with no independent existence in nature” (Denmark and Michele A. Paludi (eds), 2008: 104). The natural character that a woman or a man has could not be changed and it is different from one and another that means everyone is special in his own way. It is clear that a woman also has specific characteristics that differ from other women, such as big breast, small breast, red hair or blonde hair- they are all naturally gifted. Yet, the society forces all women to be the same by defining them to be the feminine creature whose same characteristics.

Wolf has stated in her books several times about this issue one of which as follows, *“the more financially independent, in control of events, educated and sexually autonomous women become in the world, the more impoverished, out of control, foolish, and sexually insecure we are asked to feel in our bodies”* (2002: 197). When a woman is told that there is something wrong with her body because she is different from another woman, it means that she has been made to hate the femaleness that she has. It could be the reason why a lot of women are insecure about what they have already had for the entirety of their life since it is considered as something wrong for the society.

These femininity issues are started from men domination in every aspect of life. Bourdieu states in his book about the problems as follows,

They exist first through and for the gaze of others, that is, as welcoming, attractive and available objects. They are expected to be 'feminine', that is to say, smiling, friendly, attentive, submissive, demure, restrained, self-effacing. And what is called 'femininity' is often nothing other than a form of indulgence towards real or supposed male expectations, particularly as regards the aggrandizement of the ego (2001: 66).

Men have dominated the world since long time ago that they manage to rule and control the world like what they want including controlling women. This means that women are ought to act and behave like what men want them to do. Men tend to construct the culture.

The culture that is already constructed is learned and taught through generations as if it has already existed since long time ago without asking why the cultural ideas happen. The theory is called interpellation. Louis Althusser is the man behind the theory. Today, people are already constructed by cultural ideas since they were born. Cultural ideas have already shaped the society's behaviors; this is including how the society views women. Culler states about the interpellation as follows,

You are addressed – by ads, for instance – as a particular sort of subject (a consumer who values certain qualities), and by being repeatedly hailed in this way you come to occupy such a position. Cultural studies ask how far we are manipulated by cultural forms and how far or in what ways we are able to use them for other purposes, exercising ‘agency’, as it is called (1997: 45).

From the quote above, it can be seen that humans are the interpellation object, especially women. Advertisements, tv, and media try to shape women to be the same: they have to be slim, feminine and submissive.

3.2.3. Beauty Image

How the women should look or the beauty image is also the result of men domination. This beauty image has already spread and become the standard that all women should follow. Beauty image has been developed by men, then women have already obeyed it for a long time. This cultural behavior has already affected what women see on beauty, *“a cultural fixation on female thinness is not an obsession*

about female beauty but an obsession about female obedience” (Wolf, 2002: 187).

The very first condition for women to be called as beautiful is being thin or slim. It is also supported by the media that all women that look thin are beautiful. Thereby, women become obsessed with being thin or slim. The standard for women to be called beautiful is actually not from the women themselves but it is from men that expect all women to be what they want from women, in order to be called beautiful. It means that women that are obsessed with thinness because of following the beauty standard are actually obeying men.

Bourdieu also states that,

The female body at once offered and refused manifests the symbolic availability which, as a number of feminist works have shown, is incumbent upon women, the combination of a power of attraction and seduction that is known and recognized by all, both men and women, and tending to honor the men on whom they depend or to whom they are linked, and a duty of selective refusal which adds the price of exclusivity to the effect of 'conspicuous consumption' (2001: 29-30).

The female bodies are only the objects that men use to fulfill their sexual desirability since women are considered as the object that must be obedient to what men say. Women should be attractive according to the beauty standard which has been developed by the society. The image that women must have is an object to honor the men.

“The cultural thinness ideal does not promote a healthy lifestyle” (Denmark and Michele A. Paludi (eds), 2008: 376). The quote says that some women who are trying to obey the conditions of being beautiful to have to sacrifice themselves by having such hard eating behavior or hard diet. The diet itself sometimes leads to an

unhealthy lifestyle which only makes women become sick and suffering from the eating disorder such as anorexia and bulimia.

The beauty standard has become the most important thing that cannot be separated from women's lives as follows in the quotation, "*there is a high societal priority placed on women's thinness and attractiveness. Indeed, much of American culture and gender politics supports an objectification of women's bodies*" (Denmark and Michele A. Paludi (eds), 2008: 377). Judged by the culture, women that are not thin, slim or attractive are not welcome and they are required to change themselves. Wolf also states,

But since we as women are trained to see ourselves as cheap imitations of fashion photographs, rather than seeing fashion photographs as cheap imitations of women, we are urged to study ways to light up our features as if they were photographs marred by motion, acting as our own lighting designer and stylist and photographer, our faces handled like museum pieces, expertly lit with highlights, lowlights, Light Effects, Frost n' Glow, Light Powder, Iridescence, and Iridience (2002: 105).

The statement above shows that women actually have no value in front of men. Women must be obedient to the standard that has been made by the cultural ideas in order to be able to live in a good way without any resistance.

3.2.4. Violence

Beauty image of women leads so many women to be obsessed with having the perfection of their bodies. Some women are able to fit the perfect beauty image but the others are not able to fit it resulting judgmental society. Wolf declares that "*beauty discrimination has become necessary, not from the perception that women will not be good enough, but that they will be, as they have been, twice as good*" (2002:22). The society who judges and compares one beauty to another becomes

natural activity. This society has created a horrifying standard for women which is called as the beauty standard. The standard valuation has led to discrimination which women considered beautiful according to the standard are getting praised, on the other way, women considered ugly are getting insulted.

“Beauty provokes harassment, the law says, but it looks through men’s eyes when deciding what provokes it” (Wolf, 2002: 45). Beauty discrimination always culminates in violence. The kinds of violence possibly done are verbal, physical, and ignorance. The verbal violence includes mocking with the words that possibly hurt the victims; the physical violence is the violence done by hurting the body’s part of the victims. Furthermore, ignorance is the most effective to hurt people. People getting ignored sometimes think that they are not worth the attention they actually have to get. When a person gets violated, people around them must take care of the victim instead of just ignore him which will lead to the more serious condition. The victim usually thinks that he is not a part of the society and he needs to disappear which sometimes lead to more dangerous actions like self-harming or even suicide.

Effects that are widely agreed on include low self-esteem, clinical levels of depression, compliance or lack of assertiveness, feelings of low control or helplessness, strong fear reactions to threatening situations, vulnerability to medical illness, and a sense of needing to hold one’s aggressiveness in check because of a fear of being overwhelmed (Denmark and Michele A. Paludi (eds), 2008: 324).

From the quotation above, the harassment affects the victims' personalities. Apparently, the victims who are affected severely tends to have harder lives. It must be noted that the victims should be taken care of well.

3.2.5. Cosmetic Surgery

The insecurities of not being able to fulfill the beauty standard could lead to action that would change the perspective and the image of beauty for women which is by doing some cosmetic surgery, *“surgeons can now do anything. We have not yet reached the age in which we can defend ourselves with an unwillingness to have “anything” done. This is a dangerous time. New possibilities for women quickly become new obligations”* (Wolf, 2002:253). The struggle for beauty has led some women to take a shortcut to grab the definition of beautiful in their bodies by using technology. This is caused by women’s helplessness in defending what they have already had.

“Since there is nothing wrong with women's faces or bodies that social change won't cure; so, the surgeons depend for their income on warping female self-perception and multiplying female self-hatred” (Wolf, 2002: 232). This shows that the women perception of being beautiful is wrong because of society. The women who cannot fulfill the definition of beautiful are forced to hate themselves for being what they are. Unfortunately, not all women have good incomes to afford to do surgery so they are even being miserable for not being able to change the bodies that they have.

“Beauty was no longer just a symbolic form of currency; it literally became money” (Wolf, 2002: 21). The progression of the cosmetic surgery nowadays shows that women’s insecurities are the source of money. It is combined with the advancement of makeups and fashions. Women beauty insecurities have become the field of business.

3.2.6. Love Relationship

As known for centuries, before the marriage, a woman has to present in a battlefield of the marriage market. A woman should compete with other women to get the most decent man to be her husband. Today's society is no different. A woman still has to compete with her appearance to get a love.

Wolf states, *“physical attraction, obviously, played its part; but “beauty” as we understand it was not, for ordinary women, a serious issue in the marriage marketplace”* (2002:14). Beauty can be defined as anything since it has various meaning and understanding. In the marriage marketplace, appearance is still the most influential factor to determine whether or not for a woman to be successful in getting a decent man. In many occasions, a woman who is considered as valuable physically has more chances to get a husband.

Some researchers have proven the power of physical appearance one of which as follows,

Even during the earliest stages of life, infants show a preference for attractive faces (Langlois, Rogmann, & Rieser-Danner, 1990). Smith (1985) demonstrated similar results by showing that preferential treatment was shown toward the prettiest preschooler peers. Synder, Berscheid, and Glick (1985) showed evidence that high self-monitors showed more interest in the physical appearance of their potential mates (Braxton-Davis in McNair, 2010: 6-7).

A human being has been selective since he was born. It affects how a man rather chooses a woman with attractive physical appearances than less attractive ones. This becomes one of the biggest issues that women have to face. Most women want romantic relationships either to fulfill their sexual desires or to have a family. Becoming a wife and a mother is still most girls' main goal. Unfortunately, some

women cannot fulfill their goal due to their lack of “attractiveness”. Some women are also afraid that they will never get the loves they need. This can be the reasons why women try hard to look physically attractive by dieting, working out or even getting cosmetic surgery. Love can be one of the biggest factors to make women insecure.

Back to the reality, love is all about taste. Wolf states,

A man who wants to define himself as a real lover of women admires what shows of her past on a woman’s face, before she ever saw him, and the adventures and stresses that her body has undergone, the scars of trauma, the changes of childbirth, her distinguishing characteristics, the light in her expression. The number of men who already see in this way is far greater than the arbiters of mass culture would lead us to believe, since the story they need to tell ends with the opposite moral (2002:177).

In the end, not only physically attractive women get the love they want but also physically less attractive women experience the same. It is true that physical appearance has a big role in the relationship, but other factors such as attitude and behavior also determine the relationship. How a man accepts a woman and vice versa is something that must be noted. A relationship is all about consideration and seeing thoroughly in human beings rather than only by looking at the most superficial thing like physical appearance.

3.2.7. Self-Esteem

The necessity of being perfect women in front of men burdens women. The stare, talk, opinion, and insult are making women suffer so that the burden they should take only makes them more stressful thus can affect their physical health. *“Maybe the less pain women inflict on our bodies, the more beautiful our bodies will look*

to us” (Wolf, 1991: 291). When women little by little release their burden about the beauty standard, eventually they will find the beauty that they are looking for.

Women should live their lives with their own ways, “*the greater women grow, the more power is supported to show professions: they are having significant role to raise women value*” (Wolf, 2002: 27). When women look powerful by their jobs, the bodies that they have do not matter as long as they are able to show their capabilities to be independent and worthwhile for the society. “*The woman wins who calls herself beautiful and challenges the world to change to truly see her* (Wolf, 2002: 290)”. The women that successfully find their definition of beauty manage to call themselves beautiful without the burdens that lead them to change what they are. Instead, they ask the society to change what they see about them. They are not objects which are easily replaced or shaped. They are independent individuals that are capable to face the cruelty of life.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the analysis of the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects which are shown in the novel. The intrinsic aspect discusses the characters and the settings which build the story in the novel *Dietland*. The extrinsic aspects using the feminism approach discusses the beauty obsession shown in the novel. The theories related to the analysis have already been discussed in the previous chapter, theoretical frameworks.

4.1. Intrinsic Elements

4.1.1. Character

4.1.1.1. Alicia ‘Plum’ Kettle

Plum is the main character in *Dietland*. Plum is a 30-year-old woman who works as a ghostwriter in a very famous teen magazine called *Daisy Chain*. The fact that she has been fat all her life, that is three hundred and four pounds, makes her lose confidence (Walker, 2015: 6). She always blames her weight for every humiliating situation and the source of her problems. She hates the gaze everyone gives her in public places and thinks that she is the strangest creature in the world that makes her love to live and work alone.

Most people treat Plum differently as if she is not a human being. With the mistreatments she gets from the society, Plum really wants to lose weight and live normally like other people without worrying what other people see in her. Her insecurity has made her depressed so that she wants to disappear from this world so

that she tries to disguise her body by wearing black clothes all the time. *“I always wore black and rarely deviated from the uniform of ankle-length skirts and long-sleeved cotton tops, even in the summer* (Walker, 2015: 14-15). Plum thinks that the black clothes she wears are able to make her look smaller so people will stop stare strangely at her. Moreover, she believes that the color is able to make her invisible to people's eyes so that the insults, scorn, and problems will also disappear.

4.1.1.2. Verena Baptist

Verena Baptist is a daughter of Eulayla Baptist, the founder of Baptist Diet Program which Plum had undergone while she was a teenager. After the death of her parents, Verena closed down the business made most Baptists, people who had undergone Baptist Diet Program, in despair including Plum. In other words, Plum thinks that Verena has ruined her dream (Walker, 2015: 29).

Verena is a very rich woman having a very amazing background who leads a feminist organization that empowers women with capabilities to change the world as seen on the quote, *“Verena said she had no intention of writing another book, that Adventures in Dietland was her one and only. She said she wasn't a writer, but a philanthropist, an activist. She had also trained as a therapist, but she didn't practice anymore* (Walker, 2015: 88).” She writes a book entitled *Adventures in Dietland* which exposes what is the behind of her mother's business, Baptist Diet Program, and similar businesses. The book makes Plum think differently about Verena. Eventually, Verena becomes the one who inspires Plum to change her perspective of beauty that will be elaborated more in the extrinsic element subchapter.

4.1.1.3. Leeta

Leeta is a young woman that works as an intern at the same company as Plum. She has stalked Plum that makes Plum really annoyed. Plum thinks that she is not worth to be followed but suddenly there is a strange girl following her around. “*The first time I noticed the girl in a conscious way was at the café.*” (Walker, 2015: 3). Plum works at her friend’s cafe when she notices Leeta for the first time. Leeta has the look that catches everyone’s attention, unlike Plum who chooses to be unnoticed.

Leeta has become one of the most important people to Plum. In the beginning, Plum does not feel comfortable to be watched but then Leeta gives Plum a book entitled *Adventures in Dietland* by Verena Baptist which has made Plum changes her vision of the world.

Adventures in Dietland. It was a book by Verena Baptist. Her name wasn’t familiar to me until I read the description on the back. When I realized who she was, I squeezed my eyes shut. I might have been in the Austen Tower, suspended in the air by nothing more than concrete and steel, but in my mind, I traveled to Harper Lane, back in time to my childhood home. I felt a pang, the kind that memories bring. How did the girl know? She couldn’t have known (Walker,2015: 29).

Plum does not know the aim of Leeta giving her the book but Plum is really grateful that Leeta has followed her. Leeta is like Plum’s gate of happiness. Without Leeta, Plum will never meet great people who will change her life.

4.1.1.4. Marlowe Buchanan

Marlowe Buchanan is a former actress from a very famous television series in the 80's. In her career as an actress, she has an image of a very beautiful white girl with long blonde hair so that she becomes a beauty image at the time. Marlowe has to give up her career when she is accidentally noticed for cutting short her iconic hair

during her vacation in Italy. Producers and people think that she is not a role model for beauty standard anymore since she has lost the image that makes her look like an ordinary girl. Moreover, the worst part of it is that she is also considered as ugly since she also gains a lot of weight during the vacation.

When for the first time Plum meets Marlowe for having her makeover, which will be explained in the makeover subchapter, she is a little surprised because none of Marlowe's image from the past still remains. Marlowe is now a mother and a writer who has the same figure as Plum, obese. *"When Marlowe's acting career ended, she earned a bachelor's degree and then a Ph.D. She wrote a book called *Fuckability Theory*, which took concepts from Hollywood and applied them to the rest of society"* (Walker, 2015: 138). Even though she has transformed into a very different image, Marlowe is very confident with her new image and is very proud of what she has already achieved. Her new image successfully makes Plum think differently how actually fat women are able to express themselves like other women. Marlowe has become one of the great people who has changed Plum's point of view of what beauty is.

4.1.2. Setting

4.1.2.1. Setting of Place

This novel takes place in three cities that the main character, Plum, has ever lived in. Each city Plum has lived has different memories that Plum will never forget. It can be said that those places are the part of Plum's voyage to happiness. Those places are Harper Lane, Vermont, and New York.

Plum spends her childhood in Harper Lane, located in Los Angeles, in her great-aunt's house. In this house, Plum lives with her mother, her great-aunt named Delia and Delia's husband, Herbert. Before Plum moves to Harper Lane, she lives in Boise with her parents. Unfortunately, her parents are divorced making Plum should live separately with her father (Walker, 2015: 33). Harper Lane is the place that Plum totally loses her self-belief. For the first time, Plum gets bullied and hates her own shape so that she wants to be another person. Plum also finds out Baptist Diet Program and follows it when she is in Harper Lane which the program has already ruined Plum's dream and expectation for becoming slim when it is suddenly closed down. For Plum, Harper Lane remains bad memories about failing her goal.

This novel also takes place in Vermont. Plum goes to college here and falls in love for the first time. Unfortunately, Plum gets rejected that makes her begin to take an antidepressant to take away her pain that will be discussed further in the extrinsic analysis. Her mom even visits her to check out whether she is okay or not since she is worried so much about Plum's condition as seen in the following quotation, "*my mother flew to Vermont*" (Walker, 2015: 5).

After Plum graduates from college, she moves to New York to work. She lives in her mother's cousin's, Jeremy, apartment since he moves away from New York. "*I lived in an apartment on Swann Street in Brooklyn, on the second floor of a brownstone*" (Walker, 2015: 5-6). In New York, Plum meets some people that manage to change Plum's perspective on life and beauty. Those people are Verena, Leeta, Marlowe, and some other women with different beauty image point of views.

In the city, Plum succeeds in finding the real meaning of beauty and happiness and also finally throws away her beauty obsession.

4.1.2.2. Setting of Time

This novel is set in late spring which will enter the summer. *“It was late in the spring when I noticed that a girl was following me, nearly the end of May”* (Walker, 2015: 3). Spring is the season where flowers bloom which signs as the opening of a new book. The new book is opened to start a new story. The correlation with the story in the novel is Plum that has gloomy personality resets her life and begins to discover and starts a life that can make her happy.

The season continues in the summer which has very hot sunshine and longer daylight indicating no more darkness. As summer comes, many people come to the beach and wear clothes that are revealing for fun which means no secret and fear to show. As the summer comes, Plum, who has managed to get her self-belief, is already ready to face the world. She does not want to hide again. She is not afraid of what people think of her. The proof that the story is set in summer is, *“One letter was from Austen Media, dated from the summer”* (Walker, 2015:179).

Hence, Plum lives at the time when the internet is an easy thing to be accessed which the beauty standard can be spread more easily. As stated in the previous subchapter, Plum works at a teenage girl magazine as a ghostwriter which accepts emails from girls all around America who easily share their thoughts of beauty through the internet. On the internet, there are social media which become the place for women who are qualified in beauty standard to show off their beauties.

This condition makes women who are not qualified feel inferior. Plum who is included in the unqualified women feels not confident with her appearance.

4.1.2.3. Setting of Social Environment

In the novel, the environment that Plum lives in is the environment where its people greatly deify appearance where people they perceive differently is an oddity that does not deserve to be in their society. That situation has urged Plum to work from home rather than in her office because people do not want to see something different in the usual environment they occupy. When I finally met Kitty in her office, she suggested I could work from home. *"We're a bit tight for space." Working from home made the job more appealing, but I said I would need to think about it"* (Walker, 2015: 23). From the quote stated, it is assumed that Plum is not welcomed to work with her co-workers since she is fat which makes her different.

In addition, as known in the subchapter setting of places, Plum ever lives in three places that have kind of similarity. Those places are Harper Lane located in Los Angeles which is well-known as the world's entertainment capital, Vermont, a state in New England that has more than twenty universities and colleges, and New York which is well-known as world's fashion capital. These places where appearance becomes the thing that most people should invest in. It can be assumed that those places have higher beauty standard since those places always become the spotlight. Actors and models living in Los Angeles and New York are popular for their beauties. Furthermore, Vermont is a state having a lot of universities and colleges becomes the place where youth live and study. The youth are usually highly

invested into fashion so it implies that appearance is one of the most important things that should be taken care of.

4.2. Extrinsic Elements

The extrinsic elements of this analysis are about the reason why the main character gets obsessed with being beautiful according to the beauty standard in the United States of America as the main character lives in. By using feminism approach which theories have been discussed in the previous chapter, the extrinsic are analyzed to understand why the main character has the beauty obsession and how she overcomes it.

4.2.1. Beauty Obsession

For most people, when assessing a woman, physical beauty will first to be judged before looking at other aspects so many women are competing to get the best value with attractive physical appearance. Meanwhile, in the novel by Sarai Walker, *Dietland*, physical beauty is the major problem possessed by the main character, Plum Kettle.

4.2.1.1. Plum's Identity Crisis

The lack of identity that someone has might become a disaster. Like Plum, the main character of *Dietland*, she has a problem with her identity. Plum is a 30-year-old woman who supposed to not to care about the issue called the identity crisis. Identity crisis is commonly found in teenager phase. In her age, she is supposed to be mature and stable with her life and know what she is doing. How Plum describes herself and her life which is stated in the novel about who she is will be discussed

more in this subchapter which is very related to the identity theory especially Plum's identity as a woman.

Plum has a really deep thought. She is obese and only has few people around her, making her sad. Plum is actually lonely which can be seen in the following quotation, "*In my real life I would have more friends, and dinner parties and overnight guests, but my life wasn't real yet*" (Walker, 2015: 6). Plum is not satisfied with her life and she wants something more than what it is. Plum actually wants to have fun and live like other people. It can be assumed that Plum is a shy person that cannot socialize well with her surroundings. As stated before that Plum is an obese woman can be an indication that Plum does not want to expose herself and make friends. The fact that Plum considers her life as unreal is also an indication that Plum actually is not ready to face the reality so that she wants to be someone else that makes her life like what she dreams about.

Plum thinks that she is not like other women at her age. Plum works as a person who replies emails from teenage girls all around America as Kitty in a teenage magazine, *Daisy Chain*. Plum's daily life that should deal with those girls' problems makes her think that she is actually one of the girls. It is stated in the following quotation, "*I was more like one of Kitty's teenage girls compared to them, even though I was almost thirty. When I was around women who had grown-up lives, the kind of life I thought I should have, I felt suspended in time, like an animal floating in a jar of formaldehyde*" (Walker, 2015: 7). Kitty's girls are the readers of *Daisy Chain* that most of them have the similar problem like Plum, identity crisis. For teenagers, an identity crisis is common that can be called as the

cycle to adulthood. Meanwhile, Plum herself is an adult who is supposed to have found her identity and be able to call herself as an adult. She feels like she is far left behind by other women at her age. She is still at the stage of finding and questioning who she is meanwhile most women at her age have been settled with life.

Plum is still haunted by her childhood. What happened in the past sometimes can affect the present. It also occurs to Plum that thinks that her name defines what she actually looks. In the childhood, it is common that kids have nicknames which sometimes the nicknames are the visualization of their appearances. The nickname that Plum's parents have given to her unexpectedly means a lot to Plum. Plum's real name is Alicia but because of her appearance, she thinks that the name Plum is more suitable for her. Plum thinks that the name Alicia is only for someone who is elegant and feminine but she thinks that she is the opposite of the name. *“A pearl, a plum—roundness defined me. Every year on the first day of school the teacher would take attendance, and when she reached my name, she would say, “Alicia Kettle?” and then I’d have to tell her I was called Plum. Plum. Plump. Piggy. Alicia is me but not me”* (Walker, 2015: 38). From the quotation, Plum has the habit to tell to people she first meets to call her Plum instead of Alicia. It can be seen that Plum is not confident for having such a beautiful name and thinks that Alicia and Plum are not one person. Besides, plum is the name of rounded fruit with reddish purple color. Actually, the color of plum itself is associated with something feminine but Plum only sees it from one side which means that Plum has always negative thought that makes her more pitiful with her current condition.

Plum is not happy with her current condition. As stated in the previous paragraph that Plum thinks that Alicia and Plum are not one-person, Plum thinks that becoming Alicia will be able to make her life happy. The statement is very clear that Plum is confused with herself indicating identity crisis. *“I’m not surprised. You believe there’s a thin woman inside you, waiting to be set free”* (Walker, 2015: 105). The quotation stated about Plum want to be her other self. The fact that Plum is obese makes Plum wants to change it and become a slim woman so that it will be able to change her life. She is certain that when she manages to lose weight and become slim like other people, she will find the happiness and deserve to call herself as Alicia.

4.2.1.2. Plum’s Femaleness

Being a woman means being identified as has been discussed in the theoretical frameworks about how femininity and interpellation work. When someone is able to call herself as a woman that means she has obtained one description to tell her what she is. As discussed in the previous subchapter, Plum is not satisfied with her own condition influencing the way of her think about her body. Plum believes that she can change her body parts that she does not like. It implies that Plum is certain that she only crosses her current condition and she will be able to leave it making her do not appreciate what she has already had since she was born being a woman with her natural characteristics, femaleness. The parts that can describe Plum as a woman.

She saw these things as fixed, for the most part. “You’re beautiful the way you are,” she would always say, and it seemed as if she meant it. Once when we argued about dieting, she said, “You look like Grandma,” meaning:

“You look like Grandma and there’s nothing you can do about it” (Walker, 2015: 43).

From the quotation above, it is indicated that Plum’s mother does not think Plum’s weight as a problem. It can be identified that Plum’s mother has slim figure unlike Plum and her grandmother since Plum's mother always says that Plum resembles her grandmother that her mother finds it as something genetically transferred. The fact that Plum's mother is slim can be the reason why her mother does not consider Plum's weight as a big problem which makes Plum does not like that attitude even though her mother has already shown her affection for Plum by telling her beautiful the way she is yet being obese is the biggest problem for Plum.

The fact that Plum hates her body makes her thinks that she is different from other women. *“I have a womb,” I said. “Of course, you do. You’re a woman.” Underneath my bulky exterior, I was like every other woman, even if I had never been allowed to feel that way”* (Walker, 2015: 167). From the quotation, it can be identified that Plum is able to tell herself a woman but she doubts herself is like one of which. Even though, the fact that every woman has a womb still makes Plum is surprised that she actually has one. A womb is one of the organs that a woman has to get pregnant. The fact that every month Plum gets period is not enough evidence for Plum to tell herself as a woman. Plum lets herself buried in her own world that her thought is full of doubt of herself.

4.2.1.3. Plum’s Beauty Image

Plum does not accept her body shape and thinks that her body's shape and weight are the sources of her problems all this time so that Plum wants to lose her weight. As known that beauty standard applied in the society especially in American society

is a woman with a slim figure. It has been stated in the theoretical frameworks about how a woman can be called as beautiful. Since Plum is obese, she does not fit in the beauty standard applied.

For Plum, being obese is a misery so that she wants to cast away her body's weight which she thinks is embarrassing. Plum wants to look like other girls at her age that have a lot smaller size. Since she suffers from the obesity, she wants to lose weight to get her ideal body. *"I imagined seeing that photo on TV, me in my ever-present black dress, the roll of fat under my chin. Burst! I'd obliterate that hideous girl"* (Walker, 2015: 42). From the quotation above, it can be identified that media plays well in influencing people. What Plum sees on the TV is always beautiful girls who are slim and they seem having happy lives. Plum dreams of a life like girls on television so she wants to change her body by dieting. From a TV commercial, Plum knows Baptist Diet Program, found by Eulayla Baptist, that shows the transformations of fat women becoming slim ones. At the time, Plum is only a teenager that is in her growth period which the wrong diet will harsh her health.

As a teenager, Plum should watch her diet. It is true that Plum needs to eat healthy food but having a diet like an adult is not good for the health of a teenager body that needs a lot of nutrition to help her grow. Plum does not think too far like that since she is suffering from obesity and her vision is blinded by being slim. Even though adult's diet will harm Plum's health, she insists to do it. Since her mother does not approve the program, Plum pays the program by herself by working part-time. *"There were too many ingredients to count. I took smaller portions and*

sometimes skipped lunch at school, but I didn't like being hungry" (Walker, 2015: 43). While having the program, Plum actually feels more suffering since she has to count the calories in every meal she has, she has to feel hungry which she hates the feeling even she gets sick by doing the program. Eventually, Plum does not succeed with the program since the program is shut down by the daughter of Eulayla Baptist after her death which has been discussed in the character of Verena Baptist. Plum and other women who follow the program soon to hate the daughter of Eulayla Baptist for making them despair for stopping and ruining their dream to become slim.

The fact that she fails in following the Baptist Program when a teenager, Plum does not give up to follow another diet program called Waist Watcher, *"in college I joined Waist Watchers since they held meetings right on campus. When I became disillusioned with their program I followed the diet plans outlined in books and magazines"* (Walker, 2015: 65). Plum still has hope to transform her body to be slim so she will be able to fit in the society and will not be ashamed of her body. Plum still tries very hard to follow every plan so that she becomes obsessed and delusional that when she follows every plan, she will get her ideal body soon.

Beauty standard becomes very harsh to most people especially women. Even though the standard always changes according to time and place and even educational background as stated in the previous chapter, there is one characteristic that hardly ever changes which is a slim and skinny body. Especially in America, having slim body means that someone has already fit the beauty standard. Since Plum has obesity, automatically, she does not fit the standard. *"I'm every American*

woman's worst nightmare. It's what they spend their lives fighting against, it's why they diet and exercise and have plastic surgery—because they don't want to look like me" (Walker, 2015: 102). According to the quotation, Plum thinks that she is every American woman's nightmare. Nightmare is associated with something horrible that everyone wants to forget. Plum compares herself like a nightmare that her body is something that must be avoided and got rid of. People try hard not to get fat by exercising and having plastic surgery in order to fit the beauty standard and society.

4.2.1.4. Plum's Experiences of Violence and Humiliation

Living in the society that desires equality makes no sense for Plum. Meanwhile, being different is like having contagion. Plum is obese and most of the people in her society have a lot smaller sizes than hers which makes her different. Plum is not accepted well in the society because of her body weight that makes Plum get a lot of bully, humiliation and even violence from other people which is based on the theory on the previous chapter that beauty standard could lead into harassment for people who are unfortunate to not be able to fulfill it.

Plum first gets her humiliation about her body is when she was a child, not only her schoolmates that made fun of her body but also her cousins.

Back home when we visited cousins they would laugh and call me Miss Piggy, until a chorus of mothers went Shhhhhh. In first grade, in Mrs. Palmer's class, the two girls who sat next to me, Melissa H. And Melissa D., told me they weren't inviting me to their Halloween party because I had fat germs. When I asked my mother what this meant, she said to ignore them (Walker, 2015: 36).

From the quote above, it implies that Plum actually does not know what people tell about her instead, her mother tells her to ignore everything that people say. The way

her mother tells Plum to ignore all the humiliation and never explains what actually happens to Plum makes Plum does not understand the situations happen around her which actually can hurt Plum more when she grows up. On the other hand, the explanation of humiliation for Plum can also affect Plum's psychology as a child.

Plum lives in her grand aunt when she is a child in a house in Harper Lane and coincidentally once is the house of a famous celebrity that accidentally makes the house very popular so that many pilgrims who know the celebrity come to see the house and take pictures. At first, Plum does not know the fact of it and no one in the house ever tells her. When she plays in the front yard, some people in cars take photos of the house but Plum thinks that they take pictures of her. This happens sometimes that makes Plum paranoid. She believes that there is something wrong with her so people keep taking pictures of her making her always hide whenever she sees cars which approach the house. *"They're not taking photos of you, doll. They're taking photos of the house. A famous lady used to live here. I've been in the house so long, I don't notice those crazy people anymore"* (Walker, 2015: 37). Then, after Delia, Plum's grand aunt tells Plum the truth of the house, Plum still does not believe what actually happens and she still hesitates to play in the front yard because of the pilgrims. Even though she knows the fact, she completely ignores it and keeps her thought of the pilgrims for herself.

Plum does not get only humiliations such bad or rude comments about her body but also, she gets violated. It shows how bad the society is for a person like Plum who only wants to live peacefully. Everything that Plum does attract people just because she is different. It can be found in the following quotation, *"the first of*

the man who'd made the comment came flying at me. ... Blood filled my mouth. (Walker, 2015: 149). The violence occurs when Plum tries to dress like other women who are wearing clothes that expose her body parts that are not common for such fat girl like Plum to wear that will be discussed further on the subchapter about Plum's makeover. Since it annoys people who think they are far more perfect than Plum, they treat Plum as if Plum is not a human being so they can do anything to Plum including bully and harass her. Living in this society leads Plum to be obsessed with beauty because she wants to be treated like other human beings.

Since Plum is always suggested to ignore every humiliation thing that happens to her, Plum doubt to tell everything to her family since they tend to not care so Plum does not get the protection or comfort that she needs when she talks to them. *"I kept what happened at school to myself"* (Walker, 2015: 39). Since Plum never shares her feelings, she becomes more silent and overthinking. Plum actually needs people who are able to listen what Plum grieve about so that she does not feel lonely. Since everyone says to her to ignore everything, she does it and she feels like living in the world of denial because she believes that when she ignores something meaning that is not real. Plum tries to consider that all the humiliations are just illusions that do not actually happen to her (Walker, 2015: 106).

4.2.1.5. Plum's Cosmetic Surgery

Plum is tired of being obese. As known that Plum has tried some diet programs yet she fails to lose weight it can be seen in the following statement, *"Given my failure at dieting, my plan was to trade Waist Watchers for weight-loss surgery"* (Walker, 2015: 7). Plum does not like being hungry and following diet programs makes her

hungry even starving. Plum then decided to take bypass surgery as the shortcut of having her ideal body which has been discussed in the theoretical frameworks that plastic surgery becomes the fastest way to achieve beauty standard. For Plum, the existence of the surgery helps Plum to reach her dream body instantly. She hopes that when she gets her slim figure after the surgery, she will be able to be happy and accepted by the society.

4.2.1.6. Plum's Romantic Relationship

Plum believes that because of her body, she never gets a boyfriend. She has a couple experiences with boys but the one in her college year is the worst one leading Plum to take an antidepressant. It can be seen in the following quote, *“Each day I took thirty milligrams of the antidepressant Y—. I had taken Y— since my senior year of college. That year there had been a situation with a boy”* (Walker, 2015: 5). It is clear that the guy in Plum's college year is Plum's, first love. Plum and the guy has been close to one another so Plum thinks that the guy has feelings for her. As a woman that is never involved with guys, for the first time in her life she gets attention from a guy. Unfortunately, the relationship between them is no more than a friend and tragically, the guy decides to leave Plum alone which makes Plum depressed. Since then, Plum always takes the anti-depressant to take away her pain every day until the present time. Plum blames her body for making the guys she loves to leave her. As known from the theory that physical appearance is the most significant factor for a woman to get in a relationship since a man is more of a visual person who cares what he sees first.

The relationship for Plum is not possible. She thinks that the possibility of her getting a husband with her body is zero percent which means she does not believe that relationship can occur between fat people. She also believes that she does not deserve love because she is fat. “*If I was fat, no one would want to marry me*” (Walker, 2015: 53). Plum actually expects to get love but her insecurity tells her not to. This makes Plum have more courage to change her body and become slim to get the love she wants.

4.2.2. Overcoming the Beauty Obsession

In order to gain her self-esteem, Plum needs to get rid of her obsession with beauty so she needs to gain her self-esteem. After Plum gains her self-esteem, Plum will feel the burden she carries all the time fade away which has been stated in the theoretical frameworks when a woman having self-belief and power in herself, she does not need to follow what most people see in a woman instead to make people see in her meaning that she just needs to be herself.

4.2.2.1. Struggle for Happiness

When Plum is depressed with her body and she decides to get bypass surgery, she meets Verena Baptist, the daughter of Eulayla Baptist that will change Plum’s life completely. Plum knows Verena because of Leeta gives Plum a book entitled *Adventure in Dietland* by Verena Baptist. At first, Plum really hates Verena when she recalls what happen in her teenage year when Verena suddenly closes down the Baptist Diet Program that Plum follows. In the book, Verena exposes the truth behind the diet industry especially her mother’s. Verena knows that Plum is a talented woman that unfortunately works at a teenage girl magazine to reply emails.

“Let’s make a deal,” she said. “I’ll give you twenty thousand dollars. You were a Baptist member. You paid your dues and you paid for that horrid Baptist food. With interest, and considering pain and suffering, I’d say I owe you twenty thousand” (Walker, 2015: 91). From the quotation, Plum is offered money to reconsider her surgery. Verena knows that when Plum wants to undergo surgery, she needs a lot of money so she offers it to Plum which has been known that money speaks louder than words. The aim of Verena to offer money to Plum to reconsider her surgery because bypass surgery is very risky and it has dangerous side effects that Verena does not want it to occur to Plum. The fact that Plum is a former of Baptist Diet Program also makes Verena feels like she has the responsibility to pay back what she has done to make Plum fails the program.

Verena does not give the money for Plum unconditionally. If Plum agrees to take Verena’s money and reconsider her surgery, she must agree to do the tasks that Verena gives for her.

“I’ll give you a series of tasks to help you be sure you’re making the right choice.” “What kind of tasks?” “Nothing too difficult. If at the end you decide to go ahead with the surgery I’ll sign the form and give you the money. If you decide you don’t want the surgery, I’ll give you the money. Either way, you win” (Walker, 2015: 91).

Whatever the result of the tasks, Plum will still get the money from Verena but Verena herself guarantees Plum that these tasks that Verena calls the New Baptist Program will forever change Plum without having the surgery. Those tasks aim to change Plum’s mindset about her beauty obsession. The tasks given are withdrawal, confrontation, makeover, blind dates, and reflecting and disconnecting. The tasks

will gradually change Plum's thought in order to boost her own self-esteem and regain her self-belief.

4.2.2.1.1. Withdrawal

The first task given to Plum is to withdraw her addiction to take the antidepressant. Plum starts to take antidepressant since college because of heartbroken causing Plum begins to be addictive with the medication. Plum feels that when she takes the medication, it will take away Plum's pain. Verena is really concerned about this so she orders Plum to stop taking it gradually. *"Now that I know you better, I want you to consider reducing your dosage of Y—and then quitting it all together. You said Alicia wouldn't take Y—"* (Walker, 2015: 111). Plum believes that being herself as Plum is not easy and depressing so it is the reason why Plum keeps taking the medication after her heartache healed. Plum has already completely forgotten about the guy in her college life but the pain of being fat and rejected still remains. The fact that she is not happy becomes Plum's excuse to keep taking the medication. Verena realizes that Plum cannot quit the medication at once so she suggested to take it half of the dosage Plum usually take until Plum becomes used to her condition without the medication,

Before quitting Y—, I'd been like a lamp that was broken, but now I was switched on, emanating heat and light. There was pleasure in feeling strongly. Even an emotion like rage could feel good—it was almost cleansing, the way it made me feel alive (Walker, 2015: 264).

After Plum manages to quit the anti-depressant completely, she changes. From the quotation above, it can be assumed that the antidepressant makes Plum more passive with her feelings. It seems that Plum's sensitivity has been pressed that it makes Plum cannot easily express her feelings.

4.2.2.1.2. Confrontation

The second task that Verena wants Plum to do is a confrontation. Verena catches that Plum is always quiet and helpless when people try to mock and make rude comments about her. Verena wants Plum to be able to defend herself. *“She wanted me to confront people who made rude comments or stared at me (Walker, 2015: 122). Since a child, Plum is always told to ignore all the humiliation that she experiences resulting Plum grows with carelessness. “I had no intention of confronting anyone. The only way I could survive my life was to exist in a fog of denial” (Walker, 2015: 123). Plum tends to ignore everything since it makes her more comfortable than to defend herself and involves with other people so that Plum find it to be useless.*

Plum’s passiveness has made her careless and insensitive with her surroundings. After Plum manages to confront people who make bad comments about her, she is aware that actually she is connected with other people, it can be seen in the following quotation, *“I was aware of the line that existed between us, the line that existed between me and most people. I had never liked to acknowledge the line, but there it was. Now I was too aware of it” (Walker, 2015: 125).* Since Plum always thinks that ignoring means unreal, Plum grows the thought that she is alone and all the people who bully her are just illusions. It indicates that Plum does not accept the reality and the fact that she is fat. The fact that Plum is aware of the line existing between her and other people means that Plum realizes that she has the authority to herself. She finally realizes that the line is like the border that all people

have. Plum has the full authority as to whether or not defending the rude comments to her which can be said as crossing Plum's border.

4.2.2.1.3. Makeover

Verena orders Plum to makeover her appearance as the third task. As known in the previous subchapter, Plum really loves wearing black clothes that are believed to have the capability to disguise her presence. Verena wants Plum to change her mind about how to dress and how to appreciate her own presence in public. Plum is introduced to Marlowe Buchanan who is a very famous actress in the 80's with her flawlessly beautiful figure. As explained, Marlowe looks totally different from her image when she is young. Marlowe suggests that makeover is not just changing the appearance but also enhancing the fuckability quotient. According to Marlowe, fuckability quotient is the ability to attract men into a sexual relationship. *"Let's not call it a makeover," said Marlowe. "We're going to up your fuckability quotient"* (Walker, 2015: 139). Marlowe says to Plum that, in the society, a woman does not only have an attractive appearance but also possess sex appeal since a woman is considered as second sex that her presence is meant to fulfill men's desires and lusts.

From the following quotation, *"the makeover had been days of mowing and pulling weeds, a whole landscaping experience that was painful and disheartening. I still didn't feel like Alicia. If anything, I had never felt more like Plum"* (Walker, 2015: 145), it can be assumed that Plum succeeds in doing makeover even though she is doubtful to do it at first. Plum never thinks that she is able to wear different clothes from what she usually wears. Plum always dreams of dressing beautifully

but not in her current body but in Alicia's body, the thin self of Plum. Plum's experience of changing her looks is not an easy experience since she gets abused for what she wears as seen on the previous subchapters of Plum's humiliation experiences. In this state, Plum still thinks that it does not suit her to dress beautifully unless she becomes Alicia first. At least, Plum is brave enough to try to dress differently and to accept that a girl like her also deserves to express themselves with the outfits she wears.

4.2.2.1.4. Blind Dates

Plum thinks that she does not deserve love. As discussed before that Plum has experienced heartbroken so she never opens her heart again to other men. She believes that when she is still obese, no man will love her. Verena sees it as an issue and wants Plum to open her heart again by setting her some blind dates. *"You've imagined yourself as Alicia for so long that you don't give Plum a chance to be everything she can be"* (Walker, 2015:129). Verena wants Plum to give a chance for herself to experience what Alicia will experience someday. Verena wants Plum to feel what is it like having a date with guys that Plum never felt before.

Unfortunately, the dates that have been set up do not work well. *"Verena," I said in a tone that let her know I was tired of this game, "you know what I mean. I'm not a generic female. I cannot be set up on dates"* (Walker, 2015: 129). Plum still does not have the confidence to face men. Even though her personality from having the tasks change a little bit, she still thinks that she is not good enough to have a boyfriend. While having the blind dates, not all the guys reject Plum but also Plum rejects them. It implies that Plum herself does not allow to be loved because

she does not love herself but she has successfully opened the opportunity for another romantic relationship.

4.2.2.1.5. Reflecting and Disconnecting

The last task that Plum should do is reflecting and disconnecting. This task is the hardest task for Plum since Plum is required to live in the basement apartment alone. In the apartment, Plum gets everything she needs except mirrors. There is no mirror in the apartment aiming that Plum will not be able to see her reflection. Plum is always ungrateful for what she has already had when she looks herself in the mirror. Verena wants her to change her mindset. Plum is convinced that she is actually a strong woman that can be seen in the following statement, *“it’s not easy to live in that body, is it? Not in this culture, with so many shitty, hateful people everywhere. You haven’t had an easy time of it. Anyone who can survive that is strong”* (Walker, 2015: 195). Up till now, Plum never considers herself as a strong woman. What Plum knows about herself is a sad obese woman who has an imperfect life. From that, Plum reflects and recalls what she has already been through all her life.

“Pain takes up a lot of space,” Verena said. “You could fill that space with other things. Love, perhaps? In our first session together, you said you wanted to be loved.” “I can’t imagine anyone loving me while I look like this.” “That’s only because you’ve never allowed yourself to imagine it. How can anyone love you if you hate yourself?” (Walker, 2015: 196).

Plum does not know about her own condition. As known from the previous subchapter, Plum does not have confidence in love so that she closes her heart to people around her. From the quotation above, it can be seen that Plum all this time is in pain. Her wounds are caused by how people treat her, how she fails in dieting, and how she falls too hard for a guy who does not love her back. The only thing

that will heal Plum is moving on. She needs to cast away the pain and replace it with other things that will make her happy. Plum is suggested to stop hating herself and to start loving herself more. When she manages to do it, her pain will slowly go.

The five tasks that Verena gives to Plum really work. Plum starts to think differently as she realizes that what she has seen all the time is not that bad. She has widened her vision about the society. It is not all about how the society treats Plum that Plum should change but how Plum treats herself without worrying about how the society will treat her like Wolf said in her book, *The Beauty Myth*, which has been discussed in the theoretical frameworks.

“Because I’m fat, I know how horrible everyone is. If I looked like a normal woman, if I looked like you, then I’d never know how cruel and shallow people are. I see a different side of humanity. Those guys I went on the blind dates with treated me like I was subhuman. If I were thin and pretty, they would have shown me a different side, a fake one, but since I look like this, I know what they’re truly like” (Walker, 2015: 197).

From the quotation above, it is seen that Plum realizes the loathing side of the society which most people really deify the appearance. People with better appearances will be more appreciated and treated like human beings otherwise people with different appearances or ugly appearances will be treated badly so that people try hard to look good in order to get the approval from the society. Then, Plum starts to leave the thought of being suited in the society, “*I don’t want their approval*” (Walker, 2015: 197). As known, society expects too much. Plum cannot be a perfect person when she has entered the society. There are always bad things in a person so when she wants to fulfill what society wants, she cannot do it. Too many expectations from the society unfulfilled getting Plum hated, ignored,

mocked, and not respected. That is how Plum feels all this time causing too much pain. After Plum meets Verena and people who change her, Plum slowly releases the pain she has as seen in the following quotation, “*I thought about the painful things I might put into it. I imagined letting go*” (Walker, 2015: 198). Furthermore, no matter Plum has already fulfilled the society's expectations, the judgments will always be given to her.

Foxy, hot, fuckable. Whatever it was called, that's what I'd wanted—to be hot, to elicit desire in men and envy in women. But I realized I didn't want that anymore. That required living in Dietland, which meant control, constriction—paralysis, even—but above all it meant obedience. I was tired of being obedient (Walker, 2015: 201).

From the quotation above, it can be identified that Plum feels like she is only being obedient. As known, Plum lives in the society where men are superior and women are inferior. The fact that men are dominant in everything and women are only the objects for men is the reason why the beauty standard occurs. How women should look is what men demand. Plum thinks that how she wants to look good is just because she is too obedient to what society called as beauty norms. She is controlled not to be herself and is told that what she has already had are unacceptable and she must change them all. Plum realizes that happiness will not come to her if she does not enjoy herself. By trying hard to fulfill men demands, Plum feels tied to the unwritten rules that she will be punished. The punishments that Plum has already got are the abuse and all the rude comments. No matter how hard Plum tries to obey the rules, the punishments for her will always come that has been stated before that Plum only becomes obedient as a woman in the world ruled and dominated by men.

4.2.2.2. Post New Baptist Program

Calliope House means a lot for Plum. Plum first meets Verena in Calliope House, Verena's house and office. The house is also Marlowe's office and some of the great, strong and talented women also live and work there. The basement apartment that Plum lives for the last task is also in Calliope House. The house is filled with great, strong and talented women who have the contribution to Plum's change. *"Calliope House was filled with the scarred and the wounded, like me. Some scars were visible, some not"* (Walker, 2015: 207). Plum is so grateful to meet them all and slowly accepting the diversity among all women. Plum realizes that most women are wounded and healed in their own way and become beautiful the way they are.

There was a phantom woman in my mind that I was comparing myself to, and I had to force her from the dressing room. When she was gone, I looked at my body, the body that had kept me alive for nearly thirty years, without any serious health problems, the body that had taken me where I needed to go and protected me. I had never appreciated or loved the body that had done so much for me. I had thought of it as my enemy, as nothing more than a shell that enclosed my real self, but it wasn't a shell. The body was me. This is your real life. You're already living it. I removed the clothes and stood naked before the mirrors, turning this way and that. I was round and cute in a way I'd never seen before (Walker, 2015: 221-222).

From the quotation above, it can be identified that Plum is now really grateful for her life. She finally let the thin self of her go and become the new Plum. She realizes that her body is not her problem, the way she thinks about it is. She now can accept her body as the part of her life that she has already lived in all this time. She has changed her way of thinking that she is already beautiful the way she is. She realizes that every woman has their own beauty. She has met a lot of great

women through the tasks Verena give to her with scars and wounds but they look absolutely beautiful without having their body changed.

How Plum sees fat has also changed as seen in the following statement, *“I was fat, and if I no longer saw it as a bad thing, then the weapon they had used against me lost its power”* (Walker, 2015: 222). Plum now sees fat as a normal thing that is not to be embarrassed about. Before and during Plum meeting Verena and having the tasks, Plum considered being fat means being deserved all the humiliation. She has lost her self-esteem and does not believe herself. When people give comment about her body, she would be angry and then she would hate herself more. Now, Plum realizes that being fat is being human. There is nothing bad about that. It is something that must be appreciated.

Plum does not only change her vision of being fat but also starts to build up her self-esteem as seen in the following quotation, *“I was wearing bright colors, refusing to apologize for my size. The dress made me feel defiant. For the first time, I didn’t mind taking up space”* (Walker, 2015: 222). She does not only wear the long black dress but also tries to wear colorful clothes without being ashamed of. How she changes her way of dressing is an indication of her not afraid of getting attention from people. Furthermore, she is ready to be the center of the attention. She does not afraid that her appearance will be commented. As far as Plum knows, she has the right to be happy and to enjoy her life like other people.

Since Plum has changed her mindset about her body weight, happiness, and life, she decides rather not to do the surgery. She thinks that there is something more important than having her body done. Then she uses her money to help her friend

and donates her small clothes, as seen in the quotation, “*in my bedroom, I removed Alicia’s clothes from the closet, the dresses that didn’t fit me and never would. I called Sana and asked if she might need clothes for the girls at the clinic when it opened*” (Walker,2015: 287). By donating her small clothes, Plum is able to do a good thing not only for herself but for others. If the clothes are not in Plum’s sight again, she will never be reminded how hard she is to obey the society. She will not be reminded how hard she has already been through. When she donates the clothes, she will be able to move on quickly into her meaningful life without worrying her past. In addition, people who will receive the clothes from Plum will also be grateful.

In the end from the following quotation, “*After being in the hiding space, I found everything outside to be beautiful, even the concrete barricades and the neon lights*” (Walker, 2015: 307) Plum is able to overcome her beauty obsession. She has managed to change her perspective of beauty. She realizes that society will always demand more and more. She realizes that she will never be able to fulfill what society wants. In this case, Plum will never be able to look beautiful in all people’s eyes. There will always be people who will never accept Plum for how she looks. The most important thing for Plum is how she accepts herself, how Plum sees her body and how Plum treats herself. Plum’s vision about the world also changes. The world is actually being beautiful than before she meets Verena. Plum is finally ready to against the world with her new point of view about beauty and happiness as seen in the quotation above.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Having beautiful look is the dream of all women. Thus, beauty standard is created to judge which the best look for women. A lot of women try hard to fulfill the beauty standard in so many ways. The writer found that the main character of Sarai Walker's *Dietland*, Plum Kettle experiences the effort of fulfilling that beauty standard which makes her obsessed with it since she is obese and is not fit in the standard applied.

There are several things that affect the main character, who is obese, having the beauty obsession which has been discussed in the analysis chapter, those are identity crisis, humiliation and harassment experiences, and heartbroken which lead to the lack of self-esteem, wrong perspective of beauty image and desire for having plastic surgery. It is found out that those causes have guided the main character into an extreme action like cosmetic surgery to change her body which has so many risks for her health.

From the analysis, it is found that the main character has already had the beauty obsession since she was a child. It is known that the humiliation of the main character's body size occurs since she was a child and unfortunately the people around her did not pay attention to her causing her to disbelieve in society. Moreover, she also loses her self-belief that makes her hate herself for being not considered as beautiful in the society which is ruled and dominated by men. In the analysis, it has been stated that beauty standard occurs and should be followed by

women is the indication of how women must be obedient to men who are considered as superior who have power rather than women who are considered as inferior who are submissive.

In the novel, it can be seen that the main character met people who have a different perspective on life, especially of beauty and happiness. Those people have the big contribution to changing the main character's life. They are able to change her point of view of beauty and happiness. It can be assumed that the surrounding really affects someone's behavior. In this case, the main character who previously had unsupportive and negative surrounding causing her become obsessed with the beauty standard, change into someone who has a positive attitude and thinking of beauty standard according to the supportive surroundings she lives with.

It can be concluded that Sarai Walker's *Dietland* shows that a definition of beauty standard is able to influence the mind and the life of a woman. *Dietland* has successfully represented the insecurity of women in valuing what the real beauty is since beauty itself has different shapes according to different people who see it.

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