

The Concept Of Female Body In *Shallow Hal* Movie

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ABSTRACT

The concept of the human body has existed since ancient Greece. The Greece philosopher halted from Plato, followers, and thinkers have different concepts about the body. The human body is so important that many discussions related to the body has always been an endless debate. This kind of debate is also depicted in *Shallow Hal* (SH) movie produced in 2001. The film shows the story of a man named Hal (Jack Black) and Mauricio (Jason Alexander). Both men have an interest in women who are slender and beautiful. Through the issue of the body by using the discourse analysis approach and Michel Foucault's theories of power, this study analyzes how the concept of the female body as a form of discipline is represented in the film. From the data in analysis, it is found that the beautiful concept reflected in the film shows that woman can be said to be beautiful if she has the standards prevailing in society; that is she must be slim, has big breasts, long legs, and a perfect body proportions. This concept is often presented by the media which eventually becomes the true standard of how the woman's body should be. Hence, it can be said that the media plays a role in shaping the discourse how the concept of beauty of the acceptable female body. Media, in this case, is the main stakeholder in winning the discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the body dates back to ancient Greece. Greek philosophers ranging from Plato to his students, followers and different thinkers conveyed a diversity of concepts about what the body is. Body Plato argued that the body is the prison of the soul, it is a kind of dualism while Aristotle rejected the dualism of body and soul, according to him the body and soul are forms of human existence that cannot be separated. The body exists because there is a soul in it (Synott, 2007). St. Thomas Aquinas compiled a new synthesis of the body-soul. He emphasized the unity of body-soul, matter and form, as well as the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. He explained, "the divine good is the good of all things bodily". This view contrasts with the ideas of Meister Eckhart, who considered that any good and pleasure given through the body or flesh would be nothing but detrimental to soul or spiritual pleasure (Synnott, 2007:27). Such is the view of the body among philosophers and theologians. In both fields, the body is sometimes revered as something positive while on the other hand it is reviled as a stain that can pollute the soul.

This tug-of-war also continued into the renaissance period. The renaissance period brought a new view of the body. The Renaissance marked the disappearance of ascetic ideas that demonized the body, instead the body now became a beautiful, good, personal and private form. Even so, the ascetic movement did not die out completely. Ignatius Loyola, for example, instructed on the punishment of the body, advising his followers to abstain from sleep and food (Synnott, 2007).

Why then is the body so important that many things related to the body have always been the subject of endless debates. Body then, is not an individual. It is something social and constructed. Women's body receive different treatment than that of men. This dualism is concerned with two separate ideals, such as good and evil, separates the body and mind. Western society's power of women since they are usually criticized because of their alleged connection to evil, the body nature, too. Likewise, men are generally boosted by their imagined connection to virtue, intelligence, and culture. (Adair, 1992)

As in the movie *Shallow Hal* (SH) produced in 2001, it is very interesting to watch and study because this movie features the story of a man named Hal (Jack Black) and Mauricio (Jason Alexander), both of whom have an interest in beautiful women. According to both of them, they think that beautiful women are those with slim bodies. So when Hal starts dating a woman who is very fat and unhealthy, Mauricio is so worried and suspicious of his best friend's new change of taste. Mauricio even thinks that Hal has gone mad.

Why is the body so important to the characters in this movie? We cannot deny that the discourse on the ideal body for a woman is inevitable. Every day we are bombarded with discourses about the ideal body for a woman, starting from soap operas, advertisements, entertainment programs and even news programs that are in fact full of information, but still, if we can be observant, almost all female presenters shown are always beautiful women with slim and slender bodies. Not to mention advertisements related to the world of women, such as advertisements for sanitary napkins, soap, powdered milk for weight loss, even advertisements that have nothing to do directly with women still put up beautiful, slim and sexy women as advertising stars solely to boost product sales. As an example, was the Gillette which capitalized the beauty standard in 1915. Gillette profited from newest fashion trends as well. They asserted that body hair on women was masculine and unsanitary in an effort to diversify their market away from just men. They addressed the idea of the "Modern Woman," saying that if women did not use a safety razor to remove their body hair, they would be left behind and locked in the past. They highlighted that women should feel ashamed if they have body hair. (Strickman, 2023)

For this reason, many places to beautify (salon), skin care, fitness centers, any kinds of products that indirectly slim down the body, such as milk and even bath soap that can dissolve fat are hunted by many women. This is what is called pervasive capitalism. All things are offered even to the absurd, but still become the target of women who feel they are not as perfect as a model, even though it must be paid with their own lives. Such was the case of a woman in Yogyakarta a few years ago, who died from slimming drug poisoning. Ironical but that's what happened.

Several studies on show hall films have been conducted by Kasana (2006), from the data she found how beauty myths regulate a person's behavior, namely gender role relationships, a person's perception of himself, a person's perception of others. While Issyana (2011) focused on the men's narrow-mindedness in seeing women's beauty which caused by two factors, first is the internal deal the innate characters himself and the second is external factor (society) who standardized women's beauty. Following the two, Wykes (2012) also discuss on today's dominant Western society views fat as the antithesis of desire. This meaning is so firmly engrained that depictions of obese women as sexual are frequently

presented as jokes because the desire for an obese body is unfathomable. This is the underlying reasoning of Shallow Hal. The prevalent definition of fatness prevents the fat body from being acknowledged as a sexual body. Instead of focusing on the absence of specific pictures, we should ask how the desire for and for fat people can be understood as desire if the definition of fat is in opposition to desire? This query delves into the lived experience of fat sexuality and goes beyond the domain of representation. This reality is an interesting fact to explore. Using different perspective, this research tries to analyze how the concept of a beautiful or slim female body in American society (read: men).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Female Body

The concept of slim female body has been discussed by many researchers, one of them is Setijowati & Khristianto (2008) discussed the concept of slimness according to teenage girls in teen lit novels. It turns out that the concept of slimness has indeed been constructed in such a way by society, so that the acceptable female body is a slim body where there are no fat deposits. Because if that happens then women cannot be said to be beautiful. A similar concept has also been discussed by Widya (2008) on the discourse of slim American women's bodies in the Sex and the City series. The research illustrates that the media in America also plays an active role in shaping the discourse of women's bodies.

The concept of dualism as black and white for women and men was first proposed by Anaksimander, who stated that the conflict of four opposing elements, hot-cold, wet-dry, is a natural force of the cosmos of desire (Synnott, 2007). Other philosophers described this dualism in similarly meaningful details: positive for men, negative for women. Plato had two views about women: egalitarian and patriarchal. First, he claimed that humans originally had three sexes: male, female and mixed - derived from the sun, earth and moon. They were round with four arms and four legs, two faces in one head and had two genitals. Because of his arrogance, Zeus decided to split her in two And so these two halves each longed to meet. Each searching to find the missing part.

The above mythology, philosophy and theology reveal a patriarchal perspective. From this, we realize that ever since humans were born, there has been gender bias in various human understandings that place women in an unfavorable position. The construct of human thought is socially and culturally shaped. Our existence from the beginning has been dictated by norms, which cannot be separated from the initial underlying understanding. We, as vessels, just take for granted what is given by society and consider it as normal. This is the case with the formation of gender constructs, which have been instilled from the moment a baby is born. Our bodies determine the treatment that our parents will give us.

The body in society is disciplined from the moment it is born. A newborn baby girl already has to endure the agony of having her tiny ears pierced with a sharp object, to mark which gender she belongs to or any accessories or cosmetics brand to take care of the babies' body. A male baby will be dressed in male clothes, colors and accessories. Jones in Ruck (2018) called it as the beauty industry. The beauty industry includes fragrances, hair and skin care items, sun care, color cosmetics, men's grooming items, bath and shower items, as well as oral and baby care, and it overlaps with other markets and services like fashion,

hairstylists and beauty salons, plastic surgery, and other more medical services. Even before the baby is born, a name is prepared that also marks the sex on his body. This process of body discipline lasts until they are adults.

Like the research conducted by Wolf who tried to trace the myth of beauty as an effect of consumerism and mass culture (Wolf, 2004). She used data on young American women with anorexia. The female body, as described by Wolf, forcing women to comply with the ideology of beauty, slim and slim. They are even willing to not eat and only drink a few low-calorie liquids in order to get a thin body. In fact, Wolf explained, if they are forced to attend a banquet or party, they eat all the food but then go to the toilet to regurgitate the food they have eaten by inserting a finger into the esophagus so that the food can come out. The impact of beauty standard as stated above is called body dysmorphia. Body Dysmorphia is a mental health condition defined by an obsession with one's perceived physical flaws or imperfections (Kaur, Jasleen, et.al,

Furthermore, social constructs, behind which stand strong ideologies of capitalism and consumerism, through the media, with the theme of beauty and health, offer various ways, strategies, and also products used to discipline the body. As exemplified by Prabasmoro (2006), a person who has a body with rather a lot of weight experiences public scrutiny. He is considered abnormal or not ideal just because of his large body. "And slimness itself is not the only thing demanded of women to be acceptable.

From Prabasmoro's explanation above, women seem to experience excessive discipline. Their bodies become the object of interests of a group of subjects (men). Cultural categories (men) over the body certainly have motives to perpetuate domination, as well as play control over the targets that are objectified for themselves, both as pleasure and other interests. The female character in the film was described to "repair" for her body, which was considered too fat and not fulfilling the beauty standard.

2.1 Problem of Research

This research will focus on answering the following problems:

How is the concept of slimness as a form of disciplining the female body represented in the movie *Shallow Hal*?

2.2 Research Objective

This research has an objective that is in line with the main problem raised, namely to describe how the discourse of slimness as a form of disciplining the female body is represented in the film *Shallow Hal*.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative. In the social sciences and humanities, qualitative approaches are frequently employed to investigate a variety of themes, including democracy, race, gender, class, globalization, and freedom (Ratna, 2016). Further, Kumar (2011), stated that the fundamental goals of qualitative research is to understand, elaborate, discover, and clarify events, feelings, perceptions, attitudes, values, and experiences of a group of people are. This method enables researchers to gather information about a phenomenon in a comprehensive manner.

This research applied textual analysis using documents or texts that focus on analysis in the form of dialog scripts in the film *Shallow Hal* as the main data. This research aimed to describe the data that had been collected to answer or solve problems namely the concept of slimness about the female body. This method is used in accordance to Mc.Kee (2001) to understand the meanings audiences assign to television shows, movies, newspapers, magazines, and radio programs—in other words, to "texts"—is essential if we are to comprehend the role that the media plays in our lives and precisely how its messages contribute to the cultural construction of our worldview.

This research examined data in the form of dialog between characters in the film *Shallow Hal* to comprehend the social construction of the female's body. The existing dialogs were selected and collected based on the interests of the research objectives, namely describing the slim discourse as a process of disciplining the female body. Data collection is done by reading the script of the entire dialog in the film and selecting relevant parts to answer the problem.

All dialogs viewed and observed to find information relevant to the topics that become the object of study: slim discourse. The information will be extracted from each scene which includes character, action, dialog, and setting. These four things will be raised as data and analyzed using discourse analysis approach and Michel Foucault's theory of power.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Beauty Myth: The Concept of a Slim Female Body

The concept of beauty in *Shallow Hal* (SH), is so prominent from the early scenes in this movie. It starts with Hal's father's message moments before he died to Hal (Jack Balck), the main character in this movie:

Hal's dad : First, I want you to promise that no matter what you do in life, you will never ever settle for average. Second, don't be satisfied with routine poontang. I married for love, and your mother Betty has been a nightmare. And third, find yourself a classic beauty with a perfect can, and great totties. That will put you in good stead with the Lord. It's all in here. Hot young tail's what it's all about.

Hal : I'll make you proud, Papa.

Hal's father's message above is really out of the ordinary, usually before dying a father will advise about good messages related to morals (the relationship between a servant and his God), but the father actually advised not to be satisfied with something ordinary (read not beautiful women). Even at the end of his message, the father emphasized that he regretted having married a woman who was not beautiful, namely Hal's mother, so Hal would have to look for a beautiful woman in the future. The beautiful woman her father is referring to is a slim, blonde and long-haired woman, like the icon of a beautiful female doll called Barbie created by Mattel.

Barbie, which was originally only an icon of a female doll, can be adapted as a standard of beauty for a woman. So that the representation of beauty must be like that if not then she is considered *liyan* (ugly). The discourse of beauty as ordered by his father has an impact on Hal's daily life, so he will only date women who have a body like a supermodel. The myth of

beauty formed by this (patriarchal) society seems so real; television advertisements, magazines, billboards, and even movies are filled with Barbie-like women, so that people (read women) believe that it is the truth. That was Hal's description of a beautiful woman when she was asked by Tony Robbins, the self-guru:

Hal: Heidi Klums beams would do. And her teeth. Or, ooh, that Britney Spears girl. She's got great knockers. But she's a tad muscular. Uh, actually, you know what? Her ass would do, too, if she had a better grille. Like, uh, Michelle Pfeiffer back when she did "Grease 2". But she'd have to be a little smilier than Michelle.

Heidi Klum is an American supermodel who has a perfect body, slim and blonde, while Britney is an American pop diva who is energetic, slim, blonde and also has a beautiful face. Britney was the ideal young American female icon in the 90s as well as Michelle Pfeiffer who was legendary in the 80s for her beauty and body, a body that was coveted by women of that era. The three women mentioned by Hal above have body sizes that are standardized by (American) society with heights ranging from 5-6 feet, and weights of 100-110 pounds, a size that makes no sense for an adult female body.

The description above shows that women's bodies have become objects that must be disciplined, objects that must comply with the criteria of truth about the body if they want to be considered beautiful and desirable by men. The exclusion of women's bodies is also illustrated in the dialog between Hal and Mauricio when they meet in the park. When Hal is waiting for Rosemary, a woman who looks slim and beautiful to Hal since being given a spell by Tony Robbins, Mauricio is so shocked when he sees the figure of Hal's new girlfriend:

Hal : There's Rosemary.
Mauricio : Where?
Hal : Right there!
Mauricio : Is she behind the Rhino?

Mauricio as a "sane" man (a man who likes beautiful and slim women) was very surprised when he saw his best friend's girlfriend, Rosemary, was very fat. Mauricio even referred to Hal's girlfriend as Rhino. Rhino is a horned mammal that lives in Asia and Africa and has a very large body size. This time the fat female body is excluded and even juxtaposed with a very ugly and giant animal, the Rhino. In order to witness Hal's new lover, Mauricio thinks that his best friend is out of his mind, so he finds out why his friend has changed so much. He eventually learns that his friend has been under the spell of Tony Robbins and goes to see him to restore his friend's "sanity".

The discourse on the ideal female body as described by Mauricio above seems to have become an unquestionable myth of truth. That women must be slim to be considered beautiful. According to Foucault, this truth has become a regime of truth that dictates to society what and how the ideal body (the body that men want) and the wrong body (not ideal/fat) are. This regime of truth is spread through discourses that are revealed through print media: magazine covers, billboards, etc. and also electronic media where advertisements and movies become benchmarks of how women's bodies should be. From

the above, the discourse is spread not from above (the powerful) but from below through existing discourses and knowledge.

And that is how the discourse continues to develop and shift, the emergence of the Barbie doll icon, which is very small in stature and large-chested becomes a new obsession for women that is approved by men. Breast surgery became very prominent in the decade after Twiggy, because thin people do not have large breasts and the only way to get a Barbie-style body is by injecting silicon and breast surgery which has a very dangerous effect on life safety. But for the sake of being beautiful, women are willing to do this, because that is the kind of body that men want as much as Hal does:

Tony Robbins : Which do you prefer, a girlfriend, missing one breast or half a brain?

Hal : How's the remaining breast? Is it big?

From the dialog above, it is clear that big breasts are breasts that men like. The covers of adult male magazines almost all feature slender women with breasts that are so plump and full. The media here also plays an active role in shaping the discourse on women's bodies. The emergence of the criteria for "breasts that men want" in the cover of adult men's magazines makes women who have small breasts compete to make large breasts with silicon injections. This operation, which later turned out to be very dangerous, even became a phenomenon in the community and was even considered a trend.

Such is the role of the media to shape discourse, rarely does the media bring up other images of breasts such as the breasts of a mother who is breastfeeding or the breasts of people who are old and affected by cancer, which are solid, full and plump. The media, as referenced by Nirmalawati (2008), becomes the sole truth holder that determines the criteria and shape of women's breasts so that these women are categorized as sexy. Foucault calls this idea biopower where technology and knowledge are developed to control, organize and define women's bodies without the need for apparatuses to supervise. Because the body will be disciplined by itself by media censorship. This is what Foucault calls the logic of the panopticon, where the subject has self-control over their own body.

The demand for a perfect female body from head to toe continues to unfold from the dialog between Hal and Mauricio. So powerful is the discursive discourse of the ideal female body in Mauricio's mind that he has to break up with his slim, blonde and pretty-faced girlfriend Lindi simply because she has a second toe that is longer than his big toe.

Hal : What, are you crazy? Lindy's gorgeous.

Mauricio : On the surface, but when you get to know her better, there's a whole other story goin' on. We're sitting there, you know, and she's got her bare feet up on the couch, and I notice that her second toe is, like, half an inch longer than her big toe.

Hal :That's it? You're breaking up over that?

The fact that Lindi had longer toes bothered him so much that he had to break Lindi off. Because according to Mauricio, a beautiful woman has to be like a supermodel on the cover of a magazine. If this is the case, then to be considered or categorized as beautiful has to be

so complicated, how unfortunate is the fate of women. The photos in women's magazines and advertising media can be a threat and also intimidation (to borrow Nirmalawati's term), a threat because the measuring instrument of truth about the body explains that their bodies (fat and imperfect women) are not what they should be. Although Lindy may not have a problem with her toes. Likewise, Rosemary has not been troubled by her fat body. So, she felt no need to diet.

Rosemary : Can I get a double pizza burger, chili fries with cheese and a large chocolate milkshake?
Hal : Nicely done. I'll have the exact same thing. You got it. I am impressed.
It's nice to see a girl order a real meal.

The dialogue above illustrates the counter from Rosemary, that as a woman she does not need to reduce the portion of her favorite food in order to be beautiful and have a slim body shape. However, society has become the target object of the dominant discourse which then transforms into the only discourse of truth. So whether as a form of satire or flattery, Hal praises her by saying that he is very impressed to see women ordering food with very large portions.

Hal's compliment feels so "strange" in the midst of the truth regime that the body only needs a few calories to maintain the shape of a Spanish guitar. Society agrees that a body with certain criteria is right, so Hal's statement above is strange. Because bodies that violate it (fat) must be disciplined by undergoing certain therapies. Those bodies must expend a lot of energy by going to the gym, or must undergo super strict diet therapy under medical supervision. In fact, these bodies are suffering when they have to undergo these therapies, which are like undergoing a punishment session. The body in the diet program must be monitored at all times, controlled, prohibited from consuming any (high-calorie) food. Everything is done to comply with the regime of truth about the body.

From all the discourses discussed above about women's bodies, it shows that women's bodies are not free. These bodies must submit to the regime of truth to not be said to be deviant even though for that they must undergo a series of "punishments", namely dieting. Women's bodies must conform to predetermined criteria that have become the standard of truth so that they can be recognized in a patriarchal society.

5. CONCLUSION

The concept of beauty depicted in the film SH, shows that women can be said to be beautiful if they meet the standards prevailing in society (patriarchal), namely tall, slim, smooth skin, straight hair and have perfect facial proportions. These standards continue to be called out by Hal and Mauricio in SH. The standards as desired by the two characters have not existed since humans were born to earth but they are plastered in various media that accompany their daily lives. The description above shows that power does not impose something on the discursive subject (women), but it is the subject who finally recognizes the truth so that their bodies become docile bodies. The frequency and abundance of media displays of these

perfect figures make the perfect figure seem so real that the two characters assume that this is how the female body should be.

Another factor that determines which discourse is dominant is the media. The media is thus the main stakeholder in winning the discourse. Magazines, advertisements, billboards, movies indirectly campaign for the movement for women to be slim, busty, straight-haired and shapely-legged. Thus, the growing discourse spreads as a truth that is recognized by all parties and the body must comply with the truth otherwise the body will be excluded until the body complies and meets the standard.

The limited discussion about the concept of slim female body in SH movie, makes many issues missed. For this reason, other researchers who are interested in this film can explore deeper issues about fattertainment. Fattertainment is an effort to capture this phenomenon, also known as "weight bias in the media." Studies that looked at primetime television and film revealed that overweight female characters are frequently mocked and taunted by male characters, which is then met with laughter from the audience (Heuer, 2010). Fattertainment is very interesting to analyze to find out how fat bodies become entertainment and public ridicule.

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