BEAUTY CONCEPT OF GEISHA IN MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA NOVEL (A SOCIOLOGICAL READING)

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Abstract

This thesis examines the concept of beauty in the novel of Arthur Golden "Memoirs of a Geisha". This thesis focuses on finding beauty concept a geisha in the novel and try to discover how the concept of beauty reflected the ideal beauty of Japanese woman, the values of being a geisha in Japanese culture and how people at that time depicts a geisha in the novel. By using qualitative descriptive method. The reason for using this method as most appropriate to its application in the study. The theory is sociological theory of Literature from Alan Swingewood, that is work literature is a reflection of social context. Researchers found that the concept of beauty geisha can be seen from the four steps into a geisha; Shikomi, Minarai, Maiko and Geisha in how they explore their beauty, appearance, and the ability to serve their guests. The concept of beauty geisha also seen how he can maintain health; how to dress up; attitude and intelligence. Additionally geisha have to be a master of the art such as playing traditional music instruments, singing, dancing and most importantly, the tea ceremony. The author able to present ideologies and the true value of a geisha as an entertainer.

Key Word: Geisha, Beauty concept, Japanese Culture

Introduction

Culture, as the product of society, is that complex whole which include knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Each society has different culture which is represented by its society member. In Japanese culture, like other country culture, has some famous culture which is known in the world and sometimes it become the identity of the culture. One of them is a Geisha.

Geisha is one of Japanese cultural product contributing quite significant influence to Japan in the recent time. With makeup that is very unique and attractive, the geisha is attracted world attention. Then, thick white makeup and verbal skills (entertaining with interesting chat) and non-verbal (the art of entertaining with a variety of games, played traditional Japanese musical instruments, such as rumble, flute and shamisen with an attitude always graceful and attractive), who studied intensively for years. There are numerous reasons why geisha have remained icons of enduring enchantment since they first emerged in Japan in the 1700s. They are a very secretive group, existing in what is known as karyukai, or "the flower and willow world".

Beauty can be interpreted in many different ways across time and culture but this subjective concept has been adjusted so women feel like beauty is objective. For example, the media has influence on society's perception of beauty through magazines, tabloid newspapers and television. Women and the concept of beauty that is attached to women not only happen in the real world but also created in literature, especially the novel.
The authors of literary work usually reveal the human life and society through emotional feeling, subjectively, objectively, and evaluative. Literary also exploit the mind and intelectual, but still dominated by emotionality. In the novel of *Memoirs of Geisha* by Arthur Golden, we can see a woman who strong enough to fight against society and the sorrow of her life, because human being should not give up to their faith. The researcher is interested in this novel since the researcher read it and find that the novel could reflect women concept of beauty as reflected in the novel, even thought sometimes people said that a geisha was a bad woman that no need to live in the world. Therefore, *Memoirs of a Geisha* is not only a solo pop culture, it is also links oriental traditions, geisha narratives patterns and western narrator, it is why the researcher takes this novel to be analysis.

**Statements of the problems**

1. What is beauty concept of geisha described in *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden?
2. How does the beauty concept of geisha reflect Japanese ideals women at 19 century as reflected in the novel?
3. How is the value of being geisha in Japanese culture as reflected in the novel?

**Methodology**

Referring to the objective and the significance of the research, the researcher uses the descriptive qualitatives method. The descriptive qualitative method basically aims to observe people in their environment, to interact with them, to understand their language and interpretation concerning their environment. (Nasution, 1988 : 5).

The design of the study uses sociological approach because in this study, the analysis is focused the human being with their society and also their environment that sometime any influence from other such as author bibliography or author background of knowledge especially on *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

The data of this study can be classified into two. The first is primary data, which is all the data from the novel. They are *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden which consists 35 chapters of 493 pages. It was published in London by Vintage in 1998. The second is secondary data. All data are taken from various sources about the Japanese culture to support research.

**Finding and Analysis**

The researcher found that beauty concept of geisha could be seen in the steps of being geisha in *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur’s Golden. Beauty concept of geisha in Japanese culture are such as tea ceremony, waifuku (traditional Japanese clothes) especially kimono that usually wears in daily life, dance, playing music instrument, shamisen and so on.

“And in fact, the ‘gei’ of geisha means ‘arts,’ so the word ‘geisha’ really means ‘artisan’ or ‘artist.’ (Memoirs of a Geisha, 158)

As the explanations before from the root meaning of Geisha it self that she was the truly entertainer or an artist who show their skill in traditional art of Japan.
There are few steps of being a geisha, there so much that had been done to be the real geisha. (Lockard, 2000: 7).

**Health**

“Satsu did as she was told. Mrs. Fidget began to examine her face, not only with her eyes but with her fingertips. She spent a long while checking Satsu’s nose from different angles, and her ears. She pinched the lobes a number of times, then gave a grunt to indicate she was done with Satsu and turned to me.” (Memoirs of a Geisha, 21)

Here it is explained that health is very important. Because it was done to make sure there are any dishes or not as possible to miss a very intimate. They have to pass the health test. Then they will bring to Okiya house. And be the responsibility of the older maid to handle new girls of everything she need. Bathing is also one way of maintaining body cleanliness.

**Make up**

Make up her face using face cream is usual that the geisha done to make their skin look so shining and good in the gust eye. But all variety of make up is all depend on what the kimono that they wear because make up is to supporting their kimono.

**Kimono**

Kimono is traditional Japanese cloth. Kimono is obligated to use the clothes of a geisha when he met with his guest. Therefore, in their daily lives they also always use a kimono. Kimono has a variety of forms; there is a kimono that is used for everyday and for the party. Each kimono has a function and uniqueness.

**Manners (Politeness)**

The ways of geisha speaking to their guest are the most important. Even though sometime geisha did not understand a topic of conversation, she just only listen because the speaker will feel appreciated when someone else pay attention to what he said. Or might be say something’s that joyful. I couldn’t interrupt, so I pretend to be absorbed in watching the wrestlers on the mound prepare for their bout.

**Socializing**

There is some small thing but it’s very important, such as give a greeting out honor to other people in the sit position. The Japanese culture teach many kind of good attitude such as give a greeting and honor to the guest, the way to apologize, and also the last greeting to the death man. Just like that Mameha taught to the main character in this novel, Chiyo taught to apologize for her mistake to her.

**Intelligent**

After several months, if all the duty of house work which has been commanded done well, hence mother will give opportunity for school and all the cost and the needs of complete school like the clothes will provided by

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*Literary Criticism Journal Vol. 3 No. 2 – Juni 2016*
the Okiya house. Shikomi would go to classes at the Hanamachi’s geisha school. In modern times, this step of training still exists, mostly to accustom the girls to the traditional dialect, traditions, and dress of the geisha lifestyle.

**Master in Art**

**Playing Traditional Instrument**

It is very important in the life of a geisha to learn music instrument. They are an art worker, who showed their ability in arts to support their performers to serving their guest.

**Singing**

It is very helpful when we have the imagination in order to remember things more easily. It is owned by Sayuri, she has the talent and the special trick of remembering things by using natural voice and other.

**Dancing**

The main thing to learn by a geisha is dancing, because not all geisha had this big opportunity, which just only had a beautiful appearance, adept and had good ability will be get this opportunity. Dance is not a simple thing; they must be harmonization between heart and also their mind. The cleverness of Sayuri that can use others tricks to remember all steps of dance.

**The Value of being Geisha as Reflected in the Novel**

The statement which is stregthen by the author of the novel, through the statement below:

“.... beautiful woman wearing a kimono lovelier than anything I'd ever imagined. I'd been impressed with the kimono worn by the young bucktoothed geisha in Mr. Tanaka's village of Senzuru; but this one was a water blue...”

“This was my first glimpse of Hatsumomo. At the time, she was one of the most renowned geisha in the district of Gion; though of course I didn't know any of this then. She was a petite woman; the top of her hairstyle reached no higher than Mr. Bekku's shoulder...”

So the data refelected social values of a Geisha in Japanese culture at 1930.in generally, Arthur Golden as the author the novel successfully to deliver the ideologies of the true Geisha ideologies that is as an entertainer in beauty, skills, manners and perfoming.

**Conclusion**

From the analysis, the researcher found the answers of the statement problem the researcher found that there are four steps of being a geisha that can show concept of beauty. In consequence, she was sold by their parents in geisha’s house, they must learn anything about the special lesson and artistry of life to become interesting geisha. The beauty concept of geisha is not quit of phases passed by a woman to become a geisha. They must learn all about aspects of life and how to be elegant and classy lady.
Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden was able to bring the actual beauty figure of a geisha according with the facts of history. Therefore, Arthur Golden is able to present a literary work in accordance with one of the functions of the literary canon, where a literary work is an artifact of history.

Suggestion

In this study, the researcher has conducted a study on sociological approach about geisha reflected in Arthur Golden’s Memoirs of a Geisha. The suggestion for the reader of this thesis that becomes the next researcher for the following researchers who want conduct a study on Memoirs of a Geisha may use feminism criticisms that is not used yet by other researcher to analyze.

References

