



**THE REPRESENTATION OF BEAUTY DISCOURSE IN SCOTT  
WESTERFELD'S *UGLIES SERIES***

**THESIS**

Submitted to English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jember University, in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Sarjana Sastra in English Studies

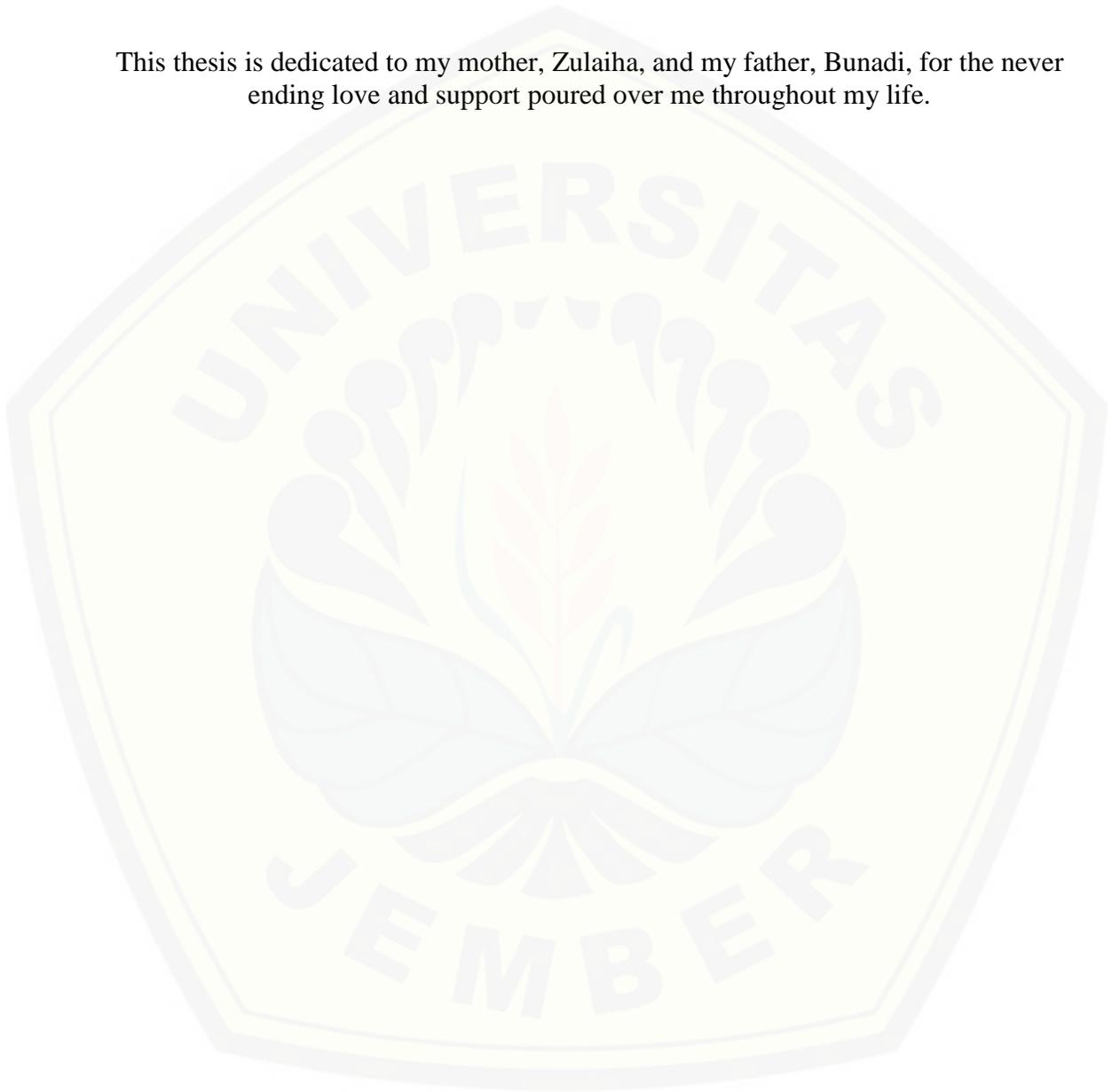
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**DEDICATION**

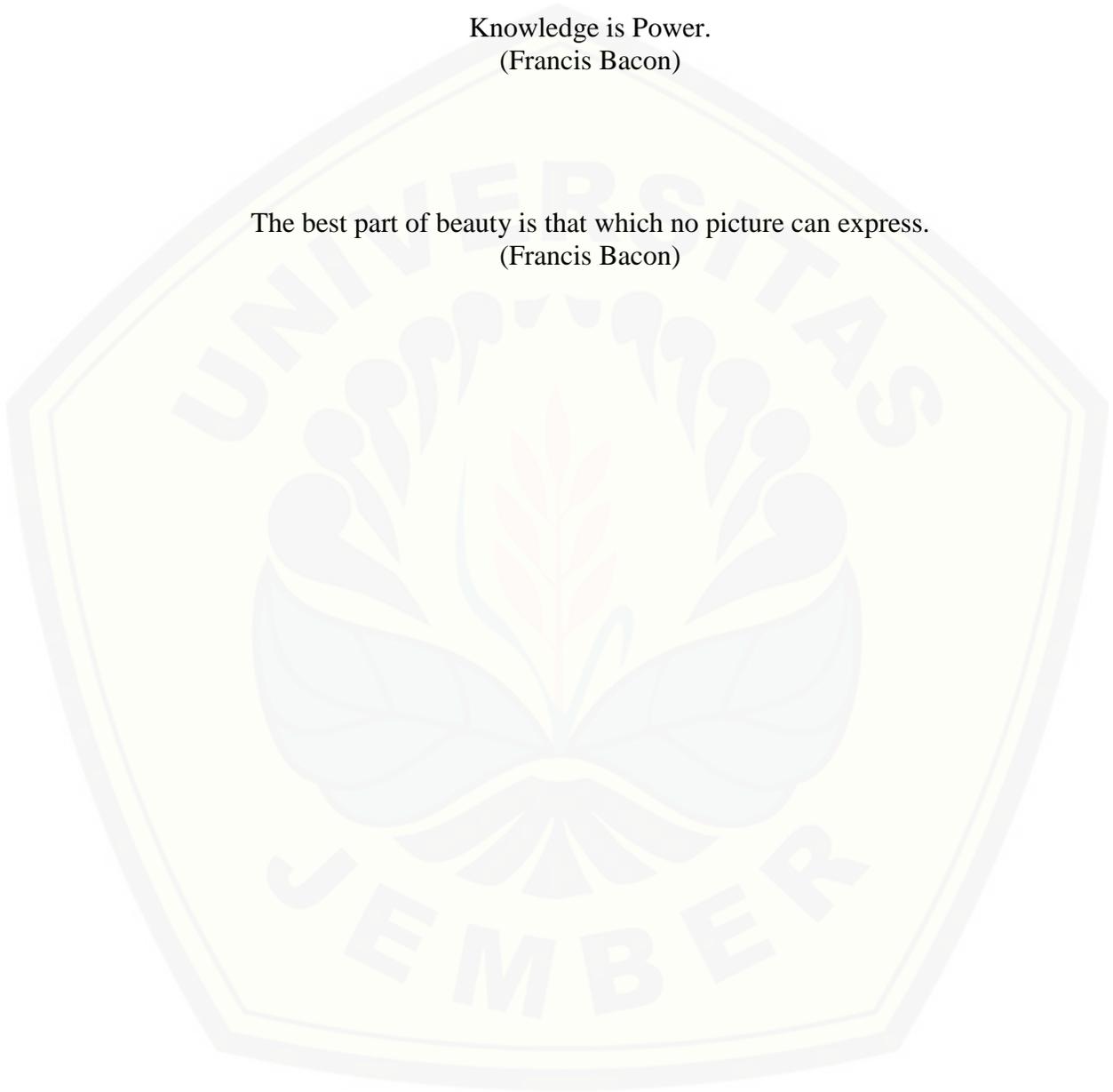
This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Zulaiha, and my father, Bunadi, for the never ending love and support poured over me throughout my life.



**MOTTO**

Knowledge is Power.  
(Francis Bacon)

The best part of beauty is that which no picture can express.  
(Francis Bacon)



## DECLARATION

I hereby state that this thesis entitled “**The Representation of Beauty Discourse in Scott Westerfeld’s *Uglies Series***” is an original piece of writing. I state that the analysis and the research described in this thesis have never been submitted for any other degree or any publications.

I certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources used and any helps received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged.

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Hopefully, this thesis can give contribution towards the English Studies, especially those who intend to develop their knowledge on the study of literature.

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## SUMMARY

**The Representation of Beauty Discourse in Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies Series*; Siti Hanifa, 120110101028; 2016: 50 pages; English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jember University.**

The research analyzes the construction of beauty discourse represented in the first three novel of *Uglies Series* (*Uglies*, *Pretties*, and *Specials*). The beauty discourse is produced differently by two groups which contradict each other. One constructs the beauty concept that sticks with the physical appearance which deals with the perfect distinct features. The idealized beauty which is produced requires people to enhance their appearance to be accepted by the society through surgery. The other produces the concept of beauty that has nothing to do with physical appearance but the quality of individuals that deals with the brain.

The main goals of this research are to uncover the construction of beauty discourse in the novel and the ideological interest beyond it. Therefore, there are three questions which are drawn to achieve the goal. First, to find how beauty is constructed in the novel. Second, to describe how beauty is constructed in the contextual background which is the American society. The last is to reveal the ideological interest beyond the beauty construction by correlating the novel and the contextual background. Therefore, I use Stuart Hall's theory of Representation which focuses on the encoding process and the concept of discursive model by Michel Foucault to correlates between the discourse and power behind the beauty construction.

The result of this research shows that the different construction of beauty discourse by the two groups intends the similar aim which is to gain power over the society. Both create the concept of beauty that contradicts each other through their own ways and tools to finally reach the stage of having power to dominate the society. Thus, it can be concluded that both hold the ideology of liberalism and neo-

liberalism. This ideology is also closely connects with what is delivered in today's American society in which through the construction of beauty, they intend to gain power through the concept of freedom.



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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the research as a whole. It delivers the description of the topic discussion of the research. Next, it will be followed by more detail information in subchapters, they are: background of study, research topic, research problem, research questions, the scope of the study and the purposes.

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

As part of literary works, novel describes the portrait of life experiences that are shown by its characters and conflicts. It delivers more complicated events that closely represents the real situation of human experiences dealing with social, cultural, moral and religious aspects. Besides, novel also provides wider issues and social phenomena that exist in the real world. Of the various issues and problems, the ones that relate to the individuals or inferior groups are mostly brought up in novels. One of them is the human's existence acceptance by its facial appearance or the beauty standard.

The beauty standard issue generally leads people to judge one and another differently. It deals with the unequal treatment of the certain groups or society toward other groups based on racial features and background. One of the novels that delivers the beauty standard issue is *Uglies Series*. This is a young adult novel written by an American author, Scott Westerfeld which consist of *Uglies*, *Pretties*, *Specials* and *Extras*. *Uglies Series* was first published in 2005.

*Uglies Series* mainly tells about a constructed society set in the future where everyone has the same willing to be pretty, both faces and way of thinking to reach the equality. The only requirement to get that prettiness is to wait until their ages hit sixteen so that they will able to undergo surgery to change their whole features. The ones who fit the requirement will happily enjoy the rest of their life in New Pretty Town—a place where Pretties having all the fun day and night, while the Uglies should live in Uglyville and waiting for their turn to be pretties. Both New Pretty Town and Uglyville are ruled by the Specials who live

in Special Circumstances. They are the ones who run the government and set the beauty standard of the society.

In addition, there is a little hidden and far away town called The Smoke that is built up by the rebels who are against the Special Circumstances' rules. They, the Smokies, choose to run away from the city before turning pretty and set up their own society—the ugly faces that prefer stay as they are rather than being the same as bunch of Pretties in the town. The Smokies is a threat for the Specials as they hand the secrets behind the prettiness of people in the town and their struggles to reach the world without ugliness. The only way to prevent their failure in powering the whole society is to chase the Smokies down, forcing them to get surgery and change their way of thinking.

*Uglies Series* represents the beauty discourse construction. As the ruling agent, the Specials set their own beauty standard that automatically is followed by the society and dreamed by them all the years. Moreover, they construct the mind of the society, especially the Uglies, through the schools' subjects about any beautiful life that wait for them once hitting sixteen and being part of Pretties. The life of no hating over their bodies and facial features, the life of spending all the time with partying and having fun.

In addition, the construction of beauty standard by the Specials causes the clustering of the society based on the facial and body features. The unfairness treatments follow the Uglies until they reach the age of sixteen. At this stage, Tally as the main character in the novel, is ruled and brainwashed to have the same urge to turn as pretty as her best friend, Peris, and lives in Pretty Town soon. She always hate for being part of uglies, because as part of uglies, she is treated badly by the Pretties.

Furthermore, this research analyzes the representation of beauty discourse in *Uglies Series*. This research uses the Hall's theory of representation to analyze the representation of beauty discourse and to find the ideology of the beauty discourse constructed in the novel.

## 1.2 Research Topic

The novel of *Uglies Series* provides some issues and problems. The main character who at the beginning sees beauty as what the Specials is constructed, slowly changes her mind as she finds another definition of beauty that has no correlation to the facial and physical features. Thus, the research topic of this research is the beauty discourse constructed in the novel.

## 1.3 Research Problem

*Uglies Series* represents the beauty construction through many sides. The novel delivers how beauty is constructed and believed differently by the Specials and the Smokies. The different construction beauty in the novel questioned whether it counters or supports the same ideology.

## 1.4 Research Question

As the main point of this research is to figure out how the beauty discourse is constructed in *Uglies Series*, the problems that will be discussed in this research are formulated as follows:

1. How is beauty represented in the novel?
2. How is beauty constructed in USA in 2000s?
3. What is the ideological interest beyond the beauty discourse in the novel?

## 1.5 The Scope of Study

In order to avoid any complicated discussions and misinterpretations, the limitation of the study is needed. I focus on analyzing the representation of beauty discourse in *Uglies Series* and the ideologies of the beauty discourse in the novel.

## 1.6 Purposes

The purposes of this research are implemented as follows:

1. to provide the description of beauty discourse that exists in the novel and the society
2. to find out the ideological interests of beauty discourse represented in the novel *Uglies Series*.



## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides two discussions. The first subchapter presents the previous research. It is needed as the prove that this research has not been analyzed by other students. The second subchapter delivers the theory of representation by Stuart Hall that will be the main theory used in this research.

### 2.1 Previous Research

Previous research is the previous studies that refers to the several materials such as theses, journals, articles, books etc that closely relates to the research that the researcher is studying now. It is needed as the reference in determining the relevant topic discussion and the theory that is used. This also helps in keeping the research on the track as the previous research is already acknowledged before.

I choose two previous researches relate to my research. The first is written by Viyantini Rakita Sari entitled *The Representation of Beauty Discourse by Media Text* (2015). This thesis delivers the construction of beauty discourse by media text (film, billboards, the wrapper of candy, etc) that leads the Afro-American women into oppression in *The Bluest Eye*. Viyantini uses the theory of representation by Stuart Hall and focuses on the encoding/decoding process in the novel about beauty discourse. She also uses Gramsci's hegemony and Althusser's ideology in supporting her analysis. This thesis shows the result that by media text through actors and actresses, the beauty standard is constructed and lead the Afro-American women into oppression as they are being burdened of being black and try to be the same as white based on the facial features; blue eyes, white skin, blonde hairs and slim body (Viyantini, 2015:2).

I use this thesis as the previous research because we both discuss the similar topic about the beauty discourse and use the same theory which is the theory of representation. This thesis provides the understanding of using the theory of representation in figuring out the beauty discourse and the ideologies of the novel.

The second research is written by Michiko Weinmann entitled *Operation Beauty: Discourse of Cosmetic Surgery in Popular Women's Magazines in Australia, Germany and Japan* (2010). This thesis presents the constructed identity and beauty in society through the cosmetic surgery in the syndicated women's magazine Cosmopolitan and Marie, Claire in three big countries: Australia, Germany and Japan. Weinmann uses the Bauman's theories of 'liquid' society and 'liquid' life to illustrate the wider context on increasingly fluid world, in which cosmetic surgery plays significant role as powerful tool of identity construction (Weinmann, 2010: 3). She also uses the Hall's theory and Said's theory of 'otherness' as the supporting theory to find the alignment of one culture identity to another as part of identity construction.

I use this thesis as my other previous research because of the similar issue brought up in both of this thesis and my research. The main issue is about the plastic and cosmetic surgery as the way to reach the constructed standard of beauty. This thesis will help my research as it delivers the way to connect the discourse of constructed beauty and the ideologies beyond it.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1 Stuart Hall's Theory of Representation

As part of culture, language constructs meaning through the representational system. It deals with the fact that in using language, people use signs and symbols to represent what they mean in order people will be able to understand them. At this point, representation stands as the central of the process of meaning's production through language.

Stuart Hall positions representation as the connector of meaning and language to the culture. It becomes the central part to let one meaning can be interpreted and correlated to culture through language. It is also the essential element in which meaning can be exchanged by one culture to another.

Stuart Hall divides how the representation works into two that called as the system of representation. The first is mental representation which deals with all

the set of concepts and ideas related to objects, people, events which we carry around in our heads (Hall, 1997:17). These concepts are the main objects that make people able to interpret meaning on everything. It means that to represent things, we need to form any ideas or concepts in our head first in order to let us refer them meaningfully.

Second is language itself. By language, the sets of concepts in our head can be delivered and interpreted by one another as long as they already shared the same thoughts and understanding about the concepts. Hall also puts the need of the shared language in which people understand and communicate each other through the language that can be understood by both sides. As what Hall (1997:18) stated that language depends on constructing a set of correspondences between our conceptual map and a set of signs, assigned and organized into various languages which stand for or represent those concept. This concludes that representation will work when the concepts of ideas are already formed in each people's head and language deliver them through the shared understanding and culture within people.

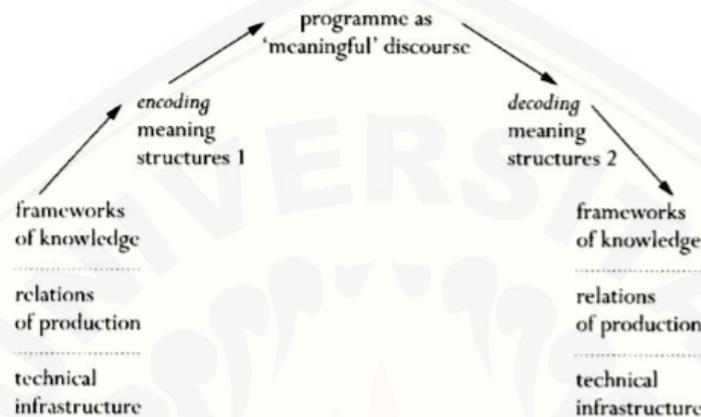
### **2.2.2 Encoding**

The concept of discourse which is offered by Stuart Hall closely relates to the production of messages or the coding of messages by the sender. It then continues to circulate to be consumed and reproduced by the receiver. Hall offers the process of communication in form of a circulation circuit to reach the perfection of message exchange that emphasizes on three main subjects; sender/message/receiver. The process consists of four stages of moments in which message starts to be produced until it reaches the receiver, they are production, circulation, distribution/consumption, and reproduction.

The moments of production and circulation include some elements that support them to work. They--what Hall calls as the symbolic vehicle--consist of the apparatuses and the relations and practices of production. As the object of this process is meaning, it needs to be accomplished and taken by the receiver before it reaches the stage of reproduction and being brought back to the social practices.

If all the stages are fulfilled, the process can be called effective and the meaning has effect.

Furthermore, Hall conceptualizes the model of communication that stresses out on how the codes and messages are transmitted through some levels of communication system to produce a meaningful discourse as follows:



Picture 1 The Scheme of Meaning Circulation (Hall, 2005:118)

The diagram shows the production of meaning is placed between two processes; the meaning structure 1 (encoding) and meaning structure 2 (decoding). There are three levels of communication system that support the production of meaning as well as its process of consumption. The first level is the technical infrastructure that includes the organization and combination of practices within media apparatuses. This level—as Hall puts the example in a television newcast—deals with the institutional structures and networking in producing a programme that constructs the message.

The circuit continues by the application of the second level of communication system called the relation of production which deals with the set of social relations. The sender creates the definition of the situation based on the socio-cultural and political structure. As the meaning that is constructed needs to be received and has an effect, the sender set the situation that the receiver can easily take the meaning and decode it.

As the most important thing that this process needs to obtain is the reception by the receiver, the message that is constructed must produce the meaningful discourse in order it is to be realized and has effect and use so that it can be meaningfully decoded. Thus, the framework of knowledge that is created by the sender should be strong and influential enough to reach to the extent it can be believed and be part of the knowledge. As what Hall states:

The typical processes identified in positivistic research on isolated elements—effect, uses, ‘gratification’—are themselves framed by structures of understanding, as well as being produced by social and economic relations, which shape their ‘realization’ at the reception end of the chain and which permit the meanings signified in the discourse to be transposed into practice or consciousness. (Hall, 2005:119)

This shows that to construct the meaningful discourse that can be realized and gives effect, the work of social and economic relations, as well technical infrastructure need to be used to create knowledge to later be shared to the receiver. As the receiver is part of the society as the cultural subjects, the knowledge they get comes from the system and convention. The knowledge that has been constructed becomes part of the culture then creates the realization of the receiver as they have become the members of the culture itself.

In addition, Hall argues that the meaning of the two sides might be asymmetrical once it doesn’t reach the same understanding. This happens when the message that the sender tries to construct does not reach the same understanding by the receiver. The misunderstanding arises because of the “lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange” (Hall, 2005:120). It means that the receiver can create different understanding and perception of the meaning based on their own preferences and experiences.

Through this communication system, I only apply the encoding side in which the process of meaningful discourse is produced and constructed. As the main problem of this thesis is the beauty discourse construction, I use the three moments of communication system to find out how the discourse of beauty in the novel of *Uglies Series* is constructed and the ideological interests in it.

## 2.2.3 Constructionist Approach

Stuart Hall also correlates the production of meaning and representation through three approaches. They are the reflective, the intentional, and constructionist. The reflective positions the representation as the mirror of life in which every meaning through object, person, idea or event lied in thought. Language works to deliver the true meaning as it is already exist in the real world (Hall, 1997:24)

The position of language as the reflecting object of real world is called mimetic. It relates to the language on how there are so many things in the world that can not be fully placed as the real thing. It needs a code to help people to lable things through language.

The intentional approach deals with the position of language in expressing the personal intended meaning of the author or the speaker. Author has its own way in delivering meaning through language. The words that the author uses the personal meaning. In order to catch the one's intended meaning, we need to understand and have the shared language that unable us to accept the meaning. All of this depend on the shared linguistic conventions and shared codes.

As language can never be wholly a private game, our private intended meaning, however personal to us, have to enter into rules, codes and conventions of language to be shared and understood (Hall, 1997:25). This indicates that in order to understand the meaning of things, we need to understand the codes and shared language one another.

The last is constructionist approach in which the material world is exluded in the process of interpreting meaning through language. This approach states that there is a big different between the material world and the symbolic practices and process through which representation, meaning and language operate.

Hall (1997:25) states:

“It is not the material world which conveys meaning: it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concept. It is the actors who use the conceptual system of their culture and the linguistic and the other representatiol system to construct meaning, to make the

world meaningful, and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others.”

The quotation above delivers that the actors or human, through the culture and linguistic system, are the one who construct and spread out meaning. By language they share and understand one another, they form the concept of ideas and construct them into meaning.

Of all these approaches, the constructionist approach is what mostly related in analyzing the literary works as it closely connects to the condition of society and vice versa. By this approach, Hall applies his conception of the process of producing the meaning. In the novel of *Uglies Series*, the meaning is also produced and constructed within the text about the discourse of beauty.

Furthermore, Stuart Hall states that there are two major variants or models of the constructionist approach. They are the semiotic approach that proposed by Swiss Linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure and the discursive approach proposed by French philosopher and historian, Michael Foucault. This research focuses on using the discursive approach in analyzing the research problems.

Foucault uses the term of representation as the production of knowledge (rather than production of meaning) through what he called discourse (rather than just a language) (Hall, 1997: 23). He focuses on how to analyze of how human being understand themselves in the culture and how the knowledge about the social, the embodied individual and shared meaning comes to be produced in different periods. Besides he also focuses on the relation of power rather than the relations of meaning.

In discourse, the knowledgge is produced through language that later relates to meaning that shape and influence what people do. It all then has the discursive aspect. Discourse based on Foucault is revolving around the language and practice. It deals to overcome the traditional distiction between one says (language) and what one does (practice). (Hall, 1997: 44)

Besides, he argues that,

“... discourse constructs the topic. It produces the object of people’s knowledge. It governs the way to put into practice a

topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others.” (Hall, 1997:44)

This shows that discourse exists to construct one’s thinking and knowledge and influences others through power. Rather than producing meaning, Foucault prefers to use discourse as the form of practice and correlates it to the use of language that constructs meaning.



## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter delivers the method of doing the research. There are three discussions in it; they are type of research, data collection, and data processing and analysis. These processes are the steps in order to get the objective result and the goals of this research.

### 3.1 Type of Research

The type of this research uses the qualitative data in which the data I collect are in the form of words. According to Best (1981: 156), qualitative data is realised in the form of words or description of something not in the form of number. This means that the analysis of the novel *Uglies Series* uses qualitative or nonnumeric data. Furthermore, it will produce the descriptive data analysis in the form of written words. In this method, the researcher collects the data that related to the topic of the object. At this stage, I use this type of research to analyze the representation of beauty discourse in *Uglies Series*.

### 3.2 Data Collection

In collecting data, this research uses the documentary method in which all the data are taken from the written materials. The primary data of this research revolves around the construction of beauty which is taken from the novel *Uglies Series* by Scott Westerfeld. The data are taken from the selected dialogues and narration delivered by the characters about how beauty discourse is produced and constructed in the novel. Then, I collect the secondary data in form of articles, journals and books related to the representation of beauty construction. These data are used as the basic theory and references to support and strengthen the analysis of the problems in this research.

In this research, I do the close reading in order to collect data and analyze the novel. I read the novel more than once and look for some resources related to the theory of representation to analyze the beauty construction in the novel.

### 3.3 Data Processing and Data Analysis

After collecting data, the next step is data processing and data analysis in order to figure out the beauty discourse in the novel *Uglies Series*. I start this process by collecting the data in the form of dialogues, sentences, paragraphs, or phrases relating to the beauty discourse in the novel.

The next step is analyzing the problems. There are two problems to discuss in this research. The first is finding how beauty discourse is constructed in the novel *Uglies Series* by collecting all the data from the character's dialogues and narration in the novel. I apply the Stuart Hall's theory of representation which focuses on the constructionist approach to reveal how beauty is constructed through language in the novel. As this approach consists of two models, I will only apply one of them which is the discourse model proposed by Michael Foucault. This model is used to find how the meaning of beauty in the novel of *Uglies Series* is produced through the characters and the events revealed in the story. The production of the meaning will create the knowledge of beauty that later produces the beauty discourse. This track forms the discursive practice that closely connects with power that regulates the conduct of society.

Furthermore, I also use Hall's encoding scheme of meaning circulation to track the technical stages of how beauty discourse is produced in *Uglies Series*. There are three stages of moments; technical infrastructure, relation of production, and frameworks of knowledge that are used to produce the meaning of beauty. Thus, the meaning which is produced creates the codes and knowledge that constructs the beauty discourse in *Uglies Series*. Through this process, the second problem of the research about the ideological interest beyond the construction of beauty will be answered by relating it with the power that lies behind the construction.

At the final, all these process will help me to answer the research problems and make the conclusion in form of the tentative argument. It is drawn from the process of collecting and analysis data earlier. Furthermore, the conclusion of this

analysis will lead me to reach the goal of this research and hopefully will give the contribution to the next researchers in studying the similar topic.



## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The representation of beauty discourse in *Uglies Series* delivers the different beauty concept constructed by two antipode groups; the Specials and the Smokies. The different beauty construction is produced through the apparatuses which are ruled by the Specials and propaganda which is run by the Smokies. The beauty concept constructed by the Specials puts emphasize on the physical attractiveness that can only be achieved through the surgery. People who already undergone the surgery are automatically accepted and have better living. In the contrary, the Smokies construct the beauty concept in the form of being normal and having brain. However, the beauty construction of the two groups shows that both aim the certain goal to achieve.

Through the representation theory by Stuart Hall that focuses on the encoding process, the stages of the process and tools used by the Specials and the Smokies form the construction of beauty discourse. Moreover, through the conception of Discursive model proposed by Michel Fucoult, the correlation between production of beauty discourse and the power which is owned by both the Specials and the Smokies is found. Thus, both constructions intend to get the similar goal in which they aim to gain the domination over the society.

The construction of beauty discourse which is delivered in the novel represents the real condition in which the author—Scott Westerfeld—lives in; the American society. As the surgery becomes the main requirement to reach the ideal beauty in the novel, the similar phenomena happens in the American society in which almost a half of the population undergo the surgery to enhance the certain features of their body. The idealized beauty leads people to believe that they will

get better living and social status. The construction of beauty in American society also reaches the goal of having power over the society.

The goal of the beauty construction shows the dominant ideology lies behind it. This ideology proposes the concept of the domination of the ruling class over the society. The ruling class as it shown by the Specials and the Smokies at the end is what motivates the two groups to construct the beauty concept by their own way. It goes the same with the beauty construction brought up in American society through the mass media especially in television shows as it creates the concept of beauty that mostly requires the symmetry.



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