

# Deconstruction of Myth of Beauty and Its Resistance in Ayu Utami's *Lalita* and *Maya*

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## ABSTRACT

Beauty myths prevailing in society are generally dominated by perfect physical depictions through the eyes of men. However, other meanings can be presented to the beauty myth with the deconstruction method. This study aimed to deconstruct the beauty myths contained in the novel *Lalita* and *Maya* by Ayu Utami and the resistance by the female characters in the novels. This type of research is a qualitative research with descriptive methods. The data in this study were words, phrase, sentences containing myths of beauty, deconstruction and resistance in the novel *Lalita* and *Maya*. After conducting research, researchers found certain forms of deconstruction from the myths of beauty and resistance found in the novel *Lalita* and *Maya*. After conducting research, researchers found certain forms of deconstruction from the myths of beauty and resistance found in the novel *Lalita* and *Maya*.

**Keywords:** *beauty myths, deconstruction, resistance*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Women always have their own charm so that it is often used as a center of discussion in literary works. This is because women's lives and worlds have many problems that can be told. One of Indonesia's foremost authors who often makes women the main character in the narrative is Ayu Utami. Ayu Utami writes a lot of women's literature with a focus on ideological elements. Two of Ayu Utami's works that focus on women's ideology entitled *Lalita* (2012) and *Maya* (2013).

In studying women as objects in literary works, they will never be separated from the problem of beauty. Beauty is discussed starting from myths, facts, variety to the standards of beauty in every woman. Women's beauty standards have become a prolonged discussion in the community. Pramesti (2018: 4) says the most common myth of beauty in Indonesia is when women are white-skinned and slim-bodied; this has long been widely believed and shapes public awareness so that it eventually becomes an accepted ideology in most societies. In the Western world, Wolf (2002: 4) also finds fairly similar stereotypes that women are considered beautiful and ideal who is thin, tall, white and also has blond hair, a smooth face without blemishes, symmetrical face shape, sharp nose, thin lips, protruding chest, densely filled hips, long legs and without the slightest blemish.

These myths will gradually settle to be considered as a new truth if there are no concepts that balance it. Asri (2014) mentions that ideology is a new thought that is the same or different from existing concepts. Ayu Utami as an author also carries her own ideology in her works. One of

them is Ayu Utami's ideology counter which deconstructs the myth of beauty in the world of women.

Deconstruction is a context to negate if in a literary work it is indeed possible to present new meanings in addition to existing meanings (Derrida in Piliang, 2013:137). Al-Fayyadl (2011: 8) also added that deconstruction is a theory that opens itself to be interpreted by anyone because of its very broad dimensions. Deconstruction is also called a theory made by Derrida based on thought if the text does not have a single meaning (Asmardani, 2008: 17).

After deconstruction is done to get other meaning in a text, resistance becomes the next thing that is discussed. Resistance according to Wahyuni (2018: 1-14) is confrontation (either tacit or overt) to policies that are released or published by a certain party. Resistance is also an individual characteristic that reflects a negative opinion of change and its tendency to avoid or reject changes that occur (Puspaseruni & Widawati, 2017: 812). Resistance in this case as a form of conflict is because women feel that they are second sex or oppressed party.

This paper is the result of research examining Indonesia women's literary works. The novels used in this research were Ayu Utami's novel entitled *Lalita* (2012) and *Maya* (2013). Both of these novels contain stories about female characters who have a life's journey about beautiful images of women. The two novels have one equation which both express deconstruction and resistance. Based on the thoughts that have been described, this study aimed to deconstruct the beauty myths in *Lalita* and *Maya* and the resistance carried out by female figures against these ideologies.

This article is compiled based on the results of research and is expected to provide benefits related to literary studies. The benefits of this research are expected to enrich literary studies, increase reader appreciation, especially literature, and become one of the references for future researchers.

## 2. METHOD

This research attempted to describe the deconstruction efforts carried out by the authors in normal and abnormal groups in Lalita and Maya and to show the consistency of Ayu Utami's deconstruction and the resistance contained in both novels.

This type of research is a qualitative study using descriptive methods. The data in this study were words, phrases, sentences that contain normal and abnormal issues in the novel Lalita and Maya. The instrument of this research is the researchers themselves. The researcher intensely reads and understands, establishes the main and accompanying figures, identification, inventory, classification, interpretation, and discrimination of the findings of research data in the novel Lalita and Maya.

In analyzing the data, the researchers themselves directly read, identified, interpreted words, phrases, clauses and sentences which were abstracted as deconstruction and resistance in the both novels. Data collection techniques used in this study were reading, identifying, classifying and inventorying data sourced from the novel Lalita and Maya. Data recording was directed to text content that is directly or indirectly related to the structural presentation of the novels. Data validity checking techniques used were observation persistence techniques and triangulation techniques.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### a. Beauty myths in the novels of Lalita and Maya by Ayu Utami

The myth of beauty refers to the social structure that is inherent in social life and culture in society as reflected in the following quote.

Ah, she really is different from that demonic woman who has never been sweating, you can't know her true face. (17/L/1,2012: 65)

Data (17/L/1, 2012:65) explains how the beauty myth of a woman is when women appear with a natural face. From the fragments of data above it is proven that the beauty myth that exists in Marja when she is seen is different from the character Lalita.

When he was staring at Marja, Yuda saw something that made him really like Marja. It is when she was sweating, which he never encountered with the character Lalita. Yuda likes Marja as she is; not an appearance that is covered in falsehood like Lalita which

never sweat which makes Yuda cannot see what Lalita's face really looks like.

This is also reinforced by the thought of Yuda that distinguishes Marja and Lalita figures revealed in the data (17 / L / 1.2012: 65) by declaring Lalita to be a devil woman of vampire descent. Dracula descendant devils are meant here that Lalita is a very cunning woman when she wants something and always covers herself and her face.

Never before had he sat so close and intimate, together, with a human with long legs. It was strange to see beauty so and so real. The skin was really olive and smooth. Her hair was as thick as palm fiber but soft as satin, so inviting to hold. Pointed nose. All her teeth are neatly tucked away in her lips; nothing sticking out His arms, which were now learning to round a chicken, and his legs to hold them back were slim and perfect. The legs are so long, that even when folded, they are longer than the legs of a dwarf. Like a pandopo pole that is so finely crafted and oiled that your palms will love to rub it and your nose will want to sniff. How could any human be created so beautiful? (18 / M / 2.2013: 69)

The entire data (18 / M / 2.2013: 69) above is a description of the myths of female beauty that prevail in Indonesia as told by the author. The main female character is narrated with a description of how the beauty myth that developed in society in general. It is a woman with long legs, fair skin and smooth, thick and soft hair, sharp nose, neat teeth, slim body. This beauty myth is told over and over again toward female figures as a natural truth. However, this is only a fantasy of men who have space in a patriarchal ideology that dominates Indonesian society.

### b. Oposisi biner

The binary opposition in Lalita novel can be seen from the two highlighted female characters namely Lalita and Marja. The first binary opposition found was Luxury><Simple. Let's consider the following data:

You can't hide your weird taste for that figure's makeup. The woman's lips are completely painted, made of pencil and lipstick. Her eyes were surrounded by

curly hairs and various gilding of a copper purple hue, like a pair of peacock feathers stuck to the bottom of the brows. Everything on that face is painted and affixed so neatly that you see a beautiful mask. You are amazed that you cannot imagine the human face behind the painting. This is the weirdest face you have ever seen. Beautiful, but so unnatural, so vulgar. (2 / L / 1,2012: 8)

In the data (2/L/1,2012: 8) there is a description that explains how a character with a luxurious impression. Makeup on the lips, eyes surrounded by fake eyelashes with striking colors, and elegance on the face with thick makeup make her appearance looks perfect and flawless. The luxury he said when he saw it was like seeing an expensive work of art (paintings). However, that face does not mean as pure beauty but a beautiful lie like a painting.

Parang Jati then contrast his impressions towards other women character named Marja who is described as natural beauty as in the following account:

Data (25/L/1.2012: 192) shows how simple a character named Marja is. Marja's innocence and the simplicity of her mind makes her far more natural than the Lalita character above. Marja has a simplicity with plain or modest makeup and no complicated thinking.

From the two data above it can be seen how Ayu Utami moves her readers' understanding through binary opposition between the figures of Lalita and Marja. Lalita who is positioned as an antagonist is caused by the makeup that always covers her authenticity. Then it was reinforced by the recognition of the male character Parang Jati to strengthen that paradigm. The beauty that Lalita displayed was considered not an original beauty but an engineering that had no value but to demean herself.

On the other hand, Marja's character was plotted by Ayu Utami as a beautiful woman without problems. In contrast to Lalita's conditional beauty, Marja's beauty is so simple that anyone can feel it without having to look too deeply. Marja's simplicity and naturalness are also affirmed by another male figure named Yuda.

The next binary opposition arises from the contrast of two other female figures, Yasmin and Maya. In this case, the comparison shown is beautiful > <ugly.

Never before had he sat so close and intimate, together, with a human with long legs. It was strange to see beauty so and so real. The skin was really olive and

smooth. Her hair was as thick as palm fiber but soft as satin, so inviting to hold. Pointed nose. All her teeth are neatly tucked away in her lips; nothing sticking out His arms, which were now learning to round a chicken, and his legs to hold them back were slim and perfect. The legs are so long, that even when folded, they are longer than the legs of a dwarf. Like a pandopo pole that is so finely crafted and oiled that your palms will love to rub it and your nose will want to sniff. How could any human be created so beautiful? (18 / M / 2.2013: 69)

Data (18/M/2,2013: 69) explains how the details of Yasmin's physical stature. Yasmin's character is categorized by Maya as a physically perfect person. That conclusion arises from Maya's deep observations on Yasmin's corporals like texture of her skin, hair, nose, teeth to feet. The physical details contained in Yasmin's body are prerequisites needed to get a beautiful title that is generally accepted in society.

There appeared creatures that never appeared during the day as natural humans. Deformed creatures. Almost all legs are short, straight or curved. Except for big figures playing as giants. Their faces are not mature, but exist at an odd age that bring together childiness and maturity at the same time. The faces of the margins of age, when humans are just beginning to live or almost ending it. The prince Ravana was a large man with scaly skin. Ram will remind you of tuyul. And Sita. Sita who is touching is an albino dwarf woman. His eyes narrowed and his mouth grimaced. How thin hair. (4 / M / 2,2013: 33)

Data (4 / M / 2,2013: 33) explains how bad is defined. In general, in society, beauty is seen when a person has white skin, sharp nose, flat teeth, is tall, slim, has thick hair and so on. Then ugly is the opposite of that. In the data (4 / M / 2,2013: 33) above, Ayu Utami explains how strange creatures have short physiques, faces that look both adult and childish so that they look aged. Albino skin, short body and thin hair. From the definitions described

above, it is said that the figures depicted in the data show the concept of plain.

The next binary opposition in the Maya novel is seen in the characters Yasmin and Maya. The binary opposition is high and short.

Now beside her was a beautiful human who strangely made her feel tall, even though she had long legs. Because the woman learned from him. Add chicken feathers. He thought that only ugly people ate meat. It had never been said, but without words he knew: in the main compound of the hermitage no one eats meat. Only the offspring of demons slaughtered animals. To his amazement, the woman with long legs also shared her faith in food. It makes him happy. Now, that woman also studied with him. (17 / M / 2,2013: 69)

The data (17 / M / 2,2013: 69) show how the height is described. A quote that describes height is found in the section "Now beside him there is a beautiful human being who strangely makes him feel tall, even though the woman has long legs and he is amazed that the woman with long legs is also the same religion as her in terms of food" the above quote shows when a person with long legs is said tall because a person with long legs is a human being who is tall is not a human being dwarf or short.

Yasmin imagines Sita who is secretly in love with Laksmana. Ah, that's the secret theme in this story. At that moment he had forgotten the values of beauty that exalted his slender and long body. The kate creatures danced in such a way that he was touched. (3 / M / 2,2013: 32)

The data (3 / M / 2,2013: 32) explain the binary opposition of high, namely short. A short explaining quote is seen in the quote "The kate creatures dance in such a way that they feel touched". The quote above explains when the creature kate is defined as a short creature. The

kate creature is a human being who has a short, midget body.

### **c. Deconstruction**

As previously explained, deconstruction is a method used to find other meanings contained in a text, so some of the data below explains how Ayu Utami deconstructs texts to look for other meanings.

Yes, a woman he just met, who doesn't want people to say his name wrong. Striking bells woman in tight purple tank top, dark blue shoes, indigo contact lenses, peacock feather gilding, smelling a sleek purple cigarette. (6 / L / 1,2012: 13)

The data quotation (6 / L / 1,2012: 13) explains how Ayu Utami deconstructs beauty, this is in line with the concept of to deiffer (differentiate). Ayu Utami depicts a beautiful woman with a bell, tight clothes with a purple tank top, dark blue shoes, wearing indigo contact lenses, colorful eyelashes and a curvy woman. Ayu Utami deconstructs the female character from the data (6 / L / 1,2012: 13) because beauty can also be seen in the character with the make-up used to make her look perfect in the eyes of others. Ayu Utami differentiates (todiffer) when the character is described as beautiful with exaggerated things to make her look beautiful. Ayu Utami finds another meaning of beauty in Lalita's character, when Lalita uses make-up to look beautiful and attract men's attention.

The next deconstruction is the deconstruction found in Ayu Utami's novel Lalita, which uses the concept of trace

He saw the woman's photo. Lalita Vistara. In the socialite rubric of luxury magazines. Lalita is a figure in elite parties. And the woman is sparkling. She is not a "mother" as Marja imagined. Her body is slender, although her buttocks are flat, no longer solid (it can be seen in the photo where she is wearing tight hipster pants). It seems that she is wearing a bra with a knot (the density of her chest is not comparable to the contours of the flesh in other parts). She does have fine skull bones, the edges of her make up are too full. Her

skin is olive yellow, although the flesh on her back is starting to soften and fall off (it can be seen when she is wearing a black dress). Marja always had the eye to add "even though" and "but" in accepting her rival's pretty heartbreaking beauty. by Lalita. He may console himself by saying that his rival is a woman of class. Not just any woman. It kept his pride from falling. (27 / L / 1,2012: 210)

Data (27 / L / 1,2012: 210) described by Ayu Utami about deconstruction using the trace concept. This concept is used by Ayu Utami by looking at traces to find the meaning of beauty. The figures in the data (27 / L / 1,2012: 210) describe how Ayu Utami describes a character who has traces of her past beauty. Marja's character sees how Lalita's character, if seen before, was a very beautiful person, even though now Lalita has a body and skin that is not tight, Marja can still see if there are traces of beauty on Lalita's slender body coupled with makeup and Lalita's appearance still looks beautiful not young. Marja's denial with the words "even though" and "but" which seem to deny the beauty of the Lalita character shows how the traces of beauty depicted in her

The next deconstruction is the deconstruction found in the Maya novel with the concept of difference.

Another dwarf woman - white skin and a slightly grimaced face - became embarrassed by her pounding. Her thin, clear hair was blown away by the wind. He was the one who played Sita. It was he who that night touched Yasmin by the strange beauty of her shadow. He, who opened Yasmin's eyes that night, that Kate's body could reveal the beauty of deepest feelings. He was lighting incense in the corner of the room when a tuyul man slammed the door. (7 / M / 2,2013: 43)

Data (7 / M / 2,2013: 43) explains when Ayu Utami deconstructs the meaning of beauty with the concept of to defer (delay). Ayu Utami delays the meaning of beauty when the author explains how the character in the data (7 / M / 2,2013: 43) is depicted, when the character who plays Sita is played by a dwarf with a scary face but she plays Sita in the Ramayana story very well . The show played by Maya made the audience amazed and

moved by the beauty displayed. Ayu Utami makes to defer (delay) beauty by how Ayu Utami presents a Maya character with physical deficiencies in contrast to Sita when she appears only with shadows, not showing Maya's true form. Even though the audience only sees many shadows, it can amaze the audience. The beautiful delay is when Ayu Utami uses the ugly and dwarf Maya to play the very beautiful and perfect Sita.

#### **d. Resistance**

Resistance is a form of resistance that is carried out by women when they do not get the same rights as others, or when they are made second (secondary). In this case, there are two forms of resistance by the characters, namely the verbal form and the physical form. Here are some data that shows the form of resistance in Ayu Utami's novel Lalita and Maya.

As a man, Yuda was secretly accustomed to being unhappy if he was caught knowing less than women. But, this time the pin he could only say o.... (4 / L / 1,2012: 10)

The data citation (4 / L / 1,2012: 10) is a resistance by a female figure named Lalita. Lalita as a female character shows her intelligence which makes the male character (Yuda) feel defeated. In general, women are always below men, but according to the data (4 / L / 1,2012: 10) Lalita does verbal resistance to her intelligence.

The next resistance is verbal resistance found in Ayu Utami's novel Lalita.

Lalita dropped Oscar at the mouth of a pathetic path. At least that night, Oscar looked pathetic. After that the woman took Yuda without asking for permission again. A queen who fully believes that men will not reject her. He just said: "Yuda, you teach at the photojournalism school now. You can't be like a digital photographer these days. They don't know anything about the basics of photography. You must know the principles of washing-printing and darkrooming. I will teach you. I have a dark room in

my house ". The tone is an order. (10 / L / 1,2012: 27)

The data quotation (10 / L / 1,2012: 27) explains that female characters do verbal resistance. Verbal resistance is shown in the data fragment "After that the woman took Juda without asking for permission again, a queen who fully believed that a man would not reject her". Verbal resistance is shown when a female character named Lalita can make a male character follow her wishes and make a male character unable to resist the wishes of the female character.

The next resistance is a form of resistance found in Ayu Utami's Maya novel.

Another dwarf woman - white skin and a slightly grimaced face - became embarrassed by his pounding. Thin, clear hair blew with the wind. He was the one who played Sita. It was he who that night touched Yasmin by the strange beauty of her shadows. He, who opened Yasmin's eyes that night, that Kate's body could reveal the beauty of deepest feelings. He was lighting incense in the corner of the room when the Tuyul man slammed the door. (7 / M / 2,2013: 43)

The data quotation (7 / M / 2,2013: 43) describes verbal resistance by female characters. Verbal resistance is carried out with the sincerity of feeling when playing Sita

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions are obtained; Deconstruction by the author aims to break down the beauty myths that generally exist in society. The myth of beauty is deconstructed in such a way that it brings out new meanings of beauty in both novels. For example, physical deficiencies in female characters can be interpreted with the meaning of new beauty. In addition, there is resistance by the female characters in the novel Lalita and Maya in the form of verbal and physical resistance.

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so that everyone feels amazed and amazed at her appearance. Her short body or tuyul which is usually underestimated and even a scorn for her husband does not hinder her from playing Sita, who is actually a very beautiful and perfect person. His shortcomings are made into something that makes him look at with great amazement by others.

The next resistance is a form of resistance found in Ayu Utami's Maya novel.

Despite her doubts, Maya sings. He sang with compulsion. Ana kidung, rumeksa ing wengi. He never felt foreign like now. All this time he sang for love, not for examination. The guard admired his voice and invited him in, saying ignorantly. "Gudel Caucasians sounded finches". The teak machetes wanted to scold the stall keepers and all the traders, but even that only ruined the atmosphere. (23 / M / 2,2013: 74)

The data citation (23 / M / 2,2013: 74) describes the verbal resistance practiced by the female shop with her voice. This is evidenced by "The guard admired his voice and invited him to come in while saying ignorance". When he saw Maya's midget body, the stall keeper laughed at Maya's body. But maya amazed the stall keepers with the voice he had. Even though he has a short and midget virtual body, he has a very beautiful voice that makes others amazed.

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