

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

5.1. Conclusion

The novel *Anne of Green Gables* tells a story of an imperfect heroine whose life is controlled by the operation of the beauty myth through cultural standards. Montgomery portrays Anne with physical traits and personality that differ from the feminine qualities of early 20th-century Canada. During this period, women became objects of entertainment for their beauty. There were specific standards expected of women, including having proportional bodies and attractive faces. These aspects are believed to have the power over women's position in society. As a result, women perceive beauty as a relevant aspect, accepting their role as objects of society. Thus, this study identifies the operation of the beauty myth, which significantly affects Anne's understanding of beauty and leads her to conformity. Moreover, it highlights her resistance as a way to recognize her existential freedom in the novel.

By employing Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* theory, this thesis discovers two cultural forces that shape Anne's perspective on beauty, which are social and media influence. These mechanisms of the beauty myth explain how women believe in the importance of appearance over intellect, as reflected by Anne in the beginning of the novel. Her arrival in the town results in poor reactions as she is being evaluated merely by her look through both domestic and public. Marilla Cuthbert is the main instrument of domestic judgment who teaches Anne how to be a proper woman. Alongside Marilla, characters in the neighborhood and the school areas also build Anne's self-perception. Their beliefs are supported by the media that showcases the images of idealized femininity. Through fashion, Anne perceives puffed sleeves as the source of social

acceptance. While the representations of the heroine in the book she reads persuade her to perceive beauty as the primary aspect of women.

Surrounded by unrealistic standards, Anne Shirley becomes a dynamic character who undergoes transformation from conforming to resisting the idealized femininity that restricts her individuality. In analyzing her journey, Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism theory is utilized to understand how she deals with restricted boundaries. In the beginning, Anne strongly shows her conformity as she internalizes the judgments and expectations placed upon her. She believes in appearance over intellect and goes under any circumstances, such as dying her hair and longing for puffed sleeves, to be socially accepted. This shows the state of immanence where women remain as what society assigned them to. As for the opposite, transcendence focuses on pursuing achievement, which is evident as Anne changes her goals in life.

While Anne's transformation is driven by her sense of ambition, her transcendence becomes conditional. She still views beauty as the primary aspect to women's social belonging, yet she refuses to be controlled by the myth. By choosing her life path regardless of societal expectations, Anne becomes the portrayal of a flawed heroine who proves women are not mere involuntary. She begins to establish a sense of acceptance and respect for herself, which justifies her existential freedom. The fundamentals of her transcendence are based on the immanence she initially had, which proves both stages as a whole progress of human nature. The novel illustrates immanence as the source of will that brings Anne to a meaningful transcendence. Therefore, the beauty myth becomes a tool of immanence that restricts Anne from exercising her transcendence.

L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* serves as a classic novel that portrays the cycle of women's struggles during early 20th-century Canada. The findings of this research suggest that the beauty myth is a dynamic system of patriarchy that continues evolving until now. The restrictive regime stays the same, while the mechanisms are developed by the advancement of digital labor. Both classic and contemporary culture have the same pattern that places women as objects, depending on their value for the satisfaction of others. By refusing to view beauty as a currency, women can fully recognize their potential and challenge the system that defines their femininity. Moreover, the novel highlights femininity as women's self-perceptions rather than societal construction, allowing women to become the subjects of their lives.

5.2. Suggestion

In expanding the analysis of this study, which solely focuses on Anne as the main victim of the beauty myth, future research may investigate other characters with the help of gendered studies. Cultural standards cover the societal expectations of both femininity and masculinity. To examine this issue, a gender theory is highly suggested as it will help discuss the conservative rule of gender as a role in society. Furthermore, the Canadian historical context offers in-depth research of gender in the early 20th-century.

While this thesis aims to reveal the significance of the beauty myth in preventing a woman's existential freedom, future studies may also discuss other feminist literary works as a comparative study. Many cultures have different standards in dictating women's position in society. Alongside it, a different female character will also bring a new conclusion to the impacts of the beauty myth. By comparing feminine standards

across cultures, it will strengthen the significance of the beauty myth as a controller of women and their individuality.

