



Gender essentialism in contemporary romance novel, Ugly Love

No. Abstract: ABS-ICOLLITE-24156

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INTRODUCTION

1. Why gender essentialism?

- The common conception of gender is that there is male and female, and both are inherently different from birth.
- Essentialism is a belief in a given nature due to our biology, such as how women are told to conform to existing patterns of femininity defined by others, as stated by Toril Moi in *The Feminist Reader*.

2. Why Ugly Love?

- The formula of Colleen Hoover's romances tend to lean on the portrayal of the ideal masculine man and feminine woman.
- Girl meets boy and the two of them would then be involved in a complicated relationship where certain character dynamics are present.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Romance novels are often derided as being formulaic and the use of tropes can contribute to this viewpoint (Palmer, 2021).
- character traits can often exhibit patterns of existing gender dynamics
- According to the novel, Miles is assertive while Tate is empathetic
- Gender difference is socially constructed or biologically determined (Manicom, 2016)



METHOD

Analyzing texts: novel, academic papers and essays.

To aid the research objectives

- To analyze the character dynamics of the leads in Ugly Love
- How they portray gender performance through the understanding of gender essentialism
- How societal norms and personal biases affect a certain narrative



FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- A trope includes a character type, theme, and plot device. Tropes can also reflect cultural and societal values (Palmer, 2021).
- When certain tropes (such as brooding male hero and naive female lead) are placed side by side with gender performance, there is a connection
- There are instances in the novel where gender performance is discussed (Miles' masculinity being questioned)
- Men are usually expected to show more interest in sexual relations than women (Coleman, 1922).
- The ideal model of masculinity is generally unattainable for most men (Liu, 2005).



FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- Tate's behavior towards Miles follows the idea that women are nurturing by nature (Moi, 1997)
- Femininity is the 'natural' standard and so is masculinity
- According to the standards of heteronormativity, monogamous relationships between masculine men and feminine women are deemed natural, and are considered superior compared to other sexual expressions (Robinson, 2016)
- Both characters are described as the patriarchal standard of masculine man and feminine woman who are involved in an ideal relationship (heterosexual monogamous relationship.)



CONCLUSION

- Tate and Miles are characters that can be considered as the norm when it comes to the model romantic relationship.
- Both are cis-gendered and heterosexual, both are also expected to meet certain requirements to fit their respective roles in the relationship.
- Failure or even disinterest in meeting any of those requirements would result in their identity being questioned by others.
- Ideas on how men and women should behave is present in this story and in the character tropes they represent.

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THANK YOU!

