IMAGE AND IMAGINATION IN A YOUNG ADULT NOVEL A WRINKLE IN TIME BY MADELEINE L’ENGLE
Children’s Literature

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Abstract
This paper reports an analysis on a young adult novel written by Madeleine L’Engle, A Wrinkle in Time (1962), which aims to uncover the presentation of the main female character in resisting the society assessment of her body image as an effort to be accepted in society just the way she is. This research uses feminism as the literary approach, especially the concept of adolescent body image by Liz Frost (2001) and Beth Younger (2009), through the study of the characterization of the main characters and the perspective of the female character and of the society where she lives, which is based on the theory of narratology by Ian Rudge (2004). The resistance is depicted from how the novel describe the concept of the body image of young woman which is not considered appropriate according to normative society, how the main female character reacts to this concept, and how this magic realism story is narrated. This study shows that the novel voices the belief of a young woman that she could be accepted by her society without changing her body in accordance with the appropriate body image her society holds.

Keywords: young adult novel, A Wrinkle in Time, adolescent body image, magic realism

Introduction
Liz Frost (2001) explained that at the end of the 20th century the ideal adolescence body portrayal and normal sexuality became an important thing for every teenager to have. Some of them even recorded suicide due to depression to achieve ideal body. This is influenced by society’s assumptions about something ideal. A Wrinkle in Time (1962) written by Madeleine L’Engle portray female adolescent character whose body image is not considered appropriate according to normative society. The character is considered not behave “normal” and not accepted by the society around her because her aggressive behavior is traditionally seen a masculine characteristic. Her behavior is seen as something that is harmful and brings problems. For example, when she fights, though to defend herself, is considered a mistake because a girl should not behave as aggressively as a boy. Her behavior is presented as a disturbance to the normative views that have been formed in society and also disturbing other character in the fantasy world presented in the novel. The purpose of this research is to provide an explanation of the image and imagination in the novel by Madeleine L’Engle. This research is also expected to help readers to understand as well as researchers who will discuss the works of Madeleine L’Engle in further studies.

Methodology
In discussing the problems that appear in A Wrinkle in Time (1962) by Madeleine L’Engle, I use Beth Younger’s concept about adolescent body and sexuality and Liz Frost in Young Women and the Body (2001). Younger (2009) argues that many young adult novels describe sexuality but do not describe the aberration of sexuality that occurs. Younger stated that adolescence is a
period of growth and changes that occur in the body and sexuality that must be passed by adolescent girls or boys in order to grow up. In Gender Trouble (1999) Butler explained that in society, body is considered as a tool for a cultural construction to represent the culture itself. Thus, the body of adolescent girls or boys can not be separated from the formation of society who have interests. In A Wrinkle in Time (1962) by Madeleine L’Engle, the depiction of a not-ideal body image is portrayed through the female adolescent character but she resists her not-ideal body image to be accepted into society without having to change her body features.

Finding and Discussion
Since the beginning of A Wrinkle in Time (1962), Meg Murry is presented as an adolescent girl who tends to have male traits. She is aggressive, often involves in fighting at the school, even shouting while talking to the principal. Her appearance is messy, her hair is tangled and her face is plain. No one in school wants to be friends with her; she is more often bullied by other students and because of that “she’d rough-housed a little to try to make herself feel better” (L’Engle, 1962: 5). At first Meg is unaware of the masculine attributes that clings within her or that it matters. She keeps fighting in school even though his mother and twin siblings have already warned her to stop fighting.

In the novel, it was told that Meg’s view of herself changed since her twin brothers Sandy and Dennys felt “disgusted” seeing Meg getting bruises under her eyes and her shirt was torn from fighting in school with a boy who bullied their youngest brother, Charles Wallace. They told Meg, “Let us do the fighting when it’s necessary” (L’Engle, 1962: 6). The word “us” in the novel is in italics which indicates the affirmation made by Sandy and Dennys that only them, boys, who are allowed to fight. The narration of her twin brothers who considered Meg behaving aggressively made her think she is a “villain”. Meg’s character is also considered as a disturbance for the teachers especially Mr. Jenkins, the principal because he thought that a girl should behave “less antagonistic” and “more tractable” (L’Engle, 1962: 28). Meg considered failing to meet the “standard” in the school through Mr. Jenkins question, “Do you enjoy being the most belligerent, uncooperative child in school?” (L’Engle, 1962:28). Mr. Jenkins assumes that Meg’s can’t change her behavior because she cannot accept the fact that her father, Mr. Murry, has been mysteriously lost for many years while working with the government. This is explained in the conversation between Meg and Mr. Jenkins:

“Meg, don’t you think you’d make a better adjustment to life if you faced facts?”
“I do face facts. They’re a lot easier to face than people, I can tell you.”
“Then why don’t you face facts about your father?”
“You leave my father out of it!”
“Stop bellowing. Do you want the entire school to hear you?”

Though in the conversation above, Meg emphasized that she faced the facts, comparing “facts” with “people” makes her seemed difficult to socialize with others. The conversation showed that Meg did not have the desire to be “more tractable” because she, against Mr. Jenkins indicates that she is not interested in adjusting herself to the rules, even shouting to the school principal is not something Meg could not do. She constructed a depiction of herself in an uncooperative way and she “escaped” from the existing categorization of an ideal woman.
Meg’s failure to direct her efforts in accordance with the role of an ideal woman which has formed in the society is also apparent through her mother’s narrative while treating Meg’s bruised wounds, her mother says, “You don’t know the meaning of moderation, do you, my darling? A happy medium is something I wonder you’ll ever learn.” (L’Engle, 1962: 13). The statement is not only said by her mother but also emphasized by Sandy, “You don’t have to take everything so personally. Use a happy medium for heaven’s sake. You just goof around in school and look out the window and don’t pay any attention.” (L’Engle, 1962: 25). The phrase “a happy medium” in the dictionary means “a way of doing something which is good because it avoids being extreme”, in other words Meg is asked to behave normally and should avoid extreme things. In the novel, the phrase “a happy medium” is stated repetitively by two different characters: Mrs. Murry and Sandy. The repetition of the phrase is an attempt to make Meg believe that “a happy medium” can ease the problems that she has. Textually, the repetition by two different characters builds the element of “devotion” that Hunt (2005) argues is needed in creating a fantasy works.

When Meg travels in space to rescue the long-missing Mr. Murry with Charles Wallace and Calvin O’Keefe and is accompanied by Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which they met a character named the Happy Medium. The emergence of a character named the Happy Medium from Planet Ixchel brings up another idea of the concept of “happy medium”. The Happy Medium character in the novel is presented as a female fortune teller who wears “a turban of beautiful pale mauve silk, and a long, flowing, purple satin gown” (L’Engle 1962: 31) and just sits all day in front of her crystal ball to “see” the lives of others. When looking at the crystal ball, the Happy Medium just keep laughing out loud. She is instantly in love with Meg, Charles Wallace and Calvin O’Keefe since the first time seeing them and having a desire to feed them like a mother who cannot bear to see her children starve.

The Happy Medium character loves to laugh a lot and always feel very happy when sitting in front of her crystal ball which Schneebaum (1990), in her article entitled Finding a Happy Medium: The Design for Womanhood in A Wrinkle in Time, compares to television. The Happy Medium character’s question to Meg when Meg wants to see her mother and her twin brothers through the crystal ball, “Where are you going in the case I want to tune in?” (L’Engle 1962: 98) makes her look like housewife that seems to “live” by watching the lives of others and putting aside her own life. The fact that the Happy Medium character has an extreme behavior and cannot adjust the concept of “happy medium” itself makes the appearance of the character is just a joke therefore Meg doubts the concept.

The planet in which Mr. Murry has been captivated named Camazotz. Camazotz has been taken over by the evil IT and becomes a dystopian planet: a whole planet in grayscale, with identical houses, streets, and its citizens moving in rhythm. Meg saw a young boy who is not in sync with the rhythm is whisked back into his house by his fearful mother in order to hide him from his peers. At Camazotz, IT stated that they are all happy because they are all alike. Differences create problems. When Meg denies this, IT continues, “You’ve seen at home how true it is. You know that’s the reason you’re not happy at school. Because you’re different.” (L’Engle 1962: 140). After reuniting with her father, however, Meg comes to a revelation of her own: “Like and equal are not the same thing at all!” (L’Engle, 1962: 154). Significantly, this is not something she realizes with direct influence from Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who or Mrs. Which but
realizes on her own, as a child. Meg, however, has realized the merit in attempting to grow outside of the expectations of the society she lives in and in the fantasy world, that she can be totally unlike the people around her and still worthy of humanity.

**Conclusions**
The research carried out in this paper concludes that the journey of the main female character does not end with her embracing womanhood, but rather with her embracing her own strong feelings in order to rescue male characters; her lost father and her brother. She does not construct herself as a woman and cannot perform gender that is easily categorized by others around her, as Butler (1999) stated that gender is a “performativity”. She can’t be separated from gender stereotype which is socially structured. Her uncomfortable feelings around other children at school is also based on the thought that she knew she could not grow and show her femininity in a way that society considers appropriate. She grows up by never defining herself in a way that conforms to anyone or in a way that other people understand. She does not convince anyone to see her as a girl who will be an ideal woman. Instead, she learns to appreciate what she already is. Madeleine L’Engle basically has a purpose on writing the novel, she is reconstructing the idea about appropriate body image as a source of control and power because by having inappropriate body image also can give control and power.

**References**


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