



The Cruciality of the Objectified Body in Samiya At'ut's *That Summer Holiday*

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ABSTRACT: This paper investigates how the body is objectified in Samiya At'ut's flash fiction entitled *That Summer Holiday*. The story recounts the painful transition from childhood to adulthood, particularly for women. This idea is mostly supported by McKinley and Hyde's research in the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS). It is said that the objectifying of the body includes surveillance, body shame, and appearance control beliefs. Through a qualitative method and an exploratory approach, this paper's analysis examines how the girl must face her body being objectified by her parents and surroundings. Living in a religious community, she is dictated on how to dress in her everyday life. In conclusion, it is clear that At'ut's story highlights the fact that the body does not belong to someone autonomously, as it is always socially constructed.

Keywords: Objectified Body, Samiya At'ut, That Summer Holiday

1. Introduction

Modern conceptions used to think that people are totally autonomous in their/own world. Individuals can define their own deeds due to each person's particular needs and interests (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013; Moradi & Varnes, 2017; Rengganis et al., 2023). In a sense, autonomy is well reasoned, as it reflects the principle that human beings should always take care of themselves. By being autonomous, people could define who they really are. In bodily matters, anyone naturally and must always have full control of her/his own body. Therefore, this sense also relates to the matter of existentialism, in which the concept of authenticity is prioritized for exploration.

In other words, no one is actually too individual at all. They will never leave out social conceptions in their life. People will always be associated with socialites, even if they try to resist it. This idea is about communitarianism, in which every person is connected to the collective ideas of society. In matters of bodily perceptions, no single body is actually so existentially individual (Boursier et al., 2020; Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020; Rengganis et al., 2023). The body is always socially constructed, as it is defined by otherness in a cultural sense.

The differences between bodies in being autonomous and socially constructed above indicate such tensions between. People rarely enter a genuine ceasefire against these two fundamental issues (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013; McKinley, 2011; Yuliastuti et al., 2021). That condition is also reflected in the literature. One crucial flash fiction piece that explores the body is "That Summer Holiday" by Samiya At'ut. Compiled in 2005, this short fiction piece explores

the painful transition from childhood to adulthood, particularly in women. The main character in this story, Dalal, must face a dictate from her parents to change the way she dresses. She is considered old enough to wear veiled clothes, even though she is only nine years old (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013; At'ut, 2005; Moradi & Varnes, 2017). The reason behind this is not coming from her parents, but from the social claims about a woman's body. Her parents are merely forced symbols of social standards that they adopt in everyday life, both as parents and as ordinary people.

Based on the background above, this article aims to explore how Dalal's body is being objectified. The analysis is done through McKinley and Hyde's research in the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS). The research explains that the objectifying of the body includes surveillance, body shame, and appearance control beliefs (Knauss, 2008; McKinley, 1998; Sandhu & Sandhu, 2021). The body is not meant to be subjectified, but it always belongs to societal standards. No one could leave this conception, especially women who are trapped under the dictates of patriarchal structures.

This paper also demonstrates how femininity is not entirely free but is constrained by the rules of patriarchy, as perpetuated by societies dominated by men (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013; McKinley, 2011; Yuliastuti et al., 2021). It is because femininity always speaks up about how women are actually the main owners of their own bodies. No one, not even men, could decrease women's freedom of their own rights, including their bodies.

2. Method

To address the inquiry outlined in this research, a qualitative approach is employed to explore specific concepts and written material. Through exploratory analysis, this paper sheds light on the correlations between Samiya At'ut's short story, entitled *That Summer Holiday*, and McKinley and Hyde's research in the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBC). This investigation integrates literary concepts and ideas from cultural studies. The analytical process involves a thorough examination of the flash fiction, comparing its themes with the concept of an objectified body, analyzing deeper dialogues and written narratives, incorporating pertinent quotations into the article, and compiling a comprehensive list of references from both primary and secondary sources. Samiya At'ut's short story, entitled *That Summer Holiday*, and McKinley and Hyde's research in the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBC) serve as the primary data and theoretical framework for this research. Furthermore, the study focuses on exploring how Dalal is never autonomous of her own body, as she must always conform to social and even religious standards.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Body and Its Conceptions in Dalal's Life

Samiya At'ut's work, entitled *That Summer Holiday*, is a short yet meaningful piece. It reflects the tensions between childhood and adulthood, alongside individual and social standards. The girl, Dalal, would like to define her own life by playing what she wants during her summer holiday (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). However, her holiday must be accompanied by hot tears since she has to change the way she dresses. Indeed, this condition brings awe to her world as a child. The proofs of the tensions are shown as follows.

Data 1

"Her pride in belonging was such that she boasted of it continually to her schoolmates. Her association with the group was not limited to playing marbles, seven stones, and soccer, nor to sharing innocent intimacies. She even

participated with them in a war game, which was her favorite. It required fast running and muscular strength, as well as ferocity and rowdy behavior.” (At’ut, 2005)

The quotation above demonstrates Dalal's confidence as a female figure. She possesses great muscular strength, comparable to that of any boy her age. In that case, Dalal is so strong that she could easily surpass the strength of any boy (At’ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). She is an active girl, as she defines herself as an alpha girl in her surroundings. She is, at the very least, very great in athletics and sports as well. She never hesitates to play with any boy. She is the one associated with the most active person among her schoolmates.

Data 2

“Her routine was the same at the end of each year: she removed her school uniform and put on a floral shirt and white shorts. Her slender body looked beautiful, well proportioned, and full of vitality, as would that of any healthy nine year-old girl.” (At’ut, 2005)

At’ut draws Dalal’s figure really well in the quotation above. It is in line with the former quotation in which Dalal chooses to dress as she wants. She does not care whether she dresses like other boys. What she cares about is that her clothes must support her active actions every day. It is also interesting how At’ut defines Dalal’s body. She is a girl in proportions, but she is not the calm one (At’ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). She is the active one who wears a shirt and shorts to show who she really is. No one could define how she dresses, but she herself did in that quotation. The dress is indeed the direct symbol of her freedom in everyday life.

Data 3

“We enjoyed it very much, and we won. Fathi collided and bled from the head, and Samir threw me to the ground, but I didn’t care. Tomorrow we have a final soccer match. We want to finish the game,” she replied enthusiastically.” (At’ut, 2005)

Soccer is not as widely played by women. There are soccer matches for girls, but they must also face other girls. There is such a conception that women's power is incomparable to men's. At’ut is otherwise explaining Dalal’s favorite sport. Dalal plays whatever she likes, even if she has to face the boys (At’ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Absolutely, she could defeat them all. She wins against the boys. She is the alpha girl who will finish the game even if she has to face any boy above her own current and past power.

Data 4

“Their father was seated in the hall, which was unusual. He was silent, his head bowed, as if sunk in deep thought.” (At’ut, 2005)

The tension starts when Dalal’s father shows unusual behavior in the house. He looks depressed and has so many things to think about. He has to consider something that is actually never in line with his own perspective. Later, he has to make a decision that will upset and even

sadden his daughter (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). The father, as the head of the family, has to cease and surrender to such power above him. Furthermore, he is not only the one who suffers. It is Dalal who is the real victim in this story.

Data 5

““Good, good,” the mother said, in an attempt to silence her. Then she continued in a quiet and serious tone. “Today Abu Mahmud the grocer and Fahmi the greengrocer spoke with your father.”

“What did they want?” (At'ut, 2005)

The quotation above is unique. It is usual for any important decision to be made by the father. However, this one is told by the mother to Dalal. It seems from the former quotation that her father does not have the heart to tell Dalal. The mother has to tell Dalal about that shocking request. The silence the mother exhibits indicates that she is also hesitant to tell Dalal, but she must do so (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). The way Dalal speaks to her mother is also quite open. Dalal bravely asks her mother about what the men want. It shows how Dalal and her mother are quite close.

Data 6

“ “They told him that you’ve grown and that . . .”

The mother fell silent for a moment, so the daughter asked, “And that what?”

“That your breasts have developed prominently. They were upset to see you wearing shorts and running in the streets with the children.”

“What?” (At'ut, 2005)

This is a crucial quotation in which Dalal's body is defined by other people, especially men. Moreover, the men are not her family, but rather strangers who are selling. The breasts are the main emphasis here, as those symbolize Dalal's body. She is shocked to learn that some people actually pay attention to how she dresses. She wants to be free, but she cannot leave any social construction where she lives (At'ut, 2005; Ibrahim & Pasopati, 2024; Liberman & Burke, 2022). She is even nine years old, but she is pushed to be a grown-up woman who must totally care about the clothes that may tease or even seduce other grown or adult men. She is no longer free, even in her own mind. This is because she has to regularly consider how she presents herself to others.

Data 7

“Dalal, from now on, you are absolutely not to go out into the street. That’s what your father said. Also, from now on, you are forbidden to wear shorts. You can give these clothes to your brothers.” (At'ut, 2005)

It is such an upsetting situation for Dalal. Her world changes in seconds. She could no longer play with other boys. The readers can imagine what will happen to the soccer game the next day if Dalal does not come. The mother could only surmise that it was Dalal's father's decision. She can no longer wear shorts, as people think it will reveal her body to the public (At'ut, 2005; Ibrahim & Pasopati, 2024; Liberman & Burke, 2022). Here, when her mother says that the shorts can be given to Dalal's brothers, it is quite intriguing. It is shown that Dalal's body

has been defined by society since that time. Even clothes are not neutral since it also has gender after all.

Data 8

“Thunderstruck, Dalal tried to protest. “But Mother, I like to play, and I like to wear shorts. What’s the connection . . .” The mother interrupted her resolutely: “The discussion is over. I don’t want to hear another word.” And she left the room.” (At’ut, 2005)

The quotation above is a strong rejection from Dalal’s point of view. She is not angry, but she tries to reason with her mother. However, her mother keeps still in her stance and leaves Dalal sooner. Dalal is someone who must strictly adhere to public law, especially in terms of dress (At’ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Moreover, she must obey an indication that she is a girl who must not stay outside. It is the religious law that says so. A woman must only show herself if she is accompanied by her father, brother, or husband.

Data 9

“Dalal stood for a moment as if rooted to the spot. She dragged herself to the bathroom and locked the door. She sat on the floor and seemed unable to think.” (At’ut, 2005)

Dalal could not say anything more to convince her father and mother of their decision. She could only leave for the bathroom. It is a private place for her to reflect on the changes she has to face. Her mind was lost at that time. She could no longer be free in how she dressed, how she played with other boys, or even how to keep herself inside the house. She could no longer say that it is her own body (At’ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Her body belongs to the social standards in her surrounding norms. She is no longer the master of her own body.

Data 10

“Suddenly she got up, lifted her shirt, and looked at herself in the mirror. Running her hands over her chest, her fingers felt two small round buds sprouting, almost escaping, from her body.” (At’ut, 2005)

This is an event when she tries to reassure her own body about what those two men think of her. She looks at herself in the mirror. She wants to see her reflection in it. One main thing that she touches is not her breast, but her nipples. For women, this is a great opportunity to showcase their maturity. However, even if Dalal already has that, it does not mean that her body is no longer hers (At’ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). In reverse, her real condition speaks otherwise. She has to nod to what other people, or public manners, say about her own body.

Data 11

“She remembered that Abu Mahmud had tried to touch them during the previous week.” (At’ut, 2005)

The quotation above is quite shocking. It could mean many things. First, the situation may mean that the man is interested in Dalal. He would like to do something related to hugging



a girl, but in a sexual way. Second, it could mean that Dalal is only hugged by the man, but she thinks it is related to her growing nipples. She feels that it is usual, but that day's event makes her think that the hugging is intentional (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996).

Third, the man has the power to check any girl's body if she has already grown up. However, that situation may raise another question of who he really is to have such power to enter the most private aspect of a woman's body. Fourth, the man could be expected to marry her later. It is common in that culture to wed a young girl, and this practice remains prevalent to this day (At'ut, 2005; Ibrahim & Pasopati, 2024; Liberman & Burke, 2022). It could also be doubted that the way the man tells Dalal's father to keep Dalal inside is merely a matter of public consent. It is actually the man's own consent, so that no one could marry Dalal besides himself.

Data 12

"Unable to control her feelings, she covered herself with her shirt and burst into hot tears." (At'ut, 2005)

This is the end of the story, in which Dalal could do nothing but cry. The hot tears symbolize how her situation has undergone drastic changes. Moreover, the change is not due to her own choice. She wants to refuse the rules, but she could not (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). She loves her father and mother, as well as her brothers, so she has to nod to the traditional values. It could also be implied that she must maintain the good image of her family. Her body no longer belongs to her own self at all (At'ut, 2005; Ibrahim & Pasopati, 2024; Liberman & Burke, 2022).

3.2. Objectified Body and Woman's Obstacles to Freedom

As human beings, people have bodies and interact with the world through these physical aspects. Philosophy has explored various aspects of how people can govern their bodies freely. One aspect is stated as existentialism that upheaves matters of human freedom regarding everything, including their own bodies (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013; McKinley, 2011; Yuliastuti et al., 2021). Their freedom is always intact since any meaning of it will only come to the surface if they realize their own bodies.

Even the whole aspect of modernism suggests that bodies are not social at all, but belong to individuals, as stated in their own uniqueness. Bodies can be defined, measured, and even predicted to reach such progress as expected under modern conditions (Boursier et al., 2020; Choukas-Bradley et al., 2020; Rengganis et al., 2023). That is the purpose of bodies in which people live simultaneously.

Meanwhile, human bodies are not actually the centers of everything. They are actually dictated by any social standard. They are not meant to be neutral but politically postured. Bodies are socially constructed. Those never belong to individuals, but to society as a whole. In this sense, such possessions of human bodies are never possible at all (Knauss, 2008; McKinley, 1998; Sandhu & Sandhu, 2021). Those are practically defined, measured, and even predicted by social constructions.

In a sense, it is clear that social construction may even liberate the body, as it is not egotistical at all. Their values are not owned by individual issues, but are mediated by others' knowledge as well. On the other hand, it could also lead to further dictations, as people may not easily agree with what they believe (Knauss, 2008; McKinley, 1998; Sandhu & Sandhu, 2021). They could only nod to what social conditions indicate to them. For these tensions, individual and social matters collide each other. Those tensions manifest in language, culture, and even in everyday texts.

For women, it is clear that bodies are even gendered and not merely biologically destined. Those are about social roles rather than destinies. Anything that happens to women's bodies is demanded by wider societies (Knauss, 2008; McKinley, 1998; Sandhu & Sandhu, 2021). It is also true that even if women define their own bodies, they cannot directly shape the values of their bodies. Indeed, this issue is strongly opposed by feminism, particularly through its critique of gendered roles (Knauss, 2008; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). However, before opposing those values, aspects that speak about dictated bodies must be admitted first.

N. M. McKinley and J. S. Hyde propose the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS) to explain how women's bodies are largely constructed by social expectations (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013; McKinley, 2011; Yulastuti et al., 2021). Any internalization of values to women's bodies is not subjective for women at all. They must always nod to objectifications of other people, especially men with their heightened patriarchal values (Ainley & Tsakiris, 2013; McKinley, 2011; Yulastuti et al., 2021). Women within their bodies are not subjects to their own beings. They are actually objects of further values dictated to them. It is indeed shameful and hurtful, but it is also inevitable.

There are three main values of OBCS. The first one is that societal expectations always do the surveillance of women's bodies. The way women dress and even move is socially observed. In this sense, women are the ones being observed by any external observer (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). The second one is body shame. This is quite a common occurrence today. Body shaming is not about such mocking, but such differentiations between women's bodies and societal standards. If women could not conform to any social standard, they would feel shame.

Indeed, shame can have a profound impact on women internally, as it may shape psychological or even psychoanalytical turbulences (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). The third is about appearance control beliefs. This part is clear in its aspects. The appearance does not belong to women, but to social views. Therefore, it is bitterly justified that women should not submit to any social control. The belief includes any value in social matters, such as religions, customs, ethics, and even marriage norms.

OBCS consists of 24 items related to its scales, which function similarly to questions in questionnaires. Hence, the questions actually reflect various tensions between this and that aspect related to bodies belonging to women or social standards. The first surveillance scale addresses these issues. Women are asked whether the ways they look are important or not (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). If those are important, then they care more about the looks. Meanwhile, the look is continued in the clothes being worn.

Women are then asked whether clothes should be more beautiful or comfortable for them to wear. It is related to such value whether the way the body feels is more necessary than the way the body looks, or in reverse. A further question concerns the appearance and its comparison to the day or night when women wear certain clothes (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). It also contains whether women worry more about their appearance. Actually, the look is how women are being surveilled and controlled by other people. Therefore, if all questions were answered with yes, then it is true that women do not have full control over their own bodies.

The second scale is about body shame. In this part, weight is the main concern, as it is socially acknowledged that controlling body weight is particularly important for women. If they do not put in much effort, they are considered not in their best looks, and they will feel ashamed. Moreover, they will also be perceived as a person who cannot cultivate the best aspects of their own bodies (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). In many cases, even women are ashamed to approach such a weighing scale. They even hide the truth about their own weight.

The way they exercise is also expected by society, as it is perceived as a sign of being a good person. If they are not of the right size, they are ashamed as well. In this scale, women are the subjects of their own bodies, but their values are often based solely on weight issues (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). If women could not reach a certain size, they would feel ashamed since they could not control their bodies regarding the values that society demands.

The third, or control, scale is about how women must conform to the values around them. In this scale, women are asked whether their bodies are about being destined or nurtured. They must choose whether bodies are naturally or socially constructed. If they want to uphold social standards, they must be willing to work harder. The more women could follow social standards, the more they could control their own bodies (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). Once again, weight is also a means by which society controls women. It extends to the way women dress.

Furthermore, such gender norms are also applied to clothing, as women are often limited in what they can wear. It is far more different from men, who could wear anything more freely. This scale measures the extent to which women engage in hard work to change their bodies (EMERGE, 2023; McKinley, 1998; Rengganis et al., 2023). If they blame the genes or even being big-boned for the weight, then they are refusing such social standards. By stating so, the control from social standards fails for them regarding their bodies.

3.3. Dalal's Objectified Body and Prolonging Patriarchal Structures

At'ut's short story about Dalal indeed is thick with the ideas of OBCS. Dalal must shift from her own world to the socially dictated world. Moreover, the change occurred in her childhood. The data in the previous sub-chapter reflects the prolonged idea that Dalal's body no longer belongs to her (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Later, she must have felt ashamed and even burst into tears, as she could do nothing about the change.

Data 1 to 3 speak about Dalal's previous world. This world is the one that Dalal likes. She truly enjoys this world, as she can freely define who she truly is. In Data 1, she is able to play soccer with his male friends. Her favorite game is even the war game, which is often considered male-dominated (At'ut, 2005; Ibrahim & Pasopati, 2024; Liberman & Burke, 2022). However, she could easily dominate other men since she always wins. In Data 2, the way Dalal wears clothes is listed. Floral shirts and white shorts are common attire for children. She is healthy and enjoys her world. In Data 3, she is even more enthusiastic about her soccer match. She never cares whether what she plays is such games for boys. As long as she enjoys the game, she will follow.

Data 4 marks the beginning of Dalal's world-changing. Her father and mother face her directly and say something shocking to her. At'ut explains how her father could not say the word and asks her mother to speak to Dalal. Her mother says that her body has changed. This is a sign that symbolizes Dalal's body is no longer hers (At'ut, 2005; Ibrahim & Pasopati, 2024; Liberman & Burke, 2022). In Data 5, she is considered a teenager and must adhere to social standards dictated by her body. Her breasts are indeed the symbols of a grown girl, and those should be controlled by social values.

In this sense, Dalal is pushed to be ashamed if she does not follow the standards. She must even nod to the surveillance, as she is no longer free to play anywhere, as seen in Data 6 (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Later, she is also not free to wear anything that she likes. She is not even free again to play with male friends because she is already a teenager, as listed in Data 7.

However, Dalal continues to refuse the dictations. Data 8 clearly shows Dalal's rejection but her mother insists. This is such tension between individual needs and social standards. Dalal



wants to wear anything freely, but her mother represents social standards by saying no to Dalal's desire (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). In this case, Dalal knows that she is being controlled, but she refuses to nod to the demand. Later, Dalal could only say yes at the end and leave her mother, as seen in Data 9.

Dalal has stopped refusing the dictation. She is still a child, but must face such tensions regarding her body. Moreover, the ones that she must fight are her parents (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). She could not say no to the ones who keep her alive to this day.

Data 10 describes how Dalal checks on her own body and speaks to herself about various things that bother her. At this point, she starts to be aware of her own body. This is not natural at all, but she must do it because she has been compelled to do so by social expectations (At'ut, 2005; Mansourinik et al., 2022; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). She does not want to be mature as she knows that she will be controlled. However, she could not escape the dictations since she was confined to her own body.

In Data 11, she remembers how Abu Mahmud tried to touch her body in the previous week. This is quite intriguing, as the dictations are not actually neutral but are influenced by patriarchal values (At'ut, 2005; Ibrahim & Pasopati, 2024; Liberman & Burke, 2022). This is because many world values are associated with men. It is usual for men, but not for any woman at all. She must surrender to being surveilled and controlled by the eyes of men. In Data 12, she refuses to do anything more and could even cry.

4. Conclusion

At'ut's short story about Dalal is about how OBCS is truly applied to women's bodies. In this story, Dalal must feel herself being dominated by the social standards. The standards indeed are made by patriarchal values made by men to control women. This story is full of OBCS because Dalal's body is being observed, surveilled, and controlled. She is no longer the owner of her body. It is because she must surrender to the conformity of the social constructions. In this sense, while social constructions may liberate women to transcend patriarchal values, this story proves otherwise. Dalal must even feel ashamed because of something that she does not want at all.

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