

## **SEXISM IN GREEN'S LOOKING FOR ALASKA**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to reveal the form of sexism representation in the novel *Looking for Alaska*. This novel raises the issue of sexism against women which is addressed through the character of Alaska and other female characters. The researcher uses qualitative method with the semiotic approach of Roland Barthes. This study aims to determine the form of representation of sexism based on signs and meanings which are analyzed based on the meaning of Denotation, Connotation, and Myths that are formed about sexism in the Novel *Looking for Alaska*. The object that is the focus of the research consists of 5 dialogues quoted, which show sexist behavior and speech. The results of this study indicate that women are depicted as weak creatures, described as mere sexual objects, women are not smarter than men, women arguments are often considered trivial, used as objects by the media as branding to provoke men's desires, and are also considered to be troublesome for men.

**Keyword :** Sexism, Woman, Semiotic, Roland Barthes, Novel

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Abrams (as cited in Nurgiyantoro, 2015). The novel is a shape of literary work. In the technique of advent of literary works, a writer is confronted with the truth determined inside the society's "objective truth" in the shape of occasions, norms or values, views of life, and different aspects of society.

In standard, the radical consists of values that arise in the network; novels can consist of a ramification of messages, be it academic messages, morals, amusement, and statistics. Today novel has to turn out to be a part of the lifestyle for teenagers, in which the radical is so popular, the unconventional genre popular among young adults is romance and sci-fi.

The novel comes as a mass lifestyle that emerged because of the improvement of urban and industrial society as a part of popular mass tradition (Runtu, Mogeia & Lolowang, 2022). As a medium, the novel isn't neutral; there needs to be a party that dominates or is represented in its importance within the novel.

The lifestyles of novels in the middle of society have various meanings, further to being study-only due to the particular tale or because of the trending then many people who read, novels also are regularly considered for motivation, ideas, and thoughts for new readers. The novel is a mixed medium of artwork that provides creativity and cultural media that depicts human existence.

On the one hand, novels can enrich people's minds, using the new understanding that can have a beneficial impact on life. But, on the other hand, novels can also have a negative effect (Rorintulus, et al, 2022). Novels that have inspirational values can have a tremendous impact on society. However, novels that include racism, sexism, and discrimination, are not proper if applied to everyday life, especially for teenagers whose manner of questioning remains liable. Therefore, in the emphasis of this study, the writer will focus on sexist behaviour among teenagers in the novel *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005).

The *Novels Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005) is a novel using the genre of youngster drama that tells approximately the lives of teens at Culver Creeks Academy. Following the tale of "Pudge", Miles Halter follows the instances of the use of his new lifestyle at the dorm to discover an in-depth perspective on life. He falls in love with Alaska Young and reveals loyal friends. *Looking for Alaska* is told in Pudge, the protagonist's point of view. It follows the downs of his insanity with the beautiful, clever, passionate, worn-out, and self-destruction Alaska Young.

The use of women as objects of exploitation is very much felt, especially when we watch films or reading books, related to this matter, it can be judged that the superiority of men is increasingly emphasized, by persuading the public continuously through the construction of women in the media.

This gives rise to the formation of a certain perception of women in the superstructure of society itself. So, the media and internet has played a major role in

shaping the image of women in real life that depict women with stereotypes that have been formed from the point of view of the patriarchal majority.

The role of women in daily life is important who have a maternal instinct for giving such contribution to the around the world. Their role cannot be underestimated because every human is created in the same way so they also have the same opportunity in developing themselves such as have freedom in developing their talent, choosing household, public relationship or social communication, and profession. Nowadays, women's role has such good place and acceptable, they do have contribution in various institutions. On the other hand, viewed from other perspectives women are still abused for example; the persistence of women trafficking, domestic violence to women, and even sexual abuse. In Webster's dictionary sexism is defined as prejudice or discrimination against women.

According to Milis (2008:10-11), the term sexism is also used to categorize a set of stereotypical beliefs about women that cannot be directly related to the use of language or a particular set of features. Sexism in the novel is characterized by several scenarios and conversations that smell gender discrete, directly and indirectly. In this novel, there are some forms of sexism among adolescents, which can be found in various scenes, one of which is the depiction of Alaska Young characters, a woman figure who can help men discover their true feelings.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Since the data in this study is in the form of words, The writer uses the descriptive qualitative method. According to Endraswara (2011), a qualitative descriptive method is a research method that is explained in words or images, if necessary, not numbers. This method aims to identify the state of sexism in the novel Looking for Alaska

### ***Data analysis***

The writer uses a descriptive qualitative method in analyzing the data with Barthe's semiological approach. Although the writer focuses on finding out about sexism and its relationship with the novel, the writer found several plots containing gender discrimination, both directly and indirectly.

The writer chose Roland Barthes' semiotic theory because Roland Barthes' semiotic theory has a more critical theory than other semiotic theories. According to Septiana, (2019) from Barthes (1988), semiology wants to study how humans interpret things. Semiotics is used to see the meaning of the representation of sexism from several points of view.

The writer chose Roland Barthes' semiotic method because it has a myth system. The myth used is based on the existing culture so that it can be the background for the emergence of meaning. Because in everyday life, the definition cannot separate humans from meaning. The myths described by Barthes are not traditional myths or in the sense of the supernatural and nonsensical. But the Barthes myth is a language or a message. According to Bouzida, (2014) from Barthes (1988), mythological utterances are not only in the form of oral speech. Still, it can be in the form of writing, photography, films, scientific reports, sports, performances, advertisements, and paintings. Myth is anything that has a mode of representation because myth has two functions, namely myth in the sense of "showing and saying something" so that the reader understands something and at the same time aims to deceive.

Barthes' semiotics theory focuses on two-stage signification. The first stage of significance is the relationship between signifier and signified in a sign to external reality. Barthes referred to it as denotation, the most tangible meaning of the sign. Connotation is a term that Barthes uses to denote the significance of the second stage. It describes the interaction that occurs when a sign meets the feelings or emotions of the reader and the values of its culture. In this signification, it is believed there will be some hidden meaning behind it. In other words, denotation is what a sign describes against an object, while connotation means how to describe it.

This study focuses on the novel *Looking for Alaska* by Green, (2005). the unit of analysis the writer uses are the novel's words, sentences, and paragraphs. After reading it repeatedly, the writer found a form of sexism against teenagers, especially teenage girls. Analytical units in the form of words, sentences, and paragraphs containing elements of sexism are analyzed again to find markers. Each marker and sign located in the novel is shown through quotations in the form of

quotation analysis. Every word, sentence, and paragraph containing elements of sexism is arranged in a form where it is a signifier (marker), and the text below is signified (sign). The writer analyzed each scenario in the novel using Roland Barthes's semiotics analysis. The writer analyzed the forms and representations of sexism in the novel using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis by carefully selecting and paying attention to the novel's words, sentences, and paragraphs that contain sexist behavior. By choosing the scenario containing sexist behavior towards women. Then the writer can find the meaning of denotation, connotations, and myths to interpret the meaning and find the background or cause of the meaning (a representation form of sexism). So this research discusses the forms of representation of sexism behavior and what causes sexism behavior toward teenagers in the novel: *Looking for Alaska* (Green, 2005).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The finding and discussion of the study would presented in this chapter that was done in the novel *looking for Alaska* by John Green. After doing research, data comes back from the research based on the formula of what has been presented before. In this study, the writer found data in the form of dialogue sentences found in the novel, data in the form of conversational dialogue, the writer obtained from the Novel *Looking for Alaska*. On some data in the meaning of denotation, the writer added a brief explanation, which supports the meaning of denotation in the analyzed data.

### **Analysis of Sexism Representation**

#### **Analysis I**

The dialogue between colonel and miles, when he was about to introduce miles to alaska (p20).

#### **Signifier (marker)**

The first analysis begins when Colonel invites Miles to buy a pack of cigarettes at Alaska's place, at that moment Miles first met Alaska. It started with Alaska's story, where she tells about how she spent the whole summer. The following is an excerpt of dialogue in the Novel (p20)

"whos the guy that not laughing at my very funny story?" Alaska asked.

"oh right. Alaska this is pudge. Pudge memories people last words. Pudge this is Alaska, her boobs was squeezed last summer."

### **a. Denotative Meaning**

Colonel and Miles went to the Alaska room to buy a pack of cigarettes. At that time Miles first met and became acquainted with Alaska. Alaska then told the colonel about all the fun in the summer, Alaska then asked about the guy who didn't laugh when he heard the story. Colonel at that time immediately introduced Miles to Alaska through a rather odd speech. "miles this is Alaska her boobs was Squeezed last summer". A very sexist expression, even though the colonel's intention was just a joke.

### **b. Conotative Meaning**

The connotative meaning of the above analysis is found in Colonel's words, which he easily says sexist words without thinking about Alaska feelings. The reason was that Colonel thought that verbal expressions such as "her boobs was squeezed last summer". it is a common thing. It shows that Colonel is a person who often underestimates women, where he thinks that men are free to say anything to women. it is a very sexist behavior. It is clear that the colonel showed his sexist attitude in the dialogue.

### **c. Myth**

The myth in the dialogue above is contained in the Colonel's words and his behavior, that men can say or act sexist towards women as long as they are joking. This happens because women are often considered trivial, and women's opinions are considered unimportant so that men think and act superior. According to Nurmalia, (2017) Violence against women is an act carried out by a person based on gender and power that is usually owned by men. Violence against women that happen in the community occurs because women are considered weak.

## **Analysis II**

Dialogue when Alaska wants to introduce Miles to his friend, The Colonel suddenly interrupts their conversation.

### **Signifier (Marker)**

The dialogue begins when Alaska, Miles and Colonel, hang out in the dorm room with the door closed while taking turns smoking cigarettes. Alaska tells the story of a girl that she wants to introduce to Miles. Through some casual conversation, Alaska asked Miles if he knew the girl who was in their precalc class. The following is an excerpt from the dialogue in the novel: (p61).

"you know that girl in our precalc class? Alaska said. "soft voice, says thees instead of this, know that girl?". Yeah lara. She sat on my lap on the way to Mcd.

"yeah lara. And she liked you. You thought she was quietly discussing precalc, when she was clearly talking about dating you. Which is why you need me."

"she has great breast", the Colonel said without looking up from the whale.

"DO NOT OBJECTIFY WOMEN'S BODIES!" Alaska shouted.

#### **a. Denotative Meaning**

The denotative meaning in the dialogue above is that Alaska wants to introduce Miles to a girl she knows in their class, apparently even that girl has feelings for Miles. Alaska asked if Miles knew the girl, Miles said yes, we sat at the same table on our way to McDonald's. Alaska wants to set Miles up with Lara. suddenly Colonel cut off their conversation with the sentence "she has great breast" meaning that she has big breasts. a sexist sentence that objectifies the female body. Alaska immediately responded to Colonel's words with a defence sentence, "don't objectify women's bodies!"

#### **b. Conotative Meaning**

The connotative meaning in the dialogue above lies in the words of the Colonel character when he was about to interrupt Alaska & Miles' conversation: "she has great breast" Colonel said. Such expressions are used to describe the female figure from a physical point of view. From the Colonel's point of view, women with large breasts are more attractive. It is clear from the dialogue that Colonel again

shows his sexist attitude through the objectification of women based on body shape. The Colonel's sexist statement immediately received a rebuttal from Alaska with the sentence "DO NOT OBJECTIVE WOMAN'S BODIES!" where the sentence is a resistance from Alaska to defend women's rights, that women are not sexual objects.

### **c. Myth**

The myth in the dialogue above is contained in Colonel's words that women with large breasts will look more attractive. This is inseparable from the stigma that attached to the society that women who have a sexy body shape will look more attractive and seductive. According to Rose (as cited in Apsari, 2010). It is said that men can't resist objectivity that invites desire because men always play the role of the subject. Actions like this have been passed down and rooted from generation to generation. Women always appear to satisfy men's desire for beautiful visualizations, this has been proven through the paintings of well-known classical artists from Europe, where women are painted in nude poses. The men who were dressed coolly watched the painting with wild imaginations. This unbalanced relationship is not limited to the visual arts, things like this has become a habit and rooted in the culture.

### **Analysis III**

Dialogue between miles and alaska when they are alone in the dorm room (P.85)

#### **Signifier (marker)**

The dialogue begins when Alaska comes to chat with Miles, inside the dorm room. After talking Miles did not realize that he had been asleep for an hour and a half. When Miles wakes up, he sees that Alaska sitting on his bed. The following are excerpts of dialogue in the novel:

"when she sat down on my bed, her butt against my hip, her underwear, her jeans, the comforter, my jeans and my boxers between us". Her on my bed, wide green eyes staring down at me, the enduring mystery of her sly, almost smirking smile, five layers between us. I could feel the warmth of her cheek on my thigh.



Also on the next page (p.85) after performing a prank in one of the Weekday warriors' rooms, Alaska rushes out the window, where Miles is waiting outside. Alaska has warned Miles before, the following is a quote from the novel: "don't look at my ass" Alaska said, and so I looked at her ass, spreading out wide from her thin waist

### **a. Denotative Meaning**

The denotative meaning in the dialogue above is, Alaska comes to talk to Miles, talks about the prank they are going to do, also about Jake or Alaska's boyfriend. Miles unconsciously fell asleep while listening to Alaska's story, and when he woke up instead of paying attention to Alaska's story, Miles' figure actually thought of something that degrading Alaska. Next Alaska has strictly warned Miles not to look at her ass, but Miles clearly violates Alaska's orders, by uttering sexist words and dirty thoughts, Miles looks at Alaska's ass, even though Alaska clearly has warned it.

### **b. Connotative Meaning**

The meaning of connotation in the dialogue above lies in Miles' words. "when she sat down on my bed, her butt against my hip, her underwear, her jeans, the comforter, my jeans and my boxers between us. Miles also purposely looks down at his ass and thinks about something porn and clearly inappropriate. Without realizing it, Miles has committed acts of verbal sexual violence in the form of words/thoughts that contain sexual content and so on.

### **c. Myth**

The myth in the dialogue above lies in the attitude of Miles who violates Alaska's orders, where there is a myth that states that orders/rules are made to be broken. Miles disobeys Alaska's orders for personal gratification for his wild thoughts. This happens because men think they are superior. Women's opinions are not important, women are just weak creatures. If a woman expresses her opinion or disapproval, it is considered "trivial" or is considered a woman who is too brave to exceed her nature. Meanwhile, if it is a man who does the same, it is natural and is

called someone who is firm and has the spirit of a leader. Stigma like this causes women position to be the second to men. The subordination of women is the starting point for gender injustice". According to Syafe'i, (2015) Subordination occurs because everything is seen from the male point of view. when there is a subordination of women, it creates an assumption that women have a weak 'label' and men are strong. As a result, women's roles are marginalized.

### **Analysis IV**

The dialogue between miles and alaska when they decide not to go home on thanksgiving (p.89)

#### **Signifier (marker)**

The dialogue used as a marker begins when Miles and Alaska go to spend time touring at the dormitory. At that time no one else was in the dormitory except the two of them. The students went home to celebrate Thanksgiving. Miles and Alaska decide to watch some movies in the TV room. The following is an excerpt of the dialogue in the novel:

"We ran with it to the tv room, closed the blinds, locked the door, and watched the movie. It opened with a woman standings on bridge with her legs spread while a guy knelt in from of her, giving her oral sex. No time for dialog, i suppose. By the time they started doing it, Alaska commenced with her righteous indignation. They just don't make sex look fun for a woman. That girl is just an object. Alaska shouted!" (p89).

#### **a. Denotative Meaning**

The denotative meaning of the dialogue above is that Miles and Alaska went to the tv room to watch a movie, they immediately closed the door and watched an adult film. starting with a woman standing on the edge of a bridge with legs straddled while the man kneeling in front of her while giving her oral sex, there is no dialogue when they start, miles say like that. Alaska just got angry and felt weird about it, Alaska said, they didn't make it look like sex wasn't enjoyable for women. Women are just mere sexual objects, Alaska shouted.

## **b. Conotative Meaning**

The connotative meaning of the dialogue above is: when the dormitory is quiet because other students celebrate Thanksgiving at their respective homes. Miles and Alaska go to see a movie in the tv room, they watch a movie that is intended for adults. The film is played and the scene immediately begins by showing a woman who is astride while the man sucks the woman's genitals. This is a sexist act that depicts women as mere sexual objects, women are free to be exploited for the satisfaction of men. Especially in the pornographic film industry, women are portrayed as vulgar as possible to provoke male lust. Women are only used as objects so that men look more dominant. The figure of Alaska here again issues the opinion that they or the producers of pornographic films make it seem as if sex is only enjoyed by men, while women must be completely submissive. Women are only objects while men are more dominant, even though this should not be the case, what we want is for women and men to be able to cooperate with each other, regardless of whether women are inferior and men are superior.

## **c. Myth**

The myth in the analysis above is: sex is only enjoyed by men and women are only used as sexual objects. This is caused by stereotypes and stigma that have been attached for a long time, where women are only used as symbols to satisfy men's desires. According to Lolowang, (2010) women are described to be as sexy as possible to increase their selling points, in order to satisfy men's desires. This provides a sufficient atmosphere for advertising to make sex a regular and often preferred part of the media.

## **Analysis V**

Dialogue when Alaska and Miles go to Colonel's house to join the family dinner

## **Signifier (marker)**

The dialogue quotes that are used as markers in the analysis begin when Alaska and Miles are in the dormitory environment, they both don't come home for Thanksgiving. Suddenly Colonel came to pick them up on his mother's orders, the

three of them then immediately went to Colonel's house to attend the Thanksgiving dinner. The sign begins when Alaska is about to help Colonel's mother prepare dinner. The following is an excerpt from the dialogue in the novel:

"Alaska decided to go help Dolores with dinner. She said that it was sexist to leave the cooking to woman, but better to have good sexist food than creepy boy prepared food. So the colonel and i sat on the pull-out couch in the living room, playing video games and talking about school."

#### **a. Denotative Meaning**

The denotative meaning in the dialogue quote above is: when the characters Miles and Alaska decide to spend their Thanksgiving holiday in the dormitory, when the other students return to their respective homes. Miles and Alaska chose not to go home, suddenly Colonel came to pick them up, his mother wanted Miles and Alaska to join in the dinner to celebrate thanksgiving. When they wanted to prepare food, Alaska then helped Dolores, or the mother of the Colonel. Alaska went on to say that it's absolutely sexist to let a woman cook alone. But it's better for us to eat sexist food than let two strange men cook. At that time Colonel and Miles decided to go to the living room, chat about things at school while playing video games.

#### **b. Conotative Meaning**

The connotation meaning of the dialogue quote above is: Alaska and Miles were suddenly picked up by Colonel to celebrate thanksgiving with him and his mother. His mother wanted to prepare dinner to be entertained together. When Alaska wanted to prepare food to help Dolores, she found it very sexist to let a woman prepare food. While Colonel and Miles were just watching, alaska then said it's better to eat sexist food than let a man cook. This expression is a sarcasm directed at Colonel and Miles. They ignored it, and decided instead to go play video games, leaving the women to do the cooking. is a sexist act, letting women cook in the kitchen or the sentence (mother cooking in the kitchen) is a classic example of showing gender inequality at the societal level. Indirectly this is a form of cornering women. This happens because it has become a habit in society, this sexist habit is often normalized and passed down from generation to generation. Unconsciously,

sexism occurs in everyday life, so sexist perpetrators are not aware that they have behaved sexist towards a certain gender

### **c. Myth**

The myth in the analysis above lies in the stigma that women should be able to cook, while men don't have to be able to cook. Nowadays, women are still shackled by cultural values that are still inherent in society. So far, the division of tasks in building a family is still based on the wrong traditional view, namely the significant difference between women and men. Where women must be able to cooked , its their nature, while men don't have to cook because it is not their nature. According to Budiati, (2010) The nature of women are menstruating, pregnant, giving birth and breastfeeding are God's creations that cannot be changed. Meanwhile, human conditions that are not God's creation can be changed or corrected if injustice occurs. Women's duties in the family are like cooking, cleaning the house or Parenting has turned into a woman's obligation, this is due to the misunderstanding of gender that exists in the society's tradition.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Based on the overall analysis using a semiotic approach in John Green's novel *Looking for Alaska*, regarding the behavior and forms of representation of sexism in the novel, it can be said that in this novel, the writer concludes according to the research focus and the research questions are as below:

The representation of sexism seen from its detonative meaning in Looking for Alaska is verbal discrimination, such as the use of harsh words, sarcastic threats, or other words that are ridiculing, belittling opinions, mocking, or demeaning others based on gender. In addition to verbal, there are non-verbal representations of sexism, such as ignoring opinions, depicting women as sexual objects, poor judgment, and standardization of roles based on gender. The denotative meanings contained in the novel *Looking for Alaska* are some real examples that occur in everyday life, the representation of sexism that men indirectly or unconsciously gave to women.

Representation of sexism seen from the connotative meaning in the novel *Looking for Alaska* is discrimination that is indirectly carried out by the characters Miles and Colonel to show certain motives such as who is in power and who is ruled. This understanding is the reason for someone to commit acts of discrimination or sexist acts. This is a clear example of how sexist behavior and speech and attitudes can be passed down from generation to generation, either directly or indirectly. This happens because sexist attitudes are often considered trivial and the perpetrators of sexist attitudes consider it very natural (that's nature, men can behave sexist towards women). This is what makes sexist attitudes towards women still exist today.

Myths about a culture's view of the characteristics of women and men are the cause of gender discrimination. The myth that says women are in a lower social position becomes the most dominant myth in *Looking for Alaska*. In addition, the myth that men may act sexist toward women as long as they are joking, women with large breasts will look more attractive, orders or opinions from women can be violated, as a consequence of women are considered weak crybabies and emotional creatures. Women are often used as sexual objects, and women should be able to cook. While men are considered strong, brave, and logical, women do not work as well as men. It is a common myth found in the novel *Looking for Alaska*. In this novel, the character of Alaska struggles to break the stigma given to women, she tries to defend women's rights, and she also proves that women can be equal and able to stand on an equal terms with men.

## **SUGGESTION**

The writer would like to thank to those who involved in the preparation of this research. In fact, the writing of this research still requires a lot of direction and suggestions from the readers. The writer hopes that this research in the future can be useful to help other researchers who want to research about Sexism contained in the novel, this research focuses on examining the forms of sexism contained in the novel *Looking for Alaska by John Green*. The preparation of this thesis is part of a discussion of signs and meanings using the Barthes semiotic method. Finally, if there

are advantages, it is entirely because of God Almighty, and if there's a mistake, it is entirely from the writer himself.

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