

## Agnes and Nicole's Sexual Discrimination in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18860/lilics.v1i1.2240>

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**How to Cite: APA Style 7th edition**

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### Submission

#### Track:

Received:

01-08-2022

Available online:

31-10-2022

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### ABSTRACT

*The phenomenon of sexism still existed in society. Sexism came from the negative stereotypes that assumes one gender is more valuable than the other. In this research, sexism was manifested in the literary work. One of them Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*. This research aimed to describe the form of sexism experienced and it was effected by the main characters in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*. It will be focused on Agnes and Nicole. Then, it used feminist literary criticism method with feminism approach. This research sought to solve the research problems based on applying library research techniques by reading repeatedly and then taking a note. Then, the data were analyzed using the ambivalent sexism theory proposed by Glick and Fiske. The data analysis technique used content analysis. Content analysis was an in-depth analysis of the messages contained in a text. Furthermore, the finding data revealed that sexism experienced by the main characters, including: not being allowed to read and write, obligation to cover their body, arranged marriage, women constructed in domestic roles, and living in limited freedom. Then, the effect of sexism was revealed, including sexual harassment, objectification, internalized sexism, and alienation. Furthermore, the main characters' resistance is liberation and taking a mission.*

**Keywords:** sexism, ambivalent sexism, feminist literary criticism

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### INTRODUCTION

Women are figures that are widely discussed in aspects of life, but they often depiction negative stereotype in a patriarchal culture. The patriarchal cultural system that underlies the elements of identity, subjectivity, and sexuality undergoes productivity, resulting in the stereotype that women are weak, emotional, passive, and maternal creatures. Meanwhile, men stereotyped as a strong, aggressive, and mighty creatures. The

stereotype towards gender above makes the impression of discrimination against women. This is known as sexism.

Sexism is the belief based on gender criteria that limits gender-specific behavior (Thompson, 1995) in which one sex or gender is superior, more valuable, and more competent than the other (Sakalli-Ugurlu et. al., 2007). Sexism is expressed through actions, words, or forms of belief (Salama, 2013) which leads to discrimination, marginalization, and oppression through individuals or group based on gender. Furthermore, according to Salama, there are four criteria of sexism, including the belief that one sex is more valuable than the other; Chauvinism or the idea that particular sexes have a superior position to the other; The existence of misogyny or fear of equality; and women misandry hatred of men and distrust people of the opposite sex (Salama, 2013).

In General, sexism can attack both men and women, but it is undeniable that sexism mainly attacks in women more. Women are more targeted and suffered, because of sexist behavior (Becker, et. al., 2012). In addition, sexism is more inclined to position women under men, or women considered as the second sex. This stereotype stems from the assumption that women are inferior and men are superior. These cases are not uncommon to cause gender inequality in all aspects of life. Therefore, with this research, there needs a balance in the act of sexism to increase knowledge, awareness, and attitudes related to the current issues, especially sexism.

The existence of sexism can also be found in literary works. One of the literary works that raised the topic sexism is *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood. This novel tells about the women who had limited freedom under the Regime of Gilead. This novel is played by two main characters, Agnes and Nicole (as baby Nicole, Daisy, or Jade). In the story, Agnes and Nicole experience sexist treatment, which considers women to be weak and incompetent, have limited freedom, and positions women in domestic roles. At Gilead, women take second place, considered the less critical gender. In contrast, men accept and occupy a particular position. With this in mind, many experiences of women who are dictated to and get sexist treatment because of gender differences. Therefore, this novel is interesting to study because it presents the sexism experienced by women as the main characters, which will be the focus of analysis in this study.

From the brief explanation above, *The Testaments* is suitable to be analyzed using feminist literary criticism with the feminism approach. With feminist literary criticism, it is hoped that it can break the stereotype of the patriarchal culture that shapes the image and relationship between women and men, which is reflected in literary works and resistance to patriarchal domination.

Furthermore, this research will analyze using the Ambivalent sexism theory proposed by Glick and Fiske (2001). Ambivalent sexism is sexism that can comprehensively accommodate two faces of hostile and benevolent sexism simultaneously (Glick & Fiske, 2001). This sexism revealed that women could not live without men. Thus, the complexity between the two genders supports sexism from an extreme perspective (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

In addition, to the theory proposed by Glick and Fiske, ambivalent sexism has two sub-categories of sexism, Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism. Hostile sexism is defined as negative attitudes toward women. The antipathy toward women reflects a hostile

contempt for women with limited roles but negative subjective feelings (Glick and Fiske, 1996). This sexism views women as negative, worthless, competent, and sexual objects. Examples of hostile sexism are sexual harassment, sexual violence, rape, subordination, misogyny, etc. Furthermore, hostile sexism consists of three scales: dominant paternalism (the belief that men should control women), competitive gender differentiation (the belief that women are an inferior group to men so that women cannot compete for high status), and heterosexual hostility (tends to see females only as sexual objects and also concerns that women can use sexual desire to gain control over men).

Meanwhile, benevolent sexism is defined as positive attitudes toward women. According to Glick and Fiske (1996), benevolent sexism is an interrelated sexist attitude in viewing individuals in stereotyped and restricted roles. Benevolent sexism assumes that women have higher morals than men, so they should be better protected. This is a more subtle form of sexism, and most people aren't even aware of it. Fundamentally, the types of sexism are contradictory but have the same effect on inequality towards women. In addition, benevolent sexism consists of three scales: Protective paternalism (viewing that men should protect and care for women who depend on them), Complementary gender differentiation (traditional women's beliefs with traditional gender roles, such as women as romantic objects, wives, and mothers) and Heterosexual intimacy (the heterosexuality of intimate partners romanticizing women as sexual objects, seeing women's romantic relationships as required by men to be complete).

Based on the background of the research above, the problems that will be solved in this study are 1). What kind of sexism is experienced by the main characters in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*? This study aims to describe how the type of sexism experienced by the main characters viewed by analyzing the ambivalent sexism theory proposed by Glick and Fiske. Then the following research question is 2). What are the effects of sexism experienced by the main characters in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*? In this research question, the goal is to discover the effects of sexism experienced by the main characters.

Moreover, the sexism discussed in this study is only limited to the description of sexism in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* experienced by the main characters, Agnes and Nicole. Meanwhile, the sexism discussed only includes ambivalent sexism theory developed by Glick and Fiske. Include the sub-categorization of ambivalent sexism, such as benevolent and hostile sexism.

Several previous studies were taken into consideration in conducting this research. The researcher analyzes an issue that has never been raised in this novel that is the topic of sexism. However, the research about sexism has been researched in other novels, such as the research conducted by Tyas (2019) which focuses on analyzing how sexism is reflected in female characters in the novel who occupy an inferior position, while male characters are superior in many ways. Second, the research is written by Afifah (2018). Her analysis focuses on sexism in children's literature which portrays the stereotype between males and females. Third, the research is written by Choirunnisak (2020). Her research analyzes the manifestation of internalized sexism and its impact on the main characters. Four, the research written by Istiadah and Afifah (2020) examines ambivalent sexism by using five aspects to view sexism in children's literature. The last is research

## LILICS

Journal of Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies

Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.321-337

E-ISSN: 2986-9552

Website: <http://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/LILICS/index>

written by Weiss-Town (2019). The research objective is to find out if this book is sexist. The researcher denies that Down on the farm is not a sexist book, but it is about children's storybook about heroes.

Therefore, based on previous research, this study has something in common that is examining the sexism. Although many studies raised the novel of sexism, there is no formal study discusses sexism that appears in *The Testaments*. Therefore, the researchers found a research gap in this study. The previous studies only looked at the form of sexism, while in this research examines the gaps with focuses on aspects of sexism and its effect of sexism through the main characters. In which the effect of sexism examines the differences that other researchers ignore regarding the topic of sexism.

With this in mind, the researcher decided to take the title "Sexism Experienced by The Main Characters in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*." This research is expected to enrich the study of literature and increase public appreciation of literary works, especially among student in English Literature Department and the researchers that interested in research in the field of sexism in feminist literary criticism.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted using feminist literary criticism with a feminism approach. This method used to analyze literary works related to feminist concepts and focuses on analytical research that leads to women. According to Gillespie (2010), the primary purpose of feminist literary criticism is to analyze and promote gender equality and represent justice in the treatment of women in a literary text.

The data source of this research is taken from a novel by Margaret Atwood entitled *The Testaments*. This novel was published in 2019 by Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, Penguin random house LLC Division in New York. This novel is in the form of a PDF Book, which consists of 27 chapters, 71 sub-chapters, and 387 pages. The data taken in this novel are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, utterances, and paragraphs that indicate the sexism experienced.

This research obtained the data collection process by applying the technique of library research. The analysis process in this research uses feminist literary criticism using the theory ambivalent sexism theory proposed by Glick and Fiske. The data analysis technique uses content analysis. The content analysis is an in-depth analysis of the messages contained in a text.

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This part included part of the research finding and discussion. It was analyzed based on the problem of the study. Then, this research analyzed the data based on the Ambivalent Sexism theory proposed by Glick and Fiske.

### ***Sexism experienced by the main characters in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments****

This analysis will discuss aspects of sexism experienced by the main characters, Agnes and Nicol, in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*.

*Agnes*

Agnes is a pearl girl who lives in republic of Gilead. She is the daughter of a handmaid, but she was raised by his father and stepmother. She is one of the daughter's country's Commanders. So, she has a privilege such as going to an elite school, wearing a lovely dress, doing activities that have been arranged, and getting special treatment at her home. However, Agnes is one of the main characters who experience sexism. Agnes experienced sexist treatment in 3 ways: Not being allowed to read and write, the obligation to cover her body, and arranged marriage, constructed in the domestic roles.

*Not being Allowed to Read and Write*

One of Gilead's regulations is women are not allowed to read and write. This is portrayed by Agnes. Even though Agnes attended one of the elite schools, but the school at Gilead was different from schools in general. In that school, she was not taught to read or write, but women often teaching to how embroider, doing petit-point for handkerchiefs, do basic gardening, and prepared for being married, etc.

According to Gilead regulations, reading is only for men unless they are an "Aunt". This is because only men were strong enough to deal with the force. This can be seen in datum 1.

*Datum 1:*

*"Reading was not for girls: only men were strong enough to deal with the force of it; and the Aunts, of course, because they weren't like us" (p. 150).*

Meanwhile, writing is also not intended for women. Because writing is a prerogative right that is only reserved for commanders and an "Aunts". Other than that, there's no point in learning to write anymore. It is shown in datum 2 below.

*Datum 2:*

*"Writing materials were the prerogative of the Commanders and the Aunts. Otherwise, they were not generally available in Gilead; women had no use for them, and most men didn't either, except for reports and inventories. What else would most people be writing about?" (p. 278)*

From the explanation above, the rules at Gilead restrict Agnes from gaining knowledge just because she is a woman. And as a woman, there is no point in learning to read and write because Gilead society believes that women's minds are too weak and irrational, making them vulnerable to worldly temptations and fear that they cannot control themselves in God's justification and sanctification.

The assumption that women are not allowed to read and write indicated as sexism. This can be seen from negative beliefs or stereotypes against women who believe that women's minds are too weak to think, unlike men who can think and use their brains. So, women are described as an inferior gender or as a less critical gender. This sexism can be indicated as hostile sexism with the scale of dominant paternalism. Dominant paternalism believes that men should be controlled by men. In addition, dominant paternalism defends patriarchy by viewing women as adults who are incompetent, irrational, and needy and legitimizes the need for a prominent male figure (Glick & Fiske, 1996).



### Obligation to Cover her Body

Apart from not being allowed to read and write, women at Gilead are also obligated to cover their bodies. This is portrayed by Agnes; during she lives in Gilead, she was obligated to wear dress that were arranged by Gilead, it should cover her arms, hair, and skirts that reached the knees. This is because women are vulnerable to male temptations, and these urges must be controlled. It can be proven in the datum 3.

#### *Datum 3:*

*"Arms covered, hair covered, skirts down to the knee before you were five and no more than two inches above the ankle after that, because the urges of men were terrible things and those urges needed to be curbed. The man eyes that were always roaming here and there like the eyes of tigers, those searchlight eyes, needed to be shielded from the alluring and indeed blinding power of us—of our shapely or skinny or fat legs, of our graceful or knobbly or sausage arms, of our peachy or blotchy skins, of our entwining curls of shining hair or our coarse unruly pelts or our straw-like wispy braids, it did not matter. (p. 14).*

The rules at Gilead limit the woman's freedom. Gilead society believes that the part of a woman's body that seen by men can arouse male sexual desire. From that belief, it is narrated as if women are the cause of sexual crimes. This stereotypes women as tempting and to blame because whatever women is wearing a dress, everything must follow the strict of the Gilead regulation, including the style of dress adapted to the social class of girls and women. As followed in datum 4.

#### *Datum 4:*

*"The pink, the white, and the plum dresses were the rule for special girls like us. Ordinary girls from Econofamilies wore the same thing all the time— those ugly multicolored stripes and grey cloaks, like the clothes of their mothers." (p. 16)*

From datum 4 above, it can be known that Gilead regulates the way women dress, just as the pink, white, and plum dress for pearl girls; meanwhile, the ordinary girls wear only grey cloaks.

From the explanation above, Agnes is subjected to sexist treatment because she thinks that all parts of a woman's body must be regulated and protected from men's eyes. Although not all clothing women wear is intended to arouse male sexual desire, but it have been regulated in the Bible. In which the dress is one of the prominent gender markers, so women in Gilead must comply with these regulations.

Furthermore, the negative stereotype experienced by Agnes above, the assumption of female body as a male seducer is one aspect of hostile sexism with the scale of heterosexual hostility. Hetero sexual hostility is viewing a women as sexual objects (Glick and Fiske, 1997), and they also tend to see women can use sexual desire to gain control over men.

### Arranged marriage for a Girl

Another Gilead's regulation is arranged marriage. When a woman turns 13 years old, she must find the right husband to marry. This is portrayed by Agnes. When she is old enough, an "Aunts" and her family will choose the right husband for her.

*Datum 5:*

*"We and your fathers and mothers will choose your husbands wisely for you when the time comes," Aunt Estée would say. "So, you don't need to be afraid. Just learn your lessons and trust your elders to do what is best, and everything will unfold as it should. I will pray for it. (p. 15)*

From datum 5, Agnes's family will choose a three candidate for her. They will choose the best candidate. Agnes is not allowed to choose her candidate, even though she chooses the husband for herself. This is because parents don't want anything wrong to happen, like falling in love or losing their virginity. So, looking for a husband becomes an honor for his family.

Besides that, arranged marriage was pressure for Agnes. She is worried about the marriage. She believes that marriage will eliminate her from her previous life, even though she hates marriage because Agnes admits that she is afraid to imagine getting old to get married. Like datum 6 below.

*Datum 6:*

*"I dreaded the thought of growing older—older enough for a wedding." (p. 15)*

From datum 6 above, Agnes said that she dreaded the thought of getting older for a wedding. She thought that she would be a young girl locked up in marriage. Even though she is from a privileged girl's class, she feels that not every girl is suitable for marriage. So, from the story, Agnes tries to look for various ways to avoid marriage until she thwarts marriage by becoming an "Aunt" at Ardua Hall.

From the explanation above, an arranged marriage made Agnes feel depressed and try to reject herself. Agnes's act of refusing marriage is based on the many stories about unhappy marriages and women suffering in marriage, such as sexual violence, bullying, harassment, etc., which makes Agnes afraid and refuse marriage.

The case of sexism portrayed by Agnes indicates hostile sexism with the scale of dominant paternalism. In Dominant paternalism, women are not given the freedom, even though to choose their partners. In addition, women meet the existing society's standards; when a woman turns 13 years old, then she will immediately be matched to follow the norms and culture that develops in society. Otherwise, they will get a bad stereotype from society.

*Women are constructed in the domestic roles*

The role of women was introduced early to Agnes while in the school. Apart from being a pearl girl, Agnes is taught and introduced to what women should do, such as women are constructed in the domestic roles. Gilead society believes that women in the future will be getting married and become a wife and mothers. So, an "Aunt" at school will teach many things about their women roles, such as preparing food, gardening, and cooking food in the kitchen that will be served to the family. It was revealed in datum 7.

*Datum 7:*

*"She (Aunt) taught us elementary gardening, with an emphasis on roses— gardening was a suitable hobby for Wives—and how to judge the quality of the food that was cooked for us and served at our table" (p. 157).*

From that datum 7 above, even at school, women are taught early about their roles in the school. This will be a part of their daily activities in their lives in the future married. Moreover, in another part of the story shows that Agnes has a lot of Martha in her house because Agnes's father is a commander, she will still not be separated from other domestic roles. Agnes will also be taught to cook well, such as how to poach an egg properly, what temperature, and the difference between a *bisque* and a *potage*, because one of the duties of a wife or mother is to prepare food for their husbands and their families. This can be shown in datum 8.

*Datum 8:*

*"Therefore, we learned how to poach an egg properly, and at what temperature a quiche ought to be served, and the difference between a bisque and a potage." (p. 157).*

From datum 7 and datum 8 above, it is clear that women are constructed in domestic roles since early. It's clear that the sexist treatment of the character Agnes above can influence the attitudes toward women. This sexism may be indicated as Ambivalent sexism, with the sub-scales Gender Differentiation. Ambivalent sexism is conceptualized as traditional sexism, which simultaneously includes benevolent and hostile feelings with female subjectivity. Ambivalent sexism argues that Just like the traditional division of labor, where man and woman create roles that complement each other. that is, men, work outside the home; and women as housework. The traits associated with these roles are seen the female as a complementary gender. In addition, women are also considered to compensate for what is stereotypically lacking in men, such as nurturing, caring, motherhood, etc. (Glick and Fiske, 1996). With this in mind, a stereotype emerged that the scope of women was to occupy a domestic role and do housework.

*Nicole*

The next main character in this novel is Nicole. Nicole is told to live in Canada because her mother smuggled her as a baby out of Gilead. Although Nicole is said to not live in Gilead, she has also experienced of sexism, including living a limited freedom and the obligation to cover her body.

### *Living a limited freedom*

Nicole's life differs from Agnes's, but they both experience a limited life as a woman. Nicole's parents described strictly limit her social life, to protect her from the outside world's influence, such as not being allowed to go to the mall or hang out in the park for fear that strangers will stalk her. This can be seen in datum 9 below.

*Datum 9:*

*"I led a constricted life, since Neil and Melanie were so jumpy. I wasn't allowed to stroll around in shopping malls because they were infested by crack addicts, said Melanie, or hang out in parks, said Neil, because of the strange men lurking there. So, my social life was pretty much a zero: It consisted entirely of things I would be allowed to do when I was older. Neil's magic word in our house was no." (p. 52)*



From that datum 9, Nicole's social life is very zero. Even her life is not free because Melanie and Neil are always protecting and guarding her tightly as if Nicole is a fragile thing. Nicole would not be left alone in her house, even though she was already in her teens and not as a child. As in datum 10 below.

*Datum 10:*

*"I was in the clothes hound quite a lot on Saturdays and Sundays because Melanie didn't want me to be in our house by myself. Why not? I began to ask when I was twelve. Because what if there was a fire, said Melanie. Anyway, leaving a child in a house alone was against the law. Then I would argue that I was not a child, and she would sigh and say I didn't really know what was and was not a child, and children were a big responsibility, and I would understand later." (p. 38)*

From datum 10 above, Nicole said she joined Melanie and Neil in working in a clothing store during the school holidays, because her parents didn't want Nicole to be alone at home. They say that leaving a child alone at home would be against the law, even though that's not the goal.

Nicole's parents' actions that limit her can be categorized as sexism because Nicole is a girl who has no freedom, not allowed to know the outside world, always protected, and is not allowed to do anything by herself. The actions taken by her parents are categorized as overprotective, just because Nicole is a woman and thinks that the outside world is very dangerous for her.

From that explanation, the sexism experienced by Nichole can be categorized into benevolent sexism with the scale of protective paternalism. protective paternalism assumes that women are weak creatures, so they must be protected. According to Jannah (2021), protective paternalism is reflected in everyday behavior, such as the belief that men must make essential decisions in married life and become the primary protectors of their families. Here, Melanie and Neil, as parents, as the primary protectors for Nicole and guard against the outside the worlds.

*Obligation to cover her body*

The next act of sexism against Nicole is the obligation to cover her body. This obligation occurred when Nicole entered the Republic of Gilead. Previously, Nicole was depicted wearing the clothes she usually wears, such as a t-shirt and leggings. According to Gilead regulations, the clothes resemble men's clothing, and women should not wear such clothes like a man. Thus, when Nicole entered Gilead, she had to change her clothes. It can be seen in datum 11.

*Datum 11:*

*"Then Aunt Dove said that the most important extra reason for wearing the silvery dress was to smooth my entrance into Gilead because women didn't wear men's clothing there. I said leggings weren't men's clothing, and they said—calmly but firmly—that yes, they were, and it was in the bible, they were an abomination, and if I wanted to join Gilead. I would have to accept that." (p. 251)*

Knowing Nicole's clothes were not according to the rules, an "Aunt" told her to change her clothes. However, during their lives in Canada, there were no regulations requiring women to wear certain clothes like in Gilead because Canada is a legal country

for a woman. Meanwhile, in Gilead, when a woman wears clothes like a man is considered to be against the law, and it is a betrayal of gender. Thus, Nicole had to comply with the regulations and change into clothes to Gilead's dress regulation, wearing a long dress and faux pearls to ease her way into Gilead, as seen in datum 12.

*Datum 12:*

*"I reminded myself not to argue with them, so I put on the dress; even the pearl necklace, which was fake, just as Melanie had said." (p. 251)*

From the explanation above, Nicole should be covered her body categorized as sexism. This type of sexism may be indicated as hostile sexism with the scale of Dominant paternalism. Dominant paternalism is the belief that men should control women. Although men do not control this sexism, it is controlled by society. Therefore, this sexism limits Nicole's space because every society at Gilead has specific rules about how people should be, including covering their bodies. This regulation is under the strict supervision of Gilead, which leaves women with no freedom, even for themselves.

### ***The Effects of Sexism Experienced by The Main Characters in Margaret Atwood's Novel The Testaments***

This sub-chapter will discuss aspects of the effect of sexism experienced by the main characters Agnes and Nicole in Margaret Atwood's The Testaments.

#### ***Agnes***

In the previous analysis, Agnes is described as experiencing sexism, that is not being allowed to read and write, the obligation to cover her body, arranged marriage, and women constructed in domestic roles. Because of the sexism above, Agnes experienced the effects of sexism, including sexual violence, objectification, and internalized sexism. In addition, Agnes also experienced resistance that is liberation.

#### ***Sexual violence***

Agnes experienced sexual violence when she visited the dentist to check her teeth. Agnes became a victim of sexual harassment by Dr. Grove in the patient's room. When Agnes sat in the patient chair, Dr. Grove tried to touch and squeeze Agnes' breasts from behind, As revealed in datum 13.

*Datum 13:*

*"Dr. Grove was standing behind me, so it was his left hand on my left breast. I couldn't see the rest of him, only his hand, which was large and had reddish hairs on the back. It was warm. It sat there on my breast like a large hot crab. I didn't know what to do. Should I take hold of his hand and move it off my breast? Would that cause even more burning lust to break forth? Should I try to get away? Then the hand squeezed my breast. The fingers found my nipple and pinched. It was like having a thumbtack stuck into me" (p. 96).*

At the time of the incident, Agnes was in shock and could not do anything. Moreover, the acts of sexual harassment were also increasingly seen when Dr. Grove tries to put Agnes's hand on his sensitive part by saying Agnes will have it soon.

*Datum 14:*

*"About time you saw one of these," he said in the normal voice in which he said everything. "you'll have one of them inside you soon enough." He took hold of my right hand and positioned it on this part of himself.*

*I don't think I need to tell you what happened next. He had a towel handy. He wiped himself off and tucked his appendage back into his trousers. "(p. 97)*

From datum 13 and datum 14 above, what has been done by Dr. Grove is an act of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has a broad meaning that can be used as terminology to understand sexual violence. The concept of sexual violence against women is extended to the same behavior carried out by foreigners and includes sexual harassment (Nelson, DT, 2019). Therefore, the sexual harassment experienced by Agnes can be categorized as a form of sexual violence, where actions that lead to a sexual invitation or urge, such as touching, groping, or kissing, which cause emotional discomfort for women, are carried out unilaterally and are not desired by the victim (Welsh, S. 1999).

### Objectification

Objectification experienced by Agnes. This form of objectification can be seen when Gilead society believes that the curves of a woman's body can arouse men's sexual arousal and men urges. In this sense, the body becomes a prison for women. This can be shown in datum 15.

*Datum 15:*

*"They were men after all, so what about the parts of me that might stick out from under the blankets? My feet, for instance. Wouldn't that inflame their urges? It would, there was no way around it. So the four angels were not a restful thought" (p. 22)*

Datum 15 above explains that Agnes imagines herself as an object that men desire, which when a man is watching her, paying attention to her curves and protruding parts, it will disturb her mind. In addition, women become sexual objects for men because men's eyes will roam like tigers, which will see the beauty of a woman's body, starting from the arms, legs, skin, and hair of women. This can be shown in datum 16.

*Datum 16:*

*"The urges of men were terrible things and those urges needed to be curbed. The man eyes that were always roaming here and there like the eyes of tigers, those searchlight eyes, needed to be shielded from the alluring and indeed blinding power of us—of our shapely or skinny or fat legs, of our graceful or knobbly or sausage arms, of our peachy or blotchy skins, of our entwining curls of shining hair or our coarse unruly pelts or our straw-like wispy braids, it did not matter." (p. 14)*

Datum 16 above explains that, in any case, the female body can evoke sexual urges for men. Their eyes will see the beauty of a woman's beautiful and blinding body. Therefore, the appearance and beauty of women body are as if he was made a sexual object by men. Women are considered to have a unique and beautiful body that becomes endless objectivity. Their appearance and beauty seemed to be judged by men. Actions that said the female body can evoke male sexual urges can be categorized as objectification. Although this view cannot be justified, it will cause women not to have the

freedom to control their bodies. This is supported by a statement from Langton (2009) where one of the acts of objectification is if a person is identified with his body or parts of his body.

### Internalized of sexism

Agnes represents the forms of internalized sexism. Agnes was trained to be a traditional woman by her society. The Testaments consider the female not allowed to get knowledge, such as reading and writing. Therefore, when Agnes was about to be appointed Aunt, she felt she would not be able to read correctly. She thought that what Aunt had said at school was true, that women's minds were too weak to read. Because teaching girls to learn is like trying to teach a cat to crochet, how come even cats don't have fingers! As is the case with women who have tiny brains in their heads. As can be seen in datum 17:

#### *Datum 17:*

*"Then there was the reading, which I found frustrating. Maybe I was too old to ever learn it, I thought. Maybe it was like fine embroidery: You had to start young; otherwise, you would always be clumsy. (p. 271)*

Here, Agnes feels that what Aunt said at school was true, women's minds are too narrow to do the important things. Agnes felt that she would not be able to read well. Thus, seeing the reading made her frustrated, and he also felt too old to start studying it. Therefore, Agnes unconsciously internalized of sexism. This is because he underestimates his own abilities and believes that men are more deserving of these abilities, while women do not.

In another case, Agnes also experienced internalized sexism when she felt that the female body was created for male sexual objects. Therefore, it requires women to cover their bodies. The rules at Gilead were internalized within Agnes. She thought every part of her body was the sexual object of a man she had to care for. This is evidenced by Agnes's refusal to be given clothes similar to man. As follows in the datum 18.

#### *Datum 18:*

*"I found the clothing provided for us disagreeable in the extreme. The underwear was very different from the plain, sturdy variety worn at Ardua Hall: to me it felt slippery and depraved. Over that there were male garments. It was disturbing to feel that rough cloth touching the skin of my legs, with no intervening petticoat. Wearing such clothing was gender treachery and against God's law (p. 342)*

From the datum 18 above, Agnes said the clothes given did not follow what the women wore at Ardua Hall. She felt that wearing clothes like a man was an act of gender treason and a violation of God's commandments. In addition, the clothes will also show her body shape, which can attract the attention of men.

Agnes' actions above can be categorized as the effect of sexism, that is the internalization of sexism. Internalized sexism refers to the sexist beliefs that people have about themselves, due to sexist behavior or societal stereotypes. It makes women believe that myths and stereotypes about women exist and true. In line with the statement of Nelson D. T. (2019), when individuals perceive social norms as relevant to themselves,

they feel better about engaging in behavior that conforms to the norms (Wood et al., 1997).

### Liberation as Agnes' Resistance

The existence of sexism and the effect of sexism experienced by Agnes made her fight, one of which was liberation. Liberation can be interpreted as the main character stepping out of the rules constraining her. Liberation is told when Agnes opposes arranged marriages and prefers to contribute to God's plan to become an "Aunt". According to her, not all women are suitable for marriage; she likes to serve all the women in Gilead rather than having to serve in one man. This can be seen in datum 19.

#### Datum 19

"I said I'd prayed for the emotional well-being of Commander Judd and he deserved every happiness, which I was positive some other wife would bring him, but divine guidance had told me I would not be able to provide that sort of happiness for him, or indeed for any man, and I wanted to consecrate myself in service to all the women of Gilead rather than to one man and one family. (p. 231)

From the datum 19 above, Agnes was interviewed by Aunt Elizabeth, when she was about to become an "Aunt", she said that she prayed for Commander Judd's well-being for her future marriage, but Agnes could not promise happiness in a marriage. So, she chose to consecrate herself by becoming an "Aunt" in Ardua Hall.

Agnes's resistance is categorized as open resistance. In line with the opinion expressed by Scott (in Susilowati et al., 2018), open resistance aims to eliminate acts of domination and oppression from the people of others. In case, Agnes' action can be called liberation, where when she tries to get out of the standard's society rules set by Gilead, in which every girl who is gifted with a body is obligated to offer this body in a holy sacrifice to God and for the glory of Gilead and humanity. Fulfill the function inherited from the body at creation, which is a law of nature.

### *Nicole*

In the previous analysis, Nicole is described as experiencing sexism, living with limited freedom and obligation to cover their body. From the act of sexism, Nicole experienced the effect of Alienation. There is also a form of resistance carried out by Nicole to fight sexism, Infiltrate to Gilead, and Taking on a Mission.

### Alienation

The effect of sexism experienced by Nicole is Alienation. Nicole is told to live with her stepparents, Melanie and Neil. Meanwhile, his biological mother is a handmaid at Gilead. Previously, according to Gilead's regulation, a woman who gives birth means that the baby belongs to the state or will be raised by the commander's family. So, the relationship between a child and his biological mother will be severed. With this regulation, Nicole's mother chose to smuggle her out of Gilead to Canada, even though it was hazardous, but this was done to protect Nicole from the cruelty of the Gilead regime at



## LILICS

Journal of Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies

Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.321-337

E-ISSN: 2986-9552

Website: <http://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/LILICS/index>

that time. Nicole's baby smuggling can be seen in the story Ada and Elijah, when they told Nicole.

*Datum 21:*

*"Do you know much about Gilead?" Elijah asked.*

*"Of course. I watch the news. We took it in school," I said sullenly. "I went to that protest march." Right then I wanted Gilead to evaporate and leave us all alone.*

*"That's where you were born," he said. "In Gilead."*

*"You're joking," I said.*

*"You were smuggled out by your mother and Mayday. They'd risked their lives. Gilead made a big fuss about it; they wanted you back. They said your so-called legal parents had the right to claim you. Mayday hid you; there were a lot of people looking for you, plus a media blitz."*

*"Like Baby Nicole," I said. "I wrote an essay about her at school."*

*Elijah looked down at the floor again. Then he looked straight at me. "You are Baby Nicole. (p. 130)*

Meanwhile, Gilead demands that Baby Nicole be returned to Gilead because, after all, Nicole is Gilead's stolen property. Nicole's name and photo will always be on every corner of Gilead, on school walls, slogans, and posters circulating. Her name is also in the prayers Auntie says in Ardua Hall. The Aunts will offer prayers for the good and return of Nicole to Gilead. As in datum 22.

*Datum 22:*

*"And bless Baby Nicole, stolen away by her treacherous Handmaid mother and hidden by the godless in Canada; and bless all the innocents she represents, doomed to be raised by the depraved. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. May our Baby Nicole be restored to us, we pray; may Grace return her. Per Ardua Cum Estrus. Amen." (p. 36)*

From the expansion, it's clear that Nicole experiences alienation due to the existing sexism in Gilead society. Gilead's act of separating biological mother and child is a form of oppression because Gilead is trying to eliminate the relationship between the two. It will make the relationship about biological mother and her son/daughter will severed. Furthermore, when a handmaid gives birth to a baby and tries to get it back, they will be considered traitors. They will be punished according to applicable regulations, such as being punished or hanging on the wall.

### Nicole's mission as a resistance

Despite the view that women are weak creatures, in The Testaments, Nicole proves that she is more capable of performing roles than men. Nicole is said to have shown great confidence in her ability to become an agent of the resistance that would penetrate Gilead. Therefore, the only person from Canada who could infiltrate Gilead was Nicole. This is revealed in datum 23.

*Datum 23:*

*"A young woman claiming to have been converted to the faith of Gilead by the Pearl Girls missionaries could enter Gilead easily—many had done so. And the best young woman to transfer the cache—indeed, the only young woman acceptable to the source—would be Baby Nicole. The source did not doubt that Mayday knew where she was" (p. 187)*

Datum 23 above, Aunt Lydia chose Nicole to be assigned to a mission to Gilead because only Nicole could infiltrate Gilead easily. Meanwhile, when Nicole manages to enter Gilead, Nicole continues her mission with the help of Aunt Lydia by bringing files and evidence of the cruelty and oppression of many women in Gilead. He was carrying classified cache document and camera microdots. This was done to help women and girls from the cruelty of the Gilead regime. The mission was assigned to Nicole as a form of resistance by bringing down Gilead and exposing the crimes of Gilead to the media, to help women from the atrocities of the Gilead regime. Therefore, Aunt Lydia warns Nicole to focus on her primary mission, which is to help women and girls. As seen in datum 24, below.

*Datum 24*

*"Remember, too, your vows. You pledged yourselves to help women and girls. I trust you meant that."*

*"Yes, Aunt Lydia," I said. "We did. (p. 315)"*

From datum 24 above, the mission was to help women and girls. As in Gilead, there is still a lot of trafficking in women and oppression of women. So, by the mission, the women of Gilead can be freed from what has been making them feel oppressed by its rules and regulation. Although the primary Gilead's goals were purity and glory, it was tarnished and overthrown by power-crazed selfish people. At the end of the story, it is described that Nicole, along with Agnes, assisted by Aunt Lydia succeeded in revealing the crimes in Gilead and destroying the republic of Gilead.

From the explanation above, Nicole's actions to carry out her mission at Gilead show her openly fighting back. Open resistance occurs based on the participant mobilization process, which is arranged in directed agendas and has the right goals and objectives (Scott in Susilowati et al., 2018). Therefore, according to Scott, Nicole's resistance is a response to the many sexist behaviors that result in a lot of injustice for women, so she is moved to carry out a resistance mission.

## **CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION**

This study concludes that sexism is experienced by the main characters in Margaret Atwood's novel *The Testaments*, which are analyzed using the Ambivalent sexism theory proposed by Glick and Fiske. Furthermore, the researcher also examined the effect of sexism in *The Testaments* using the thoughts of Nelson D. T., and also James Scott's thoughts on resistance.

First is the sexism experienced by Agnes and Nicole. Agnes experiences sexism in a way that she is not allowed to read and write, the obligation to cover her body, arranged marriage, and women are constructed in domestic roles. Meanwhile, Nicole experiences sexism by living with limited freedom and the obligation to cover her body. Second, the effect is experienced by the two characters, Agnes and Nicole. Agnes experienced sexual harassment, objectification, internalized sexism, and Liberation as Agnes's resistance. Then Nicole experienced the Alienation effect and took Mission as Nicole's Resistance.

The existence of superior-inferior beliefs about sex or male gender by considering male as the superior gender, while the female is regarded as a less important gender, resulting in many people treating individuals as sexist. This kind of thinking is still stuck in

**LILICS**

Journal of Literature, Linguistics, and Cultural Studies

Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.321-337

E-ISSN: 2986-9552

Website: <http://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/LILICS/index>

some people. This is why many women still experience discrimination due to differences in gender or gender. Therefore, this research is expected to increase knowledge, awareness, and attitudes related to the current issues, especially the act of sexism.

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