

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Looking for Alaska is John Green's first novel, which was published in 2005. The story is narrated by Miles Halter (Pudge) as the male protagonist. The story itself splits into two main chapters, Before and After. Miles Halter as the male protagonist in the story is a new student in an elite boarding school in Alabama. He is just an outcast until he meets Alaska Young. She leads him into the adventurous life he could never imagine before. Pudge describes Alaska as a perfect girl which every body likes in the beginning, but Pudge's perspective about her has changed after Alaska's death.

Meanwhile, *Paper Towns* was published in 2008 and it is telling us the story from the perspective of the male protagonist, Quentin Jacobsen. The story is divided into three main chapters. The String, The Grass and The Vessel. Quentin Jacobsen narrates the story about his journey of finding Margo Roth Spiegelman. When he finally found her, Quentin starts to realize that everyone has different perceptions about Margo and she is not as perfect as he has imagined.

Two female characters in John Green's books reminds the writer of the term "Manic Pixie Dream Girl" (Also known as MPDG) that was coined by Nathan Rabin in 2007. Rabin coined this term when he wrote a review about

Cameron Crowe's movie, entitled *Elizabethtown*. In his review, Rabin described the MPDG as “ bubbly, shallow, cinematic creature that exist solely to teach a soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures.¹” (The Onion A.V Club, 2007). The pattern of the MPDG seemed to generalize women into some characters which exist as ‘supporting characters’ or ‘the helper’ in the story to assist the male characters to accomplish something in their life. According to Monika Bartyzel in her article “Girl on film: why it’s time to retire ‘Manic Pixie Dream Girl’” she stated that, “Manic Pixie Dream Girl lives life differently than the average girls, and it shows us the female characterizations in male dominated journey.²” (The Week, 2013).

Although Manic Pixie Dream Girl was coined in 2007 by a movie critic, but there are several literary works that were spotted with MPDG issues and some of them were published long time before the term was coined. Emily Temple wrote an article about some literary works with the female characters that fit to the description of MPDG. In her article, “Our 10 favorite Manic

¹ Nathan Rabin, “The Bataan Death March of Whimsy Case File # 1: *Elizabethtown*,” *The Onion A.V. Club*, January 25, 2007, <http://www.avclub.com/articles/the-bataandeath-march-of-whimsy-case-file-1-eliza,15577/> (accessed January 22, 2016).

² Monika Bartyzel, ““Girl on film: why it’s time to retire ‘Manic Pixie Dream Girl’” *The Week*, April 26, 2013, <http://www.theweek.com/articles/465113/girls-film-why-time-retire-term-manic-pixie-drem-girl> (accessed January 22, 2016).

Pixie Dream Girl in Literature³” She mentioned some literary works from famous authors.” First, Leslie Burke in *Bridge of Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson (1977). Second, Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* by Truman Capote (1961). Third, Samantha in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky (1999). The last one, Midori Kobayashi in *Norwegian Wood* (1987) by Haruki Murakami. Apart from those literary works that was mentioned by Temple, Nessi Camiller wrote on her blog entitled “Daisy Buchanan: the original manic pixie dream girl⁴” and stated that Daisy Buchanan, the female character in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby* (1959) is the original of Manic Pixie Dream Girl. Camiller stated that Daisy is a conflict in the form of a character, she is problem, not a person and she is existed to give an impact in the love life of the male character. (Hiatus, 2013).

There are two reasons that make the writer chooses *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*. First, in an interview John Green stated that he was writing *Paper Towns* inspired by the term Manic Pixie Dream Girl that was coined by Rabin. “*Paper Towns* is devoted in its entirety to destroying the lie of Manic Pixie Dream Girl...”⁵ (New Statesman, 2015). Second, *Looking for Alaska* was

³ Emily Temple, “Our 10 Favorite Manic Pixie Dream Girls in Literature” *Flavorwire*, June 21, 2012, <http://www.flavorwire.com/302016/our-10-favorite-manic-pixie-dream-girls-in-litarature> (accessed January 22, 2016).

⁴ Nessi camiller, “Daisy Buchanan: the original manic pixie dream girl”, *Hiatus*, September 22, 2013, <http://www.nessicacamiller.tumblr.com/post/61986176682/daisy-buchanan-the-original-manic-pixie-dream> (accessed, January 22, 2016)

⁵ Anna Leszkiewicz, “Paper Towns and the myth that just won’t die: the Manic Pixie Dream Girl” *New Statesman*, August 26, 2015,

published in 2005 meanwhile *Paper Towns* was published a year after the term was coined in 2008. Although they were published in the different period but there are some similarities between the female characters in both of the novels to the characteristics of MPDG. That is why the writer chose these novels, to observe how John Green stands towards this Manic Pixie Dream Girl issues.

Furthermore, the writer wants to investigate Alaska Young and Margo Roth Spiegelman's characters whether they are really fit to the characteristics of Manic Pixie Dream Girls or John Green tries to compose different characters in his novels. Based on the explanation above, the writer intends to conduct a research using John Green's books *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns* and entitles this research **"Image of Women in John Green's Novels *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*: Challenging the Image of Manic Pixie Dream Girl."**

1.2 Identification of the Problem

In John Green's novels *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*, Alaska Young and Margo Roth Spiegelman have some similarities with the characteristics of Manic Pixie Dream Girl. John Green already admitted that he wrote *Paper Towns* inspired by this term. Although these two novels were published in different period but they are pretty much alike. As the result, the writer wants to observe whether the female characters in *Looking for Alaska*

and *Paper Towns* are Manic Pixie Dream Girls or John Green tries to compose different characters by challenging the image of MPDG.

1.3 Limitation of the Study.

The novels narrated the story of Miles Halter and Quentin Jacobsen's journey to fill their mediocre lives with some adventures and solving some mysteries with the help of Alaska Young and Margo Roth Spiegelman. To make a brief analysis, in conducting this research the writer focuses on two main points:

1. Analyzing and comparing Alaska Young and Margo Roth Spiegelman's characters with the characteristics of Manic Pixie Dream Girl.
2. Analyzing John Green's position toward this issue, whether he is supporting MPDG or is he trying to challenge this term by creating different images.

1.4 The Objective of the Research

This research aimed to expose the images of women through the female characters in John Green's novels *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*. The writer starts by explaining the similarities and differences between Alaska Young and Margo Roth Spiegelman's characters with the characteristics of Manic Pixie Dream Girl. Finally, the writer will analyze how John Green stand towards this issues, whether he is supporting the MPDG trope or againts it.

1.5 Review of the Previous Studies

In conducting this research, the writer uses John Green's novels entitled *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*. In doing the research the writer needs some support from the previous researchers to enrich this research. With the help from several critiques and also thesis related to this topic, the writer is finally able to conduct the research on Manic Pixie Dream Girl in *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*. To support her analysis the writer found out some articles. First, article about *Paper Towns* that was published in April 2015 written by Katie for *The Guardian*. In her article entitled, "One of the funniest books I have come across in ages"⁶ she stated that the book focuses on each character's different idea of Margo, and eventually their realizations that she is just a person like them. The different perspectives came from Quentin, her friends and her family. That is such a disappointment, but also relief that people came with a different perspective about a person that you have been idolized for years and in the end of the story you realize that she is just a person, like the rest of us. (The Guardian, 2015). This article gives a contribution in this research because it helps the writer to realize and understand better about Margo Roth Spiegelman's character, and how the other characters voicing their thoughts and opinion towards Margo's behaviour.

⁶ Katie, "One of the funniest books I have come across in ages" *The Guradian*, April 28, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2015/apr/28/review-paperr-towns-john-green> (accessed January 22, 2016).

Second, an article was published in November 2013 by *The Guardian* entitled “The beauty of the book is that it does not hide anything.”⁷ The reviewer stated that *Looking for Alaska* is not just a book about love and teenage life but it is more than that. The beauty of the book is that it doesn't hide anything. It shows us what young love and growing up really are in a brutal and honest light. It helps the writer to understand better in how John Green creates the characters in his books on how they are communicate to each others and their relationships with people around them.

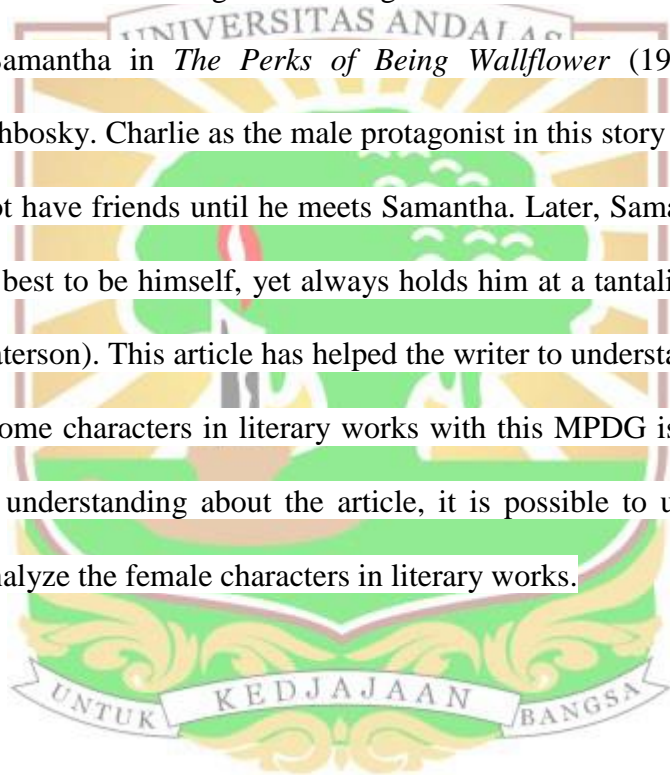
Third, in addition to enrich this research the writer found a thesis written by Bryn Dunbar entitled *Manic Pixie Dream Girl: A Question of Agency* published in 2013. Bryn Dunbar is a bachelor of Art's student majoring Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies in Williams College in Massachusetts. His research discussed about A feminist Psychoanalytic reading of Summer Finn in *500 days of Summer* (2009) and *Bringing Up Baby* by Susan Vance. (1938). Although Dunbar's research discussed about movies but it helped the writer to understand better about the term Manic Pixie Dream Girl. He also provides some sources that is really helpful in finding the additional sources to this research.

Finally, the writer found an article that was discussed the Manic Pixie Dream Girl in literary works. Emily Temple in her article entitled, “Our 10 favorite Manic Pixie Dream Girls in Literature” discussed about some literary

⁷ Pinkbookworm, “The beauty of the book is that it does not hide anything” *The Guardian*, November 13, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/nov/13/review-looking-for-alaska-john-green> (accessed January 22, 2016).

works with the female characters that fit to this MPDG issues. First, Leslie Burke in *Bridge of Terabithia* (1977) written by Kathrine Paterson. Jesse Aarons, the male protagonist in this novel is a depressed and nervous boy until he meets Leslie, a jocular tomboy who can both run and think faster than anyone else he knows, and the two build a magical world together in the woods. When Leslie drowns, Jesse is heartbroken, but realizes that she has imbued him with a courage and strength he never had before. (Paterson).

Second, Samantha in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) written by Stephen Chbosky. Charlie as the male protagonist in this story is a wallflower, he does not have friends until he meets Samantha. Later, Samantha helps him learn how best to be himself, yet always holds him at a tantalizing half-arm's length. (Paterson). This article has helped the writer to understand not only the term but some characters in literary works with this MPDG issues. Based on the writer understanding about the article, it is possible to use this term in order to analyze the female characters in literary works.



1.6 Theoretical Framework

The term feminism can be used to express a political, cultural or economic movement aimed to establish equal rights and legal protection for women. Feminism involves political and sociological theories and philosophies concerned with issues of gender difference, as well as a movement that voicing gender equality for women and campaigns for women's rights and interests. Margaret Atwood in her book *From Eve to Dawn: A History of Women in the World* stated that:

Men see feminism as a threat. Feminism is simply the belief that women are human beings with human rights. Human rights are not radical claims, but merely basic rights—the right to walk around in the world at will, to breathe the air and drink water and eat food sufficient to maintain life, to speak at will and control one's own body and its movements, including its sexuality (Atwood, 2002:3).

Atwood argues that feminism is a movement that is existed in order to gain an equality and criticize how the patriarchy got all the power meanwhile women remain weak.

Meanwhile, Feminist literary criticism is a literary criticism which is proposed by feminist to analyze literary works based on feminist principal and ideological discourses. In this reserach the writer concern on the image of woman as one of feminist studies. K.M Newton in his book *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader* stated that “The image of a woman” school of feminist critics adopts this point of view and

is particularly concerned with how woman represented in literature” (Newton, 1988:263). It means that the image of woman is to analyze the presence of female characters in the literary works. Mary Anne Ferguson in her book *Images of Women in Literature: An Evolution* stated that “The course ‘Image of Women in Literature’ have in a number of ways served as a barometer recording changes in feminist literary attitudes and theory during the last decade.” (Ferguson, 1980:34). Ferguson argues that in the middle of 1970s many writers, mostly women and couple of men have been creating new images of women. They were inventing new imagery to describe female experience, adapting the traditional literary forms to new visions. A major change during this time has been a movement away from the optimistic but naive belief that simply perceiving the negative images of women in male writing and countering them with positive ones by women would lead to a closer relationship between literary images and the reality of women’s lives (1980: 34). In her book, Ferguson emphasized that, “ Male dominance both of literature and of criticism seemed the basis for the polarity of attitude towards each image: use of the masculine as norm made women characters and traits secondary, hence inferior.” (1980:34).

According to Elaine Showalter, there are two types of feminist criticism, the first is a woman as a reader, in this case to analyze men’s work. The writer uses this form in analyzing the novel *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns*. Second is woman as a writer, Showalter called it gynocriticism . Showalter argues in her book *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*:

“One problem of the feminist critique is that it is male oriented. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics and limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt experienced, but only what men have thought about women should be.” (Showalter, 1985:75).

Showalter also stated that feminist will analyze what the male author’s perspective towards women, which can be observe through his works. It means the image of female characters in men’s work does not reflect women’s feeling or experiences.

In conducting this research, the writer will use the characteristics of Manic Pixie Dream Girl that was coined by Nathan Rabin. The term “Manic Pixie Dream Girl” (Also known as MPDG) itself was coined in 2007 when Rabin wrote a review about Cameron Crowe’s movie entitled *Elizabethtown*. In his review he wrote that:

Manic Pixie Dream Girl is the bubbly, shallow, cinematic creature that exists solely in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries and adventures. The Manic Pixie Dream Girl is an all-or nothing proposition. Audiences either want to marry her instantly (despite The Manic Pixie Dream Girl being, you know, a fictional character) or they want to commit grievous bodily harm against them and their immediate family. (The Onion A.V Club, 2007).

The term Manic Pixie Dream Girl has gained particular notoriety in the last twenty years. Julianna Joyce in her essay “Deciphering the Manic Pixie Mythos” stated that:

The Manic Pixie Dream Girl exhibits no true desires of her own, does not have any real aspirations, and is simply there to help the male protagonist. She is easily amused, childlike in her social interactions, and seemingly incapable of truly taking care of herself without the male lead. (Apollon Ejournal, 2014).

However, since the term was coined in 2007 people are start using it and the characteristic of MPDG started growing. Rabin described the characteristics of MPDG as a woman who is attractive, mysterious, and she exists to ‘fix’ these lonely men to embrace their lives through some adventures and uncover some mysteries. Meanwhile, some additional characteristic started growing when the term were getting more popular. Julia Busshardt wrote an article “10 ways to spot a Manic Pixie Dream Girl.” In her article, Busshardt gives some characteristic of MPDG, such as the way they are dressed. Manic Pixie Dream Girl have eccentric look, either they are dressed themselves as punk or girly. Not only they way they are dressed, but Manic Pixie Dream Girl is also complicated and they like to make it known. Manic Pixie Dream Girl is also creative and kind of attainable. She will make the male protagonist try to win her heart, yet she is not available (Busshardt, 2015).

1.7 The Methods of the research

Method is the important part in conducting the research. In doing her research the writer follows several steps, namely Collecting the Data, Analyzing the Data and Presenting the Result of Analysis.

1.7.1 Collecting the Data

In collecting the data, the writer used the library research to collect some books and theories for references. She used the novels *Looking for Alaska* and *Paper Towns* which has been books as the primary data of this research and other references like feminist books, literary criticism, journals, and other articles, that support this research.

1.7.2 Analyzing Data

In Analyzing the data, the writer begins by reading the novels first to find the intrinsic elements of the novels. It will help the writer to be more understood about the story by knowing the intrinsic elements of the novels. After that the writer will try to analyze Alaska Young and Margo Roth Spiegelman's characters to find the similarities and differences between them to the trope of Manic Pixie Dream Girl. Finally, after analyzing and comparing the female characters with the characteristic of MPDG the writer will observe how John Green stand towards this issue.

1.7.3 Presenting the Result of Analysis

In presenting the result of Analysis, the writer will use Qualitative Method. According to Robert C. Bogdan and Biken in their book *Qualitative Research for education* they stated that: "Qualitative research is descriptive;

the collected data is in the form of words or picture rather than numbers.” In other hand, the qualitative method is always descriptive because the data and the result of the writing is in the form of words not numbers.

