



Women's Screams in the Novels *Woman at Point Zero* and *Gadis Pantai*: An Existentialist Feminist Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study examines women's cries in the novels *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi and *Gadis Pantai* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer using the existentialist feminist perspective of Simone de Beauvoir. This approach was chosen because it can dissect women's experiences not as mere biological fate, but as social constructs that can be resisted through existential awareness and action. This study uses a qualitative literature review with data sources in the form of the 2003 translation of *Woman at Point Zero* (177 pages) and the 1987 edition of *Gadis Pantai* (121 pages). The primary research instrument is the researcher herself, who acts as recorder, critical reader, and interpreter of the texts. This study uses note-taking techniques in data collection. Data analysis is conducted through thorough reading, data classification, description, interpretation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that women's cries in both novels are not merely physical cries or emotional expressions, but rather a planned existential resistance against the hegemonic patriarchal system. The meaning of the scream goes beyond individual suffering, as it serves as a sharp social critique of patriarchal structures that continue to place women in subordinate, objectified, and othered positions. The scream also depicts women's persistent efforts to reclaim agency, autonomy, and recognition of their existence as self-determining subjects, in accordance with the demands of the ethics of freedom in existentialist feminism.

Keywords: women's screams, novel, existentialist feminist

Jeritan Perempuan dalam Novel *Woman at Point Zero* dan *Gadis Pantai*: Perspektif Feminisme Eksistensial

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji jeritan perempuan dalam novel *Woman at Point Zero* karya Nawal El Saadawi dan *Gadis Pantai* karya Pramoedya Ananta Toer dengan menggunakan perspektif feminisme eksistensial Simone de Beauvoir. Pendekatan ini dipilih karena mampu membedah pengalaman perempuan bukan sebagai nasib biologis semata, melainkan sebagai konstruksi sosial yang dapat dilawan melalui kesadaran dan tindakan eksistensial. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kepustakaan yang bersifat kualitatif dengan sumber data berupa novel *Woman at Point Zero* terjemahan tahun 2003 yang memiliki ketebalan 177 halaman dan novel *Gadis Pantai* cetakan tahun 1987 dengan jumlah 121 halaman. Instrumen utama penelitian adalah peneliti sendiri yang berperan sebagai perekam, pembaca kritis, dan penafsir teks. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik catat dalam pengumpulan data. Analisis data dilakukan melalui pembacaan menyeluruh, klasifikasi data, deskripsi, interpretasi, dan penarikan simpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jeritan perempuan dalam kedua novel bukan sekadar tangisan fisik atau ekspresi emosi, melainkan perlawanan eksistensial terencana terhadap sistem patriarki hegemonik. Makna jeritan melampaui penderitaan individual, karena berfungsi sebagai kritik sosial tajam terhadap struktur patriarkal yang terus menempatkan perempuan pada posisi subordinat, objek, dan liyan. Jeritan tersebut juga menggambarkan upaya gigih perempuan merebut kembali agensi, otonomi, dan pengakuan eksistensinya sebagai subjek yang bebas menentukan nasib sendiri, sesuai tuntutan etika kebebasan dalam feminisme eksistensial.

Kata kunci: jeritan perempuan, novel, feminisme eksistensial

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INTRODUCTION

Literature has long been a medium for expressing the experiences of women marginalized within patriarchal social structures. Within the world literary tradition, two novels that powerfully address the issue of women's oppression are Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* from Egypt and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Gadis Pantai* (Beach Girl). These two works emerge from different geographical and cultural contexts, one from the Arab-Muslim world and the other from Javanese-Islamic Southeast Asia. Yet, they share striking thematic similarities when examining how patriarchal systems shape, limit, and destroy women's lives.

Patriarchy can be understood as a system of social structures and practices that places men in a dominant position and is at the root of women's oppression. Within this system, men dominate, abuse, and exploit women in various spheres of life, from the domestic sphere (family) to the public sphere such as the state and the workplace. The oppression of women is a concrete manifestation of the patriarchal system, manifested in various forms of injustice, such as subordination (the assumption that women are subordinate to men), marginalization (economic and social exclusion), physical and psychological violence, and excessive control over women's bodies and sexuality. According to Sylvia Walby (2022: 84-97), this oppression occurs through six structures, including the exploitation of women's labor in the household, discrimination in the workplace, and violence legitimized by culture and the state. Thus, the "cries" of the female characters in the novels *Woman at Point Zero* and *Gadis Pantai* are not only personal responses to suffering but also a form of collective protest against the oppressive patriarchal system that seeks to diminish their autonomy as free human beings.

Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian physician, psychiatrist, and feminist activist, wrote *Woman at Point Zero* based on her experience meeting a female prisoner named Firdaus, who was sentenced

to death for killing a pimp. This novel serves as a kind of feminist "testament" that thoroughly critiques the Egyptian patriarchal system. Meanwhile, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, an Indonesian writer who also experienced political oppression, wrote *Gadis Pantai* as a "family romance" inspired by his own grandmother's story, describing how a fisherman girl was forced to marry a nobleman (Bendoro) through a marriage with a *keris*.

Both novels present women's "screams," both literal and metaphorical, in response to the power and oppression they experience. The screams in this context are not merely cries of physical pain, but rather a form of existential protest against the elimination of women's subjectivity and autonomy. As revealed in the synopsis of "*Woman at Point Zero*," Firdaus actually welcomes her hanging sentence because it is considered the only path to true freedom, an irony that reveals the depravity of a male-dominated society.

This research utilizes Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework, as outlined in her landmark work, "*The Second Sex*" (1949). Beauvoir argues that throughout history, women have been positioned as "the Other" in relation to men, who are "the One." Women are defined in relation to and difference from men, not as autonomous subjects. Research on the application of Beauvoir's theory in the context of Indonesian literature has been conducted, for example, by Sabillillah (2025:58–68) in her study of Javanese *Pitutur*, which critiques cultural views that position women as the other and emphasizes the importance of awareness and freedom in determining one's own existence. Similarly, Della Insiana Pebrian Sari and Jamila Wijayanti's (2026:220) research on the novel *Nyi Sadikem* identifies various forms of objectification experienced by the main female character, including her positioning as the "Other," discrimination, and gender stereotypes.

Several key Beauvoir concepts relevant to the analysis of these two novels are: First, the concept of "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."



Beauvoir emphasizes that female gender identity is a social construct, not a biological essence. Through the process of socialization, girls are taught to be passive, dependent, and accepting of male domination. Second, the concept of "immanence" versus "transcendence" is discussed. Men are associated with transcendence, the ability to transcend themselves, create, and determine their own destiny, while women are imprisoned in immanence, a repetitive life confined to the domestic and reproductive spheres. Third, the concept of freedom and situation. Beauvoir rejects biological or economic determinism, but recognizes that women's freedom is always limited by their concrete "situation." Freedom must be fought for through "projects" or actions that transcend the shackling situation. Fourth, the concept of "false consciousness" in which women often accept and internalize their oppression, thus becoming "allies" of the patriarchal system.

Several studies have been conducted on these two novels separately. However, research systematically comparing them using Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework remains limited. Yet, both novels offer a rich cross-cultural perspective for understanding the universality of women's oppression as well as the specifics of their local contexts. This research focuses on women's cries from the perspective of power and oppression in both novels.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a comparative literary study approach. The research design was library research because the primary data source came from the novels as written material. This research was conducted in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year at Gorontalo State University. The research population was the entire text of the novels *Woman at Point Zero* (2003) and *Gadis Pantai* (1987). The research sample consisted of quoted words, phrases, sentences, and dialogue depicting

patriarchal power and oppression of women in both novels.

The research instrument was the researcher herself (human instrument) assisted by a data classification table. The data collection technique used a read and note technique. Data analysis was carried out through the following stages: (1) thorough reading of both novels; (2) classifying data according to the research focus (patriarchal power and oppression); (3) analyzing data using Beauvoir's existentialist feminist framework; (4) describing the data; (5) interpreting meaning; and (6) drawing conclusions. The data analysis was qualitative-interpretive, based on the principle of theoretical triangulation.

RESULTS

1. Women's Screams: A Look at Patriarchal Power in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Girl on the Beach*

Data 1

"Father would never go to bed without dinner first, no matter what. Sometimes, if there was no food in the house, we would all go to bed empty-bellied. But he always had food. Mother would hide her food from us at the bottom of a stove pit. She ate alone while we watched." (Saadawi, 2003:23-24)

The data above shows that patriarchal power in the family places men (fathers) as the ones with the most rights to resources, while women (mothers and daughters) receive only scraps or nothing at all, in line with the problem formulation of how patriarchal power operates in the domestic sphere.

Data 2

"I can also see that all those who rule are men." (Saadawi, 2003:110)

The data above demonstrates Firdaus' critical awareness of the public power structure (political,

economic, legal, and social) that is completely controlled by men, in line with the problem formulation of how patriarchal power operates not only within the family but also in the broader social structure.

Data 3

"Men force deception on women, and then punish them for being deceived." (Saadawi, 2003:111)

The data above demonstrates the double-standard mechanism within a patriarchal system, where men play the dual role of both trapper and judge who punishes the victim, in line with the problem formulation of how patriarchal power creates a logic that systematically disadvantages women.

Data 4

"Last night she was married. Married to a keris. In that moment, she knew: she was no longer her father's daughter. She was no longer her mother's daughter. Now she was the wife of a keris, the representative of someone she had never seen in her life." (Toer, 1987:2-3)

The data above demonstrates that patriarchal power in feudal Javanese culture can reduce women to commodities that are transacted without consent, even without the physical presence of the groom, in line with the problem formulation of how patriarchal power operates through the institution of marriage.

Data 5

"Shh. Don't cry. Don't cry. Today you are the wife of a high-ranking official... From today on, you live in a big building, my child. No longer in a hut. You no longer relieve yourself on the beach. You no longer sew sails and nets, but silk, my child." (Toer, 1987:3)

The data above shows that patriarchal power can turn a female victim (the mother) into an agent who legitimizes and perpetuates the oppression of other women (her own daughter), in line with the problem formulation of how patriarchal power works through the internalization of values ??(false consciousness) in women.

Data 6

"I have performed the Hajj twice, and I don't know how many times I have completed the Qur'an" (Toer, 1987: 4).

The data above shows that symbols of ritual piety (pilgrimage, completion of the Qur'an) are used as legitimation of patriarchal power to carry out arbitrary actions against women, in accordance with the formulation of the problem about how religion can be manipulated into a tool of patriarchal power.

2. Women's Cries from the Perspective of Oppression in the Novels *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi and *Gadis Pantai* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer

Data 1

"All women are victims of deception." (Saadawi, 2003:111)

The data above demonstrates that the oppression of women is collective and systemic, not merely an individual experience, consistent with the problem formulation of how the oppression of women occurs structurally within a patriarchal system.

Data 2

"Binding them in marriage, and condemning them to hard labor throughout their lives." (Saadawi, 2003:111)

The data above demonstrates that the institution of marriage in a patriarchal system functions as a tool to both bind and punish women



with endless domestic labor, consistent with the problem formulation of how the oppression of women is institutionalized through marriage.

Data 3

"Men impose deception on women, and then punish them for being deceived." (Saadawi, 2003:111)

The data above demonstrates the sadistic mechanisms within the patriarchal system, where men create situations where women lack choice and then blame them when they attempt to escape, consistent with the problem formulation of how women's oppression is cyclical and unjust.

Data 4

"Nothing hung on the walls except the Arabic calligraphy that emitted no scent... The thick stone walls were mute and gray without a heart. What was the use of my heart? She screamed inwardly. The Beach Girl had become part of the walls of seclusion." (Toer, 1987:20-21)

The data above demonstrates that oppression against women does not always take the form of physical violence, but can also take the form of existential isolation that robs women of meaning in their lives, consistent with the problem formulation of how psychological oppression against women operates through social exclusion.

Data 5

"Now she was only allowed to whisper. And in this seclusion, even her movements had to follow the established guidelines" (Toer, 1987:23).

The data above shows that oppression against women includes the removal of the right to voice and the right to determine one's own actions, in accordance with the problem formulation of how oppression against women diminishes their agency and autonomy.

Data 6

"I didn't order you to raise my child.' 'Must I leave without my own child, my lord?' 'You never talk that much. You leave this house!' 'This child, my lord, what will happen to this child?' 'Forget your baby. Pretend you never had a child.'" (Toer, 1987:108)

The data above shows that the pinnacle of oppression against women is the deprivation of maternal rights, where the child is taken from its mother and the mother is ordered to forget her own child, in accordance with the problem formulation of how oppression against women can target the most fundamental bond between mother and child.

DISCUSSION

The women's screams in Nawal El Saadawi's novels *Woman at Point Zero* and *Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Gadis Pantai* are not simply physical cries or ordinary laments of grief, but rather a form of existential protest against the patriarchal system that positions women as "the Other" from the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism.

Women's Screams from the Perspective of Patriarchal Power in Nawal El Saadawi's Novels *Woman at Point Zero* and *Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Gadis Pantai*

The women's screams in Nawal El Saadawi's novels *Woman at Point Zero* and *Pramoedya Ananta Toer's Gadis Pantai* are not simply physical cries or ordinary laments of grief, but rather a form of existential protest against the patriarchal system that positions women as "the Other" from the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism. This is primarily evident in the unequal power relations in the domestic sphere, which prioritize men's (fathers') rights over food resources, while mothers and daughters receive only scraps or nothing at all. This phenomenon

demonstrates that in a patriarchal family structure, men are positioned as subjects entitled to scarce resources, while women are merely servants. This aligns with Israpli's (2017:135) argument, which explains that in patriarchal culture, men are central to all family members, resulting in deeply rooted subordination to wives and daughters. Women possess no power whatsoever, and are forced to accept their fate. Thus, the institution of the family becomes the primary vehicle through which Firdaus develops an awareness of her inferior position as a woman.

Furthermore, this critical awareness extends beyond the household level to broader social structures, as Firdaus begins to move beyond passively accepting injustice and instead begins to see the social structure as a whole: that all public power (political, economic, legal, and social) is controlled by men. This awareness becomes the foundation for her resistance to the status quo. Similarly, Sakina and Arif (2017:26) state that patriarchy is a social system that positions men as the primary and dominant power holders in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control over property. From this awareness then emerged a critical understanding of the double standards created by the system, which revealed the double standards and victim blaming that are characteristic of the patriarchal system. Men create structural traps for women (for example, by hindering education, forcing early marriage, or exploiting their bodies), but when women try to escape these traps, society punishes them as "guilty" or "immoral." This is reinforced by the opinion of Shalihin and Firdaus (2019:62) who state that patriarchy creates double standards that corner women and hinder their access to freedom. The character of Firdaus in the novel clearly demonstrates this sadistic logic: men become the creators of deception and the judges who punish its victims.

Pramoedya portrays the Beach Girl. In the feudal Javanese culture depicted by Pramoedya, marriage involving a keris represents the ultimate

form of objectification and degradation of women. The Beach Girl's body and existence are reduced to mere commodities that can be traded without consent, even without the physical presence of the groom. The keris, as a sacred weapon imbued with masculine values ??and power, replaces human function, demonstrating that, within patriarchal logic, the male presence is only necessary as a symbol of power over the female body. This opinion is affirmed by Rabbaniyah and Salsabila (2022:45), who explain that feudal Javanese culture positions men as absolute rulers and women as objects that must submit. They state that, within the patriarchal construction of Javanese culture, women are often positioned as objects deprived of autonomy over their own bodies and lives. Forced marriage involving masculine symbols like the keris is a concrete form of socially sanctioned self-silencing. The tragedy of the patriarchal system deepens when the victims themselves perpetuate oppression. This is when the victimized woman (the mother) acts as an "agent" who legitimizes and perpetuates the oppression of other women (her own daughter). Having long experienced the hegemony and internalization of patriarchal values, the mother views her forced marriage to an unknown man (represented by the keris) as "luck" due to the material rewards such as silk and a high-rise building. Women's dignity and bodies are sacrificed for the sake of false economic security. This phenomenon is known as false consciousness, as explained by Asmawir (2023:57). Patriarchal hegemony in this novel makes women accept subordination and violence as normal because it has been internalized in their consciousness. Women often become tools for the system to oppress other women, without realizing that they themselves are also victims.

Ultimately, all forms of oppression are legitimized by symbols of ritual piety that are used as shields of power. It is explicitly depicted that Bendoro's ritual piety, in the full context of the novel, is depicted that the depth of his religion does not prevent him from carrying out oppressive



practices: marrying women without their presence, simply divorcing them, taking children from their mothers, and treating servants arbitrarily. This reveals the disruption of morality in the form of symbols of ritual piety (pilgrimage, completing the Qur'an) used as a cover note for power to silence criticism. The higher the attributes of piety of a patriarchal ruler, the greater his authority to carry out structural violence without being challenged. This social criticism is emphasized by Wijayanti (2022:118) that Pramoedya Ananta Toer explicitly criticized the hypocrisy of the priyayi who hide behind religious attributes to commit arbitrariness against the lower classes, especially women. For him, ritual piety without the implementation of social ethics is only a mask for the practice of tyrannical power. Thus, the six data from the two novels layered together show that women's screams are an existential resistance against patriarchal power that operates from the domestic sphere, social structure, double standards, body objectification, internalization of values, to religious manipulation.

Women's Cries: A Look at the Aspect of Oppression in the Novels "Woman at Point Zero" by Nawal El Saadawi and "Girl on the Beach" by Pramoedya Ananta Toer

The oppression of women in these two novels is not individual and random, but rather collective and systemic. The character Firdaus in Nawal El Saadawi's "Woman at Point Zero" views all women as constant victims of the patriarchal system. Women collectively experience violence and injustice perpetrated by men, not because of individual weakness, but because of a social structure deliberately designed to oppress them. This opinion is supported by Syahri (2013:47), who explains that the forms of harassment against women include harassment in family relationships, marriage, dating, and social and political relationships. Thus, Firdaus's statement is a critical generalization born from her concrete experience as a woman repeatedly betrayed by men in various

roles: father, uncle, husband, and customer.

One of the most effective institutions of oppression is marriage. In a patriarchal system, marriage is not understood as a sacred bond of equality, but rather as a tool to bind and punish women. Women not only lose their freedom and autonomy over their bodies, but are also forced to perform endless domestic labor (housekeeping, serving their husbands, raising children) without social recognition or economic reward. Furthermore, Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel *Gadis Pantai* (Beach Girl) reveals violence against women, both physical and psychological, as a form of social injustice in society at that time. Furthermore, the patriarchal system creates a sadistic mechanism: men as both rule-makers and judges (Ridwan et al. (2024:112). They first trap women in situations without choice (for example, by forcing marriage, limiting access to education, or making women sexual objects), then when women try to escape this trap, society blames them as "deceived" or "immoral." This analysis is reinforced by Syahri (2013:52), who explains that symbolic violence like this is the most subtle yet most damaging form of patriarchal oppression. Syahri writes, Men create a system that ensures women are always in the wrong "if she obeys she suffers, if she resists she is punished."

In the novel *Gadis Pantai*, the form of oppression is not always visible physical violence, but also existential isolation that robs women of meaning in life. The metaphor of the "wall of khalwat" (a space of silent contemplation) refers not only to physical confinement within a large house, but also to psychological and spiritual confinement. The character *Gadis Pantai* is trapped in a space that is materially beautiful but empty of meaning; she loses connection with her own world (the beach, the sea, her family) without gaining a new, meaningful world. This is a form of pure psychological oppression that Beauvoir calls "immanence": a life that revolves around the same thing, without a project, without transcendence. This opinion is emphasized by Ridwan et al.

(2024:108) who explain that psychological violence in Gadis Pantai is actually more dominant and destructive than physical violence. They state, The social isolation experienced by Gadis Pantai within the walls of the khalwat is a form of systematic psychological violence. She is exiled from her community, deprived of her voice, and forced to live in emptiness. The thick stone walls are a perfect metaphor for an invisible yet real psychic prison.

The oppression of women in Gadis Pantai also includes the removal of their voice and the right to determine their own bodily movements. The character of Gadis Pantai is not only deprived of the right to speak audibly ("she can only whisper"), but also of the right to determine her own bodily movements. "Pre-existing norms" refer to established patriarchal and feudal rules: how women should sit, walk, speak, bow, and serve without question. This is a form of oppression in which women's bodies are no longer their own, but rather become the property of power. This analysis is reinforced by Ridwan et al. (2024:115), who assert that the novel Gadis Pantai consistently depicts how women lose their voice and agency in the face of patriarchal power.

The culmination of this entire series of oppressions is the deprivation of maternal rights. The character of Gadis Pantai, who has been pregnant for nine months, given birth to a painful child, and breastfed, is suddenly deprived of the right to care for her own child. Bendoro arrogantly refers to the child as "my child" instead of "our child," emphasizing that in feudal-patriarchal logic, children are the absolute property of men (fathers), while mothers are merely reproductive organs that can be discarded after they have "functioned." The commands to "forget your baby" and "pretend you never had a child" are the most cruel forms of psychological violence because they target the most fundamental bond between mother and child. This opinion is supported by Ridwan et al. (2024:120), who call the child-snatching in this novel the most extreme form of social injustice.

They state, "The deprivation of custody of Gadis Pantai's child represents how the patriarchal-feudal system does not recognize women as whole human beings with feelings and rights." Thus, the women's cries in these two novels represent a protest against multi-layered systemic oppression: from the collectivity of suffering, the binding and punitive institution of marriage, the sadistic mechanism of victim-blaming, existential isolation, the erasure of agency, to the deprivation of the most fundamental maternal rights. The similarities between Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's *Gadis Pantai* are that they both depict the lives of women under the pressure of a patriarchal system. Both works demonstrate that women are placed in a lower position than men, thus lacking complete freedom to determine their own lives. The characters of Firdaus and Gadis Pantai in both novels experience treatment that demonstrates male dominance within the family and society.

Their lives are governed by patriarchal power, which renders women merely accessories and not individuals with rights and personal will. In *Woman at Point Zero*, Firdaus realizes that the entire power structure rests with men. Meanwhile, in *Gadis Pantai*, the main character must accept a marriage concluded without her consent. This situation demonstrates that women in both novels are deprived of the opportunity to freely determine their own life direction. Furthermore, both novels depict various forms of oppression against women. Firdaus experiences physical and sexual violence from childhood to adulthood. She is treated harshly by the men present in her life, both within her family and social circles.

On the other hand, Pramoedya Anantatoer's *Gadis Pantai* experiences greater mental distress and psychological suffering. After entering Bendoro's house, she lives in isolation and loses the space to express her own desires. Both characters share the suffering caused by a social system that does not provide a place for women to live freely. The oppression they experience



demonstrates that women are often positioned merely as objects subject to the rules imposed by men. This aligns with Aulia & Efendi's (2025:3) argument, which explains that existentialist feminism presents itself as a critique of patriarchal domination and the labeling of the "other" regarding women's position. This is further supported by Iktisah & Supratno (2025:85) who state that the novel represents the reality of gender-based oppression, driven by misogyny as part of patriarchal culture. Consequently, women experience various forms of gender injustice that hinder their existence as free subjects.

Despite sharing similar themes, Nawal El Saadawi's "Woman at Point Zero" and Pramoedya Ananta Toer's "Girl on the Beach" differ significantly in their sociocultural settings. "Woman at Point Zero" is set in Egyptian society, a patriarchal culture closely linked to male power over women's bodies, poverty, and sexual exploitation. Firdaus's oppression appears harsher and more overt, as she experiences direct violence in various forms. In contrast, "Girl on the Beach" is set in Javanese feudal culture, which highly values social status and the power of the nobility.

The oppression faced by the Beach Girl character appears more in the form of psychological pressure and restrictions on women's living space. She does not experience overt sexual violence like Firdaus, but lives within rules that deprive her of her freedom, voice, and identity. Hasan, Rasiah, & Mustika (2023: 105) explain this difference in background and form of oppression. In the Javanese cultural context, women who are perceived as "Other" and want to become "Selves" must navigate the path of education, employment, and social change. This suggests that the oppression of Javanese women is more cultural and structural, rather than simply overt physical violence, as in Egyptian society, which is more explicit in sexual exploitation.

Another difference is evident in how the female characters deal with the oppression they

experience. Firdaus chooses to resist firmly against the men who oppress her. She attempts to regain control of her life, despite facing significant risks, ultimately leading to the death penalty. Firdaus's behavior demonstrates a form of rebellion against the patriarchal system that has dominated her life. In contrast, the Beach Girl character does not resist directly. She accepts her situation and silently endures her suffering. However, the decision of the Pantai Gadis character to leave Bendoro's life after being divorced can also be understood as a form of rejection of the oppression she experiences.

Through a comparative literature approach, the study of these two novels not only strengthens the understanding of the universality of women's experiences facing patriarchy but also highlights how differences in socio-cultural contexts give rise to distinctive forms of oppression and strategies of resistance. According to Kristin Marwinda (2019:134), in her comparative literary study of the novels *Woman at Point Zero* and *Midah Si Manis Bergigi Emas* (The Sweet Girl with Gold Teeth), female authors tend to position female characters as weak and oppressed, while male authors tend to portray women as figures with a fighting spirit and tenacity to rise above adversity. Similarly, Purnawati (2022) in her narratological analysis found that the character of Firdaus in *Woman at Point Zero* successfully demonstrates how women can take control of their own bodies through a series of resistances against the patriarchal system, represented through Greimas's actant scheme, where Firdaus transforms from an oppressed subject into a person capable of turning the tide and living on equal terms with men. Meanwhile, Nafisah, Darni, & Setijawan (2020:171) in their comparison of the novels *Astirin Mbalela* and *The Road of Lost Innocence* revealed that cultural violence stemming from patriarchal ideology can perpetuate forms of violence such as forced arranged marriages and humiliation of women's reproduction, where

differences in cultural background determine the motives and forms of violence experienced by female characters. Thus, the comparison between *Woman at Point Zero* and *Gadis Pantai* not only enriches insight into the position of women in two different cultures, but also shows how comparative literature functions as an analytical tool capable of revealing the complexity of gender relations across cultures. Thus, both female characters strive to maintain their self-esteem, but through different means, depending on the social conditions they face. These differences in resistance strategies align with Anastasya's (2024:4) findings, citing Beauvoir, that women's existence is constructed as free, whole, and empowered individuals. Women can achieve freedom through various means, such as working, becoming intellectuals, teaching social transformation, and rejecting their "otherness." The paths taken by Firdaus and the character in "Girl of the Beach" demonstrate that although their ultimate goal is the same: achieving existential freedom, the strategies chosen are largely determined by the concrete "situations" that limit their options.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted, several conclusions can be drawn. First, patriarchal power in both novels operates through the institutions of the family, manipulated religion, economics, and culture. In Nawal El Saadawi's novel *Woman at Point Zero*, the family becomes the primary locus of subjugation, where men (fathers) have privileged rights over resources, while women (mothers and daughters) receive what's left over. Religion serves as a legitimacy to maintain the status quo. In Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel *Gadis Pantai* (Beach Girl), the Javanese feudal system, through the institution of marriage involving the *keris* (the Indonesian word for "keris"), creates extreme objectification of women. Women's cries within this context of power emerge as a protest against the elimination of subjectivity,

whether through crying, narrative, or bodily actions.

Second, the oppression of women in both novels manifests itself in the forms of physical and sexual violence, psychological oppression (isolation, alienation, the suppression of voice), economic exploitation, and the denial of autonomy (including the right to children). Firdaus experiences violence from her father, uncle, husband, and pimp, as well as economic exploitation. The character *Gadis Pantai* experiences isolation within the Bendoro mansion, loss of identity, and ultimately the deprivation of her rights to her children. These cries within this context of oppression are a form of existential resistance: an attempt to reclaim agency through voice, body, and existential choice.

The similarities between the two novels lie in their critique of the patriarchal system that positions women as "the Other," depriving them of the freedom to determine their own lives, and experiencing various forms of oppression that hinder their existence as independent subjects. The differences between the two novels are evident in the sociocultural contexts that produce different forms of resistance. In *Woman at Point Zero*, Firdaus chooses radical resistance by killing and refusing clemency as his final "cry." He reaches "zero point" where nothing can be taken away, thus truly freeing him. In the novel "Gadis Pantai," the character, *Gadis Pantai*, chooses a more passive but still meaningful resistance: refusing to return to her village, choosing to live as a nomad, and disappearing from the narrative.

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