



The Existence of Female Characters in the Drama Script *Bunga Rumah Makan* by Utuy Tatang Sontani: A Study of Existential Feminism

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the existence of female characters as viewed through the lenses of “*The Other*,” *Immanence*, and *Transcendence* in the play *Bunga Rumah Makan* by Utuy Tatang Sontani, using Simone de Beauvoir’s framework of existential feminism. The method employed is analytical description. The data source is the play *Bunga Rumah Makan* by Utuy Tatang Sontani. The research data consists of dialogue excerpts that illustrate the existence of female characters in the play. Data collection was conducted through reading and note-taking. Data analysis was performed by: (1) Reading the data thoroughly to gain an initial understanding of the text; (2) Classifying the data into three analytical categories: manifestations of “*The Other*,” conditions of *Immanence*, and drives toward *Transcendence*. (3) Describing the classified data in detail and systematically; (4) Analyzing the data by referring to Simone de Beauvoir’s existential feminist theoretical framework; (5) Interpreting the analysis results to uncover the meanings embedded within the text; and (6) Drawing preliminary conclusions that are subsequently verified until a final, accountable conclusion is reached. The research findings indicate that the character Ani is constructed as *The Other* through patriarchal power relations; she experiences a condition of *Immanence* but gradually demonstrates a drive toward *Transcendence*. This study concludes that Sontani’s drama implicitly reflects the tension between women’s existential freedom and the pressures of the patriarchal social structure.

Keywords: existence, female characters, drama script, existential feminism

Eksistensi Tokoh Perempuan dalam Naskah Drama *Bunga Rumah Makan* Karya Utuy Tatang Sontani: Kajian Feminisme Eksistensial

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dititik beratkan pada eksistensi tokoh perempuan ditinjau dari *The Other*, *Immanence*, dan *Transcendence* dalam naskah drama *Bunga Rumah Makan* karya Utuy Tatang Sontani dengan menggunakan kerangka feminisme eksistensial Simone de Beauvoir. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode deskripsi analitis. Sumber data berasal dari naskah drama *Bunga Rumah Makan* Karya Utuy Tatang Sontani. Data penelitian berupa kutipan dialog yang menggambarkan adanya eksistensi tokoh perempuan dalam naskah drama. Teknik pengumpulan data dikumpulkan melalui teknik baca dan catat. Teknik analisis data dilakukan dengan cara (1) Membaca sajian data secara menyeluruh untuk memperoleh pemahaman awal terhadap teks; (2) Mengklasifikasi data berdasarkan tiga kategori analisis, yakni manifestasi *The Other*, kondisi *Immanence* dan dorongan *Transcendence*. (3) Mendeskripsikan data yang telah diklasifikasikan secara rinci dan sistematis; (4) Menganalisis data dengan mengacu pada kerangka teoritis feminisme eksistensial Simone de Beauvoir; (5) Menginterpretasi hasil analisis untuk mengungkap makna yang terkandung di balik teks; serta (6) Mengambil simpulan sementara yang selanjutnya diverifikasi hingga diperoleh simpulan akhir yang dapat dipertanggungjawabkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tokoh Ani terkonstruksi sebagai *The Other* melalui relasi kuasa patriarkal; mengalami kondisi *Immanence* namun secara bertahap menunjukkan dorongan menuju *Transcendence*. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa drama Sontani secara implisit merefleksikan ketegangan antara kebebasan eksistensial perempuan dan tekanan struktur sosial-patriarkal.

Kata kunci: eksistensi, tokoh perempuan, naskah drama, feminisme eksistensial

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INTRODUCTION

Literary works are a medium of cultural expression that cannot be separated from the social context and ideology that surrounds them. Wellek and Warren (1956: 94) emphasized that literature is not merely a passive reflection of reality, but rather a representation that is actively formed and contributes to shaping the surrounding social conditions. Similarly, Luxemburg, Bal, and Weststeijn (1989: 23) stated that literature is a communication system that embodies the values ??and worldviews prevailing in a particular society. Within this framework, literary texts become a space where various ideologies, including gender ideology, are simultaneously reproduced and questioned.

Drama scripts, as a literary genre, have their own unique characteristics. Hasanuddin W.S. (1996: 2) states that a drama script is a composition containing a story or play based on human life, presented through dialogue between characters and supported by behavioral instructions. Furthermore, Waluyo (2001: 2) defines a drama script as a literary work written in dialogue form with the intention of being performed by actors on stage. It is through dialogue that the characters' characters, social values, and power relations are directly depicted to readers and viewers. Drama thus becomes a highly effective medium for revealing the struggle for human existence, particularly the existence of female characters, within an unequal social structure.

The drama script "Bunga Rumah Makan" by Utuy Tatang Sontani is one of the works of Indonesian literature that addresses the issue of female characters within a patriarchal social structure. This drama features Ani, a waitress, who is trapped within the pressures of power relations that restrict her space for movement and existential freedom. According to Nurgiyantoro (2013:247), a character in a literary work is an actor depicted in a narrative or drama who possesses certain moral qualities and tendencies as expressed in her speech and actions. Abrams (1981:20) adds that a character is a person who appears in a narrative or

drama and is interpreted by the reader as an individual with certain moral tendencies.

When the character depicted is female, her representation cannot be separated from prevailing social constructs. Wiyatmi (2012:20) argues that Indonesian literary texts often reproduce gender constructs that place women in subordinate positions. Therefore, a critical examination of such texts is essential to dismantle the ideology that subtly reinforces society's perspective on women. Similarly, Sugihastuti and Suharto (2010:18) state that a gender-based literary study plays a role in revealing how texts position, represent, and shape women's images within a patriarchal culture. Fakhri (2013:12) asserts that gender injustice experienced by women stems from unfair social systems and structures, not from biological nature. Therefore, the issues faced by female characters in literature essentially reflect the real problems faced by women in social life.

To examine this issue in depth, this research relies on Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist framework. Tong (2009: 237) explains that existential feminism is a school of feminist thought rooted in the philosophy of existentialism, focusing on how women's existence is constructed, limited, and can be transcended through free existential choices. Existence, in this philosophical perspective, is understood as human existence that precedes its essence: meaning that humans shape themselves through free choices and actions (Sartre, 1956: 15). Beauvoir (1949/2011: 330) argues that women are not born as women, but are shaped into women through social, cultural, and historical processes that systematically narrow their space for freedom. Arivia (2003: 81) states that Beauvoir's thoughts became the foundation for existential feminism because she succeeded in connecting the philosophy of existentialism with a concrete analysis of women's oppression in social life.

Beauvoir's three key concepts, namely The Other, Immanence, and Transcendence, are the main analytical tools in this study. The concept of The Other refers to the position of women who

are always positioned as objects or marginalized parties in relations with men as the main subject (Beauvoir, 2011:26). Tong (2009:241) explains that the condition of women as *The Other* is not merely a psychological condition, but an ontological condition formed through a long history of male domination over women. The concept of *Immanence* describes the condition of women who are trapped in stagnant social roles and do not provide space for self-development as free subjects (Tong, 2009:262). Humm (2007:40) states that *Immanence* in Beauvoir's thinking is closely related to the domestic roles imposed on women, thus preventing women from achieving their existential freedom. Conversely, *Transcendence* is the power to transcend limiting situations in order to realize true existential freedom (Beauvoir, 2011:17). Arivia (2003:102) adds that transcendence can only be achieved if women dare to make choices that transcend the boundaries set by patriarchal structures.

Based on the description above, this study formulates two main questions: (1) How is the existence of female characters in the drama script "*Bunga Rumah Makan*" viewed from the perspective of "*The Other*"? (2) How is the existence of female characters viewed from the perspective of "*Immanence*" and "*Transcendence*"?

The purpose of this study is to describe the existence of Ani in these three aspects based on Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism framework. This research is expected to contribute to the development of feminist literary criticism in the context of Indonesian drama studies.

METHOD

The method used in this research is analytical description (Razak, 2017:176). This method aims to describe and analyze in depth the phenomena contained in the literary text based on the data found, resulting in a systematic and comprehensive interpretation. The data source for this study comes from the drama script "*Bunga Rumah Makan*" by Utuy Tatang Sontani.

Data collection techniques were conducted through reading and note-taking, namely intensively and carefully reading the drama script, then recording data in the form of dialogue, monologues, behavioral instructions, and interactions between characters relevant to the theoretical concepts used in this study. Data analysis techniques were carried out through a series of stages, namely: (1) Reading the data presentation thoroughly to gain an initial understanding of the text; (2) Classifying the data based on three analytical categories: manifestations of *The Other*, conditions of *Immanence*, and the urge to *Transcendence*; (3) Describing the classified data in detail and systematically; (4) Analyzing the data with reference to Simone de Beauvoir's theoretical framework of existential feminism; (5) Interpreting the results of the analysis to uncover the meaning behind the text; and (6) Drawing tentative conclusions which were then verified until a final, accountable conclusion was reached.

RESULTS

Analysis of the existence of female characters in the drama script *Bunga Rumah Makan* by Utuy Tatang Sontani based on Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism framework. The analysis focuses on three main aspects: *The Other*, *Immanence*, and *Transcendence*, each of which is described through data in the form of dialogue excerpts from the play script.

The Existence of Female Characters from the Aspect of *The Other* in the Play Script "*Bunga Rumah Makan*" by Utuy Tatang Sontani

The Other, in Simone de Beauvoir's thinking, refers to women's position as "others" or objects, rather than subjects, in male-dominated power relations. This play script shows the existence of Ani as an exploited object of beauty, rather than a human being with self-worth.

Data 1

Iskandar: "A vagrant?! Hmm, yes, I am. But for me, I'd rather be a vagrant, you know? I'd rather be a vagrant than like you, staying here as a doll selling beauty!"

Ani: "You have the nerve to make accusations!"
Iskandar: "Do I have to be like the others, coming here to drink because I'm fooled by your powdered face?"

The data above shows that Iskandar positions Ani as The Other by calling her a "doll selling beauty." Ani is not seen as a subject with free will, but rather as an object whose existence is valued solely by her physical beauty. This labeling reflects a patriarchal perspective that reduces women to commodities. Even though Ani tries to defend herself, her position remains subordinated by Iskandar's dominant discourse.

Data 2

Karnaen: "Hey, you helped cook?"
Ani: "No, sir, just boiled the water. The scales didn't work, so you wouldn't get upset."
Karnaen: "But I also like watching you cook, Ani. Especially because it makes you more clearly visible as a woman worthy of being the queen of the household."
Ani: "Ah, Sir, when I hear the word 'household,' I tremble. I still like working like I do now" (wiping the radio).
Karnaen: "How long will you think like that, Ani?"

The data above shows that Karnaen positions Ani as The Other by defining the ideal female existence solely through the domestic role of "queen of the household." This statement reflects a social construct that limits women's freedom of movement. Ani herself rejects this label by stating that she trembles at the word "household," demonstrating her awareness of these limitations. However, Karnaen's response shows that Ani's rejection was not taken seriously.

Data 3

Police: "What did he say to Miss?"
Ani: "That I'm here selling beauty, that I'm here being a liar, a cheat.
He said it angrily, anyway."
Police: "Did Miss not react to him?"
Ani: "I kicked him out, but he was petrified."

The data above shows that in her conversation with the police, Ani's position as The Other was evident in the way the police interrogated her, as if she needed to prove herself. Ani's voice and

actions were not considered sufficient; she had to report and explain herself to men in power to gain recognition for the truth of her experience.

Data 4

Police: "A con artist? A con artist in what way?"
Iskandar: "Tricking men into coming here, so this restaurant would sell by selling her beauty."

The data above shows that Iskandar again positioned Ani as The Other by using her beauty as a moral accusation before the police. This demonstrates that women are blamed for men's responses to them—a classic form of gender-based victim-blaming.

Data 5

Iskandar: (standing up): "What? I love you? Huh, am I blind, I have to give my love to a doll?"
Ani: "Go away! I don't want to see your face. You're a homeless person, you don't understand your customs.
You open your mouth easily."
Iskandar: "You're the one who opens your mouth easily, playing with your lips. Do you think your painted lips are considered beautiful by everyone?"

The data above shows that Iskandar directly attacks Ani's physical appearance, emphasizing her position as The Other, judged worthy or unworthy based on male aesthetic standards. Referring to Ani as a "doll" symbolically erases her humanity and agency.

The Existence of Female Characters Reviewed from the Aspect of Immanence in the Drama Script Bunga Rumah Makan by Utuy Tatang Sontani

Immanence refers to a condition in which women are confined to roles, routines, and dependencies that prevent them from developing as free subjects.

Data 1

Usman: "If you have a husband, no other man will bother you."
Sudarma: "But if she's married, that means she'll leave her job here. I won't allow that."
Usman: "What's stopping her from continuing to work here after she gets married? That would actually sanctify this restaurant, because then no



man would come here just to flirt with Ani. Isn't that right, An?"

The data above shows that Usman and Sudarma debated Ani's future without involving her as a decision-maker in her own life. Marriage was discussed as a solution to social problems, not as a personal choice for Ani. This reflects Immanence, where women are placed within structures that restrict their freedom.

Data 2 & 3

Ani: "You're half-baked, aren't you? Who do you think is in charge here, you or me?"

Iskandar: "Hh, just because you are a servant, you want to claim authority. You are not powerful here, but you are here shackled, enslaved. Tch! It's only in his imagination that humans feel like they're flashy, they don't know that they're actually being used as puppets, told to be liars and cheaters."

The data above shows that Ani feels she has power in her position as a servant, but Iskandar reveals that this power is fake. This condition reflects Immanence in the form of an illusion of freedom that masks true confinement.

Data 4

Ani: "That's it! That's it! I know that people only like my smile, they don't like it to my tears" (cries, goes to the back).

The data above shows that Ani's statement reflects her emotional immanence, she is trapped in an obligation to always appear pleasant for the sake of other people. Her feelings and sadness have no room to be acknowledged sincerely.

Data 5

Ani: (sighs, steps to close the exit door while pounding her right fist against her left hand; stands at the door, looks out, then sighs, walks back to the desk, sits on the chair, and a moment later stands up again, continuing to ponder. She quickly glances at the phone, reaches out for it, but quickly withdraws it, continuing to ponder, biting her lip. She waits a long time before reaching out for the phone again and this time picking it up): "Can I have you connected to three three five nine?" (waiting). "Battalion Lima's dormitory is here? I'd like to speak to Captain Suherman. Has he left? Oh, no, it's not important. Just say it's from Ani,

from the 'Sambara' restaurant. Yes. Thank you." (Hangs up the phone).

The data above shows that the description of Ani's repeated back and forth body movements strongly depicts Immanence. Ani is trapped in indecision and powerlessness to take the initiative. Even when she finally got through, the message she conveyed was indirect and condescending, saying "it's not important," a clear manifestation of internalized inferiority.

The Existence of Female Characters as Perspective of Transcendence in the Drama Script "Bunga Rumah Makan" by Utuy Tatang Sontani
Transcendence refers to women's efforts to transcend restrictive boundaries to become free and autonomous subjects.

Data 1

Ani: "No, I don't want to be tied down anymore. I want to live freely."

Sudarma: "Ah, freedom, what kind of freedom? It will be difficult for you to find work again, to find pleasure like here."

Ani: "I'm not happy here, that's why I want to leave. I must stay away from all the falsehood in this restaurant, and I will go with honest people."

The data above shows that this statement represents Ani's most explicit form of Transcendence. She consciously rejects all forms of bondage and uses the word "freedom" as an existential statement. Ani is unfazed by Sudarma's threats, indicating that she has transcended material dependence.

Data 2

Ani (to Sudarma): "I ask that my unpaid salary be given to the poor." (to Karnaen): "Sir, I pray that you will soon find a wife who is capable of managing the household." (to Rukayah): "Ruk, I'm leaving!"

Rukayah: "I guess I was right, An."

Ani: "No, Ruk, I'm no longer the me you just teased.

I'll stop acting and go with my enemy-but-friend. I'll accompany him as a woman who struggles side by side."

The data above shows that Ani's act of giving up her salary for the poor symbolizes her release

from material domination. The phrase "women who struggle side by side" is the pinnacle of Ani's Transcendence; she doesn't place herself below Iskandar, but rather on an equal footing.

Data 3

Sudarma: "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! Don't be so hasty, An. Who told you to get out of here? I love you and promised to raise your salary, as long as you don't leave."

The data above shows that Sudarma's offer of a raise is a form of material temptation that is usually effective in keeping women in Immanence. However, Ani did not waver, proving that her Transcendence was not merely an impulsive response but a consciously mature decision.

Data 4

Sudarma: "He's honest, you say? He's a bum, An! Don't let your eyes open and not see."

Ani: "My eyes opened and saw that he was actually an honest man accompanying me. It's true he's not working now, but" (to Iskandar) "if you no longer feel alone in the world, you will work, right?"

The data above shows that Ani rejects Sudarma's definition of who is worthy of trust. The statement "My eyes are open and see" is a form of Ani's cognitive transcendence, claiming her epistemological right to assess reality based on her own observations.

Data 5

Rukayah: "I guess I was right, An."

Ani: "No, Ruk, the me now is no longer the me you mocked. I will stop acting and go with my enemy-but-friend. I will accompany him as a woman who struggles side by side."

The data above shows that the statement "the me now is no longer the me before" is the most powerful declaration of existential transformation in this play. Ani consciously separates her old self, trapped in Immanence, from her new self as an independent subject.

DISCUSSION

The Existence of Female Characters Reviewed from the Aspect of The Other

Based on the analysis presented, Ani is consistently positioned as The Other by the male

characters around her. According to Beauvoir (2011:330), women are not born women, but are shaped into them through social constructions that systematically restrict their freedom. According to Tong (2009:241), the Other condition experienced by women is not merely an individual psychological condition, but an ontological condition constructed and maintained through a long history of male domination over women.

Iskandar's labeling of Ani as a "doll selling beauty" indicates that Ani's existence is valued solely for her physical beauty, not as a subject with free will. This patriarchal perspective reduces women to commodities that can be unilaterally assessed and labeled. A similar situation is evident when Karnaen defines the ideal existence of women solely through their domestic role as "queen of the household," while Ani's rejection of this label is not taken seriously. According to Wiyatmi (2012:20), Indonesian literary texts often reproduce gender constructions that place women in a subordinate position, where women's voices and experiences are only considered legitimate when validated by the authority of a dominant male. According to Sugihastuti and Suharto (2010:18), literary studies from a gender perspective play a role in revealing how texts subtly represent and shape the image of women in a patriarchal culture.

The Other's position becomes even more apparent when Ani must prove the veracity of her experiences before the police, while Iskandar turns her beauty into a moral indictment. Women are blamed for men's responses to them, a classic form of gender-based victim-blaming. According to Fakihi (2013:12), the gender injustice experienced by women stems from unjust social systems and structures, not from biological nature. According to Arivia (2003:81), Beauvoir's thinking became the foundation of existential feminism because it successfully connected existentialist philosophy with a concrete analysis of women's oppression.

An analysis of the aspect of immanence reveals various dimensions of Ani's confinement within a patriarchal social structure. According to



Tong (2009:262), immanence, in Beauvoir's thinking, depicts the condition of women trapped in stagnant social roles that do not provide space for self-development as free subjects. According to Humm (2007:40), immanence is closely related to the burden of domestic roles imposed on women, which structurally hinders women from achieving existential freedom.

Ani's confinement first appears when Usman and Sudarma debate her future without involving her as a decision-maker over her own life. Marriage is discussed solely as a solution to social problems, not as Ani's personal choice. This layered confinement emerges when Iskandar reveals that the power Ani has experienced in her position as a servant is actually illusory. According to Beauvoir (2011:17), immanence is a condition in which women lose their ability to transcend their limiting circumstances. According to Arivia (2003:102), the illusion of freedom experienced by women in a patriarchal system is actually the most effective tool for maintaining dominance.

The emotional dimension of Immanence is illustrated when Ani states, "I know that people only like my smile, not my tears." This statement reflects the deep internalization of social pressure that forces her to hide her true feelings in order to always appear pleasing to others. The deepest psychological dimension of Immanence is evident in Ani's repetitive body movements, such as back and forth, extending and withdrawing her hand, and biting her lip when making a phone call. Based on these findings, Ani lives within the shackles of Immanence, which encompass all dimensions of her life, from the social, emotional, and psychological dimensions.

The Existence of Female Characters Reviewed from the Aspect of Transcendence

In contrast to the conditions of The Other and Immanence, Ani's journey towards Transcendence demonstrates a gradual yet tangible existential transformation. According to Beauvoir (2011:17), Transcendence is the existential power to transcend limiting situations in order to realize true freedom,

which is only possible through active choice and full awareness of the conditions that have previously constrained us. According to Arivia (2003:102), Transcendence, in Beauvoir's thinking, can only be achieved if women dare to make choices that consciously transcend the limits imposed by patriarchal structures.

The most explicit form of Transcendence is seen when Ani declares, "I want to live freely," and rejects all forms of bondage that have bound her. She is undeterred by Sudarma's threats about the difficulty of finding work, demonstrating that she has transcended material dependence. Ani's conviction is further strengthened when she donates her unpaid wages to the poor. The phrase "women who struggle side by side" she utters to Rukayah reflects a fully formed feminist consciousness. According to Sartre (1956:15), existence precedes essence, meaning that humans shape themselves through free choice and action.

The cognitive dimension of Ani's Transcendence is evident when she rejects Sudarma's assessment of Iskandar by stating, "My eyes are open and see." This statement represents Ani's epistemological right to judge reality based on her own observations. The most powerful declaration of existential transformation in this play is uttered when Ani says, "The me now is no longer the me of before." Through this statement, Ani consciously separates her old self, trapped in Immanence, from her new self as a free and sovereign subject.

Based on the overall discussion above, the existence of female characters in Utuy Tatang Sontani's drama *Bunga Rumah Makan* reflects three main dimensions of Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism. Ani is constructed as The Other through patriarchal power relations that position her as an object, not a subject. She experiences a state of Immanence characterized by confinement within social structures, the illusion of freedom, the pressure to consistently appear pleasing, and psychological paralysis in decision-making. However, Ani gradually demonstrates a growing drive toward Transcendence, culminating

in her declaration of a desire to live independently and position herself as a "woman who struggles side by side."

CONCLUSION

This study examines the existence of Ani in the play *Bunga Rumah Makan* by Utuy Tatang Sontani through the framework of Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism, with three main aspects: The Other, Immanence, and Transcendence. Ani is constructed as The Other through various forms of patriarchal domination. She is reduced to an object of beauty, labeled a "doll," and her experiences are only considered valid when validated by male authority. Her humanity and agency are consistently denied by the male characters around her. Ani experiences a state of Immanence that manifests itself in various social, emotional, and psychological dimensions. Her fate is decided by others, her expression of feelings is silenced, and the freedom she feels is merely an illusion created by a system that restricts her. Despite these limitations, Ani gradually demonstrates a drive toward Transcendence. The climax is seen in her decision to leave, give up her salary, and declare herself as a "woman who struggles side by side." This action demonstrates Ani's existential transformation from an object to a subject with sovereignty over herself. Overall, the drama *Bunga Rumah Makan* reflects the tension between women's existential freedom and the pressures of patriarchal social structures. Through the character of Ani, Utuy Tatang Sontani presents a depiction of women's struggle to gain awareness, freedom, and self-existence as a complete subject.

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