



From *The Other* to *Transcendence*: Representation and the Existential Struggle of Female Characters in Novel *The Women* by Kristin Hannah

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the existential journey of the female characters in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*, utilizing Simone de Beauvoir's theory of existentialist feminism. The research focuses on the representation of women as "the Other," the forms of immanence that restrict the female characters' freedom, and the forms of transcendence that demonstrate their struggle to achieve their own existence. A descriptive-qualitative method is employed, grounded in a feminist literary criticism approach. The data consist of narrative passages and dialogue from the novel that illustrate the female characters' journeys in confronting the patriarchal system. Data collection was conducted through literature review and the "read-and-record" technique, while data analysis was performed interpretatively based on Simone de Beauvoir's concepts of the Other, immanence, transcendence, freedom, and responsibility. The findings reveal that the female characters are initially represented as "the Other" through various forms of subordination and marginalization that confine them to a state of immanence. However, by demonstrating the courage to make decisions, showcasing competence, and asserting their autonomy, the female characters are able to move toward transcendence and establish their existence as free and responsible subjects. The study demonstrates that the novel *The Women* portrays the struggle of women to gain recognition for their identities and existence within a patriarchal structure.

Keywords: transcendence, existential struggle, female characters, novel

INTRODUCTION

The image of women frequently appears in literary works—particularly modern ones—reflecting their positions, roles, and struggles within patriarchal social structures. Historically, women have often been relegated to subordinate positions and deemed to lack a central role in society, whereas men have been cast as strong figures—victors responsible for the public sphere. In contrast, women's roles have largely been confined to the domestic sphere. As Khurosan (2020:3) explains, this dominance is perpetuated through the family, the community, religion, and the state. This perspective aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's arguments in *The Second Sex* (1949), which posit

that women are often constructed as *the Other*—defined not by their own intrinsic nature, but in relation to men, who serve as the primary subjects. To combat the gender-based injustices women have long endured, resistance movements began to emerge in the 19th century. These movements were grounded in the conviction that women do not wish to be discriminated against, oppressed, or exploited. To this day, feminist movements continue to evolve across the globe, including in Indonesia (Briantiningasih & Sumartini, 2025).

Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* chronicles the struggles of women operating in a male-dominated public sphere: the world of the mili-

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tary and warfare. Hannah presents female characters who must confront a social structure that not only constrains them but also questions their capacity as individuals equal to men. This complexity is reflected in the experiences of the female characters, who battle not only the harsh realities of the Vietnam War but also the gender stereotypes, discrimination, and social rejection that accompany their presence as women within the military (Hannah, 2024). These issues demonstrate that the novel *The Women* not only addresses the theme of war but also presents the dynamics of women's struggles to attain freedom and recognition as complete subjects.

This study employs Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist approach to examine how female characters undergo a transition from the position of "the Other"—meaning they are marginalized and deprived of the agency to determine their own destinies—toward "transcendence." Transcendence refers to the effort to break free from limitations through choices, actions, and responsibility for one's own life (Beauvoir, 2016, cited in Maryam & Inayatillah, 2026). Viewed through this lens, the female characters' experiences are understood as an existential process, illustrating their efforts to move beyond various forms of restriction toward freedom.

Research by Sari and Jumita (2025)—which analyzed the portrayal of women in the novel *Layangan Putus* by Mommy Asf through a feminist framework—found that the female protagonist is depicted as a figure who, despite facing various trials, remains strong, independent, and optimistic in navigating her life. This woman, characterized by her stability, successfully balances her roles as a homemaker and a family breadwinner. Meanwhile, a study by Briantiningasih and Sumartini (2025)—examining female existence in the novel *Ragam Ni Si Marian* by Kartini Sjahrir using Beauvoir's existentialist feminism—highlights a female character who experiences the breakdown of her marriage and subsequently fights to assert her own existence.

Furthermore, research conducted by Pratiwi & Wiwik (2016)—which examined female existence in the novel *Tanah Tabu* by Anindita S. Thayf through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism—affirmed that women's struggles to define their own existence are often depicted through resistance against patriarchal values. While these studies share a focus on the marginalization and perseverance of women, they differ in their specific subjects and applied theories; moreover, there remains a scarcity of research specifically highlighting women as agents who construct their own existence—and that of other women—within male-dominated environments. This study aims to address that gap.

Based on this background, the study addresses several research questions: how are women represented as "the Other"? What forms of "immanence" constrain women? And what is the process by which women move toward "transcendence"? This research is necessary because the representation of women in the novel **The Women** does not merely depict women as marginalized figures but also illustrates their struggle to establish their existence within a patriarchal system. Previous studies have generally focused on the image of women, forms of gender injustice, or female existence in a broad sense. In contrast, this study offers a more comprehensive analysis by delineating the female protagonist's existential journey through the concepts of "the Other," "immanence," and "transcendence," viewed through the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism. Consequently, this study is expected to yield both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, it will enrich the study of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism within the context of the novel and fill a research gap regarding female war veterans navigating patriarchal environments and families. Practically, it may raise reader awareness regarding the capacity of women to thrive in male-dominated environments and serve as a foundation for future research on female representation in other novels.



METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, utilizing a feminist literary criticism approach based on Simone de Beauvoir's theory of existentialist feminism. According to Darmadi (in Wahyuningsih et al., 2024), Razak (2017), qualitative research is defined as research that utilizes data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, sketches, or images. This method is employed to examine the research subject in its natural setting, with the researcher serving as the key instrument for data collection and analysis (Sugiyono, 2019). The data source for this study is the novel *The Women* by Kristin Hannah, translated by Airien Kusumawardhani and first published by PT Elex Media Komputindo (Gramedia Group, Jakarta) in 2024, spanning 497 pages. The data consists of narratives and dialogue from the novel *The Women* that illustrate the representation of female characters in asserting their existence. The data collection technique employed is documentary study, utilizing the novel *The Women* by Kristin Hannah as the primary data source and other similar studies as secondary data.

The data analysis employed a descriptive-analytical technique. Descriptive research involves continuous engagement with the research object (Kristiyanti, 2023). The descriptive-analytical process comprises five stages. First is reading: reading the novel *The Women* repeatedly and in depth, focusing specifically on dialogue and narrative elements related to women. Second is marking: using highlighters and marginal notes to identify significant sentences or paragraphs during the reading process. Data marking involves coding narratives, dialogue, and character actions that embody the concepts of "the Other," immanence, and transcendence, in accordance with Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism. Third is recording: transferring the marked excerpts into a data corpus categorized by "the Other," immanence, and transcendence, thereby facilitating analysis aligned with the research focus. Fourth is describing: de-

tailoring the data found in the text of *The Women* by outlining the context of the excerpts to be analyzed. Finally, the data is analyzed using Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist theory—specifically the concepts of "the Other," immanence, and forms of transcendence—followed by a comprehensive conclusion that answers the research questions based on the findings.

RESULTS

The research findings indicate that the existential journey of the female characters in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* is represented through three aspects: the representation of women as "the Other," forms of immanence, and the process toward transcendence. These three aspects illustrate the female characters' journey from a marginalized position to the attainment of existential freedom as subjects who determine their own life choices.

1. Representation of Women as "the Other"

The research results show that the representation of women as "the Other" in *The Women* depicts female characters being steered toward the domestic sphere through influences ranging from their education to the attitudes of their families and social environments. Female characters are encouraged to develop domestic skills, while opportunities to participate in the public sphere are restricted by the perception that women are weak figures lacking capabilities equal to those of men. This condition deprives women of the freedom to make their own life choices. The findings indicate that female characters are positioned as lacking autonomy over themselves. From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, this condition is referred to as "the Other"—a state in which a woman is viewed as "the other" and defined by her relationship to the male, who serves as the primary subject. Beauvoir states, "Man is the Subject, he is the Absolute; she is the Other" (Beauvoir, 2011: 6).

This means that women are not regarded as autonomous individuals but are instead defined by their relationship to men. Consequently, women lose their freedom and their existence as subjects. This representation is evident from the female characters' formative years, as shown in the following excerpt:

"At her Catholic high school, they spent their days learning how to perfectly iron around buttonholes, fold napkins neatly, and set a dining table elegantly. Even at the San Diego College for Women, there was hardly any rebellion among her classmates and friends." (Hannah: 2024:7)

Throughout her education, Frankie was steered toward developing skills associated with the domestic sphere, such as ironing, folding clothes, and setting the table. These activities emphasized skills related to neatness, refinement, and domestic aesthetics. Indirectly, this educational process shaped the image of the female body as one that is gentle, orderly, and domestic, rather than physically strong or resilient. The female body was constructed to perform domestic functions deemed consistent with values of femininity, thereby symbolically distancing women from public spaces that demanded physical strength and courage.

These findings indicate that the representation of women as "the Other" in the novel *The Women* is established through a process of socialization that begins during their education. Women are constructed as individuals defined by domestic functions, leading to the perception of the public sphere as a male domain. Consequently, the marginalization of women occurs even before the protagonist enters the broader social world.

Form of female representation as "the Other": Women Directed Toward the Domestic Sphere. Analysis: The representation of women as "the Other" in the novel *The Women* is constructed through a socialization process

that begins during their formative years. Women are constructed as individuals with domestic functions, leading to the view that the public sphere is a male domain.

2. Forms of Immanence Restricting Women

Research findings indicate that the form of immanence in the novel *The Women* manifests through family-imposed restrictions on the female protagonist's life choices. The female protagonist is confined to roles predetermined by her family and restricted regarding her role in the public sphere. These constraints limit her freedom to determine her education, career, and public role. This represents a state of immanence for women. From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, this condition constitutes immanence—a state where women are confined to domestic roles and lack the freedom to develop their potential as autonomous subjects. Women ought to have the opportunity to be independent, just like men, across various spheres of life, as a woman's role is not truly limited to domestic affairs (Indriyani in Wati et al., 2023). Frankie's family views women as beings too weak to navigate the social environment. This is evident in the following quote:

"Frankie's mother had just listened to her talk about her struggles in Biology class and said gently, 'Who cares about frogs, Frances? You're only going to be a nurse until you get married. And by the way, it's time you started thinking about that. Stop trying to finish school so fast and don't rush. Who cares if you graduate early? You need to date more.'" (Hannah: 2024: 7)

Frankie's mother steers her away from focusing too heavily on education and academic achievement. Attention to studies is deemed unimportant because women are viewed as destined only to fulfill a specific role: working temporarily before eventually getting married. Restrictions placed on women are evident in the way the family steers their future toward marriage. Rather than being encouraged to freely develop their own potential, women are confined to roles predetermined by the family environment.



A form of immanence is also apparent in the limitations women face regarding recognition for their service in the public sphere. Frankie's family views service to the state as a male responsibility, leaving no place for women in that realm. This perspective relegates women to restricted roles, denying them the same opportunities afforded to men, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

"Frankie frowned; why hadn't anyone congratulated her?"

"The McGrath and Alexander families have always served the country," she continued. "You were so happy when Finley volunteered." "Men who serve the country," Dad corrected sharply. "Men." (Hannah: 2024: 19).

Frankie's parents emphasize the distinction between men and women, asserting that it is men—not women—who are meant to serve the nation. As a female figure, Frankie does not receive the same appreciation, despite her own involvement in national service. In contrast, Finley, being male, garners pride and full recognition from the family. This emphasis on "men" reflects a patriarchal construct that restricts women's participation in the public sphere. Consequently, women are not viewed as subjects possessing capabilities and rights equal to those of men when it comes to serving the country. Such restrictions exemplify a state of "immanence"—a condition in which women lack the freedom to make their own life choices. In this state, women are steered toward accepting roles prescribed by family and society, thereby limiting their potential for individual growth.

Forms of Immanence That Restrict Women. First, roles determined by the family. Analysis: Restrictions on women are evident in the role of the family in steering women's futures toward marriage. Second, restrictions on roles in the public sphere. Analysis: Women do not receive the same level of appreciation, even though they too are dedicated to serving the nation; conversely, men garner pride and full recognition from their

families. The emphasis on the word "man" reflects a patriarchal construct that restricts women from participating in the public sphere.

3. The Process of Women Moving Toward Transcendence

Research findings indicate that the process of women moving toward transcendence in the novel *The Women* is characterized by the female protagonist's courage to make independent decisions, face various consequences, and uphold responsibility for her life choices. Women possess the ability to break free from the limitations that have previously shaped them. This aligns with Beauvoir's concept of transcendence, which posits that freedom is not something instantly possessed but is achieved through struggle and concrete action. It is this journey that establishes the female protagonist's existence in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*. Frankie's decision to enlist as a military nurse marks the initial step toward transcendence. She made this decision despite it conflicting with her family's expectations, as they viewed service to the country as a male domain. This is evident in the following excerpt:

"By March, Frankie was fully prepared to put her new skills to the test. And now, finally, she was off to Vietnam. Hours after landing in Honolulu, Frankie boarded a jet bound for Vietnam—the only woman at the front of a line of 257 uniformed soldiers." (Hannah: 2024: 25)

Frankie did not merely harbor a desire; she took concrete action to realize her choice. She prepared herself and ultimately departed for Vietnam to test her capabilities. Her presence as the only woman among hundreds of male soldiers demonstrates her successful entry into a male-dominated sphere. This process of growth continued as Frankie adapted to the harsh realities of life on the battlefield. High-pressure experiences did not cause her to give up; instead, they forged her resilience in fulfilling her responsibilities as a nurse.

Serving as a veteran—both on the battlefield and in a foreign land—is certainly no easy feat. Frankie had never ventured into the public sphere; she had always been comfortable in her domestic environment and had never undertaken arduous tasks. Yet, serving as a nurse on the battlefield was a completely different reality—one Frankie had never even imagined. She encountered numerous unexpected challenges for which she had not prepared. As shown in the following excerpt:

“Frankie no longer felt afraid whenever she entered the operating room. She still hesitated at times, but—like the ‘Turtle’ nickname they had given her on that first night—she had built a hard shell to protect her heart so she could help the men, women, and children who ended up in that room.” (Hannah:2024:92).

Initially, Frankie is portrayed as fearful and hesitant, yet over time, she manages to overcome these fears. The metaphor of “building a hard shell” illustrates her attempt to protect herself emotionally so she can continue to perform her duties. The female protagonist's process of adapting to a difficult situation demonstrates not only an awareness of the possibility of breaking free from limitations but also the active pursuit of that change through her actions and shifts in attitude—an expression of taking responsibility for her choices. After completing her service as a Vietnam War veteran, Frankie returns home hoping to be welcomed as a hero and to find a sense of belonging. However, the reality is far different; her community loathes the war and views women not as heroes, but as killers. This is evident in the following passage:

They saw Frankie walking toward them in her Army skirt uniform and brandished their signs at her, as if to drive the point home. Someone spat at her. “Nazi bitch,” shouted one of the protesters. Frankie didn't understand. Why would someone spit on her? “Just go back to Vietnam!” someone yelled. “We don't want baby killers like you here.” Baby killers? (Hannah: 2024: 223)

These remarks from the public reveal the negative treatment Frankie faces upon her return from Vietnam. She endures insults, rejection, and hostility, signaling her exclusion from the social sphere. Although women strive to assume significant roles in society, men continue to dominate various aspects of life. Nevertheless, women persist in asserting their presence as an act of resistance (Putri & Qomariyah, 2024). This treatment highlights the disparity between Frankie's actual experiences and society's perception of her; despite her role as a nurse, the public unfairly brands her with a negative label that contradicts reality.

Yet, Frankie does not give up. She continued her existential struggle by pursuing further education. To achieve such freedom, women must be able to work, contribute, and provide practical support to society for the sake of future development (Trestanti & Fuadhiyah, 2025). This was by no means easy, however, as Frankie continued to experience a sense of alienation from her family and community—a result of her experiences as a wartime nurse in Vietnam. Her environment and family could not accept the idea of a woman on the battlefield, as they fundamentally viewed such roles as the exclusive domain of men. Frankie persisted in her education, eventually earning a master's degree, in order to build a community of her own and champion the cause of female veterans—as illustrated in the following quote:

Upon earning her master's degree, Frankie and Donna posted flyers at the nearest Veterans Affairs office that read: To Vietnam women veterans: join us. We survived life over there. We can survive life here. Join us. (Hannah: 2024: 458)

Frankie seeks to help others who share similar experiences. The act of distributing flyers demonstrates an initiative to build community and provide support for fellow women veterans. Furthermore, the statements “we survived life over there” and “we can survive life here” reveal a



conviction that past experiences need not be a barrier to living in the present. This indicates that Frankie has come to accept and understand her experiences as an integral part of her life's journey. Ultimately, Frankie succeeds in rebuilding her life—and indeed, establishing a sense of worth for all the women veterans who fought in the Vietnam War. Her experiences have come to be accepted by those around her, particularly her family, as evidenced by the following excerpt:

“You think I feel guilty for pushing my son to go to war? That’s true. That’s something I have to live with.” Dad swallowed hard. “But my guilt is greater because of how I treated my daughter when she came home.”

Frankie drew a sharp breath. How long had she waited to hear those words from her father?

“You’re a hero, aren’t you, Frankie?”

Tears blurred Frankie’s vision. “I don’t know about being a hero, Dad, but, yes, I served my country.” (Hannah: 2024: 471)

Her father’s admission of wrongdoing regarding how he treated Frankie upon her return from Vietnam demonstrates that the experiences and contributions of women are finally being acknowledged. Moreover, the question identifying Frankie as a “hero” signifies recognition of a role that was previously disregarded. This indicates that the position of women—once viewed differently—is now being accepted as equal within the context of service to the nation. The entire journey experienced by the female protagonist in the novel *The Women* demonstrates that women possess the capacity to break free from the limitations and roles associated with “the Other.” She navigates a challenging path and fully upholds her responsibilities, ultimately achieving transcendence—attaining existential freedom and gaining recognition from her community and family for her experiences as a Vietnam veteran. Frankie successfully proves that women need not remain objects shaped by the patriarchal system;

instead, they can become subjects capable of defining the meaning of their own lives.

The form of women's process toward transcendence consists of three types. They are presented below.

First, making decisions independently. The decision to go to Vietnam demonstrates the courage to make an independent choice, and her presence as the only woman among hundreds of male soldiers shows that she successfully entered a male-dominated sphere.

Second, facing various consequences. The female protagonist attempts to emotionally shield herself in order to continue performing her duties; furthermore, the process of adjustment she undergoes in the face of adversity demonstrates that she is actively navigating this transition through her actions and shifts in attitude—an expression of responsibility for the choices she has made.

Upon returning from Vietnam, the female protagonist faces unpleasant treatment, signaling her lack of acceptance within the social environment. This treatment highlights the disparity between Frankie’s actual experiences and society’s perception of her; despite her role as a nurse, she is unfairly stigmatized by a negative label that does not reflect reality.

Third, taking responsibility for their life choices. The female character continues her existential struggle by continuing her education to build community and provide support for others female veterans.

The female character succeeded in re-establishing her existence, even the existence of all the female veterans who had fought on the battlefield in Vietnam. Her experience has been accepted by the environment, especially her family, which shows that women have the ability to get out of the boundaries and roles of the other, undergoing a journey that is not easy to reach transcendence, namely being able to achieve existential freedom and receive recognition from family.

DISCUSSION

The Representation of Women as "The Other"

This study identifies the construction of women as "the Other"—a status imposed upon female characters by their families and social environments—in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*. This position is represented by confining women to the domestic sphere from their formative years; consequently, they are viewed merely as complements to men rather than as individuals with the freedom to determine their own life paths. This situation reflects a perspective held by their families and communities that women are weak figures while men are heroes, with women seen only as adjuncts to men. From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, this positioning marks women as "the Other"—entities whose existence is defined in relation to men, who serve as the primary subjects. In patriarchal societies, women are often judged not by their competence, but by their physical attractiveness and domestic roles. They are viewed merely as labor supporting the existing system, rather than as individuals with the potential for innovation (Adella et al., 2025).

The study's findings indicate that the construction of women as "the Other" is shaped through socialization processes occurring within educational and family environments. Patriarchal values are instilled through gender-based role divisions, steering women to accept domestic duties as their inherent nature, while men are prepared for engagement in the public sphere. Consequently, women lose the opportunity to independently define their identities and futures, as their life choices are constrained by prevailing social norms.

These findings align with the research of Pratiwi & Wiwik (2016), which analyzed female existence in Anindita S. Thayf's novel *Tanah Tabu* through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism. That study demonstrated that female characters endured various forms of oppression that relegated them to a subordinate position before they ultimately fought to assert

their existence. The present study reveals a similar trajectory: female characters experience the position of "the Other" and various forms of immanence before eventually achieving transcendence. The difference lies in the fact that the aforementioned study emphasizes forms of physical violence experienced by female characters as a form of oppression, whereas this study focuses on the female character's existential journey—navigating social constraints until she gains recognition for her existence.

Forms of Immanence Restricting Women

This study identifies forms of immanence imposed upon the female character by her environment and family in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women*. This condition is represented by the expectation for women to become wives and mothers, while academic achievement and involvement in the public sphere are not considered priorities. Frankie's family also views service to the country as a male duty; consequently, her decision to become a military nurse meets with opposition.

From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, this condition exemplifies immanence—a state in which women are confined to roles prescribed by society, thereby limiting their freedom to make life choices. Women are steered toward accepting domestic roles as inherent to their nature, while opportunities to develop their potential in the public sphere are curtailed by patriarchal norms. Consequently, women lack the same freedom as men to determine their futures and actualize themselves as subjects.

The findings of this study align with research by Jumita (2025), which analyzed the portrayal of women in the novel *Layangan Putus* by Mommy ASF. That study demonstrated that the female protagonist was capable of fulfilling her role as a housewife with responsibility, steadfastness, and independence, despite facing various domestic challenges. Both studies share a common portrayal of women who are not merely positioned as objects within a patriarchal system but also possess the



capacity to demonstrate strength and independence. However, the present study offers a distinct perspective; it goes beyond describing the female image in terms of domestic, physical, or psychological roles to delineate the female protagonist's existential journey—moving from the position of "the Other" and experiencing various forms of immanence toward achieving transcendence as a subject capable of making life choices and forging her own existence. Thus, this study provides a deeper understanding of the struggle for existential freedom undertaken by women, viewed through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism.

The Process of Women's Journey Toward Transcendence

This study identifies two forms of resistance undertaken by the female protagonist in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* that illustrate a state of transcendence: enlisting as a military nurse in Vietnam and pursuing further education to obtain a master's degree. Frankie chose to enlist as a military nurse in Vietnam, even though this decision conflicted with her family's expectations. This decision marked the beginning of her journey toward transcendence—a state in which a woman begins to define her life through consciously made choices and actions. Frankie's departure for Vietnam—as the only woman among hundreds of male soldiers—demonstrates her courage in entering a public sphere long dominated by men. This journey further illustrates that freedom is not attained automatically; rather, it is achieved through the courage to face risks and take responsibility for the choices one has made. From the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism, a woman becomes free not merely because she "desires freedom," but because she asserts herself through concrete action. Resistance can also be understood as an effort to put an end to negative actions that disadvantage a specific gender, particularly women (Putri et al., 2023).

Frankie's struggle did not end upon entering the military. During her service in Vietnam, she faced psychological pressure, the realities of war, and various traumatic experiences. Yet, these experiences forged her resilience and her ability to fulfill her responsibilities as a nurse. Upon returning home, she encountered rejection from a society that did not recognize women as war veterans. Nevertheless, she pursued further education, earning a master's degree, and established a community for female Vietnam veterans—an act of solidarity with women who shared similar experiences. This initiative demonstrates that Frankie's struggle had evolved beyond self-interest to encompass the fight for recognition for other women.

Frankie's efforts to establish the presence and standing of other women position her as an agent of change for female veterans like herself. These findings align with the study by Purnami & Pramono (2021) titled *Women's Existence in the Novel 'Kitab Omong Kosong'* by Seno Gumira Ajidarma: A Study Based on Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism. That study showed how female characters could assert their existence through actions that defied various forms of patriarchal restriction. However, while that study depicted a struggle for existence through the pursuit of literacy as a path to freedom, the present study illustrates a process of transcendence achieved through the courage to enter a male-dominated public sphere and the willingness to face the risks inherent in serving as a military nurse on the battlefield.

These findings also complement the research by Briantiningsih & Sumartini (2025) titled *Women's Existence in the Novel 'Ragam Ni Si Marian'* by Kartini Sjahrir: A Study Based on Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism. That study posited that women establish their existence through employment and social engagement. In contrast, the current study demonstrates that a woman's existential struggle is realized not only through professional

independence but also through the courage to serve one's country, the development of personal capacity through education, and the fostering of solidarity by advocating for the recognition of other female veterans. Thus, this study offers a more comprehensive perspective on the process by which women achieve transcendence through both individual and collective struggles.

This struggle earns Frankie recognition from both her family and society for her contributions as a war veteran. Her father's acknowledgment of her service symbolizes the acceptance of women as individuals possessing capabilities and worth equal to those of men. Consequently, Frankie's journey illustrates a complete existential process: moving from the position of "the Other" toward transcendence through the courage to make decisions, face consequences, and uphold responsibility for her choices. The novel *The Women* demonstrates that a woman's existence is not attained through freely given recognition, but rather through the struggle to break free from the various constraints imposed by the patriarchal system.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion, this study draws three conclusions that align with the formulated research questions. First, the representation of women as "the Other" in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* reflects a view of women as weak beings lacking agency. The specific form of representation identified involves domestic training—specifically learning tasks such as folding, ironing, and sewing on buttons.

Second, the form of immanence limiting the female protagonist in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* reflects a state of social restriction. Women are unable to make their own decisions regarding the direction of their lives. Examples of this immanence include family directives to avoid focusing too heavily on academics—since marriage was considered the ultimate goal—and the opposition to the idea that a woman could become a hero.

Third, the process of moving toward transcendence for the female protagonist in Kristin Hannah's novel *The Women* reflects a woman who is brave and determined, constantly striving to assert her life and experiences to gain recognition and rebuild her existence. The process of transcendence is demonstrated by her efforts to become a hero: enlisting in the Army and serving as a nurse on the battlefield. Furthermore, she pursues higher education to establish an organization for other female veterans and rebuild her identity, ultimately succeeding in gaining recognition from her community and family for her wartime experiences.

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