The Girl in *The Girl from the Coast*

as the Second Sex in Patriarchal Society

Seen from Feminist Perspective

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Sastra

Manda Ajie Safitri
392012006

FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS
UNIVERSITAS KRISTEN SATYA WACANA
2017
The Girl in *The Girl from the Coast*

as the Second Sex in Patriarchal Society

Seen from Feminist Perspective

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Sastra

Manda Ajie Safitri
392012006

Suzana Maria L.A. Fajarini, M.Hum
Supervisor

Deta Maria Sri Darta, M.Hum
Examiner
The Girl in *The Girl from the Coast*

as the Second Sex in Patriarchal Society

Seen from Feminist Perspective

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Sarjana Sastra

Manda Ajie Safitri
392012006

Approved by

Suzana Maria L.A. Fajarini, M.Hum
Supervisor

Deta Maria Sri Darta, M.Hum
Examiner
PERNYATAAN TIDAK PLAGIAT

Saya yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Manda Ajie Safitri
NIM : 392012006
Email : 392012006@student.uksw.edu
Fakultas : Fakultas Bahasa dan Sastra
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris
Judul tugas akhir : The Girl in The Girl from the Coast as the Second Sex in the Patriarchal Society Seen from Feminist Perspective

Pembimbing : 1. Suzana Maia L.A. Fajarini, M.Hum
2. Deti Maria Sri Darta, M.Hum

Dengan ini menyatakan bahwa:

1. Hasil karya yang saya serahkan ini adalah asli dan belum pernah diajukan untuk mendapatkan gelar kesarjanaan baik di Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana maupun di institusi pendidikan lainnya.

2. Hasil karya saya ini bukan saduran/terjemahan melainkan merupakan gagasan, rumusan, dan hasil pelaksanaan penelitian/implementasi saya sendiri, tanpa bantuan pihak lain, kecuali arahan pembimbing akademik dan narasumber penelitian.

3. Hasil karya saya ini merupakan hasil revisi terakhir setelah diuji yang telah diketahui dan disetujui oleh pembimbing.

4. Dalam karya saya ini tidak terdapat karya atau pendapat yang telah ditulis atau dipublikasikan orang lain, kecuali yang digunakan sebagai acuan dalam naskah dengan menyebutkan nama pengarang dan dicantumkan dalam daftar pustaka.

Pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya. Apabila di kemudian hari terbukti ada penyimpangan dan ketidakbenaran dalam pernyataan ini maka saya bersedia menerima sanksi akademik berupa pencabutan gelar yang telah diperoleh karena karya saya ini, serta sanksi lain yang sesuai dengan ketentuan yang berlaku di Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana.

Salatiga, 31 Januari 2018

[Signature]

[Stamp]
PERNYATAAN PERSETUJUAN AKSES

Saya yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Manda Ajie Safitri
NIM : 392012006
Fakultas : Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni
Program Studi : Sastra Inggris
Judul tugas akhir : The Girl in The Girl from the Coast as the Second Sex in Patriarchal Society Seen from Feminist Perspective

Dengan ini saya menyerahkan hak non-eksklusif* kepada Perpustakaan Universitas – Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana untuk menyimpan, mengatur akses serta melakukan pengelolaan terhadap karya saya ini dengan mengacu pada ketentuan akses tugas akhir elektronik sebagai berikut (beri tanda pada kotak yang sesuai):

☑ a. Saya mengijinkan karya tersebut diunggah ke dalam aplikasi Repositori Perpustakaan Universitas, dan/atau portal GARUDA
☐ b. Saya tidak mengijinkan karya tersebut diunggah ke dalam aplikasi Repositori Perpustakaan Universitas, dan/atau portal GARUDA**

* Hak yang tidak terbatas hanya bagi satu fakultas. Penyajian, penelitian, dan mahasiswa yang menyerahkan hak non eksklusif kepada Repositori Perpustakaan Universitas sesuai mampu tidak bisa memilik hak copyright atas karya tersebut.
** Hanya akan memanfaatkan peluang judul dan abstrak. Pihak ini harus dilampiri dengan penjelasan alasan tertulis dari pembimbing TA dan diketahui oleh pemberi fasilitas ilmuiah layaknya.

Demikian pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sebenarnya.

Salatiga, 31 Januari 2018

[Signature]

Manda Ajie Safitri

Mengetahui,

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]
COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

This Thesis contains no such material as has been submitted for examination in any course or accepted for the fulfillment of any degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this contains no material previously published or written by any other person except where due reference is made in the text.

Copyright@2017 Manda Ajie Safitri and Suzana Maria L.A. Fajarini, M.Hum

All rights reserved. No part of this thesis may be reproduced by any means without the prior written permission of at least one of the copyright owners or the English Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Kristen SatyaWacana, Salatiga.

Manda Ajie Safitri
# Table of Contents

Title Page ...............................................................................................................................i  
Approval Page........................................................................................................................ii  
Copyright Statement ..............................................................................................................iii  
Table of contents....................................................................................................................iv  
Acknowledgement .................................................................................................................v  
Abstract ..................................................................................................................................1  
Introduction............................................................................................................................1  
Literature Review ...................................................................................................................4  
Author’s Life and Background .............................................................................................4  
Theoretical Background: Theory of Conflict ................................................................. 5  
Theoretical Background: Feminist Criticism ........................................................................6  
Simone De Beauvoir ...............................................................................................................7  
The Second Sex .....................................................................................................................7  
Gender Oppression ..............................................................................................................11  
The Girl as the Second Sex to Bendoro and Society ............................................................12  
The Girl’s Resistance Toward the Oppression ....................................................................20  
Conclusion .............................................................................................................................22  
Suggestion ..............................................................................................................................23  
Work Cited.............................................................................................................................24
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would firstly like to thank God who has given me strength to finish this thesis.
I would also like to extend my gratitude to a number of people whose helps were very valuable in this research:

- My supervisor Ibu Suzana Maria L.A. Fajarini, M.Hum for her meaningful assistance, tireless guidance, and patience with her super last minute student like me.
- My examiner Ibu Deta Maria Sri Darta, M.Hum for guiding me and giving a meaningful finishing touch to this thesis.
- My parents who have endless prayers for me. I love you.
- All my best friends (Dewi, Betsy, Bas and Windy) who help me learning and “growing” through all this years I spent in this university, my beloved angkatan “twelvers” and all the events that I have joined in especially EDO and EDLT.

Without you all, this would be meaningless. Thank you so much. Xoxo

Salatiga, April 28 2017

Manda Ajie Safitri
The Girl in *The Girl from the Coast*  
as the Second Sex in Patriarchal Society  
Seen from Feminist Perspective

Abstract

This study aimed to reveal the oppression from Bendoro and society underwent by the Girl in *The Girl from the Coast*. The methodology used in this study is descriptive qualitative, employing the idea of *the Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir which the main thesis revolves around the idea that woman has been held in a relationship of long-standing oppression to man through her relegation to being man’s “Other”. The analysis shows that (1) The Girl’s image in patriarchal society is portrayed as a weak and powerless character that she is forced to accept the marriage with Bendoro; (2) the Girl’s role as a practice wife is only to serve and follow her husband’s orders; (3) the Girl’s attempts in order to abolish the oppression she endured. This study is expected to be beneficial and helpful for the readers to understand about gender oppression and that it does not act in isolation. So that they can be more aware of the practices and attempt to avoid putting themselves in that kind of situation.

Keyword: “the second sex” oppression, control
Introduction

*The Girl from the Coast* is an Indonesian literary work written by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, a major figure in world literature. Pramoedya was born in Blora, in central Java, on February 6, 1925, when Indonesia was still a colony of the Netherlands, and died in Jakarta 30 April 2006. Pramoedya is well-known for most of his works that often span the Javanese feudalism in the colonial period in the late of 19th century to the early 20th century, as in his work *The Girl from the Coast*. The story has the time setting in the beginning of the 20th century, when the Dutch colonial government allied itself with the Javanese feudal aristocracy to suppress less powerful segments of the population.

The major female character in the novel is a girl from a poor fishing village whose name is only mentioned as “the girl from the coast” or in this discussion will be simply called as “the Girl”, using capital letter “G” to give a stress in this character as it is the main character in this discussion. The Girl who was only fourteen years was considered as a “bunga desa” (“flower of the village”) or in KBBI3 it is an Indonesian idiom to mention a young lady whose beauty is well-known in the region she lives in.

The Girl was forced by her parents to accept marriage with a noble Bendoro, an important man in the city who worked for the Dutch administration in the city of Rembang. The Girl who was so powerless in front of her parents did not have other option unless to follow her parents’ request. Her life changed so much as she became the wife of Bendoro, opposite from what she used to have in the village. She and her family in village became highly respected by people and reputed to be a high-class society as well. Being the wife of a noble man gave her such aristocratic life. However, her initiation into the world of the nobility coincided with her slow realization that she was only being a "practice wife" a woman who is married by a nobleman only to bear a child and will be dismissed when the
nobleman chooses to settle down with a woman from the same station and she would not be allowed to keep her child. (The New York Time, August 11, 2002)

In the novel *The Girl from the Coast*, the author attempts to depict the Javanese feudal and patriarchal practice in the early 20th century era, the disrespect and the cruelty experienced by women from the Javanese patriarchal society that is known as gender oppression. For instance observed from the novel is when the Girl was forced by her parents to marry a man that she has even known and the fact that the man wanted to marry the Girl only as a ‘practice wife’ (temporary) to fulfill his sexual needs until he found a woman from the same social class as him to be his real wife. The gender issues are depicted by how in the novel man’s authority (Bendoro’s) works against woman’s right (the Girl’s).

This study aimed to reveal what oppression underwent by the Girl in *The Girl from the Coast* from Bendoro and her parents (part of society) and what attempts has been done by the Girl to release herself from the oppression.

The approach used in the study was descriptive qualitative by employing library research. To do more specific analysis, this study used the literary theory of characterisation and the idea of *The Second Sex*, an idea that was coined by Simone de Beauvoir in her book entitled *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir’s primary thesis is that men fundamentally oppress women by characterizing them, on every level, as the Other, defined exclusively in opposition to men. What Beauvoir discovers in her multifaceted investigation into woman’s situation is that woman is consistently defined as ‘the other’ by man who takes on the role of the Self. As Beauvoir explains in her Introduction of *The Second Sex*, woman "is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other." In addition, Beauvoir maintains that human existence is an ambiguous interplay between transcendence and immanence, yet men have been privileged with
expressing transcendence through projects, whereas women have been forced into the repetitive and uncreative life of immanence. (Beauvoir, 15-16)

It was inspiring to conduct a study about gender oppression observed from *The Girl from the Coast*, since in many societies, the practice is still observable, for instance how in some societies men are considered as the person who has higher position than women. It was also inspiring to learn about women’s resistance when they were under men’s oppression.

The possible findings are expected to help reader to enrich their knowledge about gender oppression that it intersects with discrimination based on race, sexuality, ability, class, age, history of confinement, religion, language, and citizenship status. Readers are also expected to be more aware of oppressive practices and to avoid putting themselves in that kind of situation.

**Literature Review**

There are many studies on the novel *The Girl from the Coast* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer since the novel contains many interesting issues that can be analyzed using variety approaches and perspectives. For instance, a research paper by Ida Puspita entitled *Women’s Identities and Resistance in Pramoedya Ananta Toer’s The Girl from the Coast and Katherine Susannah Prichard’s Coonardo*, which in that paper she is discussing about the representations of Javanese and Aboriginal women depicted in those novels. The thesis argues that colonisation in patriarchal Indonesia and Australia intensifies women’s subordination. There are also still many research paper that discuss about other issues taken from the novel. However, I have never encountered a research which reaveals about how the
Girl is oppressed has ever been done before, how male characters and the feudalistic tradition that shown in *The Girl from the Coast* works against women’s freedom and right. It gives me so much interests reflecting that kind of issues are still observable until today.

Author’s Life and Work

Pramoedya’s literary works are often inspired by the social conditions that he observed or experienced around him, for instance, his childhood in Blora and his political and literary activism in Jakarta. Pramoedya’s disappointments and conflict with his father also reflected to the character of the Bendoro in *The Girl from the Coast*, being colonial, feudal and patriarchal. While his mother as a soft, and gentle but also strong and very strict person was the greatest inspiration of Pramoedya’s writings, her motivation and the moral value of her devotion as a mother and wife, and as an educator and of her children are the lasting values that became the standard for Pramoedya to measure the quality of women whom he met and for the ideal female characters in many of his writings.

Theoretical Background:

Theory of Conflict

In literature, conflict is the central issue and makes the story move. Literary conflict includes internal conflict, also called man versus self-conflict, and external conflict which includes man versus man, man versus nature, man versus society and man versus fate. Internal Conflict Man vs. Self: Internal conflict is that which exists inside the character. Struggles with morality, fate, desire and belief, to name a few. This form of conflict is central
to the character, or characters and must be resolved by the character alone. Every good character suffers from the weight of internal conflict, it lends them an air of complex believability. Internal conflict is also known as man versus self. Internal conflict is necessary for good characters, but it’s the least complicated form of conflict. External Conflict Unlike internal conflict, external conflict deals with the problems of the world. The story's characters will struggle against the circumstances of external conflict, they may even suffer internal conflict resulting from the issues of external conflict, but this is not as simple as internal conflict. External conflict occurs when characters are involved in the world's woes, such issues as community, nature, government and other characters are all examples of external conflict. External conflict manifests itself as man versus man, man versus nature, man versus society and man versus fate. Man vs. Man: Man versus man is the most fundamental type of external conflict. This form of external conflict occurs when a character struggles against another character. These struggles may be born from moral, religious or social differences and may be emotional, verbal or physical conflicts. Man versus man is almost always the conflict present when a hero fights a villain. This form of conflict may present alone, or in conjunction with other external conflicts. Man vs. Nature: Man versus nature conflicts occur when a character, or characters, find themselves at odds with forces of nature. A character struck by lightning, characters whose boat sinks in a storm and a character who struggles against hypothermia in a snow storm are all characters experiencing man versus nature conflicts. Man vs. Society: This external conflict exists when characters struggle against the morays of their culture and government. Works where character's battle evil, oppressive cultures are characteristic of man versus society conflict. Man vs. Fate: Man versus fate occurs when a character is compelled to follow an unknown destiny. Man versus fate conflict breeds internal conflict, while forcing a character to consciously, or subconsciously, act on his or her fate.
Feminist Criticism

Feminist criticism concerns with "...the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women" (Tyson). This school of theory looks at how aspects of our culture are inherently patriarchal (male dominated) and "...this critique strives to expose the explicit and implicit misogyny in male writing about women" (Richter 1346). This misogyny, Tyson reminds us, can extend into diverse areas of our culture: "Perhaps the most chilling example...is found in the world of modern medicine, where drugs prescribed for both sexes often have been tested on male subjects only" (83).

Feminist criticism also concerns with less obvious forms of marginalization such as the exclusion of women writers from the traditional literary canon: "...unless the critical or historical point of view is feminist, there is a tendency to under-represent the contribution of women writers" (Tyson 82-83).

Simone De Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir was one of the most prominent French existentialist philosophers and writers. Working alongside other famous existentialists such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, de Beauvoir produced a rich corpus of writings including works on ethics, feminism, fiction, autobiography, and politics.

Beauvoir’s method incorporated various political and ethical dimensions. In The Ethics of Ambiguity, she developed an existentialist ethics that condemned the “spirit of seriousness” in which people too readily identify with certain abstractions at the expense of
individual freedom and responsibility. In *The Second Sex*, she produced an articulate attack on the fact that throughout history women have been relegated to a sphere of “immanence,” and the passive acceptance of roles assigned to them by society. In *The Mandarins*, she fictionalized the struggles of existents trapped in ambiguous social and personal relationships at the closing of World War II. The emphasis on freedom, responsibility, and ambiguity permeate all of her works and give voice to core themes of existentialist philosophy.

Her philosophical approach is notably diverse. Her influences include French philosophy from Descartes to Bergson, the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, the historical materialism of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and the idealism of Immanuel Kant and G. W. F Hegel. In addition to her philosophical pursuits, de Beauvoir was also an accomplished literary figure, and her novel, *The Mandarins*, received the prestigious *Prix Goncourt* award in 1954. Her most famous and influential philosophical work, *The Second Sex* (1949), heralded a feminist revolution and remains to this day a central text in the investigation of women's oppression and liberation.

**The Second Sex**

The main thesis of *The Second Sex* revolves around the idea that woman has been held in a relationship of long-standing oppression to man through her relegation to being man’s "other" (Beauvoir, 26). In agreement with Hegelian and Sartrean philosophy, Beauvoir finds that the self needs otherness in order to define itself as a subject; the category of the otherness, therefore, is necessary in the constitution of the self as a self. However, the movement of self-understanding through alterity is supposed to be reciprocal in that the self is often just as much objectified by its other as the self objectifies it. What Beauvoir discovers in her multifaceted investigation into woman's situation, is that woman is consistently defined as the Other by man who takes on the role of the Self. As Beauvoir explains in her
Introduction, woman "is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other." (Beauvoir, 15-16) In addition, Beauvoir maintains that human existence is an ambiguous interplay between transcendence and immanence, yet men have been privileged with expressing transcendence through projects, whereas women have been forced into the repetitive and uncreative life of immanence. Beauvoir thus proposes to investigate how this radically unequal relationship emerged as well as what structures, attitudes and presuppositions continue to maintain its social power.

The work is divided into two major themes. The first book investigates the "Facts and Myths" (Beauvoir, 33) about women from multiple perspectives including the biological-scientific, psychoanalytic, materialistic, historical, literary and anthropological. In each of these treatments, Beauvoir is careful to claim that none of them is sufficient to explain woman's definition as man's Other or her consequent oppression. However, each of them contributes to woman's overall situation as the Other sex. For example, in her discussion of biology and history, she notes the women experience certain phenomena such as pregnancy, lactation, and menstruation that are foreign to men's experience and thus contribute to a marked difference in women's situation. However, these physiological occurrences in no way directly cause woman to be man's subordinate because biology and history are not mere "facts" of an unbiased observer, but are always incorporated into and interpreted from a situation. In addition, she acknowledges that psychoanalysis and historical materialism contribute tremendous insights into the sexual, familial and material life of woman, but fail to account for the whole picture. In the case of psychoanalysis, it denies the reality of choice and in the case of historical materialism, it neglects to take into account the existential importance of the phenomena it reduces to material conditions.

The most philosophically rich discussion of Book I comes in Beauvoir's analysis of myths. There she tackles the way in which the preceding analyses (biological, historical,
psychoanalytic, etc.) contribute to the formulation of the myth of the "Eternal Feminine." This paradigmatic myth, which incorporates multiple myths of woman under it (such as the myth of the mother, the virgin, the motherland, nature, etc.) attempts to trap woman into an impossible ideal by denying the individuality and situation of all different kinds of women. In fact, the ideal set by the Eternal Feminine sets up an impossible expectation because the various manifestations of the myth of femininity appear as contradictory and doubled. For example, history shows us that for as many representations of the mother as the respected guardian of life, there are as many depictions of her as the hated harbinger of death. The contradiction that man feels at having been born and having to die gets projected onto the mother who takes the blame for both. Thus woman as mother is both hated and loved and individual mothers are hopelessly caught in the contradiction. This doubled and contradictory operation appears in all feminine myths, thus forcing women to unfairly take the burden and blame for existence.

Book II begins with Beauvoir's most famous assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." (Beauvoir, 273) By this, Beauvoir means to destroy the essentialism which claims that women are born "feminine" (according to whatever the culture and time define it to be) but are rather constructed to be such through social indoctrination. Using a wide array of accounts and observations, the first section of Book II traces the education of woman from her childhood, through her adolescence and finally to her experiences of lesbianism and sexual initiation (if she has any). At each stage, Beauvoir illustrates how women are forced to relinquish their claims to transcendence and authentic subjectivity by a progressively more stringent acceptance of the "passive" and "alienated" role to man's "active" and "subjective" demands. Woman's passivity and alienation are then explored in what Beauvoir entitles her "Situation" and her "Justifications." Beauvoir studies the roles of wife, mother, and prostitute to show how women, instead of transcending through work and
creativity, are forced into monotonous existences of having children, tending house and being the sexual receptacles of the male libido. Because she maintains the existentialist belief in the absolute ontological freedom of each existent regardless of sex, Beauvoir never claims that man has succeeded in destroying woman's freedom or in actually turning her into an "object" in relation to his subjectivity. She remains a transcendent freedom despite her objectification, alienation and oppression.

Gender Oppression

According to Iris Marion Young in her book entitled *Five Faces of Oppression*, gendered oppression is the systemic manner in which certain groups are privileged or disadvantaged because of their gender. Because gender is such an integral part of society, we may unconsciously subscribe to harmful and inaccurate gender stereotypes. These socially constructed assumptions about gender do not describe essential characteristics of men, women, and people outside of the gender binary, yet they often claim to. This maintains the gendered power difference that allows certain groups to benefit (socially and economically) at the expense of others.

The maintenance of gendered oppression is systemic and structural. In other words, it results from everyday practices and unquestioned assumptions within society, not necessarily from a few individuals in power. The dissemination of gendered oppression can often be subtle. Popular jokes or comments can be very effective means of spreading and maintaining harmful gendered attitudes.
Gendered oppression does not act in isolation. It intersects with discrimination based on race, sexuality, ability, class, age, history of incarceration, religion, language, and citizenship status. Analysis of any one of these oppressions alone is insufficient; each reinforces the other. In addition, the intersection of oppressions is not simply a linear combination of the individual oppressions.

The Girl as the Second Sex to Bendoro and Society

*The Girl from the Coast* which has the setting of time in the beginning of 20th century, portrays the feudal tradition that was still adopted by the Javanese priyayi (high-society) in that era. The relation of the Girl and Bendoro in the story also mirrors the feudalistic and cruelty of Bendoro and society that the Girl has to endure from such tradition.

According to Max Weber on the sociology of the feudal order that is highlighted in Maurice Zeitlin’s book entitled *The Sociological Review*, feudalism is a society in which the ruling class holds power by possessing fields – territories within which its members appropriate political and juridical rights. (Zeitlin, 203-208)

Bendoro in *The Girl from the Coast* refers to a particular male character who belongs to priyayi-class (high society class) who works for Dutch administration and is highly respected by people in his surrounding. As it is discussed in a Learner's Comprehensive Dictionary of Indonesian, Bendoro is a term of address of descendants from royal family. On the contrary, the Girl, the major female character, is a girl from a poor fishing village who has never been in formal-education. The Girl is portrayed as a submissive girl or tend to be timid.

As it is observed from the novel, Bendoro and the Girl are from different social classes. In Javanese feudalism, Bendoro who is a priyayi actually has higher status than the
Girl, who is only a child of villagers who lives in a fishing village. However, what actually underlays the conflict between both characters is not only about the social status, but also the status of particular gender (man) which according to Javanese society is more superior than woman.

Kurniawati Hastuti Dewi in her book entitled *Indonesian Women and Local Politics: Islam, Gender and Networks in Post-Suharto Indonesia*, discusses about *The Normative Expectation of Javanese Muslim Women* in page 51 as follows:

In Javanese culture, men are perceived as the core of the Javanese family, and women come second. The Javanese proverb, *konco wingking* (“the friend in the back”, literally the kitchen, which is usually at the back of the house) typically illustrates this subordinate roles of Javanese women. For the sake of her husband dignity, a Javanese woman is expected to undertake *cancut tali wanda* (take the initiative to do anything necessary, particularly when her family facing problem) and to protect and provide a foundation for her husband’s accomplishments. A true woman (*wanita sejati*) is one who serves well at home as mother and wife, either in the kitchen or bedroom, and plays no public role because a public role or position might undermine her husband’s dignity.

Dewi’s statement above is in line with Beauvoir’s statement that “man is a socially autonomous and complete individual… and his existence is justified by the work he provides for the group; …the reproductive and domestic role to which woman is confined has not guaranteed her an equal dignity”. (Beauvoir, 503)

It is clear that both Beauvoir and Dewi support the existence of Bendoro as to be not only a man in the family but also a man in the society, as long as the Javanese high society is concerned.

It is observable in our society nowadays that society still puts women under men. For instance, how society tends to blame women for sexual assault that happened to themselves. Society believes that women wearing provocative outfits lead to the action of being sexually assaulted as a statement made by the governor of Jakarta (2007-2011), Mr. Fauzi Bowo. His comments came in response to concerns about cases of sexual assault on public transportation happened on September 2011. The governorstated to local journalists his staffs was working with
the police to step up security, but he also urged women to be mindful of attire that could provoke unwanted acts. "You can imagine if people who ride minibuses sit in front wearing a miniskirt," he said. "It's a little too tempting, right?" *(The New York Times, September, 24 2011)*

The conflict that occurs as an oppression underwent by the Girl in *the Girl from the Coast* firstly was from Bendoro. Bendoro once noticed the beauty of the Girl from the coastal fishing village and he had an intention to take the Girl as a practice wife. His special attention towards the Girl is proven from these lines:

“—there was a man who had taken note of her and informed his employer in the city of this village girl’s beauty. One day, the man returned to the village and paid a visit to the home of the girl’s parents. No more than a few days later, the girl learned she had to leave her heart and home behind.” *(Toer, 4)*

A “practice wife” according to Marissa Monteilh, the author of *The Practice Wife*, is a woman whom a man dates right before he settles down with someone else. In *the Girl from the Coast*, Bendoro has a desire to marry the Girl only to fulfill his sexual needs before he finally finds a woman from the same social status to be married. However, the Girl, who is only fourteen years old is forced by her father to be the wife of Bendoro, a man that she has never known or seen before. She neither knows the fact that she is only going to be a practice wife nor even knows the meaning of what practice wife is.

The “high-society” label that is attached to Bendoro makes Bendoro very powerful that someone who is connected to Bendoro will have respect and privilege from the society. This fact gives strong influence to the people from poor fishing village. The Girl’s parents who are part of the fishing village society believe that this is an honor—a very big honor—when Bendoro intends to marry their daughter. They do not consider about the age disparity and the Girl’s opinions. For the Girl’s parents, the label of Bendoro magnetizes them more. It can be proven from the following lines as the Girl’s mother says to the Girl about Bendoro:

“He’s an important man,” her mother continued, “religious advisor to the government, a powerful man the Regent relies on for advice. Even the Dutch Resident is said to visit his house for advice. At least that’s what everyone said.” *(Toer, 7)*
The Girl’s mother expresses a pride she feels knowing an important man means to marry her daughter and implicitly tells the Girl that she should be grateful to be married such an honorable man. For the naive low class villagers from poor fishing village seems that the mother put more importance on status rather than her daughter’s concern.

Probably it is not something new during the beginning of 20th century that a girl who is already got menstruation should marry at very young age. However, the way that the Girl’s parent ignore their daughter’s opinions and feelings and was charmed more by Bendoro’s status proves that the Girl undergoes an oppression from her smallest circle.

Bendoro is certainly aware of his status, he knows that when he requires something he will achieve it. No need to wait for long, Bendoro finally gets to marry the Girl. He does not need a clear agreement and acceptance from the Girl. The Girl has no authority to resist it and ultimately, she could only agree with Bendoro’s request. Bendoro also does not come to his wedding. A dagger represents his presence on the wedding day. In other words, Bendoro with his higher status thinks that the Girl is insignificant woman although he requires her. It is also mentioned by Beauvoir that woman is weak and powerless while man is “essential or master”.

The portrayal could give an example of as very oppressive and discriminative actions endured by the Girl, by (1) in the first place, the Girl is not given chance to decide whether she accepts the marriage or not, (2) the Girl is not told that she is only to be a practice wife, (3) the Girl is unable to see and know Bendoro first, even on the wedding day. So in the wedding she only thinks that she is becoming a wife of a keris. The last occurrence regarding the keris praises the girl’s confusion as could be seen in the following lines:

“They day before, she had been married, in a proxy manner, with a dagger representing her husband to be. At that moment, she had become aware that she was her father’s daughter no more, that she was not her mother’s baby anymore. She was now the wife of a keris, a dagger standing in for a man she had never seen.” (Toer, 4)
The Girl’s naivete and the parents’ ignorance not to explain Bendoro’s absence could be understood as how oppression controls the low class people without they really realise it. Despite the social status, wealth, and prosperity as a wife of Bendoro, the Girl is still ill-fated and miserable. What is in her mind is that she does not want to marry, she wants to stay in her village with her family and is very distressed to leave her previous life in the fishing village. The Girl’s feeling is narrated in the following lines:

The girl didn’t understand. Neither did she know what lay ahead. All she knew was that she had just lost her entire world. Why couldn’t she live where she wanted to, she asked herself with fear and apprehension, among the people she cared for and loved, in her seaside world of pounding waves?”

(Toer, 5)

Even though it was very hard at first time for the Girl to accept the marriage with Bendoro, as the time went by, the Girl finally falls in love with Bendoro. She also misses Bendoro when he is away for days or even months for a business trip. Despite the fact the Girl loves Bendoro, the oppression do no end there, instead, other oppression is obtained from the people and her surrounding. Sometimes when Bendoro is away from home the Girl worries of Bendoro might have other women. Such a thought makes her feel sad and start to think she probably needs to change to be someone who Bendoro would be pleased with, as discussed by the Girl with her servant in the following lines:

“So what am I then, Mbok?”

“Forgive me for saying this, Young Mistress, but you are a person of the lower class who, for the moment at least, has been hitched to the upper classes.”

“Then what am I supposed to do?”

“How many times have I told you, Young Mistress? You must serve your husband faithfully. You must bow to him and kiss the ground beneath his feet.” She sighed. “Now let me tell you a story...”

“I don’t want to hear a story now,” the girl insisted. “I want you to tell me how to serve the Bendoro better. How am I supposed to bow before him?” (Toer, 96)

The word “serve” based on Oxford Dictionary means performing duties and services for another person or organization. Here, the Girl actually realizes her existence as a weak woman. Possibly the Girl has thought that in a marriage there would be an equality as she observed when she was a maiden in fishing village that husband and wife have an equal
status, as she stated in the following line: “In my village, men and women call on one another.” (Toer, 76) However she does not experience it in her marriage with Bendoro. Her discussion with her servant even strengthens her position as a weak woman. Moreover, the conversation confirms her that a man’s power is bigger than a woman’s. She is discouraged to show her belief as a woman who considers equality between husband and wife. It means that she just alienates herself in man’s power. Even though the idea of “serving a husband” comes from her thought with the influence of society’s beliefs and values that teaches women to serve their husbands, the pressure mostly comes from her husband. The Girl feels insecure because she learns that Bendoro actually would like to be with someone who is a noble and behave like ones, which is in contrast to her characteristics. As the Girl does not want to lose Bendoro, she makes the effort so hard to change herself in order to make Bendoro satisfied.

Beside from Bendoro, the society also has a big role in affecting the oppression that the Girl endures. The doctrine about women should serve men has truly affected the Girl’s mindset. In the the 20th century—the setting of the story—Javanese society still believed that wives must serve their husbands, this belief is related to the feudalistic system that considered men were above women, as discussed earlier by Dewi in *Indonesian Women and Local Politics: Islam, Gender and Networks in Post-Suharto Indonesia* and supported by Beauvoir’s statement that woman is ‘man’s other’, or ‘absolute sex’ and ‘inessential’ (Beauvoir, 26). The discussion between the Girl and her servant in the following lines proves the society doctrine:

“In the city, don’t husbands and wives ever speak?”
“Well, in the city, in most every city, I’d say, it’s usually the men who are in control. So the women there find themselves a man’s world. Maybe that’s not the way it is in a fishing village.”
“Then what do women have in the city?” the girl asked.
“I’d have to say nothing, Young Mistress, except for...”
“Except for what?”
“Except for her duty to guard her man’s holdings.”
“So what do women own?”
“Nothing, Young Mistress. She herself is property.”
“But where does the Master go for days on end like this?”
“That’s a man business, Young mistress, and it would be best for you not to interfere. Women don’t know about such things. Our work is here in the house. This is our territory, the area under control.” (Toer, 74)

The Girl’s servant statement has a doctrine about women should not interfere men’s business that adopted by society at the 20th century era, especially for a woman who is married a high society man. Javanese traditional culture demanded married women to stay at home and look after the children and domestic area, while the husbands were the ones who take care of external matters. Even though until today our society still adopts such culture, some people are already open-minded about the idea of women having career. Discussed in Jakarta Globe, about stay-at-home father, Maha Matma Aji, known as Ahmat, is a stay-at-home dad who let his wife having career while he fully becomes a house maker. However, Ahmat is also aware that such concept is even still unfamiliar, and is even considered as taboo, in Indonesian society where most people still cling to the idea that the man should be the leader and breadwinner of the family. In such concept women place is at home, doing the chores and looking after the children. “At first we often got negative views about Ahmat being a stay-at-home dad, but I don’t care. We’re happy with the situation,” says Wiwin, Ahmat’s wife who works as a finance officer at a school in Yogyakarta. (Jakarta Globe, May 25, 2014) Although not everyone is agree with such idea, this new idea reflects that our society and culture are no longer exactly the same as in 20th century. However, it cannot be denied that until today the patriarchal culture in Indonesia still treats women as lower than men on the social hierarchy.

Regarding to the fact about the Girl is only a practice wife, the Girl finds out that Bendoro does not admit her as a real wife. One day she accidentally hears her husband speaking to a man:

“I heard that pirates attacked a fishing village,” the Chinese man said to her husband.
“Which village was that?” the Bendoro asked.
“If I’m not mistaken, sir, it was your wife’s village.”
“My wife?” the Bendoro almost screamed. “I don’t have a wife!”
“I’m sorry, sir, forgive me, but I was asked by newspaper in Semarang to make some inquiries. The home office must have made a mistake.”
“Leave!” the Bendoro spat at the man. “Leave before I get angry”
“Of course, sir, forgive me,” the guest pleaded as he bowed and left the hall.”(Toer, 242)

Bendoro’s anger toward the man who mentioned about his wife was caused by his embarrassment and dishonor about the Girl’s status that she comes from nowhere out of his social level. However, the Girl is still his wife anyway, she is the Girl that he married in proxy manner and everyone witnessed it. The way of Bendoro treats her not as a normal wife is depicted in an image of power and domination. Bendoro assumes himself as ‘subject’ who defines the Girl only as ‘others’ or ‘determined being’. Even the Girl does not have enough courage to protest or complaint to her husband. She is aware that in Bendoro’s house she cannot talk or express herself freely. It can be acknowledged that the Girl’s attitude toward the authority expresses what Beauvoir said that woman has lost her autonomy existence or freedom which makes ‘women tend to subordinate themselves to the real and imaginary needs and interests of men.’. (Beauvoir, 169)

Furthermore, it is observed from the novel that in the daily conversations with Bendoro, the Girl still call her husband ‘Bendoro’ or ‘master’, this reflects that she devalues herself as a “man’s other” and put herself in a low position in front of a man. She is a dependent who totally submits to her husband.

“Listen!” the Bendoro said
“Yes, Bendoro.”
(Toer, 99)

The biggest oppression observable from the novel is how as a practice wife, the Girl is finally expelled out the house by Bendoro after she gave birth a baby. The Girl has never thought before that everything actually would be over after she gave Bendoro a baby, just as Bendoro’s previous wives experienced.
“As you said, the girl is my child. Now, you can leave this house and you can take your clothes and jewelry, too, everything I ever gave to you. That’s what I’m telling you to do. I’ve given your father compensation,” he added, “enough to buy and fit out two boats if he wants. As for you…” He held toward her a small cloth bag, heavy with coins. “This is for you. Find yourself a good husband and forget you’ve ever been here, in this house. Do you understand what I’m telling you? You are to forget you’ve ever known me!” (Toer, 260)

After she had to marry a man she did not love, the Girl now has to leave the man she already loved and the baby she beared for nine months from that man. She is even not allowed to see her child. As Beauvoir states that “man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man and she is nothing other than what man decides” (Beauvoir, 26). Bendoro is the only one who makes the desicion, he married the Girl only for a practice wife and that he will dismiss the Girl after she bears their baby. Everything works as how Bendoro wants it to be.

The Girl’s Resistance Toward the Oppression

Though the Girl’s appears as an oppressed character in the novel, yet the Girl also perfoms as a character who has her own resistance towards the oppression. In the last chaper in the novel when the Girl is forced to give up her baby to Bendoro, for the first time the Girl makes a disagreement. Eventhough it was a big shock for the Girl that her mariage with Bendoro has been ceased after the Girl gave birth, yet the Girl has more concern in her baby. She speaks for her baby which goes againts Bendoro’s order. The Girl’s resitance can be proven in her dialog with Bendoro in these following lines:

“But my lord, am I to leave without my child?”
He was growing impatient. “What’s all this talk? You’ve never been talkactive before.”
“I speak for my child. What wouldn’t a mother do for her child? (Toer, 260)

The Girl also requires Bendoro to accept their child his holding, at least before the Girl leaves the mansion forever.

“I’m sorry to disturb you, but I’ve come to hand over this child of mine to you. She is your child and no other’s. Please take her from me.”
“Put her on the bed!” was all he would say. 
“I can’t do that, sir.”
“Didn’t you hear my orders?”
“I am this baby’s mother. If her father won’t even hold her or take care of her, then I will take her home to the village” (Toer, 266)

When Bendoro rejects her request, the Girl initiates to run and take her child with her to the village, yet Bendoro runs after her and tells the servants to stop her. Although the Girl fails, yet the Girl has made a big struggle to defend her right by running away from Bendoro with her baby. The Girl also decides not to return to her village, after she is expelled from Bendoro’s mansion. She goes to Blora, a new lace where she can start her new life over and forget everything that has oppressed her.

Other resistances that the Girl has done when she was still in Bendoro’s mansion is when the first time the Girl arrived at Bendoro’s mansion, the Girl was taught new values as a noble lady and told to imitate the manners of aristocats by her personal servant simply known as “Mbok”. However the Girl seemed to be undermining those values by how oftenly she is questioning and disputing values that she considers unreasonable and starts to compare the life of nobility to the life in the village. For instance when the first time the Girl arrived to the Bendoro’s mansion, the Girl was confused when she saw Mbok bowed to her, she has never encountered such action in village. She observes that in village, people are more friendly to each other while in the city social rank and wealth determine people. The Girl’s confusion narrated in these following lines:

The servant bowed to her, leaning forward deeply from the waist. What was she doing that for? The girl wondered. Just minutes ago they had been equal. Why was this woman acting so humble now? The change confused the girl, made her feel frightened and apprehensive. (Toer, 19)

The Girl’s confusion portrays her opinion that tends to support equality. The Girl wants herself and her servant have equal position eventhough she is aware that she is the mistress in the house. Another question also has been came from the Girl, she asked her servant if “In the city, don’t husband and wives ever speak?” (Toer, 84) The Girl observes the
differences of husband and wife relation in city and village, which in the city she finds that
the women or wives are more passive and controlled while in the village the men and women
have more equal position. This has proven that the Girl is also a smart characteristic and she
is also trying to maintain her own identity.

Conclusion

The feudalistic tradition that is spanned in the Girl from the Coast shows the full
power that was given to the men in the 20th century era. Men were considered to have full
authority in the family and also in society that they had the right to control their families and
also had the privileges to take a role in public.

From the discussion, it was proven that the Girl who is only fourteen years old, is
portrayed as a powerless character in front of her father and husband. As a girl who lived in
20th century era, her role was still fully controlled by her father to decide her life. As a
woman, she was mostly controlled by her husband or in other words she is the ‘second sex’ to
her husband, as how her existence is fully controlled by her husband. The Girl’s duty as a
wife is to serve and fulfill her husband’s needs, other than that, she does not have the freedom
of voice or do anything.

Applying the idea of Second Sex by Simone de Beauvoir, in the discussion regarding
the Girl in the Girl from the Coast this study answered the research question “what
oppressions underwent by the Girl in the Girl from the Coast from Bendoro and society”. This
study also found out the Girl’s action as her resistance against the oppressions.
**Suggestion**

In this study, the character who is analyzed is the Girl in how she is oppressed by other characters and also how she acts in order to release herself from the oppression. For the next research, it is possible for those who adore the literary work of Pramodya to conduct a study with the same novel (the Girl from the Coast), applying the theory of reader response to observe the relevancy of male power or authority towards women. It is also possible to compare the novel *the Girl from the Coast* with *this Earth of Mankind* or another Pramodya’s work to find the main topic of those works.


Bahari, Pramoedya Poscolonially: (Re-) Viewing History, Gender and Identity in the Buru Tetralogy, Denpasar, Pustaka Larasan, 2007


Baay, Nyai & Pergundikan di Hindia Belanda (‘Nyai/ native cocubine & prostitution in the Dutch Indies’), Depok, Komunitas Bambu, 2008


