



The Inessential Woman: A Beauvoirian Analysis of Female Otherness in Mueenuddin's *Saleema*

Tsabitah Ashilah¹, Ruly Indra Darmawan²

^{1,2} English Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Jawa Tengah

Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026 - 06- 01 Revised: 2026 06-18 Accepted: 2026 06-30	<i>This study examines the construction of female identity and oppression in Daniyal Mueenuddin's short story Saleema (2009) from the collection In Other Rooms, Other Wonders using Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist framework. Employing a descriptive qualitative method with a close textual reading approach, the research analyzes how patriarchal and feudal structures in Pakistani society restrict the female protagonist's autonomy. The findings reveal that Saleema is constructed as the Other through sexual objectification and dependence on male authority figures. These conditions deny her autonomy and reinforce her subordinate position within patriarchal society. The study also explores the tension between transcendence and immanence in Saleema's life. Although she briefly demonstrates transcendence through her personal choices, patriarchal and socioeconomic constraints ultimately force her back into immanence. As a result, her attempt to assert agency collapses into personal destruction and loss of subjectivity. This study concludes that Saleema's fate reflects structural oppression rather than individual failure. It also contributes to feminist literary criticism by demonstrating the relevance of Beauvoir's existential feminism in analyzing gender oppression and female subjectivity in Pakistani literature.</i>
Keywords: Existential Feminism, Simone De Beauvoir, The Other, Transcendence, Immanence, Daniyal Mueenuddin, Saleema	
DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.11216	
Corresponding Author: Tsabitah Ashilah tsabitah@students.unnes.ac. id English Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Jawa Tengah	

1. Introduction

Women face various situations and problems, such as oppression and power relations in a patriarchal society. From a feminist perspective, oppression is rooted in a system of power rather than individual characteristics, and individuals who resist or fail to conform to established cultural norms may consequently experience

forms of marginalization and oppression (Peters et al., 2008). Such conditions often occur because in a patriarchal society, women are considered objects, marginalized ones, and inessential. Estivalet and Dvoskin (2023) argue that throughout history patriarchal society have constructed women as fragile and inferior beings whose roles were limited to domestic responsibilities while restricting their participation in public life, making marginalized women more vulnerable and deprived of public life, rights, and power. Therefore, studying oppression towards women lies in the fact that such conditions are not just historical, but also continue to shape the realities of women in several contexts, including social and cultural.

The condition of women's oppression continues to manifest in today's society, and oppression against women can take various forms, including objectification. Objectification refers to the tendency to view and value women mainly according to their physical appearance rather than recognizing them as human beings with their own subjectivity and identity, which shows that Beauvoir's concept of women as the Other continues to be relevant in today's society.

As Beauvoir (1989) argues, women are defined in relation to men rather than as independent subjects on their own. Such phenomena can be better understood through Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism in her book titled *The Second Sex*, first published in 1949, which explores how women are seen in society. In that book, Beauvoir argues that women are marked as the object, which makes women seen as the Other, while men are marked as the subject, the Absolute.

According to Beauvoir, the concept of the Other is a social construct shaped by cultural reason and not a natural state. Women are often seen in their relation to men rather than as themselves or their own identity, which leads to the conclusion that women are the Other or seen and valued as the object. Closely connected to the concept of the Other are her notions of transcendence and immanence, which describe two different ways of experiencing human existence.

Transcendence refers to an individual's ability to exercise freedom, make choices, and pursue goals that enable personal growth. In contrast, immanence represents a condition in which individuals are restricted from fully exercising their freedom and acting independently (Beauvoir, 1989). She points out that patriarchal society places women in a position of immanence by limiting their autonomy and defining them in relation to men, as she states, men propose to stabilize her as an object and to doom her to immanence (Beauvoir, 1989), positioning women as objects rather than independent subjects.

As a result, women's aspirations, choices, and identities are constrained by social structures that benefit male authority. Therefore, the concepts of the Other, transcendence, and immanence will be used as the theoretical framework for this study to analyze how patriarchal structures in literary works restrict female characters, deny their subjectivity, and reduce them to objects through their relation with men.

It is important to note that Beauvoir developed her existential feminist framework mainly within the context of Western bourgeois society. In *The Second Sex*, she states that from feudal times to our days the married woman has been deliberately sacrificed to private property and that in the working classes economic oppression nullified the inequality of the sexes, but it deprived the individual of all opportunity (Beauvoir, 1989, pp. 101, 103), showing that she acknowledged the role of class and feudal systems in women's oppression.

However, Beauvoir's discussion mainly focuses on Western European society, while the patriarchy portrayed in Mueenuddin's *Saleema* is shaped by postcolonial feudalism, poverty, and Pakistani social hierarchies. In the story, women are treated as the Other not only because of gender but also because of economic dependency and limited social mobility. Therefore, applying Beauvoir's framework to *Saleema* demonstrates that the condition of women as the Other can also appear in different cultural and historical forms of patriarchy beyond Western society.

A short story titled *Saleema* by Daniyal Mueenuddin (2009), published in his collection *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*, is one of the examples of literary works that explore how women are seen and treated in patriarchal society, as Beauvoir explains in her framework. The story is set in Lahore, Pakistan, and presents a social environment where gender strongly influences someone's opportunities and social position. Through the female protagonist, the narrative shows how women are often placed in a lower position and judged based on their relationships with men. By depicting the female protagonist's struggle, the story reveals how patriarchal values shape women's identities. The most relevant aspect of the story lies in its representation of women who experience oppression within a patriarchal society.

Various previous studies have discussed the representation of women in Daniyal Mueenuddin's works, particularly in his short story collection *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*. Most of these studies highlight how women are represented within patriarchal social structures and experience various forms of oppression and marginalization. Several studies find that *Saleema's* character is described in stereotypical ways such as weak and dependent on men and is frequently represented as an object through the use of metaphors and expressions with sexist nuances, with her body and identity shaped by the patriarchal power structure in feudal society (Afzal & Sheikh, 2020; Khalid et al., 2025).

Other studies similarly state that *Saleema* is represented within a patriarchal society structure that reinforces gender stereotypes and the systematic objectification of women, while also portraying her as a subaltern figure whose voice and agency are limited by social hierarchy and economic dependence (Hakim & Khan, 2024; Hussain, 2021; Arshad et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2025). Although these studies are important in explaining how *Saleema* experiences oppression in a patriarchal society, some studies only describe the forms of *Saleema's*

subordination without examining the existential reasons. In addition to highlighting aspects of patriarchy, several studies examine the relationship between gender inequality and class hierarchy in Mueenuddin's works.

Women from different social classes, including Saleema, are denied through voice, agency, and independent identity due to patriarchal and feudal social structures, with the collection portraying rural Pakistan through representations that highlight feudalism, patriarchy, and class inequality, and lower-class characters experiencing false consciousness, a condition in which they are unaware of being exploited (Almas & Akhtar, 2019; Nazir et al., 2022; Nasrullah et al., 2024).

Further studies illustrate that poverty, social environment, and class hierarchy determine characters' fates and restrict their ability to change their lives, while also arguing that Saleema's life describes intersectional forms of oppression shaped by gender discrimination and class hierarchy in a patriarchal and postcolonial society and that the collection reflects strong ideological representation of class hierarchy, cultural norms, and power relations in Pakistani society (Qureshi et al., 2024; Jami et al., 2025; Imtiaz et al., 2024; Nazir et al., 2026).

Other research focuses on how language and discourse in literary texts reinforce gender power relations, finding various forms of linguistic anti-feminism in Mueenuddin's stories, such as the use of language that degrades women and metaphors that indirectly objectify female characters while also pointing out that the narrative highlights male dominance, female conflict, and the role of family upbringing in shaping Saleema's character (Shah et al., 2025; Huma & Sultana, 2023).

While this perspective provides a wider discussion by connecting Saleema's oppression to social, economic, and linguistic contexts, but it only focuses on external structural factors without addressing the existential dimension. On the other hand, some studies have started to explore how women negotiate their positions within patriarchal social structures, arguing that Saleema cannot be entirely understood as a passive victim as she also demonstrates forms of agency and survival strategies, while others explain that female characters negotiate with patriarchal structures through patriarchal bargains to gain temporary security and social mobility, but these strategies ultimately reinforce rather than challenge the patriarchal system (Tanvir & Amir, 2017; Mehmood & Bhatti, 2023). At the same time this perspective offers a deeper discussion about Saleema's condition but it does not fully examine whether her action can be considered a form of transcendence, which this issue remains unexplored.

Although the studies above have made important contributions to understanding patriarchal oppression, the objectification of women, and the relationship between gender and class in Mueenuddin's works, in writer's opinion, most studies still focus on the social marginalization and gender stereotypes experienced by female characters. While these approaches have successfully demonstrated women's subordinate position in patriarchal society, as far as the

writer knows, none has yet examined how female identity and subjectivity are constructed through the concepts of the Other, immanence, and transcendence that are proposed by Simone de Beauvoir through existential feminism.

In fact, Simone de Beauvoir's concept of the Other not only explains women's marginalized position but also highlights how women's identities are shaped through their relationships with men, who are positioned as dominant subjects and the Absolute. Beauvoir explains woman is defined as the Other by man, who has taken the role as the Self, whereas woman is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential, the Other. In writer's perspective, *Saleema* is the most suitable story among Daniyal Mueenuddin's works to be analyzed using Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist framework. Beauvoir's theory is considered the most appropriate approach because the story clearly portrays a woman whose life is shaped by patriarchal oppression. Although other stories in *In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* also depict female characters facing patriarchal oppression, *Saleema* presents the most complete portrayal of a woman whose identity and existence are continuously defined by the men around her from childhood until death.

The story reflects Beauvoir's concepts of the Other, transcendence, and immanence. *Saleema* is consistently treated as the Other throughout the story, while her opportunities to achieve autonomy and freedom are repeatedly limited. Even the one important decision she makes for herself eventually fails because of the patriarchal system surrounding her. In addition, her condition of dependency and limitation continues not only in her own life but also affects the future of her child. Therefore, *Saleema* provides the most comprehensive representation of Beauvoir's existential feminist concepts compared to the other stories in the collection. Thus, an analysis that positions woman as the Other allows not only for a more comprehensive understanding of how gender power relations are constructed and maintained in narrative but also are inscribed into the very conditions of woman's existence, shaping what they can be, do, and become.

Furthermore, the dynamics of the relationship between male dominance and female marginalization in *Saleema's* story have not been analyzed through the concepts of immanence and transcendence. Without considering these relational dynamics, an analysis of the female character could potentially view her solely as a victim of patriarchy, without understanding how social relations within the narrative contribute to shaping and maintaining that position. Therefore, this study aims to analyse how women are represented as the Other through the perspective of Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism, as well as the impacts of the representation of women as the Other in Mueenuddin's short story.

2. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the representation of women in a patriarchal society through textual interpretation. As

Darmawan et al. (2025), qualitative literary research relies on textual sources as the primary data and uses analytical interpretation to examine the meaning in the literary text. Qualitative research is suitable for literary studies because it focuses on interpreting meanings related to social and human issues (Creswell, 2014). This study applies close reading techniques and qualitative analysis to examine the literary text in detail. The data are presented in the form of textual excerpts and narrative descriptions rather than numerical data because the study emphasizes interpretation and meaning.

The study applies Simone de Beauvoir's (1989) existential feminist theory from *The Second Sex*, especially the concepts of the Other, transcendence, and immanence. Beauvoir's theory is relevant because it explains how women in patriarchal systems are treated as the Other and denied autonomy and subjectivity. These concepts are closely related to Saleema's experiences of oppression, dependency, and limited freedom. The primary data source is *Saleema* by Daniyal Mueenuddin (2009), while the secondary sources include *The Second Sex* and various academic discussions on feminist literary theory and Mueenuddin's works.

The data were collected through close reading by examining dialogues, phrases, words, and narrative descriptions related to the research questions. The textual evidence was not selected randomly but based on its relevance to Beauvoir's concepts and the research questions. For example, the passage "... and she herself at fourteen became the plaything of a small landowner's son" (Mueenuddin, 2009, p. 29) was selected because the word "plaything" reflects Beauvoir's concept of woman as the Other and shows Saleema's oppression in patriarchal society. This process helps ensure that the selected evidence directly supports the analysis.

After the relevant passages were collected, the data were organized into a classification table containing the excerpts, page numbers, and their relation to the research questions and theoretical concepts. The passages were then coded into the categories of the Other, transcendence, and immanence. Finally, the data were interpreted using Beauvoir's existential feminist framework to identify patterns of oppression, dependency, and limited agency in Saleema's life. To maintain validity, all interpretations were supported by textual evidence and analyzed consistently using the same theoretical framework throughout the study.

3. Result

In this section, the researcher will present quotations and narrative passages analyzed to address the study's questions. The quotations and narrative passages analyzed will begin with the depiction of a woman as the Other and then the impact of a woman as the Other in the short story by Daniyal Mueenuddin using Simone de Beauvoir's theory of existential feminism.

The Depiction of a Woman as the Other
Saleema Positioned as a Sexual Object since Childhood

In this short story, Saleema has been sexually objectified since she was a child. She was sexually objectified at the age of fourteen by the landowner's son. This demonstrates that even from a young age, Saleema has been reduced to an object rather than a person. This objectification is depicted in the opening of the short story.

... and she herself at fourteen became the plaything of a small landowner's son.
(In Other Rooms, Other Wonders, (2009), page 29)

The word "plaything" in here is not incidental, it is a definitive of naming. Saleema is not describing as a whole individual rather than an object. A word "plaything" here can also refer as a toy, something that exists only for entertaining and it has no will and purpose beyond pleasure it provides to whoever holds the toy. This idea aligns with Ali et al. (2021) that argue society viewed women not independent individuals but as objects or a tool whose roles and treatment are determined by men's interests and authority.

Saleema experiences objectification when she only fourteen years old before she has had the opportunity to build her identity and subjectivity, which makes this narrative suggests that her status as the Other was forced on her rather than chosen. This portrayal reflects Simone de Beauvoir's argument that women are socially constructed as the Other in relation to men who is placed as the Subject.

As Beauvoir says, She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to he, she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential, He is the Subject, he is the Absolute, She is the Other (Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxii). The characterization of Saleema at fourteen demonstrates this idea which her identity is defined through her relationship to a man who positions himself as the Absolute, while she is being reduced to an object of his desire.

Saleema's Existence Depends on a Man

The existence of Saleema in the short story apparently depends on men speaking on her behalf rather than on her own voice. When Shah Sahib, the account manager, attempts to remove Saleema by labelling her as corrupt and bad character Saleema is being excluded to defend and explain herself in the discussion regarding her future in the household. Instead, Rafik steps in and speaks on her behalf to justify her presence in the household by explaining her circumstances. This condition reveals how patriarchal system continue to operate through social institutions which maintain male dominance and female subordination. Certain figures, in many cases, are positioned as authorities who reinforce and control existing gender hierarchies (Fauzia & Rahayu, 2019, as cited in Batool & Hayat, 2025). As this one passage represent it.

"I beg your pardon, sir, about the maid Saleema who has been serving Begum Kamila. She's a poor girl and her husband is sick and she's useful in the kitchen. She makes the chapattis. If you can give her a place it would be a blessing."

(In Other Rooms, Other Wonders, (2009), page 44-45)

Rafik's defense of Saleema does not refer to humanity or human rights, but rather justifies Saleema's existence through her usefulness in the house and her attachment to her sick husband. This strongly suggests that Rafik judges Saleema on the basis of what the patriarchal system recognizes. Saleema does not even have a voice to defend herself in discussions about her life, but men speak and determine her fate. As Beauvoir (1989, p. xxv) states, women live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men, fathers, or husbands, more firmly than they are to other women. Saleema's presence in the household is not a result of her own agency and subjectivity, but rather Rafik's choice to represent her. Saleema survives not because she declares herself as a subject but because a man chooses to speak for her. This situation demonstrates that the existence of the Other is dependent on men.

The Impact of a Woman as the Other in Saleema Transcendence in Saleema

Throughout the entire story, every choice Saleema make is shaped by her dependence on men such as she did not get remove because Rafik speaks for her and defend her. Essentially, Saleema's life is always determined by men rather than herself. However, there is one moment she can choose what she wants for once in her life. One of the most significant impacts of Saleema is that she reached transcendence which is she makes a decision made entirely on her own terms. When Saleema finds out that she is pregnant with Rafik's child but he reacts negatively and she makes the only choice in her life that fully to herself.

But I won't give up the baby. I'd rather have the baby than Rafik.

(In Other Rooms, Other Wonders, (2009), page 50)

Saleema's thoughts are the only moment in the story where Saleema is able to determine her own life without dependence on men and for the first time her decision comes entirely from within herself. This is what Beauvoir means by transcendence, the ability of an individual to move beyond the limitations imposed by their circumstances and exercise their freedom through self-determined choice. Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out towards other liberties (Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxxiv). This act can be seen

through Saleema who decides to keep the child, describing herself as a subject rather than an object of someone's decision.

Nevertheless, this moment of transcendence does not ultimately transform Saleema's condition. Within two years of this decision, she loses her job as maidservant in K.K. Harouni household, fall into heroin addiction, and dies begging on the street of Lahore. Ironically her son which she chose to keep also ends the story as a beggar just like his mother, Saleema. This failure of transcendence occurs not because Saleema lacks the desire to be free, but because the desire for freedom alone is not sufficient. According to Beauvoir, transcendence requires external, material, and social conditions that make the achievement of freedom possible.

Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she, a free and autonomous being like all human creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign." (Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxxv).

Saleema demonstrates the potential transcendence, as evidenced by her choice to keep the child, but she lives in a world that consistently deprives her of the resources and opportunities necessary to maintain the freedom. Saleema has no financial independence and social recognition as a full human being rather than as an object. As result of that, her act of transcendence cannot be maintained because the structural conditions necessary to maintain that freedom were not made available to her.

Immanence in Saleema

One of the few indications of Saleema's personal values and agency is her strong rejection of drug addiction. Having witnessed both her father's life being destroyed by heroin and her husband's dependence on rocket pills purchased with the money Saleema earned as a maidservant in K.K. Harouni's household, makes her develop a deep resentment toward drugs and addiction. This opposition to addiction distinguishes her from the environment that surrounds her and serves as one of the ways she maintains her personal identity and moral convictions despite the hardships of her life. Nevertheless, Saleema's determination to distance herself from drugs does not last as illustrated in the following passage.

Within two years she was finished, began using rocket pills, which she once had so much despised, lost her job, went on to heroin, leaving her husband behind without a word. She knew all about that life from her husband and father.
(*In Other Rooms, Other Wonders*, (2009), page 60)

The phrase which she once had so much despised is the analytically critical detail in this passage. Mueenuddin does not simply tell us that Saleema became

addicted, he tells us that she became addicted to the very thing she most despised. This is not a neutral narrative detail but a deliberate and devastating one. It signals that Saleema has not just fallen into difficult circumstances, but has collapsed back into the exact pattern she had defined herself against. The woman who once pushed her husband out of the room for his addiction, who funded his pills, who carried herself with the pride of someone who would never become that, has become precisely that.

From Beauvoir's perspective, this should not be understood as a personal or moral failure on Saleema, but it is the result of a life shaped by social and material conditions that keeps restrict her opportunity to exercise freedom and pursue transcendence. As a writing from Beauvoir (1989, p. xxxv) every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the "en-soi" the brutish life of subjection to given conditions and of liberty into constraint and contingency.

This downfall represents a moral fault if the subject consents to it; if it is inflicted upon him, it spells frustration and oppression. In both cases it is an absolute evil. This distinction is important for understanding Saleema's downfall. Throughout her life, Saleema repeatedly shows that she does not willingly accept the limitations imposed on her. She forces her husband out of her life, moves from one household to another in search of survival, and ultimately chooses her baby over Rafik, a decision that represents one of the strongest expressions of her agency in the story.

These actions demonstrate resistance rather than surrender. However, despite her efforts, the circumstances surrounding her gradually leave her with fewer and fewer options. The loss of her position in the Harouni household, Rafik's abandonment, and her lack of financial independence make it increasingly difficult for her to support herself and her child. As a result, the restrictions that have shaped her life begin to overwhelm her completely. In this sense, immanence is not something Saleema chooses for herself, but it is a condition imposed upon her by forces beyond her control. When those forces become impossible to escape, the result is not freedom or choice but the destruction of her ability to act as an autonomous subject.

4. Discussion

The analysis of Saleema in Mueenuddin's short story through Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism approach reveals two interrelated aspects throughout the story. The first one is that how Saleema is portrayed as the Other, while the second one is the impact of depiction of the Other on her existence and fate. These two aspects demonstrate that Saleema's condition is not the result of personal misfortune or individual weakness, but rather of a structural and existential system that has denied Saleema's subjectivity since the beginning of her life.

The findings that indicate that Saleema depicted as the other is shaped through two mechanisms. First one is that Saleema is being reduced to a sexual object since she was a child, at fourteen. It can be seen by the word that the narrative used “plaything,” which indicates her existence mainly for male pleasure before she had any opportunities to build her own identity and agency. Second one is by her social existence that reflected by Rafik action in the story.

Instead of Saleema defends herself, Rafik speaks on Saleema’s behalf to secure her position as maidservant in K.K Harouni’s house. Altogether, these two findings suggest that Saleema as the Other operates on both physical and social levels which her body is treated as an object by men and her existence depends on the intervention of men who has power and authority.

Beauvoir claims that woman is defined in relation to man rather than as an independent subject is precisely reflected in Saleema. As Beauvoir states that woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential (Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxii). Saleema is never defined by who she truly is, but always by her relationships with the men who used and represent her.

These findings are consistent with previous research that has examined the objectification and marginalization of women in Mueenuddin’s works. Afzal and Sheikh (2020) found that Saleema is portrayed stereotypically, reducing her to an object through sexist language and metaphors. On the other hand, Arshad et al. (2025) reveal that female characters in the short story collection are systematically objectified within a patriarchal social structure. Further research by Ahmad et al. (2025) shows that Saleema is portrayed as a subaltern figure whose voice and agency are limited by social hierarchy and economic dependence.

This present study is consistent with these findings in identifying Saleema’s objectivity, but expands on it by showing that Saleema’s condition is not only a social phenomenon but also an existential one. This condition represents a structural rejection of Saleema’s subjectivity, her position as the Other, the inessential whose existence is always dependent on her relationship to men as the Absolute.

The findings that explain Saleema’s impact as the other show two distinct but inseparable states, transcendence that is ultimately untenable and the total collapse into immanence that ends Saleema’s life. The finding of transcendence points out that Saleema is not simply a victim of patriarchal structures, but a human being with the capacity for freedom.

Her decision to keep her the child is a moment in the narrative where she defines herself through her own will rather than through relationships with men. This is called transcendence according to Beauvoir, as she writes that every subject plays their part as such, specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; they achieve liberty only through a continual reaching out towards other liberties (Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxxiv). For the first and only time in the

narrative, Saleema transcends her circumstances and asserts herself as a free and autonomous subject through this decision. This is the moment where she exists as a subject rather than an object.

However, Saleema's moment of transcendence fails to alter her condition. The reason for this failure is not because Saleema lacks the desire for freedom, but rather because the desire for freedom alone is insufficient when the structural conditions of one's existence as the Other consistently foreclose any possibility of realizing that freedom. Beauvoir argues that what peculiarly signals the situation of woman is that she, a free and autonomous being like all human creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as an object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign (Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxxv).

Saleema demonstrates the potential for transcendence, as evidenced by her choice to keep her child, but she lives in a world that systematically denies her the conditions necessary to maintain that freedom, no financial independence, no social recognition as a full human being, no institutional support once the K.K. Harouni house dissolves and Rafik departs. Her act of transcendence is untenable because the structural conditions necessary to maintain that freedom were never available to her.

The findings on immanence highlighting the final outcome of Saleema's inability to sustain transcendence. Her eventual addiction, which mirrors the same destructive behavior she once condemned in both her father and her husband, should not be interpreted simply as a personal or moral failing. Instead, it reflects the impact of the conditions that have shaped her life. Beauvoir argues that there is an important difference between willingly accepting immanence which is may involve consent, and having it imposed upon oneself which results from oppression and the restriction of freedom (Beauvoir, 1989, p. xxxv).

Saleema's experience precisely falls into the second category. Throughout the story, she repeatedly demonstrates her desire to resist the circumstance imposed on her such as she despises her husband's behavior, moves from one house to another in search of stability which is by seeking for a job, and chooses her child over Rafik despite the personal consequences of that decision. These conditions show a persistent effort to assert her agency rather than surrender to her situation.

However, her ability to maintain that resistance gradually weakens as the social and material foundation of her life disappear; the collapse of the K.K. Harouni household, Rafik's abandonment, and the lack of financial independence leave her with increasingly limited options for survival. Such conditions make the possibility of sustaining freedom becomes more difficult to achieve and as result of that Saleema's return to immanence is not the result of her choice, but of a circumstance

that continuously deny her opportunities for self-determination. In Beauvoir's terms, this condition represents a form of oppression that ultimately destroys the individual's capacity to exist as a free subject, leading to what she describes as an absolute evil.

These findings differ from previous studies that view Saleema's agency and survival strategies as evidence of resistance to patriarchal oppression (Tanvir & Amir, 2017; Mehmood & Bhatti, 2023). While this study agrees that Saleema demonstrates agency, especially in her decision to keep her baby, Beauvoir's concepts of transcendence and immanence suggest that her actions do not fully represent transcendence. Instead, they reflect her efforts to survive within the limitations imposed on her. Rather than breaking free from oppression, Saleema's strategies remain tied to the conditions that limit her life.

The findings above show that Beauvoir's argument about patriarchal system positioned women as the Other by denying their subjectivity, limiting ability to maintain freedom which known as immanence, and also making transcendence hard to achieve. This confirms Beauvoir's statement that women are trapped in conditions that reduce them to inessential beings within patriarchal society.

5. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the depiction of a woman as the Other and its impact in Daniyal Mueenuddin's short story titled *Saleema* (2009) through the existential feminism framework by Simone de Beauvoir on her work *The Second Sex* (1989). By addressing two research questions, this study shows that Saleema's condition is not the result of individual misfortune or individual weakens, but of a structural and existential system that denies her subjectivity from the beginning of her life to its end. She is a woman whose entire existence is shaped by oppression that position her not as a person with her own will and identity, but as the Other, the inessential, that always defined in relation to men who is the Subject and the Absolute.

The first question reveals that Saleema is depicted as the Other through two mechanisms. Patriarchal structure reduces Saleema to a sexual object since her childhood and her complete dependence on male for her social existence. The second research question shows the impact of Saleema as the Other is that her entrapment in immanence. Although Saleema demonstrates the transcendence in her life, but this moment of transcendence fails due to social conditions that necessary to sustain it were never made available to Saleema.

This study contributes to enrich the existing research on Mueenuddin's work by depicting that Saleema's condition is not only a social phenomenon, but also a deeper existential condition. Using Beauvoir's concept of the Other, the study reveals that Saleema's subjectivity is limited by patriarchal structure that present her from being recognized as a fully autonomous subject. The analysis also shows that her effort to survive do not represent true transcendence, but rather forms of

immanence.

There are several limitations of this study such as the analysis only focuses on one short story and specifically examines the representation of patriarchy in context of Pakistani society in Mueenuddin's *Saleema*. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other literary works or cultural contexts. Future research may apply Beauvoir's existential feminist framework to literary works from different cultural backgrounds, such as African or other Asian societies, to explore how women are constructed as the Other in different forms of patriarchal systems. Future studies may also examine whether the concepts of immanence and transcendence operate differently across various cultural and historical contexts.

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