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## THE EXISTENCE OF WOMEN IN THE DARKEST MINDS: A FEMINIST STUDY BY BEAUVOIR

*Sheren Vipta Maulidya*

Universita Bangka Belitung

Email: [Sherenmldy96@gmail.com](mailto:Sherenmldy96@gmail.com)

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi perempuan dalam film *The Darkest Minds* dengan fokus pada karakter Ruby Daly melalui lensa teori feminis Simone de Beauvoir. Hal ini bertujuan untuk menggambarkan bagaimana Ruby mewujudkan perlawanan terhadap sistem patriarki yang menempatkan perempuan pada status “lainnya”, sehingga menegaskan independensi dan kesetaraan kemampuan mereka. Dengan menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis karakter Ruby sebagai perempuan mandiri yang mengarungi masyarakat yang membatasi potensi dirinya. Temuan ini mengungkapkan 26 poin data yang mencirikan pemberdayaan, solidaritas, dan kompleksitas keberadaan Ruby dalam kerangka patriarki. Secara khusus, analisis ini menyoroti 22 contoh pemberdayaan, 6 contoh "Yang Lain", 7 contoh solidaritas dan aksi kolektif, dan 5 contoh ambiguitas dalam karakterisasinya. Penelitian tersebut menyimpulkan bahwa perempuan, seperti Ruby, mempunyai hak untuk memimpin dan mengadvokasi kepentingan mereka sendiri, menantang anggapan bahwa mereka harus tetap berada di bawah laki-laki. Studi ini berkontribusi pada wacana feminis dengan menekankan pentingnya mengakui hak pilihan dan kemampuan perempuan, mendorong evaluasi ulang norma-norma sosial yang melanggengkan ketidaksetaraan gender. Pada akhirnya, hal ini berupaya menginspirasi perempuan untuk mendefinisikan identitas mereka dan menegaskan hak-hak mereka baik dalam konteks pribadi maupun masyarakat yang lebih luas.

Kata kunci: perempuan, Femisime, Feminis Eksistensialis.

### Abstract

*This study examines the representation of women in the film *The Darkest Minds*, focusing on the character Ruby Daly through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory. It aims to illustrate how Ruby embodies resistance against a patriarchal system that relegates women to an "other" status, thereby affirming their independence and equal capabilities. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the research analyzes Ruby's character as an independent woman navigating a society that imposes limitations on her potential. The findings reveal 26 data points that characterize Ruby's empowerment, solidarity, and the complexities of her existence within a patriarchal framework. Specifically, the analysis highlights 22 instances of empowerment, 6 instances of "the Other," 7 instances of solidarity and collective action, and 5 instances of ambiguity in her characterization. The research concludes that women, like Ruby, possess the right to lead and advocate for their own interests, challenging the notion that they must remain subordinate to men. This study contributes to feminist discourse by emphasizing the importance of recognizing women's agency and capabilities, encouraging a reevaluation of societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Ultimately, it seeks to inspire women to define their identities and assert their rights within both personal and broader societal contexts..*

**Keywords:** *women, feminism, existentialist feminism*

## PENDAHULUAN

In contemporary society, the representation of women in media remains a critical issue, particularly in the realm of film, where narratives often reflect and shape cultural attitudes towards gender. The urgency of this research stems from the pervasive nature of patriarchal systems that continue to marginalize women's voices and experiences. The *Darkest Minds* (2018), directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson, offers a compelling narrative that highlights the struggles of its female protagonist, Ruby Daly, against such systemic oppression. This study seeks to address the problem of gender inequality by analyzing Ruby's character through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory, which posits that women are often relegated to the status of "the Other" in a male-dominated society. Beauvoir firmly invites women to get out of this patriarchal power. *"We must discard the vague notions of superiority, inferiority, and equality that have hitherto corrupted every discussion of the subject ..."* (Beauvoir, 1956). Woman must resist the growing sense of superiority that comes with their power, refusing to accept a position of inferiority under a patriarchal system that is subjective to them.

The problem lies in the persistent portrayal of women as "the Other," a concept articulated by Simone de Beauvoir, which positions them as subordinate to men. This dynamic is evident in Ruby's journey, where her strength and capabilities are overshadowed by societal expectations and gender norms. The film illustrates the broader implications of gender inequality, where women are often relegated to passive roles despite their potential for leadership and empowerment. The study of women's representation in film, particularly through the lens of feminism, has garnered significant attention in recent years. Previous research has explored various aspects of feminist theory and its application to cinematic narratives, emphasizing the need to challenge patriarchal depictions of women.

One relevant study is conducted by Pidada et al. (2021), which discusses how film serves as a medium for feminist movements, highlighting the portrayal of women as objects within patriarchal structures. This aligns with the themes presented in *The Darkest Minds*, where Ruby Daly, the protagonist, embodies the struggle against societal constraints imposed on women. Additionally, Nugroho (2021) examines existentialist feminism, asserting that women should be viewed as subjects rather than objects. This perspective is crucial for understanding Ruby's character, who, despite her extraordinary abilities, faces systemic barriers that prevent her from achieving equality with her male counterparts.

The current study builds upon these foundations by employing a qualitative descriptive methodology to analyze Ruby's characterization in *The Darkest Minds*. It aims to uncover the nuances of her empowerment and resistance against a patriarchal system, contributing to the discourse on women's agency in media. By recognizing the significance of Ruby's journey, this research seeks to inspire women to assert their identities and challenge the limitations imposed by societal norms.

## **METODE PENELITIAN**

### **Type of Research**

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive research approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the character Ruby Daly and her representation within a patriarchal context.

### **Time and Place of Research**

The research was conducted in 2024 at Universitas Bangka Belitung, specifically within the Department of English Literature.

### **Targets/Subject of Research**

The main subject of the research is Ruby Daly, the female protagonist in *The Darkest Minds*, who serves as a representation of women's empowerment and resistance in a patriarchal society.

### **Procedures**

The research involves the following procedures:

- **Film Analysis:** The film is watched and analyzed to extract relevant themes and character traits.
- **Data Collection:** Data is collected through observation of Ruby's character and her interactions within the film's narrative.
- **Characterization Framework:** The analysis categorizes Ruby's traits into themes of empowerment, solidarity, and ambiguity.

### **Data, Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques**

The main instrument used in this research is the film *The Darkest Minds* (2018) directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson, along with Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theoretical framework to guide the analysis of Ruby's character. The way to collect data is by watching films repeatedly and noting important points that support the existence of Ruby Daly as the character being studied. then look at Ruby's characterization as depicted through the dialogues she says. then groups Ruby's characteristics into several groups in accordance with Beauvoir's feminist analysis.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis involves:

- Thematic Analysis: Identifying and categorizing themes related to empowerment and oppression within Ruby's characterization.
- Qualitative Coding: The research identifies 26 data points related to Ruby's character, including:
  - 22 points for empowerment
  - 6 points for characterization as "the Other"
  - 7 points for solidarity and collective action
  - 5 points for ambiguity

### **HASIL PENELITIAN DAN PEMBAHASAN**

One of the primary findings of the research is the empowerment of Ruby Daly as a central theme. The study identifies 26 data points that characterize Ruby's journey, with 22 instances showcasing her empowerment. This empowerment is not merely about possessing supernatural abilities; it reflects Ruby's resilience and determination to assert her identity in a world that seeks to marginalize her. As describe on the dialogue, Ruby's character challenges the notion that women must remain subservient to men, aligning with de Beauvoir's assertion that women should transcend the roles imposed upon them by patriarchal norms. “they are... subject to convulsive attacks, nervous laughter, and hysterics” (Beauvoir 1956). The research also emphasizes the importance of solidarity among women as a means of resistance against oppression. Ruby's interactions with other characters illustrate the necessity of collective action in challenging societal expectations. The research

underscores that solidarity is essential for women to navigate the complexities of their identities and to combat the systemic barriers they face. This theme resonates with contemporary feminist movements that advocate for unity and empowerment, reinforcing the idea that women can achieve more together than in isolation (Pidada et al., 2021).

Clancy: “I can prune and snip and rewrite you now into a better Ruby. The perfect Ruby. The Ruby I want you to be”

Ruby: **“I kinda like how I am”**

Ruby's power is the strongest among the other teens. Another person who has the power of Orange besides Ruby is Clancy Gray. Under these circumstances, only Ruby can fight Clancy's power. When a war broke out between Clancy and Ruby, Clancy tried to convince Ruby to be on his side. Clancy said that he could rewrite Ruby into a new Ruby, one that was perfect and to his liking. However, Ruby denies this by saying **“I kinda like how I am”**, emphasizing that no one can change her, no one can control her and no one can confine her. She is a free and independent woman with her own strength. Her empowerment makes her free to determine her values and goals. She is free to make decisions for her life and future without the influence of others. With this empowerment, she rejects marginalization in mind and mentally.

Additionally, the discussion addresses the concept of ambiguity in Ruby's character, reflecting the multifaceted nature of women's identities in a patriarchal society. While Ruby possesses extraordinary powers, her journey is fraught with challenges that highlight the societal perception of women as “the Other.” This duality illustrates the struggle many women face in reconciling their strengths with the limitations imposed by gender norms. Ruby Daly is a black woman who has long been valued by the patriarchy. McCann & Kim, say racism against black literature has had a huge impact on women's lives and the women's movement. The emergence of the second wave of the feminist movement in North America revealed that these works accurately depicted the impact of patriarchal values and practices on women's lives, and more importantly, that women's literature offered significant insights into women's experiences (2016, p. 99).

This research further explores Ruby's character's intersection with existentialist feminism, showing that her journey embodies the struggle for women to define their existence outside social boundaries. By analyzing Ruby's experience, patriarchal structures attempt to limit women to subordinate roles. This criticism is very relevant in the current context, where discussions regarding gender equality and women's rights continue to gain momentum. The film serves as a reminder that women, like Ruby, have the right to challenge and redefine their identities.

Ruby: **“I’m not scared of you. I’m trying not to hurt you”**

Ruby: **“I don’t want to do to you what I did to my parents.”**

Liam: “No. I’m never gonna forget you!”

Ruby: **“You can’t make that promise, Liam. You can’t help me. You’re not Orange. We’re not the same.”**

Empowerment is related to an increased sense of self-responsibility. Individuals who feel empowered tend to take full responsibility for their lives and decisions. They have the belief that they have control over their own destiny, which can increase motivation and independence. While self-definition involves acceptance and appreciation of differences. Empowerment encourages individuals to embrace their uniqueness and accept differences with others. Thus, self-definition is not only about how one sees themselves, but also about how they interact with their social environment. Liam felt disappointed with Ruby because Ruby didn't tell him about her powers. More than that, Liam was disappointed that Ruby very openly told Clancy about her past and her powers. He also felt that Ruby was afraid of him because every time Liam got close, Ruby would reflexively move away. **“I’m not scared of you. I’m trying not to hurt you”** Ruby replied emphasizing that she was not afraid of Liam. She was just trying not to hurt him with her power. Then Liam denied it, saying that he didn't care if Ruby knew everything about him. Then Ruby retorted with **“I don’t want to do to you what I did to my parents.”** Ruby snapped. The trauma she had experienced in the past made her afraid of her power harming those around her. She didn't want to repeat the same mistake she made to her parents. Liam also did not want to lose to Ruby, he seriously said that he would never forget Ruby no matter what happened. Ruby felt fed up arguing with Liam who didn't understand her feelings. Finally she said **“You can't make that promise, Liam. You can't help me. You're not Orange. We're not the same.”** Liam who heard this left Ruby. What Ruby said was true that the fear Ruby felt could not

reach Liam. Liam did not understand the pain Ruby felt through what she had been through. What Ruby did was a form of empowerment towards her life. She has a responsibility to protect herself and her future life. Her decision to keep her distance and not tell Liam about what she went through in her past is also a decision in the process of recognizing herself. Ruby is fully aware of the power she has and accepts that she is dangerous to others. With this, she tries to protect herself and others around her. Her process of self-recognition results in her social interactions being tightly guarded.

Ultimately, this research encourages women to recognize their agency and capabilities. It serves as a call to action for women to define their identities and assert their rights, challenging the patriarchal structures that seek to diminish their existence. This exploration not only enriches the understanding of feminist themes in *The Darkest Minds* but also inspires a broader conversation about women's empowerment in contemporary media.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

This research contributes significantly to feminist discourse by advocating for a reevaluation of women's roles in both film and society. By analyzing Ruby Daly's character through the lens of existentialist feminism, the study encourages women to recognize their agency and assert their identities. It serves as a call to action for women to challenge the patriarchal structures that seek to confine them, ultimately inspiring a more equitable future. The implications of this research extend beyond the cinematic realm, as it highlights the need for continued exploration of women's representation in media. By shedding light on the complexities of female characters, this study aims to inspire future research and discussions surrounding gender equality and women's empowerment. As society evolves, it is essential to support narratives that empower women and challenge the status quo, fostering an environment where women's voices and experiences are valued and recognized.

### **Suggestion**

This study discussed "The Existence Of Woman In A Movie *The Darkest Minds*: A Study Of Feminism By Simone De Beauvoir". This study analyzes the characterization of the main female character in *The darkest Minds* movie and how her characterizations support her to deconstruct patriarchal system by using the Existentialist feminism theory by Simone De Beauvoir. Some suggestions can be considered by other future researchers. Future researchers may compared the book and the movie of *The darkest Minds* and future

researcher can find characterization Solidarity and Collective action in deconstruct pathriarchal system in Rejecting Marginalization and characterization Ambiguity in deconstruct pathriarchal system in Rejecting Marginalization category and Breaking Free from Stereotype in other objects such as books, novels, speeches, song lyrics and others.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

My name is Sheren Vipta Maulidya, I was born in Mislak, Jebus June, 09<sup>th</sup> 2001. Below the social media account; email: [sherenmldy96@gmail.com](mailto:sherenmldy96@gmail.com), Instagram: shvipta\_

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