

## WOMEN'S EXISTENCE IN SIBEL ERASLAN'S HAJAR (A Feminism Study)

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### Abstract

This study was aimed to study and explain women's existence and Sibel Eraslan's *Hajar* novel structure based on feminism literature. This is a qualitative research using content analysis method. The findings in this study include; (1) the building element structure contained in *Hajar* covering theme, characterization, plot, and background; (2) women's images in *Hajar* which includes both physical and non-physical images; (3) women's roles in *Hajar* which corresponds domestic and public roles. The existence theory used to study *Hajar* was Kiekegaard's existence theory which defines images and roles. The theory was used to analyze the efforts undertaken by women against oppression. The results of this study are expected to be useful in the process of learning language and literature, especially in feminism studies, as to improve learners and readers' ability in understanding literary works.

**Keywords:** *women, existence, feminism, novel.*

### INTRODUCTION

Existence is the discussion of being. Every human being shows its existence in different ways, through the ways of each individual. In essence, no human being in this world has the same purpose and identity. In other words, everyone shows different ways to actualize themselves. There are differences in term of existence between women and men. Many believe that women as a *mysterium fascinosum*, a captivating mystery. This shows women as a weak figure when compared to men. Phitagoras said, "There is a good principle which created order, light, and man, and an evil principle which created chaos,

darkness, and woman. "Thus, the human's view of the existence of men and women. It is as if women are born just as a chaotic being, while men are always referring to goodness. But in fact, religions explain that women are a person who actually possesses the nature of patience and endurance to face the demanding life. In certain contexts, when deciding on a matter, women's decisions are based on feelings, in contrast to men who decide things based on logic.

So much behavior is shown by women in an attempt to show their true identity. Women are not always in the confines of men. Even in foreign countries (like Japan), many women climbed into a position parallel to the

men. Either in terms of economy or social status. In Indonesia, in the government of this country, women can sit on the same position with men in the people's representative office for example, ministry institutions, even as a President. In addition, in Madura, women are regarded by men as an honor. It was revealed by Syafoedien that, in the Madurese male community, women are the symbol of honor and dignity, a symbol of masculinity, patriotism, courage, and chivalry. However, in this era, there are still some communities who regard women as the weak and the backwards. In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, women are not allowed to serve as leaders in several institutions in the area. Until now, the laws governing the governor's leadership in the area do not allow women to become chairperson or leaders. In addition to women's rights, in a patrilineal orderly society like the Batak Karo people, only men are entitled as heirs. This is because Batak Karo people consider women out of the original patrilineal group after they got married.

Issues faced by women do not only lie in the reality of life, but also in the literary world as discussed earlier. Women's existence appears in the literary works as the background of women to show their existence. So many problems, events are revealed in a novel. One of the problems in a novel story plot is about women's existence. The existence in question is women's image, especially women issues that refer to their struggle. In recent years, women have arisen with various kinds of existence, movement, and struggle.

This could be analyzed using the feminism approach in literature.

Feminism approach is expected to overcome the androcentrism and representation of women and men. It is also expected to consider the women's life experiences and their overall subjectivity to define the world in building knowledge. It is clear that women are not presented, inaudible, and connoted by a male-standard universal interpretation in the development of science. This experience demands a more equitable methodology initiative and an answer for the inevitable difference between men and women.

Referring to what has been mentioned before, the novel in which tells of women's existence is a novel by Sibel Eraslan. Sibel Eraslan's novel that will be studied is entitled "Hajar", considering the novel is a Best Seller International one which tell series of the greatest woman. In addition to "Hajar", Sibel Eraslan also wrote novels about other women's circumstances namely Asiyah, Maryam, Khadizah, and Aisha. The reason for choosing "Hajar" by Sibel Eraslan as the object of this research was because it is a novel written by a female writer, whose literary works have been worldwide recognized. "Hajar" gives birth to women's image with various attributes and characters, and contains the phenomenon of women's struggles made by a woman as well.

Women's existence is so attached in "Hajar", as in a quotation in the novel that says, "*Aku adalah satu-*

*satunya pewaris Kabilah Col Mirleri, dan aku adalah putri dari kepala adat; seorang yang terhormat yang telah memberikan pendidikan sebagai orang yang terhormat pula kepada putrinya. Akulah satu-satunya ahli waris yang tersisa dari keluarga yang suci dan terhormat. Meskipun dia adalah seorang Komandan, seorang Duta Besar yang telah memenangkan peperangan sekali pun, aku sama sekali tidak sudi melihat wajahnya.”* (“I am the only heir of Col Mirleri, and I am the daughter of the village chief; a distinguished man who has educated his daughter. I am the only remaining heir of a holy and honorable family. Even though he is a Commander, an ambassador who has never won a war once, I do not want to see his face at all.”) This one quote is women’s existence in “Hajar”. By analyzing the novel, it clearly shows how women express and view women as their own, who want to be free, move, and struggle to describe their existence as a couple, and members of society.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used qualitative approach, with content analysis method. Qualitative approach aims to create a description, painting in a systematic, factual and accurate ways about facts, properties and relationships between under-investigated phenomena qualitatively. The facts are data about female characters depicted by the author in "Hajar" using feminism theory.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the research. The findings in this section are quotes taken from data collection which are deemed to be representative of the data as a whole, the quotations have content and means of disclosure appropriate to the sub-focus in this study. The quotations are taken from the words in the novel that can describe the focus of this research on women's existence that includes their image, and roles. There are also sub-citations of the intrinsic element in the novel. In all, the data collected as much as 87 data about women's existence that include their image and roles. The data that belong to the woman's existence is then divided into several sections. The data collection includes every aspect of the quotation which represents women’s existence. The complete data can be seen in the attached table.

### 1. “Hajar” Structure

An intrinsic element is a novel builder element that generally consists of theme, plot, character and characteristics, and setting.

#### 1) Theme

The theme raised in “Hajar” novel is life problems experienced by Hajar, the main character, when her residence was colonized by King Awemeleh, then she was asked to be a concubine for the king, until she finally meets with Sarah and Ibrahim, and became the wife of Ibrahim. This novel also tells the story of how the struggle of a woman named Hajar in undergoing various kinds of polemic of life that

came to her. Here's one the quotes: *Aku adalah satu-satunya pewaris Kabilah Col Mirleri. Dan, aku adalah puteri dari kepala adat; seorang yang terhormat yang telah memberikan pendidikan sebagai orang yang terhormat pula kepada putrinya. Akulah satu-satunya ahli waris yang tersisa dari keluarga yang suci dan terhormat. Meskipun dia adalah seorang komandan, seorang Duta Besar yang telah memenangkan peperangan sekalipun, aku sama sekali tidak sudi melihat wajahnya. (hal 14)* ("I am the only heir of Col Mirleri, and I am the daughter of the village chief; a distinguished man who has educated his daughter. I am the only remaining heir of a holy and honorable family. Even though he is a Commander, an ambassador who has never won a war once, I do not want to see his face at all." (p. 14).

## 2) Plot

"Hajar" is told through the first person's perspective as a storyteller so that all problems are told in detail by her. Overall, Hajar uses a chronological pattern: A-B-C-D-E. The initial phase consists of the introduction of the main character, Hajar, then there is the emergence of conflict, where the middle phase tells the peak of conflict and climax, while in the final stage is conflict resolution.

## 3) Characters

In the novel, there are a main character and side characters. The main character in the novel is described dramatically and analytically. There are two female characters that dominate and influence the story, Hajar and Sarah. The main character introduced at

the beginning of the story in the novel is a character named Hajar who was originally a child of the customary chief of Col Mirleri. When the area was colonized by King Awemeleh, it instantly changed Hajar's role. Hajar was made a prisoner slave that would be presented to Awemeleh. However, with the plan made by Hazyerec, changes of circumstances befall on Hajar. Hajar was finally released from the palace filled with contempt. Hajar managed to get out of the king's court, and then she joined the entourage of prophet Ibrahim to live a nomadic life with the aim of spreading religion.

The second most influential female character in the novel is Sarah, or the first wife of prophet Ibrahim who are recounted in the mid and final part of the novel. Most of the depictions of Sarah's characters are described dramatically. As the wife of a prophet, Sarah has such a commendable character. Everyone who saw her said that Sarah is a woman who possesses physical beauty and heart. It is evident, from every word, behavior, and thought conveyed in the novel.

Hazyerec is a Harem courtman, who had an obligation to make captive women beautiful to be selected by king Awemeleh to serve as his concubine. At first, Hajar saw Hazyerec as a cruel, arrogant, and ruthless figure. But after Hazyerec learned that Hajar was a woman who shared the same background, Hazyerec changes and shows his true self in front of Hajar. It turns out that during his time in the Harem, Hazyerec pretends to be someone else who is actually far from

the nature or the original character that is in him.

#### 4) Settings

Hajar describes three types of settings, namely place, time, and atmosphere. The place setting is shown in the novel as follows: *Setibanya di Kenan, tenda Sarah adalah tenda yang pertama didirikan. Baru kemudian Nabi Ibrahim pergi ke perbatasan, ke lembah paling luar untuk mendirikan tenda tempat penyembelihan hewan kurban dan juga mushala sebagai tempat beribadah. (hal 168)* ("Upon our arrival at Kenan, Sarah's tent was the first to be erected. Only then did the Prophet go to the border, to the outermost valley to erect a tent where sacrificial animals and also a place for worship lies." (p. 168)

The time setting in "Hajar" tells various events and timelines as follow: *Hari sudah hampir petang. Aku harus segera selesai mempersiapkan semuanya sebelum Nabi Ibrahim datang. Aku rapikan semua barang, membakar dupa pengharum ruangan kemudian aku mulai menunggu kedatangan beliau. Makan malam juga sudah siap, namun beliau tidak juga kunjung datang. (hal 294)* ("It was almost dawn. I must finish preparing everything before Prophet Ibrahim

came. I tidied up all the things, burned the air freshener incense and then I started waiting for him to arrive. Dinner was also ready, but he did not come." (p. 294)

Aside from place and time settings, the novel also describes atmosphere setting. The atmosphere can be seen in the following quotes: *Begitu bertemu dengan Nabi Ibrahim, kapten kapal langsung bersimpuh menangis sembari memperbarui keyakinannya dengan menyatakan beriman dan berbaiat kepada Nabi Ibrahim. Kami menyaksikan peristiwa istimewa ini ikut menangis. (hal 130).* ("As soon as he met the Prophet, the captain of the ship immediately sank to tears while renewing his faith by declaring his faith and binding to Prophet Ibrahim. We wept as we watched this special occasion." (p. 130).

There were 38 data found based on the findings on the structure of the novel. 1 quotation is based on the theme aspect found in Sibel Eraslan's Hajar. Then, as many as 20 data are about characters and characteristics. 5 data is about settings, while the plot is described in 12 data. See the table below.

**Novel Structure Data Classification Table**

No.	Novel Structure	Data
1.	Theme	1

2.	Plot	12
3.	Characters	20
4.	Settings	5
Total		38

The table above is a data classification table of the novel structure found in Sibel Eraslan's Hajar. In the novel structure, 1 quotation was found about theme, where the quote depicts a picture of women's existence in the main character named Hajar. The depictions of women's existence show what they experienced and how the main characteristics in the novel. The novel is closely related to the various forms of existence seen from female characters. On the plot, 12 data were found, where it appears that the author found out "Hajar" incorporates chronological plot. This is because the novel tells the life story of Hajar from her adolescents, adults, being a wife, and a mother. Then, for the aspect of characters and characterizations, 20 data were found. The data depicts a character that reflects women's existence. Characters and characterizations that depict women's existence were obtained based on three female characters in the novel, namely Hajar, Sarah, and Hazyrec. Women's existence is clearly illustrated through the three female figures. Furthermore, 5 data were found for the setting aspect. The data is a depiction of atmosphere, time, and place settings. Overall, the analyzed data was derived from the dialogue and narration of the female characters in the novel. It can be

concluded the data structure of the novel which is divided into 4 parts, namely theme, plot, settings, and characters written in the novel is totaling 38 data.

## 2. Women's image

In the data collection on the female image aspect, 47 quotes were collected. Here are the quotes that represent women's image, and for the full quotation of women's image can be seen in the appendix. Women's Image; *Ya, Sarah adalah seorang wanita tidak hanya berasal dari kalangan pilihan, tapi juga terpilih langsung oleh zat yang maha menciptakan. Semua orang pasti tahu saat kali pertama melihatnya bahwa ia adalah orang yang terpilih. Ia anggun, cantik, dan lemah lembut. Namun juga menunjukkan sikap yang tegas dan penuh karisma. Ia adalah bara gunung yang kokoh menjulang tinggi bagi tegaknya hukum dalam kehidupan ini. (h 106).* ("Yes, Sarah is a woman not only from among the special, but also was raised directly by the Creator. Everyone would know when they first saw that she was the chosen one. She is elegant, beautiful, and meek. But it also shows a firm attitude and full of charisma. She is a towering mountain for the rule of law in this life. (p. 106)

The data contains elements or characteristics of the study of women's

existence in terms of imaging. The data is utilized, because it has a specific purpose. The quote shows that Hajar is a woman who has such a piercing word to the Ambassador of Awemeleh's envoy who has ravaged the area where Hajar lives. Due to Hagar's hatred toward the Ambassador, out the vile words of Hajar's mouth pierced the heart of the North's Ambassador. The data that contains the women's image

in the novel has characteristics, characters that fit the image of women. The findings were based on words that describe the existence of a female image in the novel. Based on findings on the women's image, 47 data were found. 12 quotations based on the physical aspect are found in the novel. For the women's image, in terms of non-physical image, 35 data were data. See the table below.

**Women's Image Data Classification Table**

No.	Women's Image	Data
1.	Physically	12
2.	Non-physically	35
Total		47

The table above is a data classification table of women's image quotes found on the novel Hajar by Sibel Eraslan. In the physical image aspect of women, 12 quotes were taken from three female characters, namely Hajar, Sarah, and Hazyrec. The three have physical characteristics different from one another. The physical features of Hajar are mirrored as a woman who has an ordinary face with dark skin tone; Sarah's physical features are portrayed as a woman who has almost perfect wajah (very beautiful) and has a radiant white skin, while for the physical characteristics of the Hazyrec character has a creepy face. Furthermore, on the aspect of the women's image viewed in terms of non-physical, as many as 35 data were taken from the three female characters. Hajar character has a strong and

courageous female one. Non-physical image of Sarah's character has a clever, mature, strong, and brave character. Furthermore, the non-physical image of Hazyrec has a firm, strong, and courageous one. It can be seen that the three female figures have good non-physical images, which mean the three characters are characterized as a strong and courageous woman. The data analyzed derived from the dialogue and narration of the female characters in the novel Hajar. It can be concluded women's image viewed from the physical and non physical aspects in the novel were amounted to 47 data.

### 3. Women's roles

In the data collection on the female role aspect, 40 data were found. Following is a quote that represents womae's role, and for the full female

role quote can be seen in the appendix. *Jika engkau bertanya tentang keadaan Ismail, ketahuilah bahwa ia sangat baik. akhlaknya mulia, sopan, santun, dan berkasih terhadap yang sesama. Masyarakat Jurhum sering mengajari Ismail menggunakan pedang, membidik dengan anak panah, bergulat, dan mengendarai kuda. Bahkan, Ismail saat ini juga sudah mulai menghafal suhuf-suhuf yang telah diturunkan Allah kepada engkau. Setiap hari, secara khusus aku membimbingnya untuk hal ini. (h 404).* (“If it is about Ismail’s circumstances, you should know that he is very well. He is noble, polite, and love others. Jurhum people often teach Ismail to use swords, shoot with arrows, wrestle, and ride horses. Ismail now also has started memorizing suhuf-suhuf that Allah has revealed to you. Every day, I specifically guide him to this.” (p 404).

The data above contains elements or characteristics of the female role aspect. The data is used for having a specific purpose, to describe the existence of a phrase that proves the role of a woman. It illustrates that the role of Hajar is the daughter of an village chief. Hajar is an honorable woman born of a holy and honorable family. She wants the Ambassador who has colonized her residence not to do cause chaos. Data containing women’s role in the novel has characteristics, characters that fit with women’s role. The findings were based on words that describe women’s role. Based on the findings on women’s role, 40 quotes were found. 10 domestic-based quotations were found in the novel. Then, for women’s role from the public side, 30 data were identified. See table below

**Women’s Role Classification Data Table**

No.	Women’s role	Data
1.	Domestic	30
2.	Public	10
Total		40.

The above is a data classification table of women’s role quote found in the novel. In women’s role in the domestic aspect, 30 quotes were found. The 30 quotes are domestic roles that exist in two female characters, Hajar and Sarah. Sibel Eraslan describes the role of (domestic)

Hajar as a child, as a wife, and as a mother, while for the domestic role depicted by the author of the character Sarah; she only acts as a wife. Furthermore, women’s role in the public sphere is found as many as 10 data. The data describe the role of the public of two female leaders, Hajar and

Sarah. Hajar has a public role as a member of the group of followers of Prophet Ibrahim, while the public role which is on the character Sarah is as a counselor, or preacher in every religious gathering of women followers of the Prophet. The data analyzed derived from the dialogue and narration of the female characters in the novel. It can be concluded that the data on women's role viewed from the public and domestic aspects that existed in the Hajar novel is amounting to 40 data.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions obtained in this study are as follows; first, the structure of Sibel Eraslan's Hajar was built on novel structures in the form of themes, plot, settings, characters, and characterizations. The theme used found in the novel is about the life of a woman whose terms with the changes she experienced during her lifetime. The plot used in the Hajar novel is a chronological one. There are several phases in the plot including the beginning, conflicting climax, peak climax, and ending. For the settings in the novel, Sibel used place, time, and atmosphere settings. Then on the character and characterization, there are female characters that have strong and courageous characteristics, namely Hajar as the main character, Sarah and Hazyrec as supporting characters.

Second, women's image found in the novel is divided into two parts: physical and nonphysical. The author found the existence of physical and nonphysical imagery in three female characters in the novel Hajar, including the Hajar figure who is the main

character and the two other female characters namely Sarah and Hazyrec. The portrayal of women's image in the three female characters is different from each other. In the physical imagery possessed by Hajar as the main character, she has a physical description as a woman who has black skin, and has an unattractive face. Physical image of the Sarah figure is that she has a very beautiful face, and very white skin, while the physical image owned by Hazyrec female figure is the figure of an elderly woman, who looks arrogant and ruthless. There are similarities in the inner nonphysical image in each of the three female characters. The three female characters have a nonphysical image as a strong, tough, and courageous woman.

Third, women's role found in the Hajar novel by Sibel Eraslan is divided into two parts: the domestic role and the public role. The author found the existence of public and domestic roles existed in several female characters in the novel Hajar, including the Hajar figure who is the main character and Sarah. The portrayal of women's roles in the two women's figures is different from each other. In a domestic role, the character of Hajar plays the role of a mother, daughter and wife. As for Sarah, her role is as a wife. Hajar's domestic role as the main character is as an obedient child to her parents, Hajar is a devout wife to a husband, and a mother who loves and protects her son (Ismail). Domestic role attached to Sarah is as a wife who is very respectful, obedient, and loves her husband (Prophet Ibrahim). As for the public role that exists in both female characters, Sarah has a public role as a

preacher who used to speak or give advice to women who participated in religious teachings or entourage followers of Prophet Ibrahim. As for the Hajar figure, Hajar acts as a woman who is active in social activities, actively participating in every gathering of women or the Prophet, and actively helping to complete every need required by the Prophet Ibrahim's entourage.

Overall, the novel has women's existence in the form of image and women's role. The data on women's existence found are 87 data that include women's role and image. Women's image data found in Sibel Eraslan's Hajar based on the physical, 12 data were gathered, whereas from non-physical aspect, as many as 35 data were found. The analyzed data derived from the dialogue and narration of the female characters in the Hajar novel. Then, on the aspect of women's role based on the public aspect, 10 data were collected, while in domestic aspect, as many as 30 data were identified. The analyzed data derived from the dialogue and narration of the female characters in the Hajar novel. It can be concluded that the data on women's role viewed from the public and domestic aspects in Sibel Eraslan's Hajar are amounted to 40 data.

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