

An analysis of existential feminism on *Bombshell* (2019) movie

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Abstract

Feminism existentialists focus on women's existence as an object for men. This study analyzes existential feminism in Bombshell movie, released in 2019, written by Charles Randolph and directed by Jay Roach. This study used existentialist feminism by Simone de Beauvoir. The study aims to discover how women exist as "the other" and how the resistance form of women exists in Bombshell's 2019 movie. The research method used in this study is a descriptive-qualitative method to analyze the data. The result of the study found about 3 (three) women's existence as "the other," which consists of (1) The different positions of women and men, (2) Violence against women, (3) Sexual harassment, and also found about 4 (four) the resistance form of women existence, which consists (1) Women can work, (2) Women can become intellectuals, (3) Women can work as socialist transformation for society, (4) Surpass their limit, and the study showed if there still discrimination forms towards women that had been happened with women characters on Bombshell 2019 movie. Also, there were the resistance forms of women characters in Bombshell 2019 movie to resist their existence as "the other."

Keywords: *Bombshell, Existentialist Feminism, Feminism*

1. Introduction

Literature is one of the ways humans communicate, and it is manifested by artistic writing. Literary works usually do not only tell about facts but also something made up or fictional (Rainsford, 2014). Literary works' most important components or aspects are imaginative and creative aspects such as poetry, drama, fiction, and other imaginative writings. Pictures of the works are also part of literary works created into fiction and had stories (Bressler, 2011). In the late 1800s, motion pictures became popular. At the beginning of the 20th century, motion pictures developed and changed, making it a forum for expression and entertainment for the public (Paxson, 2010). Over the decades, motion pictures have come into university literature courses, and the literature professors called it film. Nonetheless, the film is a part of the literature study and cannot be separated. Studies about films can assist in improving innovative ways of literature analysis (Bennett, 2004).

Films consist of elements of a visual object, and each element on the frame produces the object's meaning. Films can be analyzed based on the narrative, such as novels, or the pictures, such as paintings. The film's narrative had the same elements as novels by selecting and combining scenes. The frame is the important thing that creates meaning in the films (Seilatuw et al., 2020). The position of the camera action determined the meaning of the size and shape of the frame of the pictures (Ryan, 2012). In the last few decades, the curiosity and understanding about gender and how to understand the relation of gender to a film has

increased, especially the interest in studying feminism in film (Nelmes, 2011). Feminism is a struggle to end sexual repression and discrimination toward women (Jenainati, 2007). Women are often most victimized by sexist oppression, and every day, they are beaten down mentally, physically, and spiritually. It happens because they cannot change their condition (Hooks, 2015). Men and women are two types of human species, and women are a species that can be explained as a womb or an ovary and are purposes to reproduction (Beauvoir, 2010). In society, there are still false beliefs about women.

Women intellectually and physically are less capable than men, and it tends to discriminate towards women in the academy, forum, and the marketplace. It is unfair because women should be able to succeed in society as men do (Tong, 2017). The rise of cases of sexual harassment that occurs in women makes researchers choose the *Bombshell* film to be analyzed. This is because the storyline in the film is following with what happens to women victims of sexual harassment in the work environment. In addition, the film is based on the true story of a woman Fox News employee whom the Fox News CEO had sexually harassed. *Bombshell* movie tells about sexual harassment by Roger Ailes, the CEO of Fox News. Roger is known to have committed acts of harassment against his female employees since 1960. In his actions, Roger promised a salary increase or a better position to female employees who wanted to have sex with him.

2. Theoretical Framework

Feminist existentialist theory has a point of view about women's existence in society. This theory is based on the theory of existentialism by Jean-Paul Sartre in his book *Being and Nothingness*. However, Simone de Beauvoir focuses more on women's societal situation (Tong, 2017). Jean-Paul Sartre divided three principles or concepts of existentialism. The first is being in itself, the second for itself, and the third for others. The third concept of Jean-Paul Sartre is based on the concept of Simone de Beauvoir feminist existentialist. In the third concept, Jean-Paul Sartre explained that human relations with each other are divided into two. It is a conflict between rival awareness, among the self and the other, which results in love that was originally based on masochism, and carelessness, ardor, and hatred are based on sadism (Tong, 2017).

A woman's body has a uterus that functions to give birth. Therefore, there is an assumption that a woman's body is meaningless if there is no support from a man's body, while a man's body is for itself. In this case, it can be ascertained if men are subjects and absolute, while women are objects or called 'the other' (Beauvoir, 2010). De Beauvoir observed the facts of women's biological and psychological role in giving birth. The woman's physical is weaker than the man's (Tong, 2017). Therefore, women are considered part of men and not men who are part of women.

Women as "The Other"

According to Simone de Beauvoir, there are three oppressions against women. First, the different positions of women and men. Men defined women as human beings who always depend on men. It is because men are subject, and they are absolute, and women are an object or "the other." Men consider the acts of women to be the only symbol of their anxiety, and they will win their action if men have agreed with them (Beauvoir, 2010). Second, violence against women. In society, men are subjects, and women are objects. Men's bodies have meaning because, in their opinion, men can live without women, and they define themselves as "itself," and for them, humanity is male. Women's bodies, in men's point of view, are nothing without men. In other words, women's bodies cannot live without men.

Third, sexual harassment. Women are nothing; they are an object, and they are nothing unless men tell them to become what men want. Men called women "the sex," which means men inherently saw women as creatures that have "sex" to fulfill men's desire. Because men called her "sex women cannot become absolute (Beauvoir, 2010).

Women's Ways to Refuse as "The Other"

On *the other*, women become the object for men and have to be obedient. According to Beauvoir in Rosmarie Tong (2017), there are four strategies that women can employ to cease *the other*. First, women can go to work. Beauvoir knows that the work system in capitalist patriarchy is oppressive and exploitative. Especially for women, it can make them work double in a day. It is because if women get work other than at home, they have to work double in the factory and at home. However tough and tiring the job, they still give women a job. By working outside besides men, women can regain their ability and, emphasize women's status as *subjects* and become free to do anything.

Second, women can become intellectuals. Women can be intellectuals, such as by joining a female movement organization. Intellectual activity is the activity for someone who becomes a thinker, looks, and gives an opinion, and not someone who is non-active, thinking only about something, supervisor, and definition. De Beauvoir supports women in studying writers such as Emily Bronte, Virginia Woolf, and Katherine Mansfield, who took it seriously to discover the issues of death, life, and suffering.

Third, women can work as a socialist transformation for society. Like Sartre, Beauvoir hopes the subject-object thing can end the conflict about self-other or between men and women. Beauvoir trusts that the key to women's freedom is economic, and the point of her discussion is about independent women. Beauvoir told them that the environment would restrict them, and the number of money in women's bank accounts also restricted them. Fourth, to surpass their limit, women can ignore the opinion about their being the *otherness* using the dominant circle in society. Beauvoir argued that if women accept their role as *the other*, they agree to become *objects*.

3. Research Method

This study used the qualitative method to analyze existentialist feminism in Bombshell. Patricia Leavy (2017), the qualitative method is a method to examine the meaning or the process of forming meaning through data obtained based on the activities and circumstances of the people and objects being studied. The qualitative method refers to the broad meaning used in research in generating data from spoken and written words based on observable activities (Taylor, 2016). The qualitative methods can reveal the main issues in observing phenomena or circumstances of people or objects. The qualitative methods provide an understanding of the habits that people do. In other words, qualitative research helps us understand the world, society, institutions, and the issues or problems around them (J. Tracy, 2013). This study used the following methods to collect the data related to the problem formulation: First, watching the film several times and focusing on the film's conversation can give an understanding of the film's meaning. Second, take note of every scene and stop it to write about the screen time and the dialog related to the two problem formulations. Third, after watching the film, the studies observed and identified the needed data and used the qualitative method to analyze and find the topic related to the problem formulation. Fourth, after the data is collected, there will be the process of selecting, identifying, and classifying the data that is considered important to this study.

4. Result and Discussion

Women's Existence as "The Other"

The Different Positions of Women and Men

Men are defined as "itself" or subject, and women as "the other" or object. The subject and object always have a conflict where mostly the subject thinks the object is weak and the subject can do anything towards the object.

Datum 4

Kelly: Well, the thing is, sir, I actually started on-air during college in Central Florida. Weather. I want to convince you that that is where I belong, Mr.Ailes, I think I'd be freakin phenomenal on your network. (38:18)

Kelly told Ailes that she started an on-air job in college. It shows that she was a woman who could go to work and get an education for a better future. Kelly tries to convince Ailes she will do her job without any problems if she gets promoted because of her experience. Also, she indirectly praises Ailes for his power that he can do anything with his word. It showed that if men have more power than women, they will make women do anything for them with the power they have. Kelly shows that if she can convince Ailes, she will get a better position and a high salary.

Violence Against Women

Men are the subjects, and women are the objects in the society rules. Men can do anything they like, and women have to get permission from men to do what they want. It made men have control over women's bodies, such as doing violence towards women. For men, their bodies are absolute, and women are not. So, they assume that women's bodies cannot live without men.

Datum 8

Megyn: Mr.Trump, one of the things people love about you is you speak your mind, and you don't use a politician's filter. In particular when it comes to women. You called women you don't like "fat pigs, dogs, slob, and disgusting animals." (08:37)

The statement by Donald Trump can cause other men to look down on women because Trump is an important person who will lead America and have many supporters. In this case, it seems like men still normalized violence against women in such a harsh word. They think little about that and do not care about women's feelings. They said hurtful things that can damage women.

Sexual Harassment

Based on Simone de Beauvoir, men's point of view towards women was called "the sex." It was because women could give birth. As "the sex," they become an object of sex or men's fantasy, only to fulfill their sex needs.

Datum 18

Brian: All I want from you, Rudi, is to see the inside of your hotel room. (15:49)

Rudi : (God damn it). Brian, if I've done anything to make you think I feel that way about you, I apologize. We're friends. We have a great professional vibe. (16:08)

Based on the dialogue, Brian asks his female partner at work, Rudi, if he wants to see the inside of her hotel room. In other words, Brian wants Rudi to do sexual things with him in her hotel room. It showed that Brian saw Rudi not only because she was his partner at work but also as an object of his sexual desire. He underestimates her and thinks that he can do anything to her, like sex, because he only sees her according to her appearance, not based on her ability. It showed that men thought of women in sexual ways and assumed that women were objects to fulfill their desires. But Rudi already expected this to happen to her, so she kindly rejected him.

The Resistance Form of Women's Existence

Women Can Work

Simone De Beauvoir argued that women can also work outside the house and do jobs with men. With that, it can help women prove their existence in society, emphasize their status as the subject or being "itself" like men, and have a right to do anything they want without fear.

Datum 4

Kelly: Well, the thing is, sir, I actually started on-air during college in Central Florida. Weather. I want to convince you that that is where I belong, Mr.Ailes, I think I'd be freakin phenomenal on your network. (38:18)

Kelly said that starting her On-Air job during college could help her when she gets a job On-Air again because she already had experience. That is why she tried to convince Ailes that she could give him a significant income if she worked under Ailes. Kelly's statements showed that women could go to school like men and could work even though they were women. It can be sure that women have the freedom to get a job that they want and also can go to school to get a proper education to help them quickly get a job.

Women Can Become Intellectuals

Women have become intellectuals to make themselves a subject or "itself" and not the object or "the other." Intellectual women can think, watch, define, and give their opinions when others want their ideas. In other words, women must become active and brave to get their rights and justice. Many will appreciate and respect intellectual women brave enough to speak about their opinions and lead people to their rights.

Datum 18

Brian: All I want from you, Rudi, is to see the inside of your hotel room. (15:49)

Rudi: (God damn it). Brian, if I've done anything to make you think I feel that way about you, I apologize. We're friends. We have a great professional vibe. (16:08)

The dialogue shows that Brian asks Rudi to make love to him. Although they are a partner at their job, Brian sees Rudi not as a partner but as an object of his desire. From the dialogue, we can see that Rudi already expected it would happen to her, which means she already knows that her partner saw her sexually. She kindly rejected Brian for doing that and tried not to upset him because she was rejecting him and told him if they were friends and great partners. Nonetheless, she felt angry towards Brian because he thought she was an easy woman who would obey him. She knows that rejecting him can destroy their relationship, but she keeps rejecting him and showing him that women are not sexual objects for men.

Women Can Become A Socialist Transformation For Society

Becoming a socialist transformation is not easy. The persons must be confident, brave, and carefully sorting out information and knowledge. As Simone De Beauvoir said, the conflicts between self and other, subject and object, or men and women have to be ended. Because of that, women have to be diligent and brave to speak about their rights and justice for their freedom and have a better life, like doing anything they want.

Datum 8

Megyn: Mr.Trump, one of the things people love about you is you speak your mind, and you don't use a politician's filter. In particular when it comes to women. You called women you don't like "fat pigs, dogs, slob, and disgusting animals." (08:37)

When she became a presidential debate moderator, Megyn read one of Trump's sentences towards women in harsh words. Trump's statement is very controversial because it can make women insecure and cause mental issues, and he is one of America's presidential candidates who will lead America to the future. If he keeps spreading harsh words to women, the verbal violence towards women will be normalized by other men. In this case, Megyn tried to say that Trump cannot judge women in such harsh words because that was inappropriate and told everyone not to say bad things about women, especially their appearance. However, Megyn knew the consequences when she said there would be pros and cons in front of presidential candidates and on national television, and the worst was that she would get bullied by Trump's supporters. But she does not care because that kind of violence must stop.

To Surpass Their Limits

If women do not want to become "the other," they must surpass their limit and not quit when they feel tired of others' opinions. Simone De Beauvoir said that if women give up and accept their fate for being "the other," they agree to become an object for men.

Datum 7

Lawyer 1: If Roger finds out you came to us, he won't just fire you. He will bang us with a million-dollar lawsuit. He will attack you personally. These men care more about their reputations than they do money. (17:50)

Lawyer 2: Roger won't stop. (17:51)

Gretchen: Oh, I know. (17:52).

From the dialogue, Gretchen knows she has insufficient power to sue Roger Ailes, so her lawyers warn her of the consequences if she fights with Ailes. But she remains optimistic and wants justice and to stop the sexual things that Ailes did towards his female employees. Gretchen is sure that taking Ailes down can be easy if she and other victims are together. Gretchen already knew that Ailes was more powerful than her, but she did not give up because she did not want to become an object of sexuality for Roger Ailes.

5. Conclusions

From the data analysis, it can be found that although women get an education and can work like men, women still become "the other" in men's point of view and still have control over women. Based on the data on the first problem formulation, It proved that women still become an object for men, and they can control them only for men's sake. However, we can see how women fight discrimination in the second problem formulation; they are really brave to give their opinion and fight hard to get justice, although they know the consequences.

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