

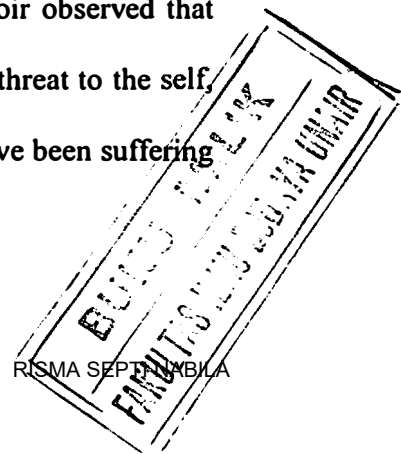
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Every people need recognition of existence in their life, even a woman. Woman needs her existence to prove her rights, capability, and career similar as man. Actually, both men and women have equal right and position in status, social environment and job. However, since the patriarchal system is applied in society, women are regarded as inferior to men. Men can go everywhere and do anything, while women are considered as the ones who take care of household and children. Man is socially constructed as an independent and complete individual; he is regarded first of all as a producer whose existence is justified by the work he does for the group; therefore why it is that the reproductive and domestic role to which woman is confined has not guaranteed her an equal dignity (de Beauvoir 446). Then women seems having small opportunities to show her existence in the society. Whereas, in fact many women have great capabilities as men and they need time to prove their existence. This phenomenon happens in many places in the world. There are many women who are against this social construction and tend to struggle to get equal position as men.

In her influential book, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir observed that men named 'man' the self and 'woman' the other. If the other is a threat to the self, then women is a threat to men (Tong 179). As the result, women have been suffering



because they are placed on second position. In this case, men treat women as complement. Women are positioned as men's object. Tragically, women do not realize it.

This positioning of women as object also occurs in marital relationship. Marriage is used as an ideal place to oppress women smoothly because marriage institution has legitimized the different roles and positions for each sex and supported men's place on powerful position. This men's domination makes women suffer. Therefore there are some women who do not have opportunities to express her feeling, idea and to develop her career. According to Simone de Beauvoir, the role of a wife blocks women's freedom, although Beauvoir believed that it is possible for men and women to be deeply in love, she claimed the institution of marriage pervert couples relationship. Marriage offers women contentment, tranquility and security but it also robs women's chance become great. In return for their freedom, women are given "happiness" (Tong 184).

Furthermore many women keep struggling to achieve their existence in their marital relationship. The existence means that woman exist if she is able to act, to express her idea, and plan the future of her life apart from man domination. Woman has existed for herself not for her husband. Many women struggle in that position because getting equality is not easy as the way we think. When women are trapped in that position, the walls of the prison must first be broken down. They must be independent, the active makers of their own destiny. They are not dependent anymore. Furthermore, woman is not exist for her husband, but for herself. Moreover

as a human being, women must be brave to show her existence even though in marital relationship, they also have to make decision in life in some ways. According to Beauvoir, the point of existentialist philosophy is to look reality squarely and honestly in the face and having done so to assume the responsibility of changing it by engaging in struggle for freedom (Tong 87). So there might be no simple answers of what people should do with their freedom. They must find the answers themselves by using their freedom to discover the meaning of their life and to find out what they want to be.

Furthermore, the writer of this study finds a novel that raises the topic of woman's search for freedom and existence portrayed in Paulo Coelho's *The Zahir*. Most of Coelho's books tell about spirituality because he traveled the world and learned about secrets, religion and mysticism. In this novel, the writer found another interesting issue about woman's decision for freedom and existence in marital relationship. It is an interesting issue because whether realized or not, this issue reflects the reality about how woman negotiate herself to search her freedom and existence in marital relationship.

The novel is inspired by Paulo Coelho's life experience when he was making a journey throughout the world. Many of his ideas about life, love, human and happiness are reflected in this novel. Paulo Coelho was born in 1947 in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *The Zahir* was written by Paulo Coelho and published in 2005 in New York. Paulo Coelho is one of the most widely read authors in the world today and *The Zahir* is one of his works. The works that are considered as masterworks are

The Alchemist and *Eleven Minutes*, which were awarded numerous prestigious international awards. Paulo Coelho has inspired millions worldwide. Paulo Coelho was inducted at the Brazilian Academy of Letters in 2002. Coelho writes a weekly column syndicated throughout the world (<http://paulocoelho.com//> retrieved on 14 August 2008).

The Zahir is a novel about a husband, an unnamed character, who is a famous author living in France and enjoys all the privileges of his money and celebrity status. Although he is bound to a marriage relationship, the husband has an affair with another woman. Marriage life is not always going well, since he sometimes miscommunicates and ignores the existence of his wife while they are together. The character of wife is trapped in marriage situation in which her existence as a woman is limited, especially in her rights, career and freedom because of man's domination.

The wife, Esther, tries to survive passing the condition by staying and giving supports to her husband but finally, Esther wants to show that as a human being, she has a right to do something she wants the most. Though it will break her husband's rule, she is able to take a decision for herself. She is pleased to be a good wife for her husband but finally she realizes that the husband never appreciates her efforts and works. Consequently, she demands her right to be free, fully as a new woman who is not only being a wife.

B. Statement of the Problems

After reading the novel and determining the topic, there are two questions which appear. These will make the process of the analysis easier. The questions are as the following:

1. What factors that influences Esther to leave her marital life?
2. How does Esther interpret the meaning of her freedom and existence?

C. Objective of the Study

The Objectives of the study are intended to answer every question. Regarding the statements of the problem above, the writer determines the objectives of the study as below:

1. To know the factors that influences Esther to leave her marital life.
2. To know the interpretation of Esther to the meaning of her freedom and existence.

D. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study has two major, specific and general. The first significance of this study is that the writer expects this study will be able to contribute a significant meaning both to herself and the readers. By analyzing this novel, the writer hopes to gain the knowledge about the novel entitled *The Zahir*. Moreover, the issue about the case of Esther's struggle in *The Zahir* might be a representation of woman's life. The problem of searching an existence and making a difficult decision must be faced by every human regardless to the gender. Thus, this study aims to

explain about how woman can finally find her freedom regardless the norms and opinions that exist in society. This study is proposed to give advantages to the readers who want to know more about woman's search for freedom and existence in marital relationship. This study also gives significant contribution to those who want to make a further study about the topic.

E. Scope and Limitation

The writer decides scope and limitation of the study in doing the analysis. There are many aspects and issues that could be studied through different perspective in this particular story and character. For that reasons the study of Esther's character is focused on her decision to be free. Her existence is shown through her monologue, dialogue and acts when she has some experiences of the problem with her husband. This study will concentrate on those aspect mentioned above, which altogether build the conflict in the story. The writer will also trace the character of the husband to strengthen the analysis.

F. Theoretical Background

The writer is going to apply existentialist feminism theory by Simone de Beauvoir especially her ideas of married and independent women. The main view of existentialist feminism exposes femininity as a cultural construction. Simone de Beauvoir analyzes and attacks the feminine mystique which keeps women imprisoned in their secondary status (Lisa Appignanesi 86). Existentialist feminism according to

Beauvoir, promotes the concept of independent woman, freedom and the equality of gender. Existentialist feminism shows that women, as human being, have the same equal position with men and refuse the assumption that woman is different from man. Beauvoir's vantage point is that of existentialist philosophy is to look reality squarely and honestly in the face and having done so to assume the responsibility of changing it by engaging in struggle for freedom (Appignanesi 87). The primary existentialist injunction has it that we must recognize the horror of our general condition and particular situation and transcend these by taking responsibility to our freedom and two foundation stones of existentialist ethics are a sense of responsibility and solidarity (Appignanesi 71). The theory is applied because its basic rule focuses privately on the problems in the novel. The gender roles have been successful to justify inequities which still happen, such as excluding woman from equal access to decision making.

G. Method of the study

The method of the study is library research, while the main source is *The Zahir* novel itself. The study applies the method of data collection by having a closer reading to the novel, from the books, internet, which related to the problems appear in the novel. Then, making data classification and determining the data based on criteria which contain the identification of the problems itself. The criteria used here are the data that can be used to know and focus on Esther's character as portrayed in feminist's perspective.

After discovering the data based on the criteria above, the writer will understand the novel deeper therefore it will be easier to do the analysis by using those sources based on the theory. The criteria are analyzed using existentialist feminism theory. In analyzing the data, the writer uses descriptive analysis and explanation through the events and action in the story related to the identification of Esther's search for freedom and existence. The analysis elaborates dialogue and the narrator's voice in the novel. This method is considered suitable to be applied in the analysis because it supports the topic which is going to be analyzed. Finally, the last step after making the analysis is drawing the conclusion, so that the study is complete based on the statement of the problems.

H. Definition of Key Terms

In this study, there will be some important terms used later. Thus, definition of key terms section is provided as the dictionary compiled by the writer to help the readers in understanding the analysis of this thesis. Furthermore, some sources are also provided to define the terms in order to get an accurate meaning.

1. **Existentialist Feminism:** Existentialist feminism is a philosophical movement, emphasizing on freedom, existence and choice. Existentialist feminism is a theory which promotes the concept of independent woman, freedom and the equality of gender. Existentialist feminism shows

that women as human being have the same equal position as men.

2. Freedom : We have a hand in making ourselves what we want to be.

3. Existence : The way of life with other human being

4. Humanity : Humanity are the stories, the ideas, and the words that help us make sense of our lives and our world by showing how others have lived and thought about life, the humanities help us decide what is important in our own lives and what we can do to make them better.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW