

Female Characters' Resistance to Domestication in the Netflix Film Gadis Kretek Series, Simone de Beauvoir's Feminism Studies

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

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The Gadis Kretek series on Netflix (2023) emerged as a phenomenal show upon its debut in November 2023. This series, an adaptation of Ratih Kumala's novel "Gadis Kretek" (2012), showcases the journey of the main character, Dasiyah, as she endeavors to break free from the constraints of patriarchy amidst the backdrop of 1960s Indonesian political turmoil. Dasiyah's character consistently challenges the societal norms that confine her as a woman. This research seeks to identify the various forms of resistance displayed by female characters against domestication, drawing upon Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theories. The primary source material for this study is the Netflix series "Gadis Kretek," analyzed through qualitative methods and cinematographic techniques. Findings reveal instances of social injustice perpetrated against female characters through domestication. Resistance among these characters manifests in rejecting arranged marriages, refusing subordination, pursuing employment, and boldly advocating for their romantic interests. Thus, this research contributes to understanding the imperative of resisting domestication, particularly for women.

1. Introduction

As time goes by, films can not only be seen on the screen but can also be easily accessed using a smartphone. This accessibility is notably exemplified by paid streaming services such as Netflix, which not only facilitate the viewing of movies but also offer a diverse array of series, TV shows, and reality programs (Netflix, 2023). Among these offerings, an original series addressing women's issues is slated to debut on the Netflix platform on November 2, 2023. "Gadis Kretek" is an adaptation of Ratih Kumala's novel of the same title, crafted into a serialized narrative under the direction of Kamila Andini and Ifa Isfansyah.

Comprising five episodes, each ranging from 40 to 70 minutes in duration (Netflix, 2023), "Gadis Kretek" chronicles the story of Dasiyah, often referred to as "Jeng Yah," the daughter of Idrus Muria and Roemaisa, prominent figures in the kretek industry in City M. This series intricately intertwines the history of kretek cigarettes in Indonesia with a complex love story and somber historical tragedy. "Gadis Kretek" underscores the pervasive issue of gender equality and entrenched patriarchal norms prevalent in the 1960s. Dasiyah confronts formidable social norms dictating predetermined roles for women, precipitating her arduous struggle against their constraints.

Certain societies continue to espouse traditional and patriarchal ideologies, relegating women to domestic roles while reserving public spheres for men (Indriani & Zulhazmi, 2021). Regrettably, the representation of women in the film industry, both nationally and internationally, remains entrenched in negative stereotypes. Terms such as "kitchen," "well," "mattress," "dressing up,"

"cooking," and "giving birth" perpetuate the portrayal of women as subordinate figures, consistently trailing behind and positioned as mere complements to (Fauziah & Hidayah, 2021).

The "Gadis Kretek" series is interesting to research due to its portrayal of women's resistance to domestication. Resistance, characterized by efforts to combat or oppose societal norms using one's strength and resources, has garnered significant attention within feminist studies for its association with issues of discrimination and gender inequality. It is closely intertwined with attitudes of rejecting and opposing laws, stigmas, or stereotypes that contribute to the subordination and marginalization of women (Maghfiroh & Zawawi Moh, 2020).

Exploring the backdrop of the "Gadis Kretek" series offers an opportunity to delve deeper into women's resistance. This series offers a distinct perspective on women's capacity to challenge the prevailing patriarchal structures in society. Hence, research on the "Gadis Kretek" series holds promise. In this inquiry, the researcher employs Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theories, particularly focusing on the inequality between men and women. Beauvoir delineates a dichotomy wherein men are regarded as *The Self* or the self, while women are relegated to the status of objects or "Sang Liyan" (lit. *The Other*) (Beauvoir, 1949).

In an attempt to define women as "Sang Liyan (the other)", Simone de Beauvoir studied interpretations based on biological data, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism. Despite biological evidence indicating physical disparities favoring men, such as larger muscles and greater physical prowess, Beauvoir underscores the insignificance of these factors in the context of dominance. She argues that biological explanations alone are inadequate for comprehending women who are perennially relegated to the status of "Sang Liyan" (Beauvoir, 1949).

Numerous prior studies have delved into feminist themes, exemplified by Berliana Fiardi Annastasya's analysis of women's resistance in Sherry Hormann's film "Nur Eine Frau," as outlined in Maghfiroh & Zawawi Moh's work (2020). Annastasya's research utilizes Naomi Wolf's examination of power feminism to elucidate the forms of resistance exhibited by the female characters in the film, encompassing aspects such as the protagonist's courage defining her life, steadfastness in decision-making, the vocalization of opinions, and a demonstration of resistance to dependency.

Another pertinent study is Nafila Azzahra's exploration of women's presence in Alaa al-Aswany's novel "Jumhuriyyatu Ka'anna," as documented by (Mutiar, 2019). Azzahra's investigation employs Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminist perspective to assess women's roles in the novel, focusing on themes such as employment, intellectual agency, rejection of subordination, and the attainment of influential societal positions.

In light of these antecedent inquiries, this present study shares common ground with its predecessors. The former research, akin to the first study, centers on women's resistance, albeit employing a distinct analytical lens through Naomi Wolf's perspective. Conversely, the latter investigation, akin to the second study, aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's feminist framework, though it focuses on the existence and roles of women within the literary context. Leveraging insights gleaned from previous scholarship, this study can offer a comparative analysis while advancing nuanced understanding within the field.

2. Method

In this study, the author adopts a descriptive approach coupled with qualitative methods to elucidate the portrayal of female resistance to domestication in the Netflix series "Gadis Kretek," drawing upon Simone de Beauvoir's feminist perspective. As articulated by Rijal Fadli (2021), qualitative research methodology serves as a suitable framework for addressing inquiries pertaining to narrative data. Such data, obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis, furnishes descriptive insights comprising explanations, arguments, perspectives, and textual materials. Researchers employ qualitative methods to generate rich, contextually embedded findings sourced from trustworthy informants or materials.

The study operates within a constructivist paradigm, positing that reality is not inherently given but is instead socially constructed. This paradigm offers a lens through which to examine how media constructs perceptions of reality. The primary data source for this research is the Netflix series "Gadis Kretek," accessible via the streaming platform. Data collection methods encompass observational techniques and literature review, involving the scrutiny of various documents, books, and written records. The literature review component entails sourcing and synthesizing theoretical frameworks pertinent to the research focus, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

The data analysis technique in this research uses several methods as follows:

1. In The first stage, the researcher watched the "Gadis Kretek" series on the Netflix platform, then collected it in the form of capturing scenes related to the problem under study. *peneliti menonton serial "Gadis Kretek" di platform netflix, lalu melakukan pengumpulan berupa menangkap scene yang berkaitan dengan permasalahan yang diteliti*
2. In the second stage, the scenes and dialogue were collected for research, and then the data was analyzed using the scene and dialogue analysis unit.
3. In the third stage of the analysis unit, the researcher analyzed concepts regarding resistance to domestication using Simon de Beauvoir's feminist studies.

3. Result and Discussion

This film is a depiction of breaking down patriarchy against women, where women are always placed in the domestic sector while men are always placed in the public sector. The many boundaries between women and men in this film provide awareness that gender inequality and patriarchy are still extreme in society. Based on this research, several data were analyzed as a form of resistance to the Dasiyah character in facing domestication by Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory:

3.1. Refuse arranged marriages

Dasiyah, the daughter of a prominent kretek entrepreneur, harbors lofty aspirations within the kretek industry, aspiring to craft the finest blend of kretek tobacco for public consumption. However, her ambitions are thwarted by the patriarchal norms prevailing in the 1960s, which dictate that women in Java are primarily confined to domestic roles and relegated to reproductive functions. This societal context manifests in Dasiyah's mother, Rumaisa, endeavoring to arrange her marriage to a widowed schoolteacher, as customary for women of Dasiyah's age during that era. The first episode, specifically at the 10:27 mark, illustrates this imposition, highlighting Dasiyah's reluctance to acquiesce to societal expectations of marriage, which she perceives as an impediment to her professional aspirations. Refusing to conform, Dasiyah articulates her resistance at the 10:55 mark, defying her mother's matchmaking efforts by feigning indifference and evading accompanying her father to the market. This episode exemplifies Dasiyah's defiance against her mother's matrimonial overtures.

Further instances of Dasiyah's resistance are portrayed in episode three, notably at the 24:40 mark, where she openly confronts Seno and her parents regarding the termination of her engagement to Seno. These scenes underscore Dasiyah's steadfast refusal to adhere to societal conventions that impinge upon her autonomy and ambitions, thereby showcasing her determination to assert her agency in pursuit of her professional goals.



This scenario exemplifies a mother's concern for her unmarried daughter, rooted in societal stereotypes prevalent during the depicted era. In accordance with the prevailing norms, women of Dasiyah's age were expected to promptly marry to attain presumed fulfillment. Despite societal pressures, Dasiyah diverges from this conventional path, steadfast in her pursuit of her dream to become a kreték sauce maker. In Figure 1, the utilization of a medium close-up shooting technique effectively captures Dasiyah's shocked facial expression upon hearing her mother's matchmaking proposal. Dasiyah's assertiveness in making independent decisions reflects her resolve to pursue the happiness she envisions. This resistance is exemplified by her determination to pursue a union with Suraya, the man she loves. In Figure 2, the employment of the Long Shot technique offers a comprehensive view of the scene, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the interaction within the depicted context (Thompson & Bowen, 2009).

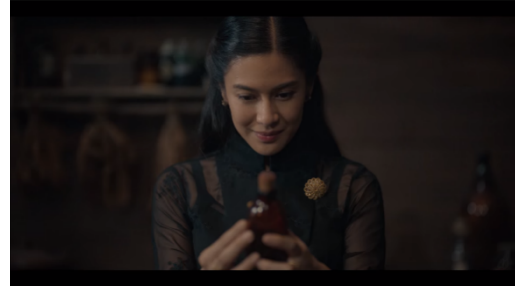
These observations prompt reflection on the pervasive impact of traditional stereotypes that encumber women's autonomy and hinder their holistic development. As elucidated by Beauvoir, women are often relegated to the status of the "other," confined within the confines of marriage. Despite promises of comfort and happiness, women are systematically relegated to roles primarily defined by domestic responsibilities, devoid of opportunities for personal development (Beauvoir, 1949). This portrayal underscores the enduring challenges women face in transcending societal constraints to actualize their aspirations and assert their agency.

3.2. Refuse Subordination

The film portrays a sad illustration of gender-based limitations, exemplified by the prohibition of women from accessing the sauce room and participating in the kreték sauce mixing process. This prohibition stems from the prevalent belief that female intervention would adversely alter the flavor of the cigarette sauce, rendering it sour. Such constraints represent a systemic impediment to women's pursuit of their aspirations, constraining their professional development. Job classifications during this era functioned as mechanisms of restriction, thwarting women's endeavors to realize their ambitions.

Dasiyah's resistance to domestication is notably evident in episode two, spanning from the 09:00 to 11:30-minute mark, wherein she clandestinely infiltrates the sauce room to engage in sauce mixing activities. This clandestine act serves as a bold assertion of her agency, challenging the prescribed gender roles and societal expectations. A parallel instance of resistance occurs at the 32:28-minute mark in the same episode, as Dasiyah defiantly returns to the sauce room, successfully concocting a sauce infusion with roses gifted by Mr. Jagad to his mother.

These acts of resistance underscore Dasiyah's unwavering determination to defy societal constraints and assert her autonomy in pursuing her passions. Through her clandestine actions, Dasiyah symbolizes the resilience and fortitude of women in confronting and transcending societal barriers to achieve their aspirations.



The resistance exhibited by Dasiyah in the narrative serves as a potent protest against the gendered domestication prevalent in the society, wherein men are exclusively permitted to engage in clove sauce mixing while women are relegated to the task of cigarette rolling. This stark dichotomy perpetuates a system of oppression dominated by men, relegating women to the status of "other." Figure 3 employs the Long Shot technique, capturing the essence of the sauce room and its surroundings, thereby contextualizing Dasiyah's act of defiance within the broader societal framework (Thompson & Bowen, 2009). Despite her successful creation of clove sauce, her endeavor is abruptly halted when discovered by her father, Mr. Dibyo, and Suraya. Consequently, her homemade creation is confiscated. In contrast, Figure 4 employs the Medium Shot technique, focusing solely on specific elements of the scene, thereby highlighting the pivotal moment of Dasiyah's discovery.

From the lens of historical materialism, Beauvoir critiques the notion that the transition from capitalism to socialism would inherently eradicate gender disparities in labor distribution. She contends that capitalism perpetuates and reinforces gender hierarchies, affording men greater economic ownership and resource access. Beauvoir underscores that the transition to socialism does not inherently mitigate gender inequality, as evidenced by the persistent gendered division of labor. This division is perpetuated by entrenched myths, such as the belief that clove sauce prepared by women would alter its flavor. Beauvoir (1949) elucidates that historical materialism inadequately addresses gender inequality, as it predominantly focuses on economic structures dominated by men. She advocates for a comprehensive understanding of gender inequality, which necessitates consideration of intersecting cultural, social, and political factors.

3.3. Women (must) Work and Empower

As Dasiyah's impending marriage to Seno looms closer, her mother pressures her to relinquish her role as the manager of the clove factory, urging her to prioritize marriage arrangements instead. Consequently, Suraya assumes Dasiyah's former position as foreman, relegating Dasiyah to adopt traditional feminine roles such as cooking, cigarette rolling, and sewing. This transition marks a stark departure from Dasiyah's aspirations to excel as a clove sauce mixer. Her resistance to this societal expectation is vividly portrayed in the second episode, particularly from the 24:20 to 25:07-minute mark, as she grapples with feelings of frustration while attempting to learn cooking. Similarly, in another scene at the 29:00-minute mark, Dasiyah's resistance is evident as she struggles to grasp the art of sewing, disillusioned by the limited roles assigned to women.



Figure 7 employs a medium-long shot technique to underscore Dasiyah's cooking activity, emphasizing her engagement in a traditionally feminine task. Conversely, Figure 8 utilizes a Long Shot technique to capture the entirety of the subject, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the interactions unfolding within the depicted scene. In the same Figure 8, the Medium Shot technique is utilized to highlight specific details of the subject's body parts, ensuring that focus remains on Dasiyah's actions without entirely overshadowing her surroundings (Thompson & Bowen, 2009).

Examining biological realities through ontological, economic, social, and psychological lenses, it becomes apparent that women often find themselves confined within the constraints of their reproductive capacities. Beauvoir contends that while biological differences may exist, they do not inherently determine one's identity or capabilities. Despite potential physical disparities, such as smaller muscles, these factors do not preclude women from performing tasks traditionally associated with men, as exemplified by Dasiyah's aptitude for sauce mixing. Beauvoir argues that biological explanations alone fail to encapsulate the multifaceted nature of women's identity, perpetuating their classification as "the other (Sang Liyan)" (Beauvoir, 1949).

3.4. Daring to fight for the loved one

Following her proposal to Seno, Dasiyah grapples with a sense of unease, realizing that her engagement was orchestrated by her parents rather than a reflection of her own desires. This realization underscores the limitations imposed on women, even in selecting their life partners. Dasiyah's resistance unfolds across various scenes in the third episode: clandestine encounters with Suraya, covertly preparing kretek sauce recipes for him, and silent rendezvous in the tobacco warehouse. These acts of resistance signify Dasiyah's defiance against societal expectations and her pursuit of autonomy and authenticity, which she finds in her relationship with Suraya. Unlike Seno, Suraya embraces Dasiyah's ambitions in the kretek industry, providing her with the freedom to pursue her aspirations.



Several scenes above depict a form of resistance against the restrictions imposed on women in pursuing their aspirations. Women are often reduced to mere objects for men, household chores are always burdened on women, and they are always expected to be able to cook, sew, and take care of children but are never given the freedom to express what they desire. The limitations imposed on women, which trigger their resistance, are evident in several scenes above. In Figure 7, the Medium Close-Up technique emphasises the subject of the human, utilising a medium-range camera shot. Figure 8 employs the Medium Long Shot technique, capturing a slightly narrower shot. This technique helps highlight the activities of an object (Thompson & Bowen, 2009).

Simone de Beauvoir acknowledges the significance of psychoanalysis, particularly the contributions of figures like Sigmund Freud. However, she critiques its implications for sexual relations, highlighting the humiliation inherent in positioning women beneath men. In response, she introduces the concept of 'masculine protest,' wherein women either strive to adopt more masculine traits or utilize their feminine strength to resist male dominance. This phenomenon reflects women's desire to attain a semblance of equality with men, often manifested in aspirations for their descendants, particularly sons, to possess equal strength. Nevertheless, Beauvoir notes the inherent

dilemma for women, who must first accept their assigned role and perceived inferiority, leading to a sense of division and conflict within themselves.

Beauvoir suggests that women possess a unique destiny within a world that champions the values of freedom. She contends that women have the power to choose between asserting their transcendent existence or resigning themselves to their role as objectified beings. Within psychoanalytic theory, the concept of becoming a mother or father symbolizes a form of alienation within a predetermined model. Women, according to Beauvoir, find themselves trapped in two forms of separation: attempting to conform to masculine norms, which engenders frustration, or embracing their role as women, which ultimately perpetuates their objectification as 'the other.' This dichotomy underscores the central challenge for women: refusing to succumb to societal expectations and instead striving for existential fulfillment and autonomy beyond predefined roles and constraints.(Beauvoir, 1949).

3.5. Create d Discussion

This research diverges from two previous studies in several key aspects. Firstly, in the study by research (Maghfiroh & Zawawi Moh, 2020). the analysis of feminism is approached through Naomi Wolf's perspective, whereas this current research employs Simone de Beauvoir's feminism perspective. While Wolf's perspective may focus on different aspects of gender dynamics, Beauvoir's perspective delves into the unequal relationship between men and women, where men assert themselves as "The One" while women are relegated to the status of objects, defined as "The Other" (Beauvoir, 1949).

Secondly, in contrast to the study conducted by Mutiara (2019), which explores the existence of women, this research centers on the resistance of female characters to the domestication depicted in a film. While Mutiara's study may examine the broader presence and portrayal of women, this research narrows its focus to the specific theme of resistance within a cinematic narrative.

The findings of this study reveal several themes regarding the resistance of female characters to domestication within the film. These include the refusal of arranged marriages, resistance against subordination, advocacy for women's empowerment and labor participation, and the willingness to fight for love. These themes shed light on the multifaceted ways in which female characters assert agency and challenge societal norms within the cinematic narrative.

4. Conclusion

The Netflix series "Gadis Kretek," directed Kamila Andini and Ifan Ifansyah, serves as a poignant portrayal of the defiance against patriarchal norms by its central female protagonist. Through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's feminist perspective, the series unveils various forms of resistance against domestication exhibited by its characters. Despite the subtlety and ambiguity surrounding these acts of resistance, the resilient and indomitable character of Dasiyah shines through, even amidst her eventual demise and marriage to an undesired partner. The study identifies several manifestations of resistance within the narrative, including the rejection of arranged marriages, defiance against subordination, advocacy for female empowerment through work, and courageous pursuit of love. While slight alterations in Dasiyah's characterization may occur during the adaptation from novel to screen, the overarching theme of the series underscores the challenges faced by women in asserting their thoughts, attitudes, and aspirations. "Gadis Kretek" thus serves as a compelling exploration of the struggles and triumphs inherent in the quest for autonomy and self-expression within a patriarchal society.

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