



RESEARCH PAPER

Patriarchal Control and Women Empowerment: An Existential Feminist Analysis of Tara Westover's *Educated*

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ABSTRACT

The article examines Tara Westover's memoir *Educated* in the thought of Simone de Beauvoir's Existential Feminism. The memoir tells how Westover grew up as an isolated survivalist in a rural part of Idaho and then became one of the most highly educated professors at the Cambridge University. The study is qualitative in nature; data is gathered through close reading of the memoir. The analysis is directed by de Beauvoir's ideas of 'the Other', transcendence, freedom and self-creation, emphasizing Tara's courage to question roles imposed by society and build upon a sense of self through education and choice. The findings ascertain education as a strong instrument of liberation whereby the dependence and marginalized position of Tara could be transformed to self-awareness and autonomy. Thus the epiphanic use of Existential Feminism in *Educated* provides a richer comprehension of the problem of women in terms of their journey toward freedom, identity and self-redefinition.

KEYWORDS Existential Feminism, Tara Westover, *Educated*, Identity Formation, Patriarchal Control, Women's Empowerment

Introduction

Tara Westover's memoir *Educated*, tells the incredible story of her journey from an isolated, survivalist family in rural IDAHO to earning a PhD from Cambridge University. Tara grew-up in the mountains of IDAHO, SHE is youngest in her family and dominated by her paranoid father. Her father had deep bad sense of the government, public education and medicine, believing the world was nearing to its end, Tara had seven siblings and they were kept out of public school and received little formal homeschooling, They worked in the family's threatening junkyard, often suffering serious injuries that were only treated with herbal remedies by her mother, an unlicensed housewife despite this deeply isolated and dangerous upbringing, emotional and physical abuse from an older brother, Tara desired to learn, encouraged by another older brother, Tyler, at the age of seventeen, She was excepted into Brigham young University (BYU); it was her first time that she was ever stepping foot into a classroom (Bae, 2025). University was a complex adjustment, Tara lacked basic historical and cultural knowledge yet her intelligence determination and confidence helped her. She got scholarships that took her to study abroad at Cambridge University in England and she secured her- self and did masters and PhD in history there and her education expanded her world view, Tara began to see her childhood and family life differently this made a conflict with her parents who demanded her loyalty and rejected her new view of world. The book tells up her painful years and long struggle to reconcile her love towards her family with her personal growth and development. IT tells how she

pay's high price for self-discovery and the custody of one's own mind. Tara Westover is an American memoirist and historian, she was best known for her 2018 memoir, *Educated*. She was born in rural Idaho in 1986 she was a younger child in her family who lived extremely isolated from mainstream society. Her father was deeply distrusted from government, medical establishment, forbade public schooling. Westover never got to classroom until she was 17. Her early life spend in working in her father's junkyard helping there her mother, her mother was an unlicensed herbalist (Brungard, 2018). She got early education at Brigham Young University and earned scholarships that took her to study abroad at Cambridge University for PhD in intellectual history. She has been recognized as one of Time magazine's 100 most influential people. Tara Westover wrote *Educated* to make sense of her own life and lose of her family. The book tells us that education is a tool for self-creation. It shows the capacity to evaluate different ideas and choose who one wants to be, even if that choice is painful, separation for one's origins. She claims her own history by having grown up with her father's deeply controlling view of reality. She establish her own voice and custody to her own mind, at-least she was able to articulate her own personal truth after years of doubt and having her memories disputed by her family. She opposed her parents about years of abused by her old brother, which they never accept. This state give her deep psychological problem and a need for a narrative to explain the deep conflict between loyalty towards her family and loyalty to herself.

The researcher apply *Existential feminism* that encourages women to recognize their agency, making choices that reflect their own desires and values rather than simply conforming to prescribed roles. It is about women's ability to define themselves, take responsibility for their lives, and make meaningful choices, within societies that often limit their possibilities. Existential feminism explores how women experience choice, freedom and responsibility within a world shaped by patriarchal structures (Beauvoir et al., 1979). Like, Responsibility and self-definition, existential feminism emphasizes taking responsibility for one's own life. Tara's decisions to pursue education, leave her family and redefine her relationships illustrate this aspect, also like, her struggle for individual freedom and choice, Tara asserts her independence and creates her own identity through education. Tara conflict can be seen as a struggle for individual freedom, autonomy and self-definition in a world that often seeks to limit and define her according to patriarchal norms. Tara story is based on the core tenets of the theory which is historically linked to figure like *Simone de Beauvoir's* as a researcher choose existential feminism which is associated with Simone de Beauvoir which is considered one of the most important feminist thinker of the 20th century. Simone de Beauvoir was a French writer, feminist, theorist and philosopher. Her work explores the themes of identity, existentialism freedom. De Beauvoir believed that individuals must take responsibility for creating their own lives and identities that this freedom is essential to human existence. She is best known for her book *The Second Sex* which is a foundational text of the feminist philosophy. In this book, De Beauvoir argues that women have historically been defined as the others in relationship to men, and explores the ways in which women can achieve independence and autonomy. By using De Beauvoir's existential feminism as a theoretical framework can help the researcher to analyze Tara's experiences and choices in educated highlighting themes of identity autonomy and self-definition.

Literature Review

In *Educated* (2018), author Tara Westover has prompted a large amount of research with respect to her deep examination of education, identity formation, family loyalty, trauma, and self-transformation. The book chronicles Westover's experience growing up in a survivalist, all-male, remote family in rural Idaho, and his subsequent career as a highly educated scholar at Cambridge University. The text has been explored from educational,

psychological, and sociological points of view, focusing on the importance of education and how it can change people's lives and attitudes. That said, and with the fact that there is a growing volume of literature on *Educated*, there is a lack of research that considers this memoir as an existential feminist approach that deals with Simone de Beauvoir's notions of freedom, selfhood and women's autonomy. Existing literature reviews on various topics in these areas are discussed with the identification of the gap that the present study is looking to fill (Warnick, 2020).

In this book, Allison Brungard (2019) analyzes *Educated* from the perspective of personal transformation and self-reinvention. Brungard highlights the profound struggle between Tara Westover's desire to achieve her own identity and her attraction to her family, each vying for a dominant place in her mind. Brungard says that Westover's childhood in a household so strongly opposed to formal schooling that it hindered her intellectual and personal growth was a big obstacle. The memoir highlights the ways in which education can serve as a catalyst for change, allowing Tara to question and negotiate her inherited beliefs and to build a new sense of self. Education in *Educated* is only a way of getting academic training not education of what exactly it entails; it is more of a liberating, self-aware and self-determining force. Education gives Tara the tools of discussion about the worldview her family holds her to and enables her to build her own understanding of the world and her identity from her life experiences.

Courses deepen study and learning, which Brungard states becomes a descent into "a sense of discovery and empowerment all for oneself. Studies open doors for Tara, giving her inspiration from new ideas, culture and new ideas of herself and the world around her (Liu et al., 2023). The memoir demonstrates the transformative potential of learning and how these can provide people with the means of transcending the restrictions encountered within their social worlds. Brungard's analysis is an effective representation of the value and role of education in the process of personal improvement and self-transformation. But her research is largely on the transformative side of learning, and not adequately discusses the gendered nature of Tara's experience. Brungard discusses Tara's fight for independence, but doesn't explore how patriarchal structures contribute to her oppression or her fight for independence as a feminist act to resist patriarchy. However, the question relating to women's autonomy, women's self-definition and women's liberation in patriarchal societies is not yet well explored.

Bryan Warnick (2020) examined *Educated* from a philosophical and educational standpoint to explore the connection between education, democracy and civic responsibility. Westover's memoir in Warnick's eyes is "a book of self-education that makes learning a route toward intellectual self-assurance and involvement in society. He believes education offers a chance for Tara to break out of the narrow-mindedness and isolation of her childhood and learn how to think in new ways to challenge and become aware of other perspectives and social realities. An educator that questions authority, assesses alternative points of view and builds her own understanding of truth and knowledge is capable of learning as a result of her experiences.

The analysis also sheds light on how severely neglected, abused and poorly educated Tara was throughout her childhood and adolescence, because of the actions of her relatives. Another pattern that is brought into focus by Warnick's analysis is the extreme neglect, abuse and lack of education that Tara suffers during her childhood and adolescence at the hands of her own relatives. He is aware that she had been driven to learn in order to free herself from her family's limiting beliefs. Regardless of these difficulties, Warnick does not fully take up the psychological aspects of trauma and abuse and how it impacts learning, memory, and cognition. While these facets are present in Warnick's

discussion, the memoir does not explore them all, or as deeply as it does explore Tara's educational experiences, her own experiences of being bullied, physically attacked, and emotionally manipulated are (Moon et al., 2023).

Gender is an integral part of Westover's experiences. Her father's oppressive and patronizing attitude and her brother's abusiveness have a huge impact on her personal development and learning goals as a woman. The fact that her mother can't challenge the status quo of male domination also greatly affects her. Warnick recognizes these, but does not fully explore these themes of gender and patriarchy in relation to Tara's experiences. His remarks are also a bit politically neutral, and even if he did expand on the broader social issues thrown up by the memoir—anti-intellectualism, religious extremism, and other structural inequalities that hampered access to education—he missed some crucial areas of discussion. Several aspects of Westover's journey towards selfhood and autonomy, for this reason, cannot be subjects of adequate analysis.

For those who prefer a more psychoanalysis-focused perspective on *Educated*, Seung-Min Bae (2025) has a more apt take on the novel. Bae says that Tara Westover's story is not just about learning, it's also about personality development and the ability to accept harsh environments (Rush, 2024). Bae finds that Tara's personal personality is key in her reaction to the problems and limitations of her family. She is determined, curious, a very intelligent person and is intellectually driven, which can give her a chance in life that may not have been available to someone in her shoes.

Bae's focus is on the interplay of biological and nurturing elements in shaping Tara's development. This study points out that a child's success doesn't depend on encountering learning opportunities, but is actually measured by his or her ability to adapt and react positively to the stresses and challenges he or she faces. Yet, Bae writes about the memoir's shortcomings which it didn't fully discuss the long-term psychological ramifications of the abuse and trauma suffered by Westover. The profound impact of these traumatic events on the development of identity, emotional health and psychology is not explored in *Educated* in great detail.

While Bae's analysis provides valuable insights into the role of personality and resilience, it failed to sufficiently explore the feminist dimensions of Tara's experiences (Butler, 2022). The study barely touches upon the fact that she is bound by the norm of patriarchy which defines herself. Instead, Bae neither examines how the process of learning becomes a mechanism of self-actualization, and how Tara actively builds her identity and defies societal roles in her own process of learning, nor examines how emotions are at play as she goes through the experience of learning.

Review of the Literature has revealed that the literature has been investigated from educational, philosophical, and psychological approach by scholars. Previous studies have highlighted themes such as self-education, resilience, personal transformation, trauma, and intellectual growth. We still, however, have yet to understand the way through the grid of existential feminism through which Tara Westover has travelled. In this regard the present study will be based on Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist theory in order to address the issue of the struggle for freedom, identity and independence of the female character, Tara in a patriarchy dominated social structure.

This is not a study that reflects on "the Other", however, because Beauvoir's ideas of transcendence, freedom, choice and self creation permeate Westover's experiences. It examines both women's restricted choices for personal development and the role of education in challenging the framework of patriarchy and in building an authentic female

identity. This analysis of the link between gender, freedom, selfhood, not only gives a new interpretation of these terms but brings together theoretical discussions of Beauvoir with literary narratives from Westover.

Conclusion: While studies on *Educated* have been performed to examine themes of education, memory, trauma, truth, and personal transformation, few have focused on the existential feminist aspects of the work. Much recent scholarship has failed to consider that Tara Westover's story is a woman's attempt to find autonomy, liberation and self-definition in a male dominated world (Сушила & Критика, 2024). This study is based on Simone de Beauvoir's conception of existential feminism, a theoretical framework that can help fill this void and enrich an understanding of how Westover comes to a way of being. The research ultimately shows how Tara's pursuit of education is more than just an intellectual one; it is a quest for identity, independence and that sense of authentic selfhood.

Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical approach of this study is Existential Feminism, which is used to analyse *Educated* (2018) by Tara Westover. A theoretical framework is a theoretical concept or lens with which to examine and interpret a literary text used to support the foundation of a research study. It assists the researcher to relate the theories with the primary text, explain why the chosen theory should be used and what is the deeper meaning of the facts in the text. Although the book hardly attempts a full description of the movement of Existential Feminism, in this research, it offers a useful lens for examining the journey towards freedom, womanhood, identity and individuality undertaken by Tara Westover in a male-dominated social context, especially as gestured by Simone de Beauvoir (Sultana, 2021).

Existential Feminism is a philosophy developed by existential philosophy that is closest to the work of Simone de Beauvoir, stated by Moon et al. (2023). Beauvoir changes the status quo with regard to the born woman and in her influential *Second Sex* (1949) she states that woman does not have fixed identities but rather they are created through social, cultural, and historic factors. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," puts her words particularly in her reading of the social construction of gender identity (Cosby, 2024). Beauvoir believes that in male society women have historically been treated as "the Other" who is defined by the male and who is subordinate and inferior to men. Butler (2022) suggests that women experience a double subjective split, as they are perceived as a thing whose identity is based on social norms which are in turn determined by male power and men are perceived as the norm, the subject.

One of the key ideas of Existential Feminism is its emphasis on the differences between immanence and transcendence. In this state people are passive, restricted, bound, treated as a property, bound to the social roles and expectations. ๑๓; Persons are generally bound to this condition via patriarchal structures which restrict their freedom and development opportunities. Transcendence is the experience of exploring what it means to rise above limitations (restrictions) and to choose and change (negatively) their identity by an active process. Beauvoir believes that everyone has freedom to transcend and freedom to make their own choices without having to accept their roles as they were given. Existential Feminism is based on concepts of freedom, choice, responsibility, independence and self-creation.

Many of the concepts of this theoretical perspective are aptly expressed in Tara Westover's memoir, because *educated* is essentially a story of identity development, personal freedom, and self-creation. Throughout the memoir, Tara battles extreme family

restrictions and negative expectations that her family (especially her father) load upon her. Tara was brought up in a very patriarchal and isolated social milieu where she is expected to behave in an Obedient, Unquestioning and Loyal to the values set forth by her father. The social and ideological institutions that shape her family life have limited her possibilities of learning, expanding her horizons and opportunities for independent thinking. Tara's upbringing is in many respects illustrative of Beauvoir's idea of "women as the other": "the Other" whose identity is constructed and determined by men (Mason, 2021).

As it is written, Tara starts questioning her assumptions and beliefs makeup her life. Learning begins to be the main way for her to receive new ideas, alternative viewpoints and possibilities to discover something new about herself. The education helps her to challenge what she has been given, and empowers her to gain an independent awareness about herself and the world around her. In this process, Tara slowly transcends from immanence to transcendence. She and her family impose an identity on her; she creates a self for herself with knowledge, critical thinking, and choice.

Existential Feminism emphasize the concept of one's own responsibility for the construction of their identity (Lewis, 2024). Beauvoir will say that freedom involves assuming some risk in decision making; risk for individuals who make choices decision making in the face of uncertainty, in the face of conflict, in the face of emotional distress and in the face of the unknown. This is something that is clearly relevant to Tara's experiences particularly. It is definitely not an easy choice for her to pursue education, break free from her family environment and her values. Throughout the memoir there is a sense of guilt, confusion and loneliness insofar as she has to balance her loyalty to her family with her need to be independent Cosby (2024). These experiences are nothing but challenges from the journey to self (Tong & Botts, 2024).

Existential Feminism is therefore the most appropriate for this study, as it offers a great insight into the relation between the male oppression and self-liberation of the women. The theory can be used by the researcher to analyse how the social structures try to restrict the freedom of women as well as how women oppose the restrictions and form their identities. This study examines the influence of Beauvoir's ideas of the 'Other', freedom, transcendence, and self-creation on Tara Westover's life and experience looking at how it is part of a larger feminist movement about gaining autonomy and self-definition.

Conclusions: This study is designed using a theoretical approach of Existential Feminism by Simone de Beauvoir to examine the journey of self-liberation and identity development that Tara Westover is undergoing in *Educated*. The framework exemplifies arrangements in which Tara refuses male influence, transgresses gendered norms and actively builds her own identity by educating and making her own decisions. Finally the book of memoirs is a personal statement by Beauvoir that women ought to take up the business of claiming their freedom, challenging the oppressive institutions that hinder their growth, and engaging in lifestyles of forming themselves as genuine persons. In this light, *Educated* is a profound story of empowerment, discovery and existential liberation for a female (Tyson, 2023).

Material and Methods

This study is qualitative research with a textual analysis method in the main. In this case, a qualitative study is the best method since it investigates how self-creation and identity formation, patriarchy and women empowerment are portrayed in Tara Westover's memoir, *Educated* (2018). The study aims to explore the developmental process through

which Tara creates a “new” self through education and personal decision while also coming face-to-face with the restraints of a male dominated family system. This research is focused on meanings, experiences, themes and representations in a literary text, therefore, the qualitative research is suitable used for this study.

The research is descriptive research and analytical research as mentioned by Tong et al. (2024). The descriptive portion involves naming and describing the significant events, characters, symbols and themes in the memoir. It makes examination points of how the experience of isolation and the experience of exclusion in education; the experience of family conflict and the experience of personal growth are featured throughout the narrative of Tara. In the analytical section such descriptions are read in the context provided by the chosen theoretical framework, which in the present study is Existential Feminism and specifically by the French author Simone de Beauvoir, through the transcendence, selfhood, autonomy, “the Other,” and freedom. This mix of description and analysis allows the researcher to explore the subject presented in the memoir, as well as the ways in which the subject's representations aid in understanding the women's struggle for self-definition and liberation.

The main sources used for this study are *Educated*, a memoir by Tara Westover (2018). All analysis is based on a careful and critical reading of the memoir, looking at the following points in the memoir: 1) Narrative structure 2) Characterization 3) Dialogues 4) Symbols 5) Themes 6) Theme progression (including shifts and developments) However, given that it provides in-depth knowledge of Tara's experience of the patriarchal control, her educational change, and her reconstruction of her identity, the memoir is by far the best source of primary information. (Tyson 2023) The researcher tries to know how personal experiences are influenced by social, cultural and genderized structures through studying the text.

Data is collected through several textual analysis techniques.

- A close reading of the memoir is performed to uncover passages that indicate themes related to identity construction, patriarchal oppression and women's empowerment, educational transformation, freedom, and self-definition. Close reading enables the researcher to study language, tone, and context for important sections of text to discover something different than what is immediately apparent to the reader on the surface.
- Recordants which cover specific motifs, symbols and character developments are used throughout the memoir in detail. Special focus is drawn to significant symbols like the mountains, penicillin, the junkyard, music, theatre, and schools. These symbols are examined for meaning as they are integral to the portrayal of feelings of isolation, control, resistance, transformation and development. Character arcs are explored to see how Tara changes from being a petulant, dutiful little girl in a patriarchal home to a grown woman who is able to claim her own space.
- Quotes from the memoir that relate to the research objectives and theory are used selectively. The following quotations offer textual support for the analysis, and help to tie Tara's experiences to existential feminisms. Themes of freedom, autonomy and self-determination, choice, responsibility, self-creation and resistance to oppression are used to interpret the selected quotations.
- This study, which consists of literary research, does not include any survey, interview or questionnaire nor external participation. There were no claims assigned to showing

that the study is completely text-based, which means that all claims and evidence are derived from the primary source. This means that the research is centring upon the analysis of literary images and not on gathering up data or statistics.

Analytical/ purposive sampling is used in the text. Only those chapters, scenes, dialogues and narrative episodes which are clearly expressed around the themes of patriarchal control, identification, self-identification, empowerment of the female person, loyalty to the family or loyalty to oneself, and isolation and belonging are chosen for detailed examination of the texts (Işıklar et al. 2022). The sampling method makes sure that data gathered is relevant, meaningful, and directly relates to the study. It also creates a means for the researcher to highlight those pivotal moments of Tara's self-discovery and change. This data is analysed in several ways:

Interpretation: Using a variety of strategies, in particular Thematic Analysis, to spot and explain key themes of the memoir. Patriarchal control, empowerment of women, process of identity development in women, liberation from education, women's struggle to define themselves, freedom, break between dependence and independence, conflict between women and patriarch, are important themes which are highlighted. Methodological approach of thematic analysis allows identification of recurring patterns and ideas within the material and connects them to the aims of this study.

Narrative Analysis: This type of analysis highlights the structure of the narration, the personal perspective, the linguistic form of the oral history, and the methods used to narrate the history and experiences. The analysis of this narrative allows us to understand how Tara has built her life story as well as the continuum of personal change, memory, trauma and self-reflection within the boundaries of the memoir.

An emphasis on character analysis, focusing on Tara Westover as the main character in the memoir. Her transformation from the lonely child of a strict survive-at-all-costs family into an educated and self-aware person is explored in the analysis. It discusses the role of education, trauma, resilience and individual agency in shaping her identity.

Theoretical Interpretation: The chosen theory is used throughout the analysis to give meanings and symbolic representation to the text. An interpretation of Tara's experiences and struggle for independence is facilitated by the concepts of Simone de Beauvoir – other, freedom, transcendence, autonomy and self-creation.

This focus is on how Tara Westover forms her identity and how her decisions are influenced by social, cultural and Patriarchy norms. It looks at the struggles she encounters as she strives for a successful life in which she plays the role of an individual who is neither suppressed nor ostracized in a patriarchal, closed and controlled environment, but rather, a fully realized and self-aware individual who can achieve the life of self-actualization through education, freedom and choice. The research aims to apply a critical lens of Existential Feminism to highlight Tara's experience as a powerful story of women's empowerment, self-definition and becoming.

Results and Discussion

The memoir *Educated* is a profound narrative of existential feminist becoming by Tara Westover. In the face of imposed 'being' it is a narrative of 'becoming'. Westover's story is a struggle against patriarchal 'othering', an exercise in radical freedom despite profound social and familial constraints and a quest for authentic self-definition. From the other to the self, Tara's existential awakening fits in De Beauvoir's argument that woman

is made, not born—in relation to man constructed as the others. Tara’s childhood perfectly illustrates that: she is defined by her paranoid father’s survivalist conviction, her brother’s abuse and her mother’s obedience. Her identity is prescribed—an obedient daughter, herbalist subordinate to male authority. In Tara’s family, men are the ‘self’ and women are the ‘other’. Tara and her mother are expected to accept this passive role. Tara’s initial accepts the abuse and struggles to trust her own perceptions of reality. “Everything I had worked for, all my years of study, had been to purchase for myself this one privilege to see and experience more truths than those given to me by my father, and to use those truths to constructs my own mind” (CH 38). The initial acceptance to this reflects what de Beauvoir terms as immanence: a confined existence without transcendence. Immanence describes the sphere where women are often confined; a life of unchosen roles, life of domesticity and a lack of self-determination. Here Tara is born in to immanence, where her life is dictated by fear, limitations placed upon her by her father’s beliefs. Transcendence is the existentialist goal of freely choosing one’s destiny, engaging with the world as a subject and taking responsibility for one’s life. By seeking knowledge, joining an intellectual community and leaving home. She actively chooses her freedom and determines her own destiny. That’s how Tara achieves transcendence through education, transforming from an object of her family’s control into an independent subject. Her decision to seek education—first secretly then formally—points out the beginning of her existential rebellion. Each step towards a move from passive object to active subject, is an act of self-creation (Işıklar & Öztürk, 2022).

Education is an act of existential freedom, Tara’s pursuit of education is the central vehicle for this practice. Having no public schooling, she chooses to take the ACT, applying to Brigham Young University, study at Cambridge and earn a PhD. For Beauvoir, freedom is not a condition but a practice, a series of choices where each choice is fraught with fear, guilt and familial rejection, her responsibility of her own becoming. “I had decided to study not music but history, having discovered in myself an insatiable need to know how the great narratives of history had shaped the world I lived in” (CH29). Freedom is not just doing whatever you want, it about self-creation. Becoming free require rejecting imposed roles and taking responsibilities for defining your own existence. Education is the framework, not just of requiring information, but it is an act of self-liberation, a means to see beyond the world in which you are born, to question, to imagine new possibilities and to create yourself as a new being. In *educated*, Tara Westover’s pursuit of learning is more than getting degrees, “She is choosing who she wants to become. Education is her path to freedom_ the freedom to create her own identity. I am not the child my father raised, but she is the father who raised her” (CH38) that aligns with Bevaurio’s idea that existence requires embracing one’s freedom, even when it involves painful separation from one’s world.

The burden of freedom, existential feminism does not romanticize freedom. Tara’s memoir depicts the psychological cost of her choices: the dislocation of not belonging to either the academic of her family. Her family regarding pass abuse, the deep _ seated guilt over betraying her roots. The recognition that one must author one’s value with no external validation, this internal conflict mirrors Beauvoir’s in site that freedom until more solitude. “It’s strange how you give the people you love so much power over you” (CH38). In Tara’s journey, freedom does not come as a pursue liberation. It comes with a heavy cost. She gains independence but also faces, guilt, responsibility of creating her own identity from scratch and loneliness. Beauvoir says women often taught to accept role which were created by others. To becoming truly free, a women must choose of her own self, but choice brings the burden of responsibility. Even after leaving, Tara feels pulled back by her loyalty towards family. She struggle with self: “Am I betraying them”? Towards creating her own

values_ after growing up, she sees the reality of her father's view and now she decides what she believes about history, gender roles, medicines and the truth. In isolation, freedom separate from her community and family. "My life was narrated by me for others. Their voices were forceful, emphatic, absolute. It had ever occurred to me that my voice might be as strong as theirs" (CH22). Tara's assertion of her own memory and truth against her family's denials is climactic moment of existential authority. Patriarchal space and the female body, patriarchal control extends to women's bodies and spatial mobility that's how Beauvoir emphasizes, Tara's body is roughly endangered in her father's junkyard, subjected to injury without any sort of proper medical care, violated through her brother's abuse, Tara's physical confinement to Idho mountains symbolizes her ideological imprisonment, "to be a woman in my family was to be a prisoner in a house built by men_ a house with rules I had not written and could not change" (CH12). Tara's home, the isolated mountain are all male dominated space which is ruled by her father. When Tara tries to enter in the new world, she faces a lot of psychological control from her family. Tara's journey is about reclaiming her body and her space, moving from being the other in her paranoid father's world to becoming a subject who defines her own existence. Her education is not about books, education works as a tool, it is about gaining freedom to occupy intellectual and physical spaces. "You could call this selfhood many things. Transformation. Metamorphosis. Falsity. Betrayal. I call it an education. I had to leave home not just in body, but in mind" (CH25), here for Tara, education becomes the means of bodily and spatial liberation- moving from male dominated junkyard to the libraries and lecture halls of Cambridge. This journey represents a reclaiming of bodily autonomy and the right to inhabit spaces of knowledge and safety (Wollstone, 2025).

Self-definition versus imposed identity is a key existential feminist, that identity is not essential but constructed through actions. Tara constantly navigates between imposed identities: the loyal daughter, the crazy sister, the ignorant outsider through education transcending labels by writing her own narrative, both metaphorical and literary. "I had begun to understand that we had lent our voices to a discourse whose sole purpose was to disempower us" (CH10); she engaged in what Beauvoir calls self-surpassing her memoir itself is the ultimate act of her conflicting loyalties. It demonstrates that for women at under patriarchy, selfhood is no an achievement, not given limits and intersection: an existential feminist critique (Tara) experience is also shaped by rural poverty, religious extremism, and specific dynamics of a survivalist subculture factors that compound her gendered subjugation. "It was an act of defiance, a declaration of loyalty to myself. It had chosen myself over my family". Simone De Beauvoir argued that to be free, one must create oneself through actions and choices not just to accept roles given by society/family. Tara's individual struggle for authenticity. It may underplay the structural and intersectional dimensions of her oppression.

Conclusion

In *Educated* Tara Westover's journey powerfully reflects Simone De Beauvoir's existential Feminism. The memoir is about Tara, breaking free from an imposed identity-set by religion, patriarchal control and family to define herself through action and choice. De Beauvoir argued that women is often made, not born, limits her freedom that shaped by societal expectation. Tara's identity is fixed as a daughter in survivalist family, when she starts choosing for her self_ studying then leaving for college. Education is not just schooling, it's a tool of self-creation. Tara gains knowledge, academic success and voice but at cost of painful memories, freedom is painful.

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