


## Analysis of Women in the “Bangsal Isolasi” Film (Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Critical Discourse Analysis, Sara Mills, Women, Gender Injustice, Film</p>	<p>Gender injustice and violence against women is still a problem throughout the world and globally, including in Indonesia, where it is also reflected in various existing media, especially films. In the film Isolation Ward directed by Adhe Dharmastriya, it discusses the form of gender injustice that exists against women in a special prison for women and how both are in the position of perpetrators and victims of injustice and gender violence in a prison, especially a women's prison. This research aims to analyze the depiction of women's position in the film through Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis approach, focusing on the position of subjects, objects and power relations formed. The research method in this study is descriptive qualitative with primary data in the form of film scenes and dialogs and sender data from related literature. The results showed four main depictions: (1) women's struggle to obtain information and justice; (2) violence against women; (3) exploitation of women; and (4) violence among women. The findings reveal how the movie reproduces gender injustice while offering a narrative of resistance through the main character, Wenny. In conclusion, the movie Isolation Ward not only reflects social reality but also becomes a media criticism of the patriarchal system and gender-based violence.</p>
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### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a society full of traditions, culture, and values where people have their own perspectives on gender. Where, traditional values are still able to influence the way society views women with the assumption that women have a meek nature, prioritize family, and must submit to men (Putri & Anzari, 2021). The occurrence of modernization and globalization today has made the role of women gradually recognized in various fields such as education, politics, and so on. However, all of this does not go easily, not infrequently they have to face a challenge from traditional values that are still strong in maintaining their point of view on women.

In the context of a patriarchal culture where women are portrayed as individuals or objects of gender injustice such as marginalization, subordination, stereotyping or negative labeling, and violence (Fauziah et al., 2024). Violence against women has always been an issue that continues to be in the spotlight abroad and at home. Violence is an action carried out by individuals or groups both physically and verbally with the intention of injuring, harming, and damaging others. Reports of cases of violence against women continue to occur

in Indonesia. From January 1, 2025 to March 8, 2025 there were 3,886 complaints, of which the percentage proportion reached 86% of the 7,382 total cases of which 6,336 were female victims through SIMFONI PPA (Prasetyo & Indraswari, 2025). The phenomenon of gender violence and injustice against women can not only be seen in a social context, but also reflected in various forms of media, one of which is film. This is what makes the phenomenon need to be understood in a medium, especially movies. Film is a communication medium that is not only an entertainment medium, but also depicts existing social issues for education and information (Fiqri et al., 2020). In a movie, it does not necessarily only show and present an interesting story, but is able to form a mindset about existing norms and values. Currently, many movies have sprung up with the theme of women. Women who appear in films are often depicted as weak, oppressed, harassed, and several other bad images (Senaharjanta et al., 2022). This theme is usually represented in violence that occurs to women in various forms. The representation in a movie explains the intent of some of the social criticism.

Critical discourse analysis developed by Sara Mills uses an effective approach to explore how narrative or language in a film work shapes meaning and ideology. Sara Mills' analysis focuses on a concern where a woman is displayed in text, images (visuals presented), photos, or news (Yudhawirawan & Nurussa, 2023). The approach emphasizes in understanding a social and historical context in a text that appears in the film. In the film "Ward of Isolation", the research will focus on how the discourse will appear in a dialog and narrative where it illustrates violence against women. With this method, the film can be seen from a different perspective, namely the tool as a social dialog. By analyzing the narrative and dialogue in the film, it is hoped that it will also be able to construct an understanding of gender and power in society.

Films that raise the theme of violence against women are intended to invite the audience to think deeply about the issue of violence that often occurs. Thus, movies about women or feminism can attract a lot of attention from the public to see the movie. Therefore, some of the films use the perspective that a man has a greater role or degree than a woman. In other terms, patriarchal ideology is also often and still used in cinema.

In this case, the film "Isolation Ward" by Adhe Dharmastriya is relevant to be observed and analyzed. The film aired on July 25, 2024 and received an audience of 143,631. This movie tells the story of a female journalist named Wenny who tries to impersonate a prisoner. She does this in the hope of solving the mystery of her sister Ratna's death. Ratna died in the curse room, which the inmates call the isolation ward.

## METHODS

### Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive nature. The purpose of this research with qualitative methods is to interpret and describe a phenomenon. This descriptive qualitative method is characterized by collecting qualitative data, such as pictures and words to provide a picture (Sugiyono, 2021). Using this method by adopting critical discourse analysis from Sara Mills to represent and describe the construction of women's gender in the film "Isolation Ward". The paradigm used in this research is the critical paradigm. As part of

the qualitative research paradigm, critical discourse analysis aims to describe the meaning of the text and also reveal a hidden social construction. According to Eriyanto, discourse is a collection of sentences that are interconnected and compose a complete meaning (Eriyanto, 2022). This research will analyze a text in the film "Bangsai Isolasi" to expose a social construction in the film. This research will analyze the text in the film "Isolation Ward" using Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis, where the analysis is carried out by selecting scenes that are considered relevant. The object of this research is the movie "Isolation Ward". While the focus of this research is the position of women depicted through scenes and dialog in the film. The unit of analysis of this research is the text, namely in the movie "Isolation Ward" by Adhe Dharmastriya.

### **Theoretical foundation**

#### **Women**

Woman is a word that refers to one of the two sexes in the world. The word woman is different from "women", where the word woman can refer to someone who is a child to an adult. In the KBBI, women are described as humans (people) who have a vagina, are pregnant, can menstruate, give birth to children, breastfeed, wife, and bini (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), 2021). Women actually have such natures and are the creation of God Almighty and will never change.

Women were created by God Almighty to be the partners of men. Women are actually gentle, caring and affectionate creatures due to their delicate feelings. The image that women have is a graceful and loving figure (Panani, 2021). However, it is these biological differences that create a difference in behavior and abilities. Therefore, women tend to be much more selective in choosing activities that are in accordance with their nature.

Gender injustice or gender discrimination in which one sex (men) or women are victims is often caused by the cultural norms prevailing in society regarding the differentiation of gender roles, attributes and behaviors. This is due to the fact that beliefs and truths have been instilled throughout human civilization in various forms and ways that negatively affect both parties, which are usually experienced more by women. According to (Mansour, 2024) in his book entitled Gender Analysis and Social Transformation, gender discrimination that often occurs in families and communities includes the following:

- 1) Stereotyping, which is the labeling of one gender that often has a negative connotation and usually causes injustice.
- 2) Subordination, which is when one gender is seen as inferior or subordinated to the other.
- 3) Marginalization, a condition or process that separates one sex from the main job or main job that can lead to poverty.
- 4) Objectification of Women, a scene intended to exploit women, where women are only seen from a physical or functional value to fulfill a need and the interests of others.
- 5) Violence, an attack on someone physically or psychologically. This violence can be physical (rape, beatings), but also non-physical (sexual harassment, threats, coercion), and can occur at home, at work, or in public.

#### **Film**

The definition of film based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 8 of 1992,

Chapter 1, Article 1 on Film: "Film is a creative work of art and culture which is an audible mass communication medium made based on the principle of cinematography by being recorded on celluloid tape, video tape, video disc, and/or other technologically invented materials in all forms, types, and sizes through chemical processes, electronic processes, or other processes, with or without sound, which can be shown and/or displayed with mechanical, electronic, and/or other projection systems."

A movie is a series of several images that are played very quickly in sequence in front of the audience (Ferdianyta et al., 2024). Thanks to the creativity of artists who are experts in the field of film, movies have now become an important part of human life for more than a few decades. Every movie produced by talented individuals is a unique work of art and needs to be appreciated.

Film is a medium of communication that is not only a medium of entertainment, but also depicts social issues that exist for education and information (Fiqri et al., 2020). Movies that raise certain moral values can be a reflection and criticism of social conditions. Movies are part of mass communication that emerged after print media. Movies are also included in mass media that are published periodically just like print media.

#### **Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis**

Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis was developed specifically for feminism issues by placing representation as the key in conducting an analysis that examines how actors, readers, and writers are positioned or portrayed in a text (Ferdianyta et al., 2024). This positioning of subjects and objects affects the way the story is presented, the point of view used, and the way characters are portrayed. In a story or writing that raises an issue of women where they will be portrayed as objects that get treated, not as individuals who have the initiative.

Apart from the Subject - Object position, it can also focus on how the reader (text) or the audience (audio visual). Where the reader or audience places themselves in identifying the story. Then in the story and the positions displayed in a text or audio visual make one party legitimate and the other party also becomes illegitimate (Eriyanto, 2022).

Sara Mills emphasizes her discussion on the way actors are placed or positioned in and text. One person acts as the interpreter, and another person acts as the interpreted object. In the analysis, there are two things that must be considered. First, the social actors in the news are positioned in the news, who is assigned to interpret the events, and what the consequences are. Second, the position of readers and viewers in the text or dialog. Here, the text is the result of a negotiation between the writer and the reader. This can mean that the audience is as expected by the author (Eriyanto, 2022). The choice of which storyteller is placed as the storyteller determines the point of view and relevance of the events conveyed to the audience. The ideology of the storyteller will be closely linked to such a position. Certain groups will be viewed emotionally, and other groups will be used as objects or tools of marginalization. Marginalized groups are usually those who do not have access to the media, so they are portrayed negatively and far from the truth. The other side displays their images, but the text presents them only as objects. Not from those who voice and describe, but from the other party who conveys his hatred and hatred in full (Eriyanto, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



This movie describes how women are shown in several gender injustices and environmental influences that exist in the scope of a special women's prison. How these women are displayed in several scenes and dialog texts will be the main research material in the Isolation Ward Film.

There are two concepts in the critical discourse analysis conducted using the Sara Mills model. The first is the position of the actor in the text/dialogue. The position in question is the position of the subject as the storyteller and the object as the one being told. Furthermore, the role of the author towards the audience, namely how the author positions the subject and conveys messages to readers and viewers. In addition, this position can show which way the audience identifies itself, the audience can side with the subject or object discussed in the movie.





### Subject Position

Subject position is the way the text shows the position of the actor. The position of the subject in the Isolation Ward Film can be seen from several scenes and dialogues performed by the players. This position can determine how the structure of the text/dialogue and how meaning is treated as a whole in the text/dialogue. Pieces of *scenes (scenes)* that show the position of the subject in the Isolation Ward movie.

**Table 1.** Data Findings of Subject Position in Isolation Ward Movie

Scene	Visual	Audio	Visual Interpretation
Scene 6 Minute 00.04.21 Detention Cell Room (Daytime)	 <p>Anggap saja rumah sendiri.</p> <p><i>Image 1</i> Scene of Wenny entering the holding cell room.</p>	Warden Women's Prison: "Consider your own home."	A woman who has just into her cell with a floor mattress, pillow, and prisoner uniform. She is escorted to the cell by two female guards and she looks a little confused by the new atmosphere. She is the main character named Wenny
Scene 6 Minute 00.05.02 Room Cell Prisoner (Daytime)	 <p>Pak Herman bilang, tempat ini adalah rumah.</p> <p><i>Picture 2</i></p>	Yanti: "Mr. Herman said, this place is home. Yes House, that snatches away desire people here."	Wenny was told told By a cellmate named Yanti with the intention that Wenny would be able to adapt well in prison and understand. With what was explained earlier, Wenny understood but her anxious expression

Scene	Visual	Audio	Visual Interpretation
	<i>Scene of Wenny being given explanation by a cellmate.</i>		was still there.
Scene 7  Minute 00.06.20 Prisoner Dining Room (Nighttime)	 <i>Image 3</i>	Wenny: "Who the hell?" Yanti: "Just shut up already"	Wenny wondered who the person was who kicked her and Yanti out, but Yanti told Wenny to shut up and continue with their dinner. Wenny asks because she is a new prisoner.
	<i>Scene of Wenny asking Yanti</i>		
Scene 7  Minute 00.07.15 Detainee Dining Room (Nighttime)	 <i>Picture 4</i>	Wenny: "Enough! He could die!"	Wenny tries to break up a senior prisoner who is beating a new prisoner in front of the other prisoners.  in front of the other prisoners. Wenny holds the tray and his hand so that the prisoner stops hitting.
	<i>Scene of Wenny Breaking up a Fight</i>		
Scene 12  Minute 00.16.02 Mrs. Rusdiyah's room (Morning)	 <i>Picture 5</i>	Wenny: "For a prison, this place is different, isn't it, Doc?" Mrs. Rusdiyah: "Yes, that's the concept."	Wenny asks a doctor about the prison that he now she was living in while answering a psychological test. Because she feels that the size of this prison is slightly different.
	<i>Scene of Wenny being called by Mrs. Doctor</i>		
Scene 13  Minute 00.18.12 Area Lapangan Lapas (Morning)	 <i>Picture 6</i>	Wenny: "What is the isolation ward? is it?" Yanti: "It's the room near our cell."	Wenny trying to find out about a what the room actually is . She asked to someone who he first met when he entered the prison.
	<i>Scene of Wenny asking about a room.</i>		

Scene	Visual	Audio	Visual Interpretation
Scene 16  Minute 00.20.28 In the Car (Nighttime)	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Picture 7</i>  <i>Scene of Wenny chatting with Syaiman</i></p>	Wenny: "Let me go in there, find out for myself." Syaiman: "You're not kidding Wenny."	Wenny asked Syaiman for permission to enter Ratu Adil Prison. She said that she wanted to find out what was really going on there.
Scene 18  Minute 00.24.00 Kitchen  (Nighttime)	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Picture 8</i>  <i>The scene where Wenny asks Mrs. Sekar.</i></p>	Wenny: "Do you know why my brother died here?" Bu Sekar: "Ratna was framed, that's what she told me."	Wenny tried to find out more information about why her sister died. She asked someone who was close to her sister.
Scene 28  Minute 00.24.00 Ware-house (Afternoon)	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Picture 9</i>  <i>Scene of Wenny asking Bi Imah.</i></p>	Wenny: "I just want to find out, why my sister could die here, Bi?"	Business Another of Wenny's attempts to find out the mystery of her sister's death was to ask someone else who was also close to her sister while crying. With the clue of a hair clip that is on that person.
Scene 35  Minute 00.38.40 Room Mrs. Doctor (Morning)	 <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Picture 10</i>  <i>Wenny asks and tells the real condition of the prison.</i></p>	Wenny: "Don't you see what's happening in this prison? Everyone people intimidate each other, sexual violence, illegal transactions, fear, and everyone turns a blind eye"	Wenny felt What happening in this prison is no longer can no longer be tolerated. Wenny speaks like that with a bit of annoyance because there are many things she has seen while in prison.

Scene	Visual	Audio	Visual Interpretation
Scene 36  Minute 00.40.20 Lapangan Lapas Area (Afternoon)	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Picture 11</i> Scene of Wenny asking Adit</p>	Wenny: "Why is it that every time who deals with Bella, ends up dead? It must be there's something right? Between Bella and the isolation ward."	Wenny asked Adit with a feeling of suspicion, because every time she dealt with Bella, she would die. Thus Wenny has the assumption that something that happens must have a real cause.
Scene 46  Minute 00.50.47 Hallway Prison (Nighttime)	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 12</i> Scene of Wenny being rescued by Adit.</p>		Wenny was helped and saved by Adit because Wenny had just been beaten by the warden. Adit helped Wenny stand up to leave the place.
Scene 47  Minute 01.01.24 Mrs. Rusdiyah's room Rusdiyah's room (Night Day)	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Image 13</i> Scene of Wenny reporting information to Ms. Rusdiyah.</p>	Wenny: "Mom should know about this." Bu Rusdiyah: "Why?" Wenny: "Yanti who injected all the inmates in the isolation ward. Herman is the brain."	Wenny tried to tell Mrs. Rusdiyah that all the inmates died because they were injected by Yanti and the brain behind all it was Herman

## Discussion

This research uses Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) model to examine the representation of women in the film *Ward of Isolation* as a cultural text. This model focuses on subject-object relations and the relationship between the author and the reader (or in this context, the audience), in shaping and deconstructing the meaning of discourse. The discussion will be divided into several main subtopics, to answer the main problem of how

the position of women is constructed and how power relations are formed in the film's narrative.

### **Representation of Women as Subjects and Objects**

The main character of the film *Isolation Ward*, Wenny, is the center of analysis in this study. In the context of narrative structure, Wenny is explicitly constructed as a subject. She appears as an active agent who makes decisions, has a clear goal (investigating her sister's death), and takes a central role in the storyline. However, this representation cannot be separated from the ambiguity of women's position in patriarchal culture.

In some scenes, such as when Wenny undergoes interrogation or when she refuses suspicious treatment from the prison medical staff, she shows resistance. However, structurally Wenny remains in a system that limits her space. She remains part of a prison system that is historically and symbolically a space of masculine and authoritarian domination.

This shows that although Wenny is presented as a subject, discursively she remains trapped in the position of an object - part of the narrative that shapes her as a symbol of sacrifice, suffering, and moral representation.

### **Gender Subordination and Stereotyping in Women's Prisons**

The film's narrative depicts a social system inside a women's prison that reproduces gender inequality. In a hierarchically closed space such as a prison, the authority of warders, doctors, and prison officers - is largely represented as the dominance of power that controls women's bodies and voices.

Dialogue between female characters often shows the structure of subordination, such as the sentence:

*"Don't ask too many questions, you're new here, learn to be quiet first."*

This sentence is not just a warning, but reflects how women are taught to submit to power structures, even by fellow women. The mutual surveillance and horizontal pressure between inmates confirms how subordination is institutionalized and standardized internally.

In addition, stereotypes against women also appear in visualizations that focus too much on emotionality, weakness, and pain, which reinforces the image of women as victims, not agents of change.

### **The Relationship between Writer and Audience: The Ideological Position of Film**

Sara Mills emphasizes the importance of analyzing the position of writers and readers. In this context, the "writer" is the filmmaker (director, screenwriter), and the "reader" is the audience. *The Isolation Ward* film directs the audience to sympathize with Wenny's struggle through the use of symbolic visuals (pale colors, gloomy lighting, close-up camera on the character's expression), as well as a linear narrative arrangement from the protagonist's point of view.

The audience is placed in a moral position to side with Wenny and the other prisoners. However, the film does not explicitly offer space for active empowerment, instead emphasizing suffering as the main narrative. This creates a kind of *empathy fatigue* - sympathy without solution - that maintains the position of women as symbols of oppression.

### Power Construction in Visual and Narrative

Scene after scene in this movie is constructed to strengthen the discourse on the body and space as objects of power. The prison room is depicted as a closed, narrow and dark area, which limits women's physical and symbolic freedom. Images such as medical rooms full of invasive devices, creaking metal beds, and hidden camera surveillance systems, show how the system of power grips women's bodies, even into the most private realms.

In addition, control over information and access is part of structural power. Wenny does not get a transparent explanation for her sister's death, which shows how the system hides the truth from women and makes them mere recipients of decisions.

### Criticism of the Prison System as a Symbol of Patriarchy

Conceptually, the film *Isolation Ward* can also be read as a critique of the prison institution as a representation of patriarchal power. Prison is not only a physical space that limits movement, but also a symbol of the social system that imprisons women in a structure of inequality.

The medical institution in prison is also portrayed as non-neutral - doctors are not named, often appear in silence, or when they speak, they only give orders. This shows the depersonalization of power, as well as women's powerlessness in the face of an unquestionable technocratic system.

### Symbolic Visualization: Key Images and Scenes

Some important images in the movie *Isolation Ward* have deep symbolic meanings:

1. Images 3-4: Shows the first time Wenny enters the prison - a face full of anxiety yet determination. The camera pans in from a downward angle to reinforce the perception of oppressive power.
2. Images 5-6: Wenny first speaks to other prisoners, showing the process of adaptation within an established system.
3. Figure 7: When Wenny refuses an injection from a medical officer, symbolizing resistance to the control of the female body.

These images are not just visual complements, but part of the construction of meaning in the film text, in accordance with the multimodal approach in AWK.

### Limitations of the Film and the Potential for Alternative Narratives

Although the film successfully raises the issue of women and power, the narrative of the *Isolation Ward* is still not completely free from the trap of traditional representation. Women are still shown in a passive position, although they are brave, but have not shown collective efforts to fight the system.

In addition, the film does not raise other perspectives such as prison system reform, solidarity between women, or healing narratives. Therefore, the representation that emerges is still depressive and less transformative.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research above, the conclusion of Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis research in Adhe Dharmastriya's *Isolation Ward* is as follows: *Isolation Ward* is a horror-thriller movie that tells a woman's struggle to find justice for her sister's death. Women in this movie act as

subjects and objects. Women who are appointed as subjects can be seen from the way Wenny, a woman, struggles to get information to get justice for her sister's death. Then women in the Isolation Ward movie in the context of objects are depicted as an exploitation obtained by women. Specifically, women who should be protected and prospered properly even though they are prisoners. In the movie Isolation Ward, it reflects and shows gender discrimination that exists in certain layers of society and in certain environments. For the position of the reader (audience), the director intends and directs to position Wenny. In the film, the director directs the reader (audience) to support and side with Wenny, where the reader (audience) in the plot of the film is positioned as someone who feels an empathy for the struggle of a woman. Then in this Isolation Ward film there are 4 depictions (representations) of women. For the first, women's struggle for information and justice. It is depicted that women fight against injustice committed by men. The second is an act of violence, where in the movie the dominant female party gets a physical act of violence. Third, women are used as exploitation material, where women here are positioned to have a value but for a personal interest or other parties. Fourth, where the environment is dominated by one gender (women), there is also a phenomenon of superiority that exists between fellow women. This phenomenon occurs due to environmental factors, where in the movie which has a prison background, especially a women's prison, women are definitely divided into two groups. In this case there is also a power relation and power relation that exists in the film Isolation Ward which has a prison background. Where someone who has power is able and can use their power to act as they wish. Meanwhile, people who have the power are able to defend themselves for their own safety and good. However, the movie still shows the inferiority of women over men. Where a woman experiences helplessness even though she has tried to fight physically and energetically.

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