

**Femininity and Women's Resistance:
Deconstruction of Meaning by Sara Mills' Critical Discourse
in 'Mother' Movie**

Rhesa Zuhriya Briyan Pratiwi¹, Eny Susilowati², Joni Rusdiana³, Arina Rohmatika⁴

^{1,2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said, Surakarta, Indonesia

⁴University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom

Correspondence: rhesa.pratiwi@gmail.com

mboke.adhyt@gmail.com

jonirusdi@gmail.com

axr207@student.bham.ac.uk

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Abstract

The strength of film as a medium that represents and constructs reality with the storyline which is symbolically packaged, through substance and full of socio-cultural values. This study is to describe the deconstruction of femininity and women's resistance meaning in the "Mother" movie. This research is a descriptive qualitative text research using main analysis of critical discourse by Sara Mills. The subject is the "Mother" movie, a thriller drama directed by Bong Joon-Ho. Collecting data at the text level, especially through documentation and literature studies, and furthermore, data is validated through FGD with experts who have experience and knowledge according to the object of research. The results explain the deconstruction of feminine values and women's resistance meaning in the "Mother" movie positioning women as objects. At this level, there is an objectification of women through the main character played by Hye ja, although another tendency appears which also positions women as subjects in the storyline. The emergence of physical and emotional aspects of femininity strengthens the objectification of women in the film. However, there is a dissection on femininity and resistance value in the film due to the emotional dynamics of the main character's complex character. Finally, the existence of media as an industry and the power of messages makes the practice of media commodification depends on the owners, so it's possible that the image of the female character in the film is used to represent a form of media power over the commodification of the message conveyed.

Keywords: *femininity, critical discourse of Sara Mills, the "Mother" movie, women resistance*

INTRODUCTION

Film is able to tell about a number of diverse meanings. At this level, the story and plot in the film can refer to the genre that appears in the film's packaging. The variety of film genres makes films directed at the classification or segmentation of the audience watching. Is it then that the films shown will be intended for children, teenagers, adults, or even can be watched by all ages. The existence of genre in a film also determines and affects the quality of impressions in a film. As part of the mass media, film is also a medium that is able to provide an overview of what it is constructed of. In a special way, films even become a means to influence the audience's perception of the values offered. Discussing the substance of the message in the film, a number of values that are raised are basically full of socio-cultural aspects that surround where a film is shown. No exception, about how the film is also influenced by the socio-cultural context that surrounds it.

One of the discussions that often appears in the substance of the message in the film is about women. *“Mother”* is one of the films from South Korea that has extraordinary specifications in the Korean cinema scene, even the world. Directed by Bong Joon-Ho, the film *“Mother”* became one of the films that appeared with a different look for a family film context, thriller and dark comedy genres once aired. With a duration or runtime of 128 minutes, the film *“Mother”* emerged as the flagship film of South Korea which became one of the nominees and competed in the Best Foreign Language category at The 82nd Academy Awards in 2009, although later, this film had to fail in the final selection stage (Siregar, 2010).

The main genres of the film *“Mother”* are drama, mystery, thriller, and crime. This film is categorized into a drama film with an R rating (restricted or limited) which means that this film is shown only for limited consumption by a few people in a certain age classification, while children or adolescents under 17 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or guardian when watch this type of film. The assumption is that there are some scenes of an adult nature that are shown in the film, or contain elements of violence that should not be seen by children or adolescents under the specified age. Like a detective film, the audience will be brought into a position in the plot of the truth that will be seen at the end of the story, where previously the facts and realities were hidden through a number of semiotic codes in this film distributed by CJ Entertainment and Magnolia Pictures.

Regarding the description of the storyline in the film *“Mother”* above, it can be said that the mother figure—Kim Hye-ja—is constructed as a person who struggles to fight for the fate of her child. Because of her love for her only child, Kim Hye-ja decided to investigate the case of her son's arrest because she believed that her son would not do that. He did this in his own way because he felt that the authorities (police) actually put him in a difficult position. In the

context and plot of the film presented, the female figure of the mother character in the film “*Mother*” is considered to have experienced deconstruction, especially through how the image of the pillars of the myth of femininity usually appears in media messages, especially in discourses that are believed and socially constructed by the community.

Before going further into discussing the construction of women and the concept of motherhood in *Mother*, defining women in South Korea at first is actually seen as significant compared to their condition a few years earlier. South Korean women are now starting to be considered in their roles and functions in society, both in the economic, social, educational, legal, and political sectors. Based on an economic survey from The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2018, there are more than half the number of adult women in South Korea (56.1%) who work. The number of children and adolescent girls there is also stated to go to school and pursue higher education as men in South Korea. Even in the political context, some South Korean women are also actively involved in politics. This is evident in the 2020 parliamentary election, as many as 57 seats were successfully occupied by women, which is more and almost three times compared to the election in the previous period which only got 20 seats, out of a total of 299 seats available in the South Korean National Assembly (OECD, 2012)

Another phenomenon regarding the context of women in South Korea can also be reviewed through the research of Patterson and Walcut, which examines gender discrimination that occurs in the workplace with the title “Korean Workplace Gender Discrimination Research Analysis: a Review of the Literature from 1990 to 2010”. A total of 52 articles discussing gender discrimination in the workplace in South Korea were documented and analyzed. From this study, it was concluded that although gender discrimination in South Korea is still quite strong, the data shows that the spirit of gender equality is starting in South Korea. Many South Korean women go to school and work. In addition, a number of laws in South Korea have also begun to consider and promote the spirit of gender equality (Patterson & Walcutt, 2013).

Under different conditions, the form of gender equality in South Korean society in fact still encounters a number of obstacles. Data from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea shows that of all working adult women, 45% only work part time. Meanwhile, the total number of part-time workers in South Korea, both male and female, makes up 36.3% of the total number of workers in the country. This figure shows that although women in South Korea are starting to be allowed to work, they are still not given the opportunity to get the same rights as men. Women are still positioned as complementary to men (*Ministry of Gender Equality and Family*, n.d. <http://www.mogef.go.kr>)

Tirto.id on November 17, 2019 also noted a number of inequality experienced by female workers in South Korea. Tirto said that South Korea is the country with the highest salary gap between male and female workers, reaching 35%. It was recorded that only 2% of corporations in South Korea appointed women as leaders in their workplaces. Women workers in South Korea are also haunted by fear due to social pressures to quit their jobs when they are pregnant and giving birth. Women's nature is considered to be a hassle and hinders women's productivity at work so that employee recruitment will always prioritize men (Dayana, 2019).

Although some companies in South Korea accept female workers as employees, it does not fully support the position of women in their work. Instead of gender equality, it turns out that women are used as employees because they are paid a lower salary standard than male workers. In this way, companies can save on their expenses so that the difference in profits obtained by the company will certainly be greater. In this context, women workers tend to be less critical of the company. In addition, recruiting female workers provides a big advantage for companies in South Korea because they are considered as advanced companies.

Fang Lee Cooke (2010) in her research entitled "Women's Participation in Employment in Asia: A Comparative Analysis of China, India, Japan and South Korea" succeeded in identifying factors related to gender bias in the world of work that occurred in four countries, one of which was South Korea. The factors in question are the level of education, social values and traditions that develop in the community, recruitment systems and policies, government regulations and policies on labor, as well as the organization and level of representation of women.

Referring back to the depiction of women in media broadcasts, the image of the pillars of women reminds us a little of Tomagola's opinion (quoted by Santi, 2004) about how the image of women appears in the mass media. Tomagola's findings seem to be one of the "nodes" that bring together the intersection between the concept of media's symbolic reality and actual reality. How then can women appear in certain images for several things that are inherent in themselves, both according to the perspective of community beliefs, as well as some things that are considered taboo by the community. The problem is whether in this case the media influence people's perceptions, or is it the people's views that in turn influence the concept of impressions of media messages. Related to this context, Tomagola started research in a number of advertisements in several magazines. In his research, he found several descriptions of how the image of women cannot be separated from a figure who is able to support the power of advertising. More, Tomagola (quoted by Santi, 2004) summed up his findings in an analysis of five images of women in a number of magazine

advertisements, namely: picture frames; pillar image; contest image; dish image; and social image.

Based on the view above, the film “*Mother*” is considered to have several depictions that are identical to the construction of the image of women in Tomagola's research, especially the image of the pillars that lead to a number of myths of femininity for women. Although the messages and media channels studied were different, in concept, the mass media basically have the power and power to shape the message. This is what then becomes a symbolic reality of the media and is a second hand reality. However, this message actually affects people's preferences in determining their perceptions. As a result, it is not uncommon for the media to form message constructions which then interfere with the views of the general public.

It seems that patriarchal culture and collectivism are seen as thick in the lives of South Korean people. Defining South Korean women, especially in their duties and social roles as mothers, is ultimately inseparable from how the South Korean socio-cultural sphere believes in the existence of a massive female discourse believed by the public. Men are seen in the main position, while women are seen as complementary. This condition occurs in family life, workplace, to politics. A father in a large family is responsible for their family. All family members must respect and obey the father. In addition to the father, the older person in a family must also be respected and prioritized. For example, at dinner, the oldest person is invited to sit before the others. All family members are not allowed to take food and drink before the eldest and their father take it first. This tradition is still maintained by the people of South Korea. Younger people should bow when meeting older people to say hello and as a form of respect to seniors.

Another phenomenon can also be seen in the agricultural society in South Korea. The concept of the family is used as the social center of community life. The extended family has a very dominant role in the life of their society. The role of this dominant extended family is evident from the fact that the clan name is still maintained. Call it the names or clans of Kim, Kang, Park, and Lee, which are quite well-known clan names in South Korea. In traditional society in South Korea, women are expected not to work but to stay at home to take care of the house, prepare food, and also raise and educate their children. On the other hand, when women work, they tend to be discouraged from working in the public sector.

Related to this phenomenon above, one of the descriptions that can be raised is the condition and depiction of the image of women in South Korea that's indirectly deconstructed when faced with the images of the characters in the film “*Mother*”. The “*Mother*” is further able to bring together a number of socio-cultural analyzes in society. The existence of the film is able to create its own criticism through the message it conveys. This is

what turns out to be a separate point for the message conveyed in the film “*Mother*”. Although this film is classified as a film that has taken a very long time to release, but in a certain context, this film is quite capable of representing how the stories of women fighting for what they are entitled to, fighting for the justice that they must receive, until they decide to survive and at the same time fight back the way they do.

Talking about women's defense, the concept of resistance also provides an attitude of fighting, opposing, and providing opposition as a form of women's resistance to power. Foucault confirms that power tends to take the form of resistance, especially in the context of social relations (Dosi, 2012; Adnani, Udasmoro, & Noviani, 2016). This is also explained by Barker (2000) which shows that the resistance carried out as the basis for resistance is a force that meets other forces, so that the resistance in question refers to an attitude of survival and opposition to other forces in the ruling social class in society.

The emergence of resistance usually occurs in conditions of society that are identical with hegemony. Hegemony can refer to a form of power over structures, social systems, and other fields. In the context of hegemony, Fairclough (quoted by Jorgensen, 2007) believes that ideology is a meaning that serves a form of power. Furthermore, the emerging hegemony does not only talk about domination, but also in the negotiation process that creates consensus on a meaning. The existence of competing elements will lead to resistance, so that the hegemonic aspect that works becomes unstable and dynamic. As a result, the existing concept of hegemony is ultimately believed by Fairclough to see the process of interpreting the discourse appears in social practices in society, that fight and defend each other (Jorgensen, 2007).

In the scope of Indonesian society for example, the practice of resistance that arises on the basis of power also occurs in the sphere of patriarchal ideology and sexualism. In addition, the reading of resistance in an implementation leads to aspects of feminism, one of a form of ecofeminism that provides an opportunity for women to fight against exploitative power over a region. In some cases, Walby (2014) found the existence of a private patriarchal form and the exploitation of women in the household, which was maintained through their involvement in the public sphere. This private patriarchal aspect is basically rooted in domestic life, where the household is the main power of men over women and circulates in the private sphere of the household (family). This is different from the public patriarchal system which tends to highlight the forms of exploitation of women on every line, although then it does not mean that women are completely excluded. As a result, there are social laws that are constructed by society, and must be believed and applied by women in their lives (Hardiningtyas, 2016).

Through the explanation above, how to see and analyze women in the realm of minorities and social inequality, one of which can be raised through critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse usually exposes the abuse of power, domination, ideological persuasion, and injustice that is shown implicitly through news texts (Sobur, 2001). Critical discourse analysis also looks at discourse in relation to the use of language in speech and writing (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Eriyanto, 2015). Discourse further emerges as a social practice that links certain discursive dialectical relationships with aspects of situations, institutions, and social structures that surround them (Eriyanto, 2015).

The practice of critical discourse can further display an ideological culture. For example, when discourse raises practices that are not balanced between social classes, men and women, it comes to the majority group versus the minority group. Critical discourse will discuss how the text plays to image how inequality is constructed. Related to this, a number of characteristics in critical discourse analysis are reviewed through several things, namely: action; context; historical; power; and ideology (van Dijk, Fairclough, and Wodak quoted by Eriyanto, 2015).

In examining the film *“Mother”*, the critical discourse analysis chosen is the Sara Mills model. This analysis is one of the reactions raised against traditional linguistic criticism which tends to be formal. The focus on discourse analysis will focus on the main points related to sentence structure and grammar. This opinion is supported La Ode Harjudin (2001) that language is not seen as a transparent medium. Language as a medium is not able to express experiences or events that actually happened, but as a construction of reality and something that is subjective.

La Ode Harjudin (2001) added that the existence of rulers ultimately influenced a number of discourse rules that emerged ideologically in the direction of a certain pattern. This context explains that there is an opportunity for individuals or groups with a strong position to tend to penetrate other groups with a weaker position (Badara, 2014). Likewise with the critical discourse analysis proposed by Sara Mills, Mills focuses on discourses on aspects of feminism and texts that contain a bias against the image of women. Mills (quoted by Eriyanto, 2015) see how women are presented in a marginal and subordinated point of view. More clearly, the critical discourse of the Sara Mills model specifically analyzes and examines the depiction of marginalized women, the forms of women's marginalization in the texts that are displayed, to the background on why the forms of women's marginalization are able to appear in the texts.

The *“Mother”*, although it is classified as an old film because it appeared in 2009, but based on the mapping carried out, obtained data that still lacks references to previous studies

that specifically used films as research subjects. However, the researcher found a number of similar previous studies and discussed how aspects of femininity and women's resistance became the main substance in the film's message.

First, the research from Biasini (2018) that discusses how femininity experiences a shift in the representation that appears in the animated film "*Disney Princess*". In his writings, Biasini explains the shift in the meaning of femininity in a number of characters in the animated film "*Disney Princess*", analyzed using critical discourse analysis from Sara Mills. Still regarding representation, further research refers to how the mass media is able to represent the depiction of women in several film shows, especially from Eviyono Adi Wibowo (2015) in the movie called "*Wanita Tetap Wanita*" and Ganjar Wibowo (2019) in the movie of "*Siti*". Furthermore, a number of studies in the critical domain refer to the writings of Novi Kurnia (2017) regarding audience reception in interpreting gender and aspects of physical disability in Indonesian films, as well as Irmasanthi Danadharta (2019) related to the portrayal of Marxist feminists in film of "*Suffragette*".

One of the studies that discusses feminism and women's resistance has also appeared in other similar films that have appeared in Indonesia. For example, film called "*Marlina Si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak*", There are a number of studies written by Irma Febryani (2019) and Asrita (2019). Both of these studies specifically refer to how the image of feminism appears in the film. Furthermore, it was also obtained previous research by Ratu Bulkis Ramli (2018) which refers to the representation of physical and symbolic violence and public acceptance of women in film of "*Marlina Si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak*". Furthermore, Niken Prahastiwi (2019) also discussed about how the resistance to physical and symbolic violence received by the figure of Marlina in her film. Different from Ratu Bulkis Ramli and Niken Prahastiwi, S.B. Lestari (2019) examines how the audience's interpretation of the messages shown in the film shows, to the context of the language style used in the dialogue. Furthermore, there is also another research that discusses women's struggles in novel media, namely the Novel "*Wedding Agreement*" of Mia Chuz by Nurhanna Widianti, Sacandra Aji Rivaldi, Shopa Labibah, & Solihin (2020).

Talking about aspects of women's resistance, the existence of defense model carried out by women can basically be seen through a number of various media texts. Just for example, research from Wildan (2014) discusses the model of women's defense or resistance in the novel *Perempuan Berkalung Turban*; discourse on women's resistance and domestic life in the short story *Intan Paramaditha* by Ery Agus Kurnianto (2016); defense of Papuan women and their environment in the romance *Isinga* by Puji Retno Hardiningtyas (2016); and discourses on violence and women's resistance in a number of films by female directors by

Liestianingsih Dwi Dayanti (2011).

Reviewing one of the mass media texts that can be conveyed through the film, “*Mother*” as the subject in this study provides a glimpse of how women and the mother figure of South Korean construction are depicted. Through an environment that is full of Confucianism, is it then that the mother figure in “*Mother*” is really able to represent the roles and functions of women for South Korea, or does it display a different form of picture of the concept of South Korean women (mothers) and experiences deconstruction of meaning. In this regard, a number of previous studies on how the construction and description of South Korean women, along with some trends regarding the treatment of women in South Korea, can be seen at a glance through this research. Hye-Run Kang & Chris Rowley (2005) about South Korean women and the division of labor management system; Yonjoo Cho, Jiwon Park, Soo Jeoung Han, Moonju Sung, & Chankhyun Park (2021) about career women and their challenges in South Korea; Louise Patterson & Brandon Walcutt (2013) about gender discrimination that occurred in the work environment in South Korea in the range of 1990-2010; Fang Lee Cooke, 2010) on women's participation in the field of work in South Korea, China, India, and Japan; as well as Kyoungtae Nam, Guiohk Lee, & Jang-Sun Hwang (2011) regarding the gender stereotyped image that appeared in Korean Teenage Girls Magazine.

Some of the research above basically places women's position in work organizations and systems, especially in relation to gender discrimination and stereotypes. However, the presentation on women and gender stereotypes does not discuss how the position of femininity and resistance becomes an important aspect in discussing the treatment of women. The film “*Mother*” as the subject in this study provides a glimpse of women and constructs the mother figure in South Korea. Through an environment full of Confucianism, is the mother figure in the film “*Mother*” really able to represent the roles and functions of women for South Korea, or is it displaying a different form of the South Korean women (mothers) concept and experiencing deconstruction of meaning.

The selection of the film “*Mother*” with different storyline specifications, also portrays and questions aspects of femininity that seem to be broken as a form of resistance and defense of the mother character in the film, including the extent to which media power is seen as dominating the construction of the image of women as mothers. Therefore, this study attempts to analyze how the deconstruction of feminine meanings and resistance actually appears in the image of women in the film “*Mother*”. Furthermore, the analysis will be directed at Sara Mills' critical discourse in order to open perspectives on how texts are able to shape the symbolic reality of women, as well as present a number of socio-cultural criticisms of perspectives that have developed in society.

This research is a text research using a descriptive qualitative approach and the main analysis through Sara Mills' critical discourse. The subject of the research is a South Korean film entitled "*Mother*" which is a drama, crime, and thriller genre, and was directed by an Oscar-winning South Korean director, Bong Joon-Ho. Data was collected in the form of documentation on the film "*Mother*", especially through a number of texts that appear in the dialogues of the film objects, scenes, plots, artistic arrangement of images, music (background) used to accompany the film and each scene, as well as a number of intrinsic and extrinsic elements in it. Furthermore, data collection was also supported by several other reference sources, such as: books, news, journals, internet sources, as well as a number of information regarding the two objects of the film being studied.

Regarding the data validity technique, the validity of the data was obtained through a peer debriefing strategy in order to increase the accuracy of the data in the analysis. In this context, we will involve other parties (peer debriefers) to review a number of data obtained in the study. This strategy is intended to obtain meaning outside the researcher in order to increase the level of validity of research data (Creswell, 2014). The peer debriefing step is carried out by Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with several lecturers and figures who have sufficient experience and knowledge of the object of research, both those referring to scientific communication on studies or text studies, film practitioners, as well as understanding the research topic being discussed that related to feminism, gender, and similar social sciences.

The data analysis refers to the qualitative analysis technique of the text, especially in terms of exploring what discourses are raised through the text in the film. Textual data analysis uses the Sara Mills model, where the discourse does not only stop at the form of discourse, but also reviews the critical aspects that can be analyzed from the film's message (critical discourse). Beside that, data analysis begins with documenting the film to be studied, namely the film "*Mother*". Furthermore, the data obtained through documentation will be reduced according to the criteria and limitations in the critical discourse analysis of the Sara Mills model. In this context, the data findings will be in the model of a reduction in the form of dialogue, pictures, characterizations or characters, sound or music, to a number of messages that are felt to be reduced to the same datagroups.

The critical discourse analysis of the Sara Mills model is basically used for a number of issues or messages that are loaded with the concept of minority. This is divided into several positions or points of view, namely the subject-object position and the reader position. For the subject-object point of view, this position will look at how the message is viewed from the perspective of the viewer. The direction is that the message in the film "*Mother*" will be

analyzed from the point of view of the narrator (the subject), and who is being told (the object), as well as the extent to which each actor in the film will try to present his character in the film. Then as for the reader's position, the messages in the films studied will be directed at how the audience reads the text in the film, as well as where the reader's point of view will be placed.

DISCUSSION

“Mother”: One of Master Piece from Bong Joon-ho

“Mother” (RR: Madeo; MR: Madō; dan Hangul: 마더) is a South Korean drama film directed by Oscar-winning South Korean director Bong Joon-ho and produced by Choi Jaewon and Seo Woo-sik. The film was released in 2009 and starred mainly by two characters, namely Kim Hye-ja and Won Bin. The film was officially released in South Korea on May 28, 2009, May 16, 2009 for the Cannes festival, and is under production by CJ Entertainment Barunson (distributed by CJ Entertainment and Magnolia Pictures in conjunction with Cannes).



Figure 1. The official poster for the “Mother” (Magnolia Pictures, n.d.)

Based on data compiled through the *layar.id* (Telaumbanua, 2020), one of the successes in the film Mother can be seen through a number of awards received by the film. The film, which takes the genre of drama, crime, and thriller, has received several awards, especially in several national and international events. A total of approximately 40 trophies were successfully brought home by the film Mother, including 46 other categories for which this film was nominated. Some of the prestigious South Korean national and international film awards that Mother has won include: Buil Film Awards, Busan Film Awards, Blue Dragon Film Awards, Asian Film Awards, and Green Planet Movie Awards (Wihayanti, 2021). The film

Mother was once lined up to be Korea's representative as a foreign language film category that was nominated for an Oscar. Although later this film could not bring victory, but the film Mother was able to win and many trophies in other prestigious international film awards. Call it the Dubai International Film Festival, Boston Society of Film Critics Awards, Toronto Film Critics Association Awards, Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards, Munich International Film Festival (Indonesia, 2020), and was even officially selected to enter the Cannes Film Festival (AP, 2009).

In terms of cast and characterizations, apart from the main cast, a number of South Korean actors and actresses who joined the film Mother, include Chun Woo-hee, Jeon Miseon, and Song Sae-byok. There is a total cast of 66 people, including the main actors and actresses involved in it (IMDb, 2009). The film Mother cost \$5 million or around 79 billion rupiah in the process of making, and was subsequently able to earn as much as \$17 million or about 268 billion for promotion in the global market (Telaumbanua, 2020).

The appeal of the film Mother can also be seen through the parties behind the film, one of which is the film's director, Bong Joon-ho. Bong Joon-ho is one of the directors who is best known for his Oscar-winning film Parasite. However, before Parasite, Bong Joon-ho basically has recorded achievements in several of his previous films, namely The Host which tells the story of a giant monster that attacks the city, as well as implies a meaning as a criticism of the ruler; Memories of Murder about a murder in a remote village; Barking Dogs Never Bite, and Mother (Jenkins, 2010). Mother's success actually follows the success of Bong Joon-ho's previous films, and can be said to be Bong Joon-ho's best record before leading Parasite to his Oscar win in 2020.

Bong Joon-ho's "*Mother*" is basically worked on and built in a perfect, yet complex way. As the title suggests, "*Mother*" with the Mother character named Hye-ja displays the character of a mother's love that goes hand in hand with the conflict of the murder case that befell her son, Do-joon. Do-joon, played by Won Bin is a 27-year-old young man who has mental retardation so that he is in a condition and thinking like a child (pre-school). The conflict in Mother's film seems complex because through the plot, the audience is brought into a situation when Do-joon as a mentally retarded person is felt unable to do anything about the treatment of the murder charge that befell him. On the other hand, the plot in "*Mother*" makes Hye-ja's figure in the analogy of a character that is both light and dark at the same time when fighting for justice for her child (Jenkins, 2010).

The unique side of the "*Mother*" can also be seen in the character that was built through the figure of Hye-ja. Hye-ja's character, played by a senior actress in South Korea Kim Hye-ja, is basically known as a character who often plays a conventional and very dignified South

Korean mother. However, Bong Joon-ho's "*Mother*" brings a different air because constructing and shaping Kim Hye-ja in a character is difficult to understand. This is also supported by the character Do-joon, played by another popular actor, Won Bin.

Although carrying the thriller drama genre, the "*Mother*" basically contains several scenes that tend to contain elements of crime, sexuality, and violence. "*Mother*" is considered as one of the films that is full of mystery, contains murder that can be packaged flawlessly, and is full of psychological elements that are able to play the characters in it perfectly. Packed with stunning cinematic, "*Mother*" can even appear as one of the drama films that contain a lot of black humor (Magnolia Pictures, n.d.).

Focus in this research, looking at the values and images of femininity that is represented through the media, especially films, basically it cannot be separated from the aspect of gender inequality and the way feminism views the concept of women in a wider spectrum. Talking about women and feminism in the context of the media, is not only about who is above whom, or who can win over whom, but also about the existence of social justice in providing equal roles and balanced functions for men and women. Furthermore, inequality at the level of feminism, one of which talks about the practice of violence that creates terror as well as the lack of commitment to respect the victim. At this stage, violence can occur and begins with political affirmations. This form of violence can be seen directly, factually, or at a symbolic level.

Representation of Women in the "*Mother*"

The existence of films as part of the mass media is also believed to be a tool whose job is to send information messages to the public. In accordance with their character, the mass media, without the exception of films, are ultimately able to facilitate the dissemination of information, as well as enable the public to be able to access the information widely (Tamburaka, 2013) At this level, there are at least three special characteristics that mass media must possess, including 1) business orientation for practical orientation; 2) develop in accordance with technological developments that affect the distribution and consumption of media; 3) mass media which acts as a reflection of human life (Anggraeni, 2018). Thus, the continuity of the film as a mass message transmitter will disseminate information messages that tend to be in a large scope and able to be widely accessed, and not only information on a personal level or private (Wahid & Pratiwi, 2018). In addition, A.W. Widjaja (1993) mentions that film's function as a medium that can influence human life and convince the audience. Films with their strengths are able to display a number of presentations of reality that seem real with various storylines and genres.

In this section, Sara Mills clearly divides the depiction and reading of the female figure in

the text, also included in the text of a film. This context explains the adaptation of the Althusser technique used by Sara Mills looks more at how the position of the actor is positioned in a text. This position is mentioned as a form of subjecting someone (Eriyanto, 2015), which means that there is a person as the object to be interpreted, while there is another person who serves as the subject to interpret.

Through this presentation, the main points that must be realized in the discourse of the Sara Mills model are explained by Eriyanto (2015) lies specifically in two things, namely: first, how the social actors in the text can be positioned and interpreted in the text, who is the party who is the interpreter in the text to then interpret the events and problems discussed, then what are the consequences of the interpretation that is raised; second, regarding how the reader is positioned in the text. In this position, the meaning in the text is believed to be a negotiation process that occurs between the writer and the reader. The assumption is that the reader is basically brought in by the results of the interpretation of the position of the subject and object in the text so that it can be interpreted that the audience or reader is actually led to believe the beliefs of the author of the text. Therefore, the portion of the reader in reading the text is the audience imagined by the author for what is conveyed in the text.

The positioning of the subject looks at how the situation is raised in the text, especially in describing the position of a character in the text, both through ideas and social events that surround it. The position of the subject in the text leads to a higher position in the meaning of the text because this position will determine the direction through the meaning of reality in presenting events. The position of the subject basically also contains the intention in imaging a certain ideology. Defining and positioning a character and character in a film means that there is a hidden meaning behind the signs in the text about how a character is raised and interpreted. This can be seen in several findings, namely: 1) the description of women's affection for the family; 2) the struggle of women in defending their children; and 3) the form of women's self-superiority. Some related scenes in the film can be seen in the following figure:



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

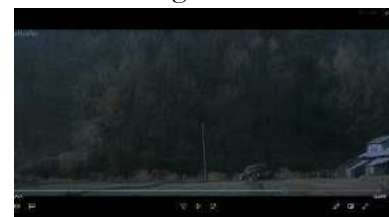


Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

The position of objects in the text describes how the characters are represented and constructed through the text. In the position of the object here, the characters in the text are interpreted by other parties and are seen as objects described by other positions (subjects). The interpretation of the characters is basically done subjectively, so it is possible that a onesided interpretation of events or characters will emerge. The characters in the text will be bound and do not interpret themselves freely in the text. Some explanations on the object positions of the characters in Mother's film can be seen in: 1) possessive and over-protective attitudes towards family; 2) forms of domestication and subordination of women; 3) sexism treatment; 4) emotional dynamics in women: 5) stereotypes on physical size; 6) labeling weak women. Some of the scenes that have been identified in the reading of meaning in the film Mother can be seen in the following figure:



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 32



Figure 33



Figure 34



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43

The position of the reader in the level of discourse analysis of Sara Mills brings a view in seeing the reader as an audience or audience to be interpreted in the text. At this level, the interpretation of the position of the reader or audience is actually a form of negotiation between the interpretation of the writer and the reader on the meaning displayed in the text. Sara Mills believes that the reader or audience actually has a connection with the text that is consumed. Thus, audiences are not only placed as consumers who do not influence the text, but are related systemically and have views on their interpretation of the text. Readers are believed to participate in transactional messages on the meaning of the text they read or see (Eriyanto, 2015).

Referring to the form of text interpretation of the characters in *Mother* film, as well as based on the discussion process through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with film and

gender practitioners, it can be identified early on that interpretations in the representation of femininity values and women's resistance tend to have good relations in subject and object levels. The dominant depiction of women in Hye Ja's figure is in fact not necessarily conceived as a character who is always considered strong in her character. The reflection of Hye ja's image also appears in her character who is emotional and weak. On the other hand, Hye ja's figure also shows the existence of surgery as well as the breaking of feminine values that are believed in general, until in the end it develops and mixes with values in the context of masculinity.

Based on the documentation on a number of main data in the film, several scenes and scenes appear that represent how the audience is taken by the point of view and plot created by the director as the film's constructor. This can be seen in the tendency of the plot twists that are played, even from the beginning the first image in the film is shown. Some of the scenes and image pieces that have been mixed in this level of analysis, among others are:



Figure 44



Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48



Figure 49

The scene in the initial image of the film indirectly brings sentimentality that is trying to be raised through the image of Hye ja dancing in a wide meadow. Indirectly, the picture shows a wide setting where the focus of the picture is only on Hye ja's presence, showing Hye ja's position alone without other characters, as well as emphasizing expressions that show different meanings from Hye ja's character. The opening in this scene raises questions for the audience, about what really happened to Hye ja's character. The picture of the scene seems to show a combination of sad and happy feelings at the same time. Thus, indirectly, the first opening scene is enough to give the director the power and influence from his point of view in bringing the audience to put their sentimental feelings on the character Hye Ja. This includes the audience's point of view which is brought to pay attention to the main character Ibu, Hye

ja, as the main focus in the film.

In the context of the film setting, the setting that appears is considered to have an influence on the atmosphere in constructing the environmental picture in the film's storyline. This setting makes the audience's point of view be brought towards the appearance of sympathy—and empathy—against the gap between the rich and the poor, which is then reflected in the protagonists that appear, namely Hye ja and Do joon. One of them is in the exposition set up section which explains the initial details of the location, showing the condition of Hye Ja's family which can be said to be lacking. Hye Ja works as an acupuncturist and traditional healer, whose business is caught up in illegal medicinal practices. The exposition set up is also reinforced in the scene of a Mercedes Bens car passing by and crashing into Do Joon who is with his dog. Several scenes in this scene give the impression of a gap in the lives of Hye Ja and Do Joon who are considered less fortunate and tend to experience financial deficiencies.

The context of the reader is also indirectly brought into the line of thought which seems to negate the initial assumptions in the plot of the film being played. At this level, Mother's storyline seems to contain logical traps that bring the audience's mindset towards a form of negation of the character's play. In other words, there are forms of cancellation and denial of several figures, such as Jin Tae, who was initially suspected of being the mastermind behind the murder, and the figure of Grandpa who is a junk seller who is also suspected of being the real killer. These two characters are actually negated in character cancellations, although previously, the storyline was brought and applied to the audience (through Hye ja's point of view) who seemed to agree that these two characters (Jin tae and Grandpa) played the real killers.

Furthermore, the depiction of other female characters in the film Mother also refers to different images. Several female characters are briefly described as objectifying and subordination, both at the physical, sexual, and emotional levels. While on the other hand, the image of women at a glance is also shown at the masculine level, especially in the behavior, gestures, and style of language conveyed in the dialogue. This shows that there is a dynamic in describing the female characters in the Mother film. Although the main point of view still concentrates on the character Hye Ja, the highlighting of several scenes and images in the film also contains a shift in interpreting the value of femininity and the concept of resistance in women. Thus, this brings the reader to a growing understanding in interpreting the representation of femininity and resistance to women in the film Mother.

One of the reader's points of view is also represented in the last scene of the film, when Hye Ja does resistance and defense over a number of conflicts she has gone through. This

became a cathartic process carried out by Hye ja, although it made her survive in conditions, but actually this tendency made Hye ja fight against the inner conflict of her actions. Hye Ja feels the need to let go of all her bad memories and experiences by practicing acupuncture on certain points in her body. This practice can make him more relaxed and get rid of the bad memories that he has been living for so long.

Femininity Concept in Physically and Emotionally

The level of common discourse usually explains that women are generally—and socially—associated with the concept of femininity, whereas men tend to be associated with positions of masculinity. However, both femininity and masculinity are socially shaped and constructed as shared assumptions. On the other hand, it is not biologically an irreversible destiny of women or men. Furthermore, this is strengthened by Ashraf (quoted by Sar, 2020) which explains that the concept of femininity and masculinity is actually behavior-oriented, which is masculine with assertive and action-centered behavior, while feminine refers to attitudes that are passive, cooperative, and gentle.

Focusing on feminity, the depiction of dissection of the meaning of femininity and the concept of women's resistance in the film “*Mother*” basically experiences several dynamics. Through the presentation of the data that has been described previously, several values of femininity that have been successfully concluded, among others, are constructed at different levels. One of them is in terms of physical and artifactual, the existence of representations of femininity can be seen in the objectification of women to the existence of make up as a support for the appearance (performance) attached to women. It is described that women who are feminine and beautiful are identical with those who are able to use makeup well.

At a certain level, the existence of make-up or cosmetics attached to women refers to the beauty myth which is believed that every woman will compete and try to attract the attention of the opposite sex. This happens biologically and develops in the capitalist sex market. In addition, a naturally beautiful image is seen as not sufficient to meet the beautiful needs of women, so they must use assistance, namely beauty products (Reed, 2019). This is what can then be seen in the character of Hye ja and the young girl lover Jin tae, which is indirectly objectified through the appearance of the film's media.

The representation of femininity which is generally believed to be then also directed at the emotional condition of women, that women tend to prioritize their emotions and feelings compared to their logic. This is reflected in the form of depiction of women in several scenes which state that the female figure in the film has a dominant emotional level so that it makes her not think clearly and it is possible to do things beyond reason.

The perception of weakness for women also gives an image of femininity that appears in

the film *Mother*. Some female characters are described as weak based on the point of view of other parties as their interpreters. At this level, women's femininity tends to be attached to the social assumption of society that women have a dominant weak side, are powerless, and have the potential to become victims of violence. The form of femininity at this level is represented in the form of love for the family. This conception of love actually has different dynamics from other representations of femininity in the film. Hye ja's figure in the film *Mother*, in addition to having a high emotionality, her side also reflects a dominant affection for the family, especially for Do Joon, his son.

Deconstruction of Femininity and Resistance

Regarding the film *Mother*, which is the subject of research, the other side of the representation that is raised through the main female character, Hye ja, contains a deconstruction or break-in on the values of femininity that tend to be interpreted in general in society. Hye ja's character is constructed in a different way, not as a character with a completely rounded character, but as a complex character with a number of loving and possessive tendencies towards her child. In this context, Hye ja develops with a character that is initially described with love, then changes and turns into a character who tends to take risks, especially when fighting for justice for her child because she feels that her son Do Joon has become a victim. This gave rise to a reshuffle in interpreting the concept of feminine socially. As a result, the image in the context of love that initially appears feminine, then develops into the courage and firmness of Hye Ja's figure in fighting for her child. This image can be seen in several scenes that explain Hye ja's position as a subject that describes her superiority, brings assumptions and criticisms that the police have been unfair to her child, and grows Hye ja's strength to fight for justice by taking on some difficult areas of the journey.

The form of superiority in female characters, indirectly forms a resistance or resistance in women against the power that suppresses them. With the initial construction to fight for justice and the truth, the image of a woman through Hye Ja is constructed to defend herself to achieve what she wants to get. Although later at the same time, actually appeared several affirmations that unconsciously shape and represent the notion of objectification of women. Call it in relation to the depiction of several scenes that show sexism, domestication, and subordination of women.

In addition, the depiction of the value of femininity and resistance in women in *Mother's* film actually leads to two points of view, either through the view of the subject or the view of the object. However, judging from the negotiations that are raised against the reader's side, the film *Mother* basically brings direction in placing women as objects in the film. The dominant side of Hye Ja as the main female character is also influenced by the

confirmation of the objectification of women. Hye ja's figure, who is strong, brave, firm, and tends not to hesitate to commit violence, is indirectly influenced by Hye ja's condition, which has to survive a difficult situation for her. In addition, based on her love for Do Joon, Hye Ja is required to fight, as well as being represented that what she is fighting for is the result of conflicts and conditions that have occurred before. In other words, the development of Hye ja's character in the form of resistance subjects in the film's text, actually appeared due to the objectification process applied to her..

Neoliberalization and Women as Objects

The existence of objectification of women is considered to be able to trigger violent practices that have actually been internalized and institutionalized so that they indirectly "force" the social environment to agree with this. This context can be seen when women with economic conditions are indirectly forced to participate in violence against other women. This may be because women need to do catharsis in a number of problems and treatments that have been experienced. In addition, in certain contexts, this tendency is also a confirmation of the social meaning of the values and forms of femininity that is believed in the social norms of society. Thus, if the form of femininity which is actually constructed according to the views and social affirmations of society is negated, then it will not become a normalization for the public.

The concept of femininity (feminine value) that exists in women tends to be judged and believed in discourse that is considered "normal" according to the views of society. For example, a feminine woman must be gentle, loving, and so on. However, if women act and do something that is considered unfeminine (beyond femininity), then this is not normalized and denied. In this case, women are believed to have no privilege in doing many things. One of them is in the form of control and violence by women, for example, this will be negated by society and not considered normal, like men who are identical with the concept of masculinity placed on them.

The emergence of market intervention in the field of communication has turned all kinds of text into commodities. This phenomenon leads to neoliberalization which gives rise to dependence on capital owners so that texts produced by the media with capital owners' backgrounds will eventually become commodifications that aim to generate profits for the media and how market interests work. All kinds of texts produced by the media are part of the commodity form. Perhaps, the woman in the image that appears will also be a representation that perpetuates this.

Judging from the image of women in the film *Mother*, the objectification of women is reflected in the protagonist Hye ja who is portrayed in a complex character. Hye ja is depicted

not only as a protagonist who has the character roundness of kindness like the protagonists in other films, but also camouflages her role as an antagonist along with the development of the characters played in the film. At first, the audience was brought to the character Hye ja who is full of love and loves her son with all her heart so that she (Hye ja) will do everything to fight for her son's life. However, the plot is carried over to the development of the story, regarding Hye ja's past who had been violent to her son, tended to be possessive and controlled her son, to the emotional dynamics that caused him to experience helplessness. The film's construction of the concept of femininity on the image of women through Hye ja is seen as experiencing a distortion when compared to aspects of femininity in general. Furthermore, departing from the form of resistance to Hye Ja's struggle for her son, Do Joon, this is what actually breaks the social normality of feminine values that are generally believed to be.

Stereotypes about gender in South Korea tend to refer to a patriarchal system that operates based on Confucian philosophy. In Confucianism, women are believed to be obedient and submissive to their husbands and families, while men are required to be the head of the family. (Nam et al., 2011). In this culture, the position of men is considered to have a dominant value so that the view of women becomes inferior and has less value (Cooke, 2010). Although in its development, many South Korean women are working and trying to improve their competence so that the view of the patriarchal system is starting to be refuted and opposed. However, South Korean women are still expected to fulfill their domestic responsibilities as wives, mothers and daughters-in-law (Choi, 1985; Nam et al., 2011) so that it is not uncommon for many Korean women to be trapped and experience conflicts over their domestic roles, with social roles and functions that are more independent and public (Lee, Um, & Kim, 2004).

The picture of Hye Ja's character is full of domestic roles, as well as contains a public character that must be carried out simultaneously. Hye Ja is described as having no husband and only living with Do Joon. This makes Hye ja's role not only in the domestic sphere such as taking care of children, cooking, and so on, but also having to perform public functions in the family who also work to meet the needs of daily life. However, Hye ja is demanded in the discourse of social roles that must be carried out in a balanced manner (public and domestic) so that this makes her trapped in the dualism of roles attached to her. In other words, the discourse that appears in the film *Mother* in the end still strengthens the form of objectification for women, namely strongly through the character of Hye ja.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion described in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the deconstruction of the meaning of feminine values and women's resistance in Mother's film basically positions the female figure and character in the position of the object. At this level, there is objectification of women through the character played predominantly by Hye ja, although then several other tendencies emerge, namely positioning women as subjects in the storyline. The existence of physical and emotional aspects of femininity is a form of objectifying women in the film. In addition, there is surgery on the value of femininity and resistance in the film. This is due to the emotional dynamics of the main character who has a complex character. Finally, the existence of the media as an industry and the power of messages is unavoidable. This refers to the practice of media commodification which depends on the owners of capital, so it is possible that the image of the female character in the film being studied is indeed used to represent the form of media power over the commodification of the message conveyed.

The placement of the subject position on a number of female characters in the film Mother leads to findings through the concept of femininity, such as: family affection, struggles for children and families, as well as forms of self-superiority which then intersect with masculine values in the picture. On the other hand, the objectification of women in the film Mother can be seen through several forms, such as possessiveness and overprotection, domestication and subordination of women, forms of sexism, objectification of women in physical and emotional aspects, and stereotypes against women who are considered weak. The reader's position explains the different nuances in the analysis and data findings, which concludes about the plot twist that is played and then leads the audience to give full sympathy to the film's main character, Hye ja. The reader's position in his findings indirectly brings logical traps to several characters as a result of the storyline that takes place in a twist. As the ending, there is a position for the audience regarding the form of resistance (defense) in the form of catharsis by the main character.

There is a limitation of research which predominantly refers to the main data in the form of text. This makes researchers have to look for relevant supporting data, either through references or previous scientific research, news alerts and data about films, online data sources, and so on. However, the efforts made by researchers to complete the data through FGDs were deemed helpful in the research process, as well as efforts to increase the validity of the data for the research carried out

Methodologically, it is necessary to replicate and develop further research in order to enrich the results of this study, especially in the selection of analytical blades (the theory used) as

well as more relevant and comprehensive data collection techniques so that further research is sought to complement existing research results. This research is also expected to provide recommendations as well as contribute ideas for the audience to be critical and responsive to a number of media shows that are displayed, especially on shows that are full of values and social phenomena in society

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