



# Representation of Woman in before, Now and Then Film

Fathan Noer Aprianto<sup>1\*</sup>, Vani Dias Adiprabowo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Communication Science, Ahmad Dahlan University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author's email: [fathan1700030320@webmail.uad.ac.id](mailto:fathan1700030320@webmail.uad.ac.id), [vani.adiprabowo@comm.uad.ac.id](mailto:vani.adiprabowo@comm.uad.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Patruarchy  
Film  
Representation  
Critical Discourse

Gender differences are social and cultural constructs that are related to differences in status, nature of roles, and responsibilities between men and women. These differences in status, nature, roles, and responsibilities are depicted in the film "Before now, and then" by Kamila Andini. Nana, a woman living during the politically heated times in Indonesia, where power was transitioning from Soekarno to Soeharto, is the background of Nana's life. Nana holds the title Raden, which is utilized by a certain group to strengthen their movement. This process is somewhat similar to a political marriage, where the group leader will gain a stronger position in the village by marrying a woman with the title Raden. If Nana refuses to marry, her father's head will be severed. It is evident in this film that women are merely accessories, serving as companions to the winners of the rebellion. The representation of women in society generally depicts that women are weak, oppressed, secondary and the source of problems. The purpose of this research is to find out how women are represented in the movie "Before now and then".

## 1. Introduction

Movies is one part of mass media that can convey messages to audiences through a story media. Movies can be used as a unique message delivery medium that easily reaches the public in a short time (McQuail, 2010). As stated by McQuail that movies become a unique message delivery medium because in a movie portrays the social reality that occurs and is displayed in every scene that seems to happen in front of us.

Movies have a major influence on changes in social life. Social changes that occur are caused by the process of conveying messages about objective reality, representations of reality and the conditions of society that can interpret messages in a movie differently. In the end, movies become a medium used to convey ideas, concepts or ideas from certain groups or people and have different effects. The effect that occurs is a message that arises from a movie that is packaged like the reality that occurs in society.

Movies have recently become increasingly popular, both as a propaganda medium and as a communication medium to spread ideas. Nowadays, the existence of film media is very important to increase people's understanding of the discourse that is blown up in the form of stories that touch on moral values. Apart from being an entertainment for the community, films are also considered to be a powerful doctrinal tool to enforce patriarchal culture, but on the one hand, they are also used as a medium of education to the public that gender issues are crucial issues because what is actually happening today is that there is still gender oppression and injustice (Moh, 2021). The existence of an "imbalance" between the roles of men and women is the reason that encourages gender themes to be presented in the world of cinema (Ayomi, 2021).

Issues about women are often raised in movies, where women have always been considered as objects of sexuality in a movie. Many directors have raised issues about gender, feminism including Nia Dinata, Mouly Surya, Gina S Noer and Kamila Andini. One director who consistently raises

women's issues is Kamila Andini, some of her films that raise women's issues include *Sekala Niskala*, *Laut Bercermin*, *Yuni* and *Before Now and Then*. Of the several films directed by Kamila Andini, *Before Now and Then* is very interesting and has received many international and national awards including Best Film at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards, Best Feature Film at the Brussels International Film Festival, Best Director at the Indonesian Film Festival.

*Before now and then* is a 2022 Indonesian independent drama film directed by Kamila Andini. The movie is set in the 1960s where there is a process of power transfer. Nana, the main character, finds herself caught up in one of the most important events in the history of the republic. It was the time before the proclamation of independence and the tragic transition between the New Order and the Old Order.

The movie opens with a scene where Nana and her girlfriends choose to run away rather than marry into the revolutionary group. Nana is asked to marry the leader of the revolutionary group because Nana holds the title *Raden* and she is used by the group to strengthen the movement. This process was a bit like a political marriage, where the group leader would have a stronger position in the village because he married a woman with the title *Raden*. If Nana does not want to marry then her father's head will be cut off. It seems that in this movie women are only accessories to become the companion of the winner of the rebellion. Nana, who managed to escape, was rescued and married by a respected *lurah* named Darga. Nana's life after marriage is faced with the condition of being shackled by the social construction that occurs where the obligation to appear perfect in front of the community because Nana is the wife of a respected *lurah*. Nana knew that as a woman she had to be water, water that was always suitable for her container. Nana believes she must not resist. To fit her vessel as the wife of Darga, a respected *lurah*, she must look decent.

Although the movie tells the story of an incident in the past, what Nana experienced is still experienced by many women today. experienced by Nana is still experienced by many women today. Women tend to experience difficulties with self-confidence because their lives are shaped and controlled by rules and patriarchal roles that make them second-class citizens, and patriarchal roles that make them second-class citizens.

Apart from the storyline, there are other interesting things, namely the phenomenon in this film departs from the reality that patriarchal culture is still inherent in daily cultural practices. The reality in this film is described through an analysis called critical discourse analysis. (Eriyanto, 2001) says that an event is revealed through texts that influence individuals who can produce new ideologies in critical discourse analysis.

Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis describes the discourse on feminism on how women are presented in texts, whether novels, pictures or news. The main concern in a feminist discourse perspective is how the position of women is often presented as cornered, isolated and unfavorable compared to men. Subject and reader positions are two key concepts in Sara Mills' discourse analysis. The first concept relates to how the positions of various social actors, concepts, or events are presented in the text, which then determines the form of the text that the audience reads. The position also determines how elements of the text are constructed. Those who have a high position to define reality will present events or other groups in a certain discourse structure that is conveyed to the audience. Women are usually presented in the text as objects, not subjects.

This research also requires references from several previous studies, so researchers found several references. First, a study entitled *Representation of Gender Inequality in the Film Kim Ji-Young, Born 1982*, this research uses a qualitative descriptive method with a critical discourse analysis knife from the perspective of Sara Mills. This research tries to dissect the values of gender inequality how inequality due to gender injustice is cultured in society. Second, a study entitled *Deconstruction of women's representation on Hollywood Production Superhero movie posters*, this research uses a semiotic analysis method that analyzes the representation of women based on the concept of gender equality. This research seeks to dismantle traditions dominated by patriarchal values both overtly and covertly depicted through analysis using semiotic analysis as a method. Third, this research is titled *The Meaning of Representation of Arini's Figure as an Object of Patriarchy in the Film Arini*. This research focuses on understanding the meaning of representation of female figures used as objects of patriarchal culture. This research uses movie media as research. *Before, Now and Then* is a movie that researchers consider as a depiction of women's perspectives that occur in the middle of society.

In the community, women still experience gender-based injustice. The subject of this research is about women's issues in society.

## 2. Method

This research uses qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. Descriptive research examines in depth the problems experienced by individuals, groups, or events (Sugiyono, 2016). This study obtained the desired data in the study by conducting observation and documentation techniques. Observation is one of the variants of data collection methods that have methodologically strong characters. The observation method is not only a process of observation and recording activities, but more than that observation makes it easier for us to get information about the world around us (Hasnah, 2017).

This research analysis uses Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is used in this study which starts from discourse theory. Initially, the term discourse refers to a unity of language conveyed orally and in writing. Discourse discussion is basically a discussion of the relationship between the contexts contained in the text. This discussion aims to explain the relationship between utterances that make up the discourse (Eriyanto, 2001). Alex Sobur in his book explains that discourse is the ability to advance (in discussion) according to regular and proper sequences, communication of thoughts, both oral and written, which are official and organized (Sobur, 2001). Discourse analysis can be an effort to reveal the hidden intentions of the subject who delivers the statement. Discourse analysis in its literature uses a lot of question words to try to reveal what is in the message or communication text (Kriyantono, 2014).

Sara Mills' discourse analysis model focuses on how actors are positioned in the text, one party has the position of the interpreter and the other party becomes the object of interpretation. Sara Mills divides them into Subject-Object and Author-Reader as follows, How the reader is positioned in the text. how the reader positions himself in the text. to which group the reader identifies himself:

**Table 1.** Sara Mills' Discourse Analysis Framework

(Eriyanto, Discourse Analysis: Introduction to Media Texts, 2001)

LEVEL	THAT ARE WANTED TO BE SEEN
Subject - Object Position	How events are seen, from whose perspective the events are seen. who is positioned as a storyteller (Subject) and who is the object of being told. whether each actor and social group has the opportunity to present himself, his ideas or his presence, his ideas are displayed by other groups or people.
Position of Author - Reader	How the reader is positioned in the text. how the reader positions himself in the text. to which group the reader identifies himself.

## 3. Theory Framework

### 3.1. Representation

Representation is an activity that represents and describes something and then the results will be constructed in the mind after describing or describing it, to place similar meanings of what we see and what we think. According to Stuart Hall in the book *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (1997), representation is a practice for producing meaning, language and culture that is exchanged by group members in a culture. According to (Giles, 1999) there are three definitions of the word "to represent", namely:

To stand for such as the Monas building symbolizes the province of Jakarta, to speak or act on behalf of such as the Governor of Jakarta who is speaking and acting for the people of the province of Jakarta to represent such as historical writings that can present events in the past: Representation is not only how cultural identities are expressed and constructed in a text but also constructed in the process of receiving perceptions by group members of a culture that consumes the cultural values that are represented. The relationship between objects, concepts and signs lies at the heart of production and the process of connecting these objects, concepts and signs together is called representation (Hall, 2020).

The representation of women in film media will be related to gender. Film is one of the media conveying messages in mass communication, because the scope of distribution is mass (Surwati & Dwi, 2011). Women in the mass media are always portrayed very typically, namely their place is at home, acting as housewives and caregivers, dependent on men, unable to make important decisions, only involved in a number of professions, always looking at themselves, as sexual objects/sex symbols and fetish objects, as objects of affirmation of patriarchal work patterns, objects of harassment and violence, being victims but actually positioned wrong, being passive, are consumers of goods and services, and as a means of persuasion (Puspitasari, 2013).

### **3.2. Feminism**

The feminism movement stems from the thought and realization that women are an oppressed and exploited group that requires efforts to resolve, either individually or in groups, regardless of the outcome (Satriyani, 2018). Feminism has changed the dominant perspective on various fields in society, inseparable from the role of feminists who continue to campaign for women's rights. This movement has encouraged the birth of women in society. The movement was able to encourage the renewal of women's suffrage, greater access to education, equal pay and the right of women to make individual decisions.

In fact, feminism is an idea that emerged along with social change, development theory, women's political consciousness, and women's liberation movements. It includes the meaning of the term "male and female gender", while the term "gender" is defined as the attributes possessed by men and women that are shaped by socioculture. The concept of gender produces two categories of traits: femininity in women and masculinity in men. While sex is the physical difference between men and women, gender also includes social traits and characteristics that are common to both sexes (Putri, n.d.).

Film as a medium for conveying ideas is used by some women activists to campaign for feminism issues. There is a transformation from old media to new media because it has a wider network, massivity and virality (Sukmi & Natalia, 2016). Movies are very effective for spreading the idea of feminism because in movies the audio-visual elements are added to the narrative and cinematic elements that attract a wide audience to be accepted.

### **3.3. Patriarchal Culture**

Patriarchal culture is a social and cultural system in which men dominate in all matters, including political, economic, social and family decision-making power. In a patriarchal culture, men are considered the leaders and main determinants of people's lives, while women are considered inferior and often given limited roles. Patriarchal culture refers to a relationship of male dominance over women both domestically and publicly. Historically, this principle of patriarchy has been central to the social, legal, political and economic organization of many ancient civilizations such as the Hebrews, Greeks and Romans (Weitz, 1998). Patriarchy changes throughout history, dynamically and complexly, Many feminists oppose patriarchal culture and fight for women's rights through movies as the media advances.

As a culture, patriarchy exists as a set of rules and values, codes and scripts, that determine how men and women should act and be in the world. Patriarchy also exists internally within people, shaping how people think and feel, influencing how people view and value themselves (Gilligan & Snider, 2018).

### **3.4. Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis is a language that is examined not only refers to linguistic elements alone, but is associated with context. Critical discourse analysis pours events on the text and has an effect on individuals through the text so as to produce a new ideology from the text (Eriyanto, 2001).

Sara Mills is one of the critical discourse analysis figures who focuses on feminism, Sara Mills analyzes discourse on how the positions of actors are displayed in the text. These positions in the sense of who is the subject of the storytelling and who is the object of the storytelling will determine how the structure of the text and how meaning is treated in the text as a whole. In addition, Sara Mills also focuses on the readers and writers featured in the text. How the reader identifies and places himself in the storytelling of the text. This kind of position will place the reader in one position and affect how the text is to be understood and how these social actors are placed. In the end, the way the story is told and the positions placed and displayed in the text make one party legitimate and the other party illegitimate (Eriyanto, 2001).

Mills makes representation the most important part of his analysis, examining how a party, group, person, idea or event appears in news discourse and influences meaning when it reaches the public. The positions, ideas and events of various social actors are placed in the text and ultimately determine the form of the text presented to the audience (Isninadia & Yuhdi, 2023). Certain actors are usually the subject of media discourse about certain events or groups.

#### **4. Result and Discussion**

Before, Now and then is an Indonesian independent film produced in 2021 by director Kamila Andini. Kamila Andini's position as a director in presenting stories about women is very successful. In the past decade Kamila Andini has been consistent with women's issues which have always been the main theme in all her films. She displays several scenes and dialogs and tries to show in detail how the life of Sundanese society at that time was depicted. The time setting in the movie is depicted with the precarious atmosphere of the transition of power, Sundanese cultural customs.

##### **4.1. The Position of the Character as Subject in the Movie Before Now, and Then**

Subject Position is a situation where actors are positioned in a discourse. In this case, how the actor becomes the subject of the storyteller (subject) in the movie. One way to study subject position is by looking at several scenes in the movie. Analysis of a scene will show how events are seen from the point of view of who sees them, and who is the actor who is the subject of the story. The subject position in Before Now, and Then is the director, the director's position in this film can be seen from how the director conveys his ideas to his actors. There is a female character, Nana, who is positioned as a subject displayed in different scenes.

This character is shown as an unfree woman who is constrained by the culture in the community itself. This character is shown as inferior, constrained and does not have the right to her own choices. Another scene captures how Nana chooses to remain alone in the house during juragan Darga's midnight show. There is also a sad story about a miscarriage and an even sadder solution: when Nana becomes pregnant again and manages to give birth well, her husband and she must follow the instructions of a "smart person" to give up their baby to be raised by a foreign family solely to avoid the return of "bad luck". The image of a submissive woman or wife has received attention from feminists who challenge the position of women who are always made second class, marginalized, and become complementary objects and sufferers of a man as a ruler in the postcolonial era that examines masculinity (Jackson et al., 2009). At the end of the story, Nana portrays herself as a party who initially felt inferior, unfree and angry at the situation, but she managed to find happiness by meeting her first husband.

##### **4.2. The Position of the Character as an Object in the Movie Before Now, and Then**

The object position is the position in which the party is defined and described by others. In the movie, the actor can see the position of the object from the biggest place in the movie. The objects in this movie are Ino and Darga, Ino is a meat entrepreneur in a market. This is represented as a young Chinese woman who is empowered, as well as strategizing to stay alive in the era of power transition. no who has a straightforward character and is easier to express herself, in contrast to Nana. Ino, who has a straightforward character and expresses herself more easily, is the opposite of Nana. In one scene

Nana asks Ino a question, "Why do women always lose and are then haunted by guilt?" "Nana leans on her best friend's shoulder." This question reflects Nana's feelings. After years of holding secrets and trauma, Nana finally let it all out. Nana's question is still relevant and pertinent to the current situation. Women continue to experience guilt for things they don't want.

Here are some scenes that show the representation of women represented through the characters Nana and Ino:



**Fig 1.** Nana applying makeup with the help of her son Dais

Nana sat in front of the bedroom dressing table and combed her hair and Dais, who was still asleep on the bed, immediately hugged Nana from behind after seeing Nana dressed up to help her comb her hair, Dais asked about the reasons why women should have long hair. Dais was curious about why women had to have long hair, and in a bun. Dais asked this question because she saw many women in her neighborhood with long hair. Dais lives and lives as a Javanese, in Javanese culture women mostly have long hair, bun in Javanese culture has a meaning that women must be smart to keep their secrets or family secrets, meaning that whatever problems and secrets experienced by women are kept behind themselves (bun). it is considered a form of self-devotion and devotion of a wife to her husband (Fitri et al., 2019).



**Fig 2.** Nana and Ino chatting by the riverbank

In this scene Nana, the children, and Ino have a picnic by the river. They are playing in the water together when Ino approaches Nana and talks about how it feels to be free. As fellow women, Nana and Ino share their feelings with each other. In this scene, Nana and Ino talk about their feelings because as women, they have to face many pressures in their daily lives. In Javanese culture, women have an image, and roles such as being submissive, not arguing, meek, and should not "exceed men" (Putri et al., 2016). Patriarchal culture limits women's freedom to do what they want and be what they want to be.



**Fig 3.** Nana looking in the mirror and after vomiting her food

In this scene Nana says, "Must be like water, adjusting to the surroundings", showing that she is holding back her emotions because of Lurah Darga's infidelity. She is trying to be like water, which is the most flexible element that will follow the shape of any container, and as a woman who is asked by her environment to be able to put herself wherever she is and harbor whatever she wants. In this scene, it can be understood that women do not have the freedom to express their emotions. This is related to the marginalization caused by patriarchal culture, which prevents women from acting, communicating, and actualizing themselves (Permana, Tenu & Maulana, 2020). Marginalization of women does not only occur in the workplace but also in the household such as, the expression of an unequal relationship between men and women, women's opinions as wives are often ignored (Derana & Ganes Tegar, 2016).



**Fig 4.** Nana and Ino chatting behind the house

In this scene set behind Nana's house, Ino smokes a joint. Ino asks for Nana's family photo, which encourages Nana to tell Ino more about herself and her life. Ino becomes a safe space for Nana to talk about all the things she has been keeping to herself. Besides being a fellow woman, Ino is a kind person and can understand Nana's feelings. Although Lurah Darga is a good person, Nana kept a lot of her grievances to herself during her marriage to him. She could not tell him about her past and her fears. (Febriyanti et al., 2022). This leads to the view that women are always considered wrong and cornered due to the dominance of patriarchal culture. The stifling of the role of women who are not free in the social life of the community is due to communal rules (customs), habits that have been cultivated, family rules, and the attitude of humility of the women themselves, this has a negative impact on women which causes them to stutter in their lives (Ikmal, 2018).



**Fig 5.** Ino approaches nana and puts on a shawl for nana

Ino went to a party at Lurah Darga and Nana's house. While she was enjoying the event, Ino forgot to see Nana at the back of the house. Later, Ino goes to her and puts a shawl on her, telling her to go to the front of the house to join the others. Nana refused, but after Ino put the shawl on her, she just obeyed and went to the front of the room. Nana felt it was better to be at the back of the house than to join Lurah Darga at the front of the house where the event was taking place. She feels inappropriate because she is only a wife and feels that Lurah Darga is a famous person in her neighborhood, even though she has been married to him for a long time. In Javanese culture, the term "konco wingking" is used to refer to Javanese women as friends in the back. In addition, konco wingking means that a woman only functions as a companion to her husband or her position is at the back. What is meant by behind is the role and duties of women who are only in the kitchen.

#### **4.3. Audience-Reader Position**

Sara Mills' discourse analysis considers the text as the product of a negotiation between the author and the reader. The reader is positioned not only as a person who receives the text, but also as a person who is involved in the transaction, as described in the text. This position of the reader is usually related to the way in which the mention is made in the text. One usually addresses the reader with a greeting or an indirect mention. Mediation and cultural codes are two ways indirect addressing works. Indirect reading makes use of mediation, which means that the position of truth is organized in stages, so that the reader or audience can identify or align themselves with the characters in the text.

The reader is positioned as the main character so that the reader can also feel that the position of women in this film is very weak and cannot follow the position of men. The character of Nana as the main character is described as a weak, obedient and marginalized woman. the audience-readers are positioned as the main character, the audience-readers also feel that the role of women in this film is very weak and cannot follow the role of men. How the character Nana keeps the trauma of wounds due to conditions that she does not want, the audience can feel Nana's struggle to find freedom. Sara Mills also focuses on how readers and writers are presented in the text. How the reader identifies and places himself in the storytelling of the text. This kind of position will place the reader in one position and affect how the text is to be understood and how these social actors are placed (Eriyanto, 2001).

## **5. Conclusion**

The representation of women in the film *Before, Now and Then* through Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis that women are not free to express and restrictions that come from a system that gives domination, control and power to men. Therefore, what Sara Mills does is often referred to as a feminist perspective. The point of attention of the feminist discourse perspective is to show how the text is biased in presenting women as the wrong party, using critical discourse analysis on serendipity films can be a medium of learning in improving the ability to learn critical discourse analysis.



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