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## Representation of Patriarchal Culture in The Film Women Talking (2022)

Windhi Wulandhari<sup>1</sup>, Fikri Reza<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University, Indonesia, [202010415139@mhs.ubharajaya.ac.id](mailto:202010415139@mhs.ubharajaya.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup>Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University, Indonesia, [fikri.reza@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id](mailto:fikri.reza@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id)

Corresponding Author: [fikri.reza@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id](mailto:fikri.reza@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id)<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This study investigates the representation of patriarchal culture in the film *Women Talking* (2022) through a semiotic analysis, employing Roland Barthes' model and contextualizing findings within Bhasin's five categories of patriarchy. Analyzing selected scenes, the research reveals how the film denotatively depicts women's limited education, domestic confinement, and vulnerability to male violence. Connotatively, these portrayals highlight the profound psychological and social impact of such conditions, underscoring the women's struggle for agency and the societal pressures that define their worth. Mythologically, the analysis exposes underlying beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality, such as male leadership, control over women's bodies and labor, and the imposition of shame. The film's unique focus on women's collective deliberation and quiet resistance, rather than explicit violence, positions it as a powerful "speech" for social critique, resonating with contemporary movements like MeToo. The study concludes that *Women Talking* effectively articulates various facets of patriarchy—control over productive power and labor, reproduction, sexuality, movement, and economic resources—thereby serving as a significant cinematic work that challenges established gender norms and advocates for gender equality and women's agency in the face of systemic oppression.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, *Women Talking* (2022), Semiotics, Representation, Gender Studies, Cinematic Communication

## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Context

Film, as a multifaceted art form, integrates elements of photography, visual arts, literature, music, and dance, serving as a powerful medium for mass communication. According to Indonesian law (Law No. 8 of 1992 on National Cinematography, cited in Rianto, 2010), film is defined as an audiovisual artistic and cultural creation, produced according to cinematographic rules, recorded on celluloid or video, and screened via electronic systems. Etymologically, "cinematography" derives from Greek words meaning "motion" and "light," thus conceptualizing film as "painting motion with light." Beyond its

technical definition, film functions as a social and cultural document, reflecting the era of its creation (Vera, 2015). McQuail (as cited in Kurniawan, 2021) further characterizes film as an art form harmoniously blending literature, music, and acting, making it an engaging and popular entertainment medium in modern society, accessible through cinemas, television, and streaming platforms.

As a prominent communication medium, film exerts significant influence on society by shaping public thought and perception through diverse narratives (Fatin, 2013). Films can also serve as a source of motivation, delivering positive messages that inspire viewers (Sari, 2020). For instance, the film *Coda* (or *Child of Dear Adults*) portrays a deaf family's resilience, mutual support, and determination to overcome adversity and achieve their dreams. This narrative challenges negative stereotypes about individuals with disabilities, demonstrating film's capacity to motivate viewers towards perseverance, empathy, and self-belief (Azizah, 2022).

Film often mirrors real-life experiences, functioning as a representation of reality and conveying intended messages to its audience. Sasono (2009) highlights film's unique ability to simulate societal realities, fostering a closer connection with viewers. Beyond reflecting the real world, film influences its audience and serves as a medium for representing prevailing social issues, including democratic principles.

One pervasive social issue frequently depicted in film is patriarchy. Spradley (as cited in Putri, 2021) defines patriarchy as a system that positions men as leaders in various aspects of life, including education, work, and politics, effectively subordinating women. This ideology is often perpetuated as a cultural norm, passed down through generations, stemming from socially constructed gender differences. Millet (as cited in Zahrudin, 2017) argues that patriarchal culture originates within the family unit, where patriarchal values are instilled and subsequently transmitted to future generations, normalizing male dominance.

Suciati (2012) notes that patriarchal values prioritize male leadership, influencing perceptions of status and roles for men and women within families and communities. In patriarchal societies, even when women engage in non-domestic work, their status often remains subordinate to men. Within the family, men are traditionally seen as heads of households and providers, signifying their leadership and authority (Pratista, 2022). This power dynamic extends beyond the family to societal and national structures. The pervasive nature of patriarchal culture leads to serious social problems, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, and the stigmatization of divorce (Sakina & Siti, 2017). Data from Komnas Perempuan and Child Protection (2023) indicates a persistent rise in gender-based violence against women (GBVTW), with 339,782 cases reported in 2022, an increase from 338,46 cases in 2021. Furthermore, surveys reveal that a significant majority (93%) of sexual violence victims do not report their cases due to shame, fear of blame, lack of evidence, unsupportive families, or perpetrator intimidation (Asmarani, 2016). These statistics underscore the entrenched nature of patriarchal issues, where victims, predominantly women, are often pressured to keep silent by societal mechanisms that blame them or prioritize family honor over justice (Wulandari, 2020). The 2023 GBVTW data further highlights the dominance of violence in the personal sphere, with 2,098 cases, including 622 cases of sexual violence against wives and 140 cases against female children, revealing significant gender inequality rooted in patriarchal social constructs.

Given these pervasive issues, the eradication of patriarchal culture is crucial for achieving gender equality and societal well-being. While challenging to dismantle deeply ingrained gender-biased policies and constructs, continuous efforts are necessary. Film can serve as a vital agent of change in this endeavor. As a medium for social critique and an educational tool, film can persuasively inform audiences and authentically represent societal realities through audio, visual, and textual elements.

This research focuses on the representation of patriarchal culture in the film *Women Talking* (2022). This 104-minute American film, directed by Sarah Polley and released in 2022, is an adaptation of Miriam Toews' novel, inspired by true events in a Mennonite religious colony in Bolivia in 2010. Premiering at the 49th Telluride Film Festival, *Women Talking* garnered critical acclaim, including the "Best Adapted Screenplay" award at the Oscars and a "Fresh" rating on Rotten Tomatoes. The film's non-linear narrative recounts the horrific experiences of women in the colony, specifically focusing on their quest for liberation from continuous sexual violence perpetrated by men. The men in the colony systematically drugged and raped women in their sleep, dismissing their complaints as demonic acts or "wild female imagination." Consequently, the women deliberate on three options: do nothing, stay and fight, or leave the colony. Their collective decision to leave signifies a powerful act of resistance and a pursuit of a better life. While *Women Talking* addresses patriarchal issues through the lens of religious conviction, other films, such as *Yuni*, explore similar themes from a cultural perspective, often depicting women as passive recipients of patriarchal treatment. Despite *Women Talking* portraying historical events, its themes resonate with contemporary social realities where anti-democratic ideologies suppress individual rights and opinions, relegating women to a secondary status.

This study aims to delve into the representation of patriarchal culture in *Women Talking* (2022) due to its depiction of patriarchal issues within a Mennonite religious colony. Analyzing such representations is crucial for understanding how cinematic portrayals influence audience perceptions of real-life societal dynamics. The research will employ Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to examine the signs and symbolic meanings embedded within the film, including imagery, dialogue, sound, and acting, to interpret the social and cultural messages conveyed (Margareta, 2022). Barthes' semiology, which investigates the relationship between signifiers, signifieds, and myths (Akhbar & Supratman, 2018), provides a robust framework for deconstructing the film's portrayal of patriarchal culture and its implications.

### **Research Question and Objective**

Based on the questions above, the aim of this study is to determine how patriarchal culture is represented using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis model in the film *Women Talking* (2022).

### **Literature Review**

#### **The Concept of Interpersonal Communication (IC)**

Interpersonal communication (IC) is defined as a direct, face-to-face communication process between two or more people that generates immediate feedback in response to the message conveyed. It is a high-frequency form of social interaction. IC is characterized by the intimacy of the parties involved (Hanani, 2017), and allows for the simultaneous exchange of verbal and non-verbal reactions (Mulyana, 2008; Azehari & Khotimah, 2015). The characteristics of IC include messages delivered through both verbal and non-verbal means, focusing on content and relationship, containing feedback and coherence, and involving active, mutual interaction aimed at influencing each other's thoughts and attitudes (Rustan & Haqiqi, 2017).

For children with Down Syndrome, communication differs due to their specific disabilities. Thus, the family unit (parents and child) plays a critical role in enhancing the child's communication abilities by paying attention to the context, content, and form of the message (Wardah, 2019).

## Characteristics of Effective Interpersonal Communication

Joseph A. DeVito outlines five core qualities for effective interpersonal communication (Saputra, 2020), which form the analytical framework for this study:

1. **Openness (Keterbukaan):** This involves three aspects: willingness to disclose information (self-disclosure) appropriately; willingness to react honestly to external stimuli; and acknowledging ownership of one's feelings and thoughts. For parents, this means creating a dialogical atmosphere where both parent and child can interact honestly.
2. **Empathy (Empati):** Defined as the ability to "know" what another person is experiencing from their perspective (Backrack). Accurate empathy requires both sensitivity to the feelings present and the verbal skill to communicate that understanding. In the parent-child relationship, empathy means understanding the child's motivations, experiences, and feelings, and avoiding judgmental evaluations or criticism.
3. **Supportiveness (Perilaku Suportif):** Effective relationships are characterized by a supportive attitude that minimizes defensiveness. A supportive environment is created when parents genuinely value the child's ideas, provide sincere attention, and use descriptive rather than evaluative language. This is key to cultivating the child's motivation.
4. **Positiveness (Perilaku Positif):** Requires a positive attitude toward both oneself and the communication situation. This is often manifested through stroking or positive encouragement, such as praise and appreciation, which supports the child's self-image.
5. **Equality (Kesetaraan):** Communication is more effective when there is an underlying sense of equality, recognizing that both parties are equally valuable and worthwhile. This principle demands unconditional positive regard for the other person, where disagreements are viewed as efforts to understand differences rather than opportunities to undermine the other party.

## Communication Barriers

Communication is not without obstacles. Potential barriers include mechanical disturbances (physical or channel-related conflicts), semantic disturbances (misunderstanding of terms or concepts), self-interest (choosing to perceive only certain parts of a message), hidden motivation (ignoring messages that contradict one's drives), and prejudice (emotional bias leading to illogical conclusions). These barriers are amplified when communicating with children with DS due to their cognitive limitations.

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study employs a **qualitative descriptive research design**. The qualitative approach is best suited for this investigation as it allows for an in-depth, holistic, and contextual analysis of the complex meanings embedded within the film's narrative and visual text (Sugiyono, 2009). The descriptive nature of the research focuses on accurately and systematically interpreting the representation of patriarchal culture without relying on statistical measurements.

### Data Source and Object of Analysis

The **data source** is the film *Women Talking* (2022), including its script, cinematic techniques, and final cut. The **object of analysis** is the selected scenes, visual signs (e.g., setting, costume, lighting), and key dialogues that are thematically relevant to the

establishment, enforcement, or challenge of patriarchal culture within the colony. Specific focus is placed on the extended sequence within the hayloft, which serves as the primary setting for the narrative's central discourse.

### Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation (visual, auditory, and textual analysis) involving the following steps:

1. **Multiple Viewings:** Repeated viewing of the film to achieve saturation and identify recurring visual and narrative patterns.
2. **Scene Segmentation:** Identifying and segmenting specific scenes, particularly those involving discussion or confrontation, as core units of analysis.
3. **Transcribing Key Dialogue:** Documenting critical dialogue exchanges among the women that articulate the nature of the patriarchal system or propose alternatives.
4. **Cinematic Coding:** Cataloging and documenting specific visual signs (e.g., the color palette, composition, camera angles) that connote power, confinement, or vulnerability.

### Data Analysis Technique (Semiotics of Barthes)

The collected data (scenes, signs, and dialogue) was analyzed using Barthes's semiotic methodology in a systematic, three-stage process (Sobur, 2004; Vera, 2014):

1. **Denotative Description:** Identifying the literal elements present in the selected scene (e.g., *a group of women in long dresses sitting in a dusty hayloft*).
2. **Connotative Interpretation:** Interpreting the cultural and emotional associations of the denotative signs (e.g., *the long dresses connote uniformity, modesty, and the suppression of individual identity; the dusty hayloft connotes abandonment, confinement, and low status*).
3. **Mythological Deconstruction:** Analyzing how the established connotations coalesce to reinforce a cultural myth (e.g., *the signs of confinement and uniformity reinforce the myth of the 'proper, subservient woman' who must sacrifice agency for the 'purity' of the community, which is maintained by male authority*).

This process allowed the research to peel back the layers of cinematic representation to expose the underlying ideological messages concerning patriarchy.

### Unit of Analysis

The primary unit of analysis for this research is the film *Women Talking* (2022). Specifically, the study will focus on selected scenes that depict patriarchal culture, employing Roland Barthes' semiotic model. Barthes' framework encompasses three key aspects: denotation, connotation, and myth, which will be utilized to deconstruct the film's visual and narrative elements.

Rather than analyzing the entirety of the film, this study concentrates on ten specific scenes identified as containing prominent representations of patriarchal concepts. These selected scenes are:

Scene Number	Timestamp (Minute)
1	04:33 – 04:40
2	07:13 – 07:17



Scene Number	Timestamp (Minute)
3	17:33 – 17:43
4	21:39 – 21:54
5	29:18
6	33:23
7	50:30
8	54:19 – 54:25
9	1:02:51 – 1:02:56
10	1:08:25 – 1:08:40

These ten scenes will undergo a detailed semiotic analysis to uncover the layers of meaning related to patriarchal structures, power dynamics, and gender roles as portrayed within the film.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Findings

This section presents the semiotic analysis of ten selected scenes from the film *Women Talking* (2022), utilizing Roland Barthes' model of denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis aims to uncover how patriarchal culture is represented within these specific cinematic moments.

#### **Scene 1 (04:33 – 04:40): Women lining up to vote in a warehouse.**

Denotatively, the scene depicts women in a warehouse forming a queue to cast their votes on a critical decision. Ona's dialogue explicitly states that the women in their colony lack formal education, with most unable to read or write. Connotatively, this scene highlights the women's collective courage to engage in a democratic process despite their educational disadvantage, a direct consequence of the patriarchal system that prioritizes male education. The warehouse, a typically utilitarian space, becomes a clandestine venue for their pivotal discussion. Mythologically, this scene reinforces the patriarchal belief that education is primarily a male prerogative, essential for leadership roles, while women are relegated to domestic spheres without the necessity of formal schooling, thereby perpetuating gender inequality.

**Scene 2 (07:13 – 07:17): Ona and other women discussing in a warehouse.** Denotatively, Greta expresses her fear that the women will be expelled from the colony and face divine condemnation if they do not forgive the men for their actions. Connotatively, Greta's statement underscores the profound psychological and spiritual pressure exerted by the patriarchal community. The women face not only social ostracization but also the threat of eternal damnation if they defy male authority. The use of straw as seating material in the warehouse emphasizes the humble and urgent nature of their clandestine meeting. This scene evokes the myth that male authority extends to religious interpretation, asserting that women's salvation is contingent upon their obedience to men, thereby instilling fear and discouraging any form of dissent or challenge to the established order.

**Scene 3 (17:33 – 17:43): Salome and Ona arguing.**

Denotatively, Salome dismisses Ona as a "dreamer." Ona responds by articulating that women are voiceless and possess nothing to return to, asserting that even animals have a more secure existence than they do, and thus, dreams are their only possession. Connotatively, Salome's frustration reflects the perceived futility of Ona's aspirations within their oppressive reality. Ona's reply powerfully conveys the women's marginalized status and their profound lack of agency, emphasizing that their hopes are merely dreams in a world where their voices are suppressed. Mythologically, this scene illustrates the myth of gender inequality, where men are inherently perceived as leaders and decision-makers. This societal norm leads women to internalize a sense of powerlessness, viewing their aspirations as unattainable dreams, despite their inherent capabilities.

**Scene 4 (21:39 – 21:54): Greta disagrees with Ona.**

Denotatively, Ona proposes that the women instruct the men to leave the colony. Greta vehemently opposes this, stating that women have never commanded men and that men control all resources, including basic necessities like salt, money, and are exempt from domestic tasks such as opening curtains or caring for horses. Connotatively, Greta's strong reaction highlights the deeply entrenched power imbalance within the community. Her examples underscore men's absolute control over economic resources and their exemption from domestic labor, reinforcing women's economic dependence and subjugation. The discussion in the warehouse further emphasizes the private and urgent nature of their deliberation. This scene exposes the myth of male dominance in both societal and domestic spheres, where men wield economic power and are absolved from household responsibilities, while women are deemed incapable of issuing directives to men.

**Scene 5 (29:18): Autjie drawing water.**

Denotatively, August is observed watching Autjie drawing water from a pump in the yard, while he makes a comment about civilians hiding in bunkers during WWII. Connotatively, Autjie's routine task of drawing water, performed without any assistance from August, signifies the normalized gendered division of labor. August, as a male teacher, is portrayed as a passive observer, reinforcing the stereotype that men are not involved in traditionally female domestic work. Mythologically, this scene perpetuates the patriarchal stereotype that certain tasks are exclusively assigned to women, while others are reserved for men, with men occupying a superior position. This leads to a rigid division of labor and reinforces traditional gender roles.

**Scene 6 (33:23): Ona, Netjie, and Autjie doing domestic work.**

Denotatively, Ona is shown tying her daughter's hair, while Autjie and Netjie, as young children, are washing clothes. Netjie exclaims "Wah" as she places clothes into a tub. Connotatively, this scene illustrates the early socialization of girls into domestic roles. Activities such as hair-tying and laundry are presented as routine, indicating that girls are trained from a young age to perform household chores, preparing them for traditional wifely duties. Mythologically, this scene reinforces the belief that girls should be educated in domestic skills from childhood, as men are often perceived to desire wives capable of managing the household and raising children. This perpetuates the idea that a woman's primary role is domestic.

**Scene 7 (50:30): Mejal feels insecure.**

Denotatively, Mejal states, "They made us insecure." Connotatively, Mejal's statement directly links the men's actions, particularly sexual violence, to the women's profound loss of self-confidence and honor. The warehouse setting for this confession underscores the private and vulnerable nature of her revelation. Mythologically, this scene reveals the damaging belief that a woman's self-worth and honor are intrinsically tied to her "purity" or lack of sexual experience, especially before marriage. This myth creates a severe

double standard, as it does not apply to men, thereby diminishing women's self-esteem after experiencing sexual violence and reinforcing societal control over female bodies and identities.

**Scene 8 (54:19 – 54:25): Ona observing August writing.**

Denotatively, Ona watches August writing and expresses her understanding of letters but not other symbols. She then points to a comma and asks August what it is, to which he explains it as a "pause or breath in text." Connotatively, Ona's curiosity about punctuation highlights her lack of formal education, a direct consequence of the patriarchal system that denies women access to schooling. August, as a male, possesses this knowledge, symbolizing male privilege in education. The "work desk" further reinforces the idea of male intellectual work. Mythologically, this scene reinforces the myth of gender inequality in education, where men are privileged with schooling while women are confined to domestic roles and denied opportunities for intellectual development.

**Scene 9 (1:02:51 – 1:02:56): Salome angry at Ona.**

Denotatively, Salome angrily confronts Ona, accusing her of judging her as a wife and mother, and then insults Ona by calling her a "spinster" and a "whore" for having a child out of wedlock. Connotatively, Salome's outburst, while directed at Ona, stems from her own internalized patriarchal values and the immense societal pressure on women to conform to marital norms. Her harsh words reflect the severe judgment women face for perceived transgressions against these norms, particularly concerning motherhood outside of marriage. The tragic irony is that the children are products of sexual violence, a fact implicitly known, adding a layer of complexity to Salome's accusations. Mythologically, this scene perpetuates the belief that women are harshly judged for having children out of wedlock or for not marrying young, leading to stigmatization. This myth does not apply to men, highlighting a severe double standard and reinforcing societal control over female sexuality and reproductive roles.

**Scene 10 (1:08:25 – 1:08:40): Ona asks August for his opinion.**

Denotatively, during a tense discussion about whether to take the young boys when leaving the colony, Ona asks August, the male teacher, for his opinion on whether the boys pose a risk to the women and girls. August replies, "Yes, perhaps." Connotatively, Ona seeks August's opinion because he is the only man present and a teacher, implying that his male perspective and educational background make his judgment superior. This highlights the women's ingrained deference to male authority, even when deliberating on issues directly affecting their own safety and future. The presence of a petromax lamp signifies an urgent, informal meeting in a location without electricity. Mythologically, this scene reinforces the belief that men are inherently better decision-makers or possess superior wisdom, especially in critical situations. This patriarchal ideology positions men as natural leaders whose opinions are more valuable, even when women are making crucial decisions about their lives.

## **Research Discussion**

This section delves into the analysis of patriarchal representations within the film *Women Talking* (2022), drawing insights from direct observations of selected scenes and contextualizing them within broader understandings of patriarchy.

### **A. *Women Talking* and the Perspective on Patriarchy**

*Women Talking*, an adaptation of Miriam Toews' novel based on real events within a Bolivian Mennonite colony, offers a distinct portrayal of patriarchy compared to other films addressing similar themes. Unlike narratives that often depict explicit acts of violence, this film primarily focuses on the women's deliberative process to liberate themselves from ongoing patriarchal oppression and sexual violence. Bernadetta (as reviewed in Cultura.id, 2023) describes *Women Talking* as more than just a film, but a powerful "speech" that merits



wide dissemination due to its profound script, diverse perspectives on the topic, minimal depiction of sexual violence, and avoidance of conventional dramatic escape scenarios. While the film subtly incorporates elements of patriarchal behavior, its uniqueness lies in its concentration on the female victims' collective search for solutions within the confines of a barn, rather than on the perpetrators. This intentional focus, evident in the title "Women Talking," underscores director Sarah Polley's commitment to foregrounding women's voices and agency. Miriam Toews, the novel's author, has also shared her personal experience of leaving the colony at 18 due to the abuse of male authority, which fostered the patriarchal environment depicted in the story.

Sarah Polley (detikhot, 2023) explicitly stated that the film serves as a response to the #MeToo movement, emphasizing themes of survival and healing. She highlighted the urgency of addressing stories of sexual assault against women and their arduous journey to recovery. Actor August Winter (antaranews.com, 2022) further noted that the events portrayed in the film are commonplace but often go unnoticed until publicly revealed, underscoring the pervasive yet often unacknowledged nature of patriarchy.

The film illustrates how patriarchal life within the colony stems from male abuse of authority, often intertwined with religious beliefs. Polley intentionally portrays the religious context seriously, suggesting that the women's decision to leave the colony is not a rejection of their faith but an endeavor to reconstruct it on a more ethical foundation (nytimes.com). The film deliberately minimizes the male presence, allowing the women's conversations and silences to convey the profound impact of their suffering and their shared humanity.

Comparing *Women Talking* with other films that address patriarchy reveals its distinctive approach. While films like *Bombshell* depict women actively confronting perpetrators through legal and public resistance, portraying them as strong and defiant, *Women Talking* presents a more introspective and patient form of resistance. The women in *Women Talking* are depicted as calmly and critically deliberating their options, ultimately choosing a quiet departure rather than direct confrontation. In contrast, films like *Fifty Shades of Grey* present patriarchal dynamics and sexual violence where the victim does not resist, often within the context of a romantic relationship where the male protagonist exerts controlling behavior. *Women Talking*, however, prioritizes the victims' perspective, showcasing their critical thinking and collective effort to escape their marginalized circumstances. The film effectively illustrates how women in the colony face injustice and marginalization, with limited access to education and opportunities, while men are privileged. It highlights the women's lack of control over crucial community decisions, diminishing their contributions and roles, thereby reinforcing patriarchal norms (Airina, 2023).

## **B. Elements of Patriarchy in *Women Talking***

The analysis of patriarchal elements in *Women Talking* (2022) was conducted through direct observation of ten selected scenes, employing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The findings are discussed through the lens of Bhasin's (1996) five categories of patriarchy: control over women's productive power and labor, control over women's reproduction, control over women's sexuality, restriction of women's movement, and control over property and other economic resources.

### **Control Over Women's Productive Power and Labor**

The film consistently depicts women confined to domestic labor such as washing, childcare, animal care, sewing, and cooking. Almost all scenes featuring women show them within the household, while men are seen engaging in public work, such as a census taker or men traveling to town to pay taxes. This stark division highlights the absence of equal opportunities for women, who are denied education and public roles. The illiteracy of the

women in the colony underscores the discriminatory practices that limit their productive potential beyond the domestic sphere.

### **Control Over Women's Reproduction**

Bhasin (1996) argues that patriarchy not only compels women into motherhood but also dictates the conditions of their mothering. The film illustrates this through various scenes: Salome's desperate search for herbal medicine for her sick daughter, Greta teaching young Ona to crawl, and Salome's panic over her son's well-being. Despite the children being born from sexual violence, the women's profound love and dedication to their children are evident. This portrayal, while demonstrating maternal devotion, also subtly reinforces the patriarchal expectation that women will unconditionally nurture children, regardless of the circumstances of their conception.

### **Control Over Women's Sexuality**

Bhasin (1996) identifies rape and the threat of rape as tools for dominating women by imposing concepts of "shame" and "honor." The film vividly portrays this control through scenes like Ona's bruised body, a result of the men drugging and raping women nightly. The women's inability to prevent these assaults due to being incapacitated by sedatives highlights their extreme vulnerability. Mejal's resulting insecurity and her smoking habit, a coping mechanism for her lost honor, further exemplify the psychological toll. Similarly, Melvin's decision to adopt a male appearance, feeling ashamed and worthless as a woman after experiencing sexual violence, demonstrates the profound impact of patriarchal control over female sexuality and identity.

### **Restriction of Women's Movement**

Patriarchy controls women's movement to regulate their sexuality, production, and reproduction (Bhasin, 1996). This is evident in the film when Salome's anger and attempts to resist the men lead to harsh treatment, illustrating the severe limitations on women's physical and social mobility. The women are denied education and public roles, confined to their homes and the barn for their clandestine discussions. Their only opportunity to gather and strategize for their escape arises when the men are absent, traveling to pay fines for the perpetrators, underscoring the constant surveillance and control over their movements.

### **Control Over Property and Other Economic Resources**

According to Bhasin (1996), men typically control and inherit most property and productive resources within patriarchal systems. This is illustrated in the film during Greta's argument against Ona's proposal to expel the men. Greta vehemently dismisses the idea, citing the men's absolute control over all resources, including basic necessities like salt, and their refusal to provide women with any money. The visual contrast between the women's simple attire and the men's more elegant clothing further serves as a clear indicator of male economic dominance and control within the colony.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to investigate the representation of patriarchal culture in the film *Women Talking* (2022) through a semiotic analysis using Roland Barthes' model, further contextualized by Bhasin's five categories of patriarchy. The findings reveal that *Women Talking* serves as a poignant and distinctive cinematic exploration of deeply entrenched patriarchal systems, particularly within an isolated religious community.

The semiotic analysis of selected scenes effectively uncovered the layers of meaning embedded in the film's narrative. Denotatively, the scenes depicted women's limited access to education, their confinement to domestic spaces, and their vulnerability to male violence. Connotatively, these portrayals highlighted the profound psychological and social impact of such conditions, revealing the women's internalized fear, their struggle for agency, and the societal pressures that define their worth based on patriarchal norms. Mythologically, the

analysis exposed the underlying beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality, such as the male right to leadership and education, the control over women's bodies and labor, and the imposition of shame and silence upon victims of sexual violence.

The discussion further emphasized *Women Talking*'s unique approach: rather than focusing on explicit acts of violence or direct confrontation, the film centers on the women's collective deliberation and their quiet, yet profound, act of resistance. This narrative choice distinguishes it from other films on patriarchy, offering a powerful "speech" that underscores the importance of women's voices and their capacity for critical thought and collective action in the face of oppression. The film's relevance extends to contemporary social movements like #MeToo, highlighting the timeless struggle against sexual violence and the urgent need for women's empowerment.

By applying Bhasin's categories, the study systematically demonstrated how the film articulates various facets of patriarchy:

1. **Control over Productive Power and Labor:** The film vividly illustrates women's confinement to domestic roles, their exclusion from education, and their lack of opportunities in the public sphere, showcasing a clear gendered division of labor.
2. **Control over Reproduction:** It subtly reveals how patriarchal norms dictate the conditions of women's motherhood, even in the context of sexual violence, emphasizing the women's unconditional maternal roles despite their traumatic experiences.
3. **Control over Sexuality:** The film powerfully depicts sexual violence as a tool of male domination, leading to profound shame, insecurity, and altered identities among the female victims, underscoring the devastating impact on their self-worth.
4. **Restriction of Movement:** Women's physical and social mobility are severely limited, with their access to public spaces and decision-making processes controlled by men, reinforcing their marginalization.
5. **Control over Property and Economic Resources:** The narrative clearly establishes male dominance over all financial and material assets, rendering women economically dependent and powerless.

In conclusion, *Women Talking* (2022) stands as a significant cinematic work that not only represents the harsh realities of patriarchal culture but also serves as a compelling agent for social critique. Through its nuanced portrayal of women's experiences and their collective search for liberation, the film effectively challenges established gender norms and advocates for gender equality, making a powerful statement about the resilience and agency of women in the face of systemic oppression.

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