



Gender and Power Representation in *Inta Eih* by Nancy Ajram: Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis

Muhamad Saiful Mukminin¹, Aninda Ayu Sitorismi²

Master of Linguistics, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada^{1,2}

muhamadsaifulmukminin@mail.ugm.ac.id¹, anindaayusitorismi@mail.ugm.ac.id²

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze gender representation and power relations in the lyrics of the song *Inta Eih* by Nancy Ajram. A qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytic design was employed to understand and describe the phenomena in the song's lyrics. Data consisted of the song's lyrics, analyzed through Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. This approach helped uncover how language in the lyrics shaped subject positioning and power relations, as well as how gender was represented in the context of male-female relationships. Data collection was done through documentary techniques, including listening to the song and reading the lyrics. Data analysis involved identifying key aspects of the lyrics, such as subject representation, positioning (actor/object), reader positioning, and power dynamics between men and women. The findings were presented through analytical description, offering a deep interpretation of the data. The research found that the song highlights power imbalances, portraying the woman as an emotionally suffering object, and the man as the perpetrator. The woman's role as both victim and willing participant reflects societal expectations of gender roles. The analysis also critiques the normalization of emotional abuse in romantic relationships, a theme explored in feminist discourse.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Power Relations, Critical Discourse Analysis.

Introduction

Music has long been a powerful medium for cultural and social expression, effectively conveying messages and influencing public perspectives on various aspects of life, including social, political, and cultural values. Through the lyrics written by songwriters, listeners are invited to interpret the embedded messages by connecting them to their own experiences and knowledge. The wordplay in a song can create a literary work that is not only enjoyable but also rich in meaning.¹ Furthermore, the right choice of song can evoke emotions that

¹ Tigor Aditya Raja Panjaitan, "Representasi Perempuan Dalam Hubungan Romantis Pada Lirik Lagu Kirana Dan Tega," *Commonline Departemen Komunikasi* 3, no. 3 (2016): 665-74.

resonate with the listeners. In other words, songs play a crucial role in shaping the way society perceives and navigates life.²

Since their inception, songs have been a means of expressing social and cultural views on the role of women that reflect the prevailing gender norms at a time.³ The aim is to ensure that the representation of women, both in terms of their roles and rights, is comprehensively understood by society. In many cultures, especially in the Arab world, popular songs often portray women as objects of love or symbols of beauty, sometimes limiting their roles to emotional or physical dimensions. However, along with the development of music, especially in the modern era, the representation of women in songs has begun to change.⁴ Many artists, especially those from the younger generation, began to take up the theme of women's empowerment, showing them as individuals who are strong, independent, and have a voice in determining the course of their lives. Although the songs tell the story of romantic love or the tragic story of a romantic relationship, the songs still have the intention of depicting women implicitly, both from the perspective of independence, courage, representation, and against the patriarchal culture that is still widely adopted in society.⁵

In the Arab world, despite ongoing cultural and social challenges, female artists like Nancy Ajram, Elissa, and Myriam Fares have begun incorporating more complex and diverse lyrics, portraying women as subjects with emotions, desires, and strength in facing life's challenges. Music not only serves as entertainment for the public, but is also seen as an effective tool for strengthening resistance to patriarchal culture.⁶ As a result, the primary reason many songs are created with themes of female empowerment is to build an educational media platform that raises awareness about the importance of gender issues, especially given the persistent gender oppression and inequality that still exist today.⁷ Furthermore, music becomes a powerful tool in redefining the identity and role of women, influencing societal perceptions of them, and encouraging positive change in gender perceptions across different parts of the world.

One of the phenomena is the position of women portrayed in an Arabic-language song by a Lebanese singer, Nancy Ajram. The song, titled *Inta Eih* (إنت إيه), falls under the pop genre and was released in 2004, becoming one of the

² Kartika Irene Widjanarko Widjanarko, "Representasi Perempuan Dalam Lirik Lagu Album TRIAD Karya Ahmad Dhani (Kajian: Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills)," *Bahtera Indonesia; Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa Dan Sastra Indonesia* 8, no. 1 (2023): 131–40.

³ Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* (Routledge, 2013).

⁴ Akosua Adomako Ampofo and Awo Mana Asiedu, "Changing Representations of Women in Ghanaian Popular Music: Marrying Research and Advocacy," *Current Sociology* 60, no. 2 (2012): 258–79.

⁵ Sheryl Hurner, "Discursive Identity Formation of Suffrage Women: Reframing the 'Cult of True Womanhood' through Song," *Western Journal of Communication* 70, no. 3 (2006): 234–60.

⁶ Nadia Novianti, Dahniar Th Musa, and Diaz Restu Darmawan, "Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills Tentang Stereotipe Terhadap Perempuan Dengan Profesi Ibu Rumah Tangga Dalam Film Rumput Tetangga," *Rekam: Jurnal Fotografi, Televisi, Animasi* 18, no. 1 (2022): 25–36.

⁷ Novianti, Musa, and Darmawan.

biggest hits in her career. The song primarily deals with feelings of confusion and conflict within a romantic relationship. In its lyrics, the singer, who plays the main character in the song's story, expresses her confusion over her partner's behavior and emotions. However, the female character in the song demonstrates her courage to leave the unhealthy relationship and not remain submerged in sorrow due to being betrayed by her partner. The theme of this song reflects Nancy Ajram's effort as a songwriter to represent the position of women, emphasizing that women are not weak or passive but possess the strength to challenge patriarchal norms.

The phenomenon of gender representation and power relations in Nancy Ajram's song *Inta Eih* can be seen as a reflection of how popular culture, particularly music, plays a role in shaping and reinforcing gender stereotypes within society. In this song, despite the deep romantic undertones, the representation of women tends to present a passive position, relying on the emotions and decisions of the other party, namely the male figure. The song's lyrics, which contain rhetorical questions about feelings and uncertainties within the relationship, depict women's emotional dependence on love, which is often perceived as a form of weakness or powerlessness. This creates an imbalanced power dynamic, where women appear to be in a subordinate position within the relationship.⁸ This phenomenon becomes a central issue in the research, which seeks to explore how the representation of women in *Inta Eih* not only reflects an unequal power relation but also has the potential to reinforce patriarchal norms that dominate Arab culture.

The representation of women in a song can be analyzed through the approach of critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA focuses on the social interactions embedded in language and aims to uncover the hidden aspects of social relations and the effects within systems through multi-theoretical and multi-ideological frameworks, while being critical and reflective.⁹ Critical discourse analysis does not only analyze the content of discourse in detail through linguistic studies, but also examines how language is used within a work. This approach can highlight social critiques present in society, such as gender inequality and the differential treatment of marginalized groups. A discourse may also contain criticism of women's positions in society, as reflected in the text.¹⁰ This study adopts Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis approach, which is often referred to as feminist stylistics because Mills contends that women are

⁸ Muh Sabilar Rosyad, "Analisis Buku Ajar Bahasa Arab Siswa Kelas VIII Mts/SMP Islam Dalam Persepektif Gender," *JALIE; Journal of Applied Linguistics and Islamic Education* 2, no. 2 (2018): 381–95, <https://doi.org/10.33754/jalie.v2i2.188>.

⁹ Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Routledge, 2013), 9–20.

¹⁰ Wiwit Sariasih, Yumna Rasyid, and Miftahulkhairah Anwar, "Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills Dalam Cerpen Sepasang Mata Dinaya Yang Terpenjara," *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 6, no. 2 (2023): 539–48.

socially constructed as marginalized figures in texts and are often placed in the wrong.¹¹

The analytical method developed by Sara Mills focuses on the positioning of both the author and the reader within a discourse. Mills examines the roles of the actors (the writer and the reader) presented in the text, positioning individuals as both interpreters and those being interpreted, while emphasizing how these actors engage with the text. This analysis also incorporates a feminist perspective to explore how a text portrays the position of women.¹² In critical discourse analysis, Mills not only considers the positions of the subject and object, but also the positions of the media, representation, and feminism.¹³ Broadly speaking, this analysis looks at the positions of subjects and objects as well as the reader's position. In terms of subject-object positioning, the focus is on the roles of social actors, ideas within the discourse, and how events are represented.¹⁴ These positions also determine the structure of the text, as those with dominant positions define reality and present events in a specific form of discourse intended for the audience.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the reader's position is analyzed by observing how the author positions the reader within the written discourse. Sariasih, Rasyid, and Anwar, "Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills dalam Cerpen Sepasang Mata Dinaya yang Terpenjara." According to Mills, a text is the result of a negotiation between the author and the reader. The reader is not seen as a passive recipient, but is actively involved in constructing the meaning of the text. The reader's position is analyzed based on how the author places the reader within a particular subject in the overall structure of the text.¹⁶

Research on the representation of women in songs and other discourses through Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis approach has been conducted in several studies. For instance, Widjanarko analyzed the ideology of women's roles as portrayed in the songs of the album T.R.I.A.D by Ahmad Dani.¹⁷ Next, Mukminin et al. focused on analyzing gender representation and power relations in the lyrics of the song Sit Still, Look Pretty by Daya, using Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis approach.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Manurung et al. focused on identifying the representation of women and challenging gender constructs in

¹¹ Sara Mills, *Feminist Stylistics* (Routledge, 2002).

¹² Sariasih, Rasyid, and Anwar, "Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills Dalam Cerpen Sepasang Mata Dinaya Yang Terpenjara."

¹³ Mills, *Feminist Stylistics*.

¹⁴ Sariasih, Rasyid, and Anwar, "Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills Dalam Cerpen Sepasang Mata Dinaya Yang Terpenjara."

¹⁵ Novianti, Musa, and Darmawan, "Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills Tentang Stereotipe Terhadap Perempuan Dengan Profesi Ibu Rumah Tangga Dalam Film Rumput Tetangga."

¹⁶ Novianti, Musa, and Darmawan.

¹⁷ Widjanarko, "Representasi Perempuan Dalam Lirik Lagu Album TRIAD Karya Ahmad Dhani (Kajian: Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills)."

¹⁸ Muhamad Saiful Mukminin et al., "Gender And Power Representation In The Sit Still, Look Pretty By Daya: Sara Mills' CDA," *SALIENCE: English Language, Literature, and Education Jurnal* 4, no. 2 (2024): 61–70.

the song Not Your Barbie Girl by Ava Max using Sara Mills' feminist stylistics approach.¹⁹ Additionally, Azizah and Marwantika examined the image of a pious woman depicted in the novel Ayat-ayat Langit through Sara Mills' approach.²⁰ Several of these previous studies are related to this research, particularly in terms of the shared topics and the use of the same analytical approach. However, this study goes beyond just focusing on gender representation, it also aims to identify the power relations embedded within a song. A significant difference between this research and previous studies lies in the discourse being analyzed. While previous studies have focused on novels and songs in Indonesian and English, this study examines gender and power relations in an Arabic song. Although previous research has analyzed songs, this study differentiates itself through the genre and song title being analyzed, as it focuses on an Arabic pop song by Nancy Ajram.

As far as researchers can see, there has been no study specifically addressing the representation of women and power relations in Arabic songs. However, the researcher has found a few studies that explore phenomena within Arabic music. For instance, Nisa et al. analyzed phonemic errors made by native and non-native Arabic speakers in Arabic songs using Egyptian colloquial language, employing the Praat application.²¹ Meanwhile, Hammad examined feminist markers by analyzing expressions of feminism in popular Arabic songs across various media, using a feminist theory framework and social roles.²² Both of these previous studies, however, do not prioritize the analysis of gender and power relations in Arabic songs. Instead, they focus on other aspects. While both studies consider Arabic songs as their object of study, their primary focus is not on the representation of women, but rather on phonemic constructions and feminist markers present in the songs.

This study aims to analyze the gender representation and power relations formed in the song *Inta Eih* by Nancy Ajram. The goal is to create a specific social understanding of women's roles and examine whether this representation reflects inequality in relation to these norms. This research can be considered relatively new because the use of Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis to explore gender representation in a popular song from the contemporary Arab music tradition has not received much attention in critical discourse studies. While many previous studies have explored gender representation in mass media or film, this study fills the gap in research on gender representation in modern Arab

¹⁹ Anna Shinta Vholyna Manurung et al., "Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Ava Max's Song 'Not Your Barbie Girl,'" *Titian: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora* 7, no. 2 (2023): 401–13.

²⁰ Maftukhatul Azizah and Asna Istya Marwantika, "Citra Wanita Sholehah Dalam Novel Ayat-Ayat Langit: Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills," in *Proceeding of Conference on Strengthening Islamic Studies in The Digital Era*, vol. 2, 2022, 532–46.

²¹ Andini Zahrotun Nisa et al., "Comparative Analysis of Phonetic Errors in Speech of Qolloquial in Arabic Song by Non Arabic Speakers," *Mantiq Tayr: Journal of Arabic Language* 4, no. 2 (2024): 460–81.

²² Ahmed Samir Hammad, "Feminist Markers in Contemporary Arabic Songs-Analytical Study of Discourse and Gender," *Arab Media & Society* 36, no. 2 (2023): 69–112.

music, particularly through song lyrics. Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis approach is employed to examine how gender and power relations are constructed in the lyrics of *Inta Eih*, as well as how the positions of the author (Nancy Ajram) and the reader (the audience) are framed within the social construction presented by the song. Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute to gender and music studies by opening up space to analyze how music, as a powerful art form, both shapes and reinforces or even challenges existing social structures. Additionally, this research has the potential to foster discussions about how artistic works can serve as a tool for social critique, particularly regarding ongoing gender inequality in various segments of society.

Method

The research method used in this study was a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytic design.²³ This approach was chosen because the researcher aimed to understand and describe the phenomena occurring in the lyrics of the song "*Inta Eih*" by Nancy Ajram, particularly those related to gender representation and power relations. In this study, the data used consisted of song lyrics analyzed using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by Sara Mills.²⁴ This CDA approach helped uncover how language in the song lyrics created the positioning of subjects and power relations, as well as how gender representation was articulated in the context of the relationship between men and women in the song.

The researcher also used documentary techniques to collect data by listening to the song and reading the available lyrics. Data analysis was carried out through steps that included identifying important aspects of the song lyrics, such as subject representation, subject positioning (actor/object), reader positioning, and power relations between men and women. The technique used to present the research findings was analytical description, which allowed the researcher to explain and interpret the data in depth. The research results were presented in the form of a narrative that outlined the findings related to gender representation and power relations in the lyrics of the song "*Inta Eih*".

Findings

In this section, the research findings are presented with a focus on four main aspects of analysis: subject representation, subject positioning (actor/object), reader positioning, and power relations. These four aspects are essential components of Sara Mills' CDA, used to explore the power dynamics and gender roles constructed in the lyrics of the song *Inta Eih*.

²³ John W Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

²⁴ Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (Routledge, 2003); Sara Mills, *Gender and Politeness* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Mills, *Feminist Stylistics*.

Table 1: Analysis of The Lyrics of Inta Eih using Sara Mills' CDA Model

Lyrics	Subject Representation	Subject Position (Actor/Object)	Reader Position	Power Relations
إنت إيه مش كفاية عليك تجرحتني حرام عليك (What are you? Isn't it enough for you to hurt me? That's not fair)	The woman represents the man as someone who continuously hurts her and shows indifference.	The man is portrayed as the perpetrator causing harm, while the woman becomes the object of suffering.	The reader is encouraged to sympathize with the woman, understanding her feelings of disappointment toward the man's behavior.	The relationship demonstrates an imbalance: the man holds a dominant position, using emotional power to hurt the woman.
إنت إيه انت له دموعي حبيبي تهون عليك (What are you? Why are my tears, my love, so worthless to you?)	The woman represents the man as someone who is indifferent to her suffering.	The man is depicted as a perpetrator who disregards the woman's feelings, while the woman becomes the object of suffering.	The reader is invited to feel the woman's sorrow over the man's indifference to her tears.	The power dynamic reveals the man's emotional dominance, where the woman's feelings are deemed insignificant.
طلب وليه انا راضيه انك تجرحني وروي فيك (Then, why am I willing to let you hurt me while my soul is with you?)	The woman represents herself as a victim who endures suffering in the relationship.	The woman, paradoxically, becomes both the perpetrator and the object, as she is willing to be hurt by the man.	The reader is invited to understand the woman's internal conflict, between love and suffering.	The relationship shows the woman's emotional dependence on the man, reinforcing his dominance.
طلب وليه يعني ايه راضية بعدايب بين ايديك (Then, why? What does it mean that I accept my suffering at your hands?)	The woman represents herself as a victim who endures suffering for the sake of love.	The woman becomes the object of suffering, yet she also acts as the perpetrator by willingly accepting it.	The reader is invited to understand the woman's dilemma, trapped in a painful love.	The relationship shows an imbalance, where the man holds emotional power that causes the woman to suffer continuously.
لو كان ده حب ياويلي منه (If this is love, then woe is me because of it)	The woman represents love as something painful and dangerous, not a source of happiness.	The woman becomes the object of suffering from love, which in this context is personified as a destructive force.	The reader is invited to feel the woman's suffering, while also questioning whether this painful love is worth holding on to.	The relationship shows that the woman is powerless in the face of the force of love that has dominated her life.
لوكان ده ذنبي ماتوب عنه (If this is my sin, I will not repent for it)	The woman represents herself as someone who accepts love, even though it is considered a sin.	The woman becomes the one who boldly bears the emotional consequences of a love that is considered wrong.	The reader is invited to understand the woman's courage in accepting a controversial or painful relationship.	The relationship shows the dominance of love so strong that the woman is willing to maintain the relationship, despite the risks it brings.
لو كان نصيبي اعيش في جراح (If my fate is to live in pain)	The woman describes herself as someone who accepts suffering as her life's fate.	The woman becomes the object of suffering, yet she also plays the role of the perpetrator by accepting her fate.	The reader is invited to feel the woman's despair as she feels trapped in her fate, filled with pain.	The relationship shows the woman's powerlessness against fate and the suffering that comes with it.
حاعيش في جراح (I will live in pain)	The woman represents herself as someone unable to break free from emotional suffering.	The woman becomes a subject who resignedly accepts living in pain, demonstrating her powerlessness.	The reader is invited to feel the woman's despair, as if suffering is the only choice in her life.	The relationship shows the woman's powerlessness and despair, as if she has no control over her fate.
مش حرام انك تخدعني في حيي ليك (Isn't it wrong for you to deceive me in my love for you?)	The woman represents herself as the one who feels betrayed and questions the morality of her partner's actions.	The woman becomes the subject who feels deceived and has the right to question her partner's behavior.	The reader is invited to feel the sense of injustice and despair of the woman who feels betrayed in the relationship.	This relationship shows an imbalance of power, where the woman feels humiliated and deceived by her partner.
مش حرام الغرام وسنين حياتي وعشقي ليك (Isn't it wrong, love, to live for years, and my love for you?)	The woman represents herself as a victim who has given all her love and time to a relationship that turns out to be unappreciated.	The woman is in a position as the subject who feels she has sacrificed, and now questions the fairness of her sacrifice.	The reader is invited to feel the injustice and despair experienced by the woman, who feels that the love and time she has given are unappreciated.	This relationship shows an imbalance, where the woman feels that her sacrifices in the relationship are unappreciated, while her partner remains unfaithful.

ضاع قوام ولا كان لعبة في حياتك بتداويك (The loss of trust, as if it's just a game in your life that heals you)	The woman represents herself as the one who feels betrayed and humiliated by her partner's attitude, who treats their relationship as a game.	The woman is in a position of feeling loss and powerlessness, while her partner acts as if the relationship is not serious.	The reader is invited to feel the woman's sadness and disappointment as she feels humiliated and played with in a relationship that does not value her feelings.	This relationship reflects an imbalance of power, where the woman feels unappreciated, and her partner acts as if the relationship is merely a game with no emotional consequences.
ضاع قوام الجنان وحضن قلبي واملي فيك (The loss of warmth, the embrace of the heart, and my hopes for you)	The woman represents herself as the one who feels the loss of emotional warmth and support from her partner, who should have been her safe haven.	The woman becomes the subject who feels deeply harmed and lost, while her partner is positioned as the one unable to provide emotional comfort.	The reader is invited to feel the deep emotional loss and how the woman feels betrayed by someone who should have given her safety and hope.	This relationship depicts an imbalance, where the woman feels that her partner fails to meet her emotional needs, even after she has given so much love and hope.

From Table 1, an explanation can be formulated regarding the four analytical aspects to be discussed, which include subject representation, subject position (actor/object), reader position, and power relations.

1. Subject Representation

Subject representation refers to how individuals, especially in lyrics or narratives, are portrayed in relation to their emotions, actions, and roles in the story. In the context of the song lyrics, the woman is often depicted as a victim, enduring suffering, disappointment, and emotional turmoil in the face of a man's indifference or betrayal. The lyrics highlight the woman's internal struggles and her emotional sacrifice, portraying her as someone who continuously bears the emotional consequences of a one-sided or unreciprocated love. This representation emphasizes her vulnerability and emotional dependence on the man, framing her as someone who accepts suffering as part of her fate or love, even when it leads to pain and despair.

2. Subject Position (Actor/Object)

Subject position (actor/object) in the lyrics positions the woman in a dual role, often as the object of suffering, but at times also as an actor, paradoxically willing to endure or accept the pain. For instance, in the line "طب" (Why am I willing to let you hurt me while my soul is with you?) she becomes both the object of harm, enduring the man's emotional abuse, and the actor, voluntarily accepting the hurt. This complex positioning highlights the imbalance in the relationship, where the woman is both passive and active in her emotional torment. The man, on the other hand, is portrayed as the actor, perpetrating emotional harm and betraying the woman's trust.

3. Reader Position

Reader position invites the audience to empathize with the woman, positioning them to feel her sorrow, confusion, and despair. The lyrics encourage the reader to understand her emotional journey, from the hurt caused by the man's indifference to her willingness to endure suffering for love. This empathy draws the reader into the emotional conflict between love and pain, urging them to reflect on the unfairness of the situation and the emotional toll it takes on the woman. In this way, the reader is meant to

identify with the woman's pain and her struggle to understand her role in the relationship, often feeling sympathy or even a sense of injustice.

4. Power Relations

Power relations within the lyrics depict a clear imbalance, where the man holds the power in the relationship. His actions, whether through betrayal, neglect, or indifference, place him in a dominant position, while the woman is portrayed as powerless to break free from her emotional attachment. This power imbalance is reflected in the emotional control the man exerts over the woman, manipulating her love and emotions. The woman, though occasionally questioning her role, remains entrapped in a cycle of emotional suffering, unable to escape or change the dynamics of the relationship. The lyrics underscore the disparity in emotional power, where the man's dominance leads to the woman's continuous suffering.

Discussion

The exploration of gender and power representation in Nancy Ajram's *Inta Eih* through Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides insight into the complex gender dynamics within the lyrics. Mills emphasizes how language constructs power relations and subject positions, with particular focus on the roles assigned to women in patriarchal discourses.²⁵ In the context of this song, the woman is consistently positioned as the object of suffering, while the man is the perpetrator. This reflects wider societal structures in which women are often depicted as emotionally subordinate to men, reinforcing gender hierarchies that marginalize women's autonomy and emotional agency.

Similar themes have been explored in previous studies that analyze power and gender representation in music lyrics. For example, Peter highlights how popular music often portrays women in passive and subjugated roles, particularly in relation to romantic relationships.²⁶ In *Inta Eih*, the woman's portrayal as a victim who endures emotional abuse aligns with Peter's observations, where women are expected to remain loyal and enduring, even at the expense of their emotional well-being. This subjugated representation aligns with feminist critiques that argue cultural narratives often glorify women's suffering and reinforce their subordinate roles within relationships. By focusing on the woman's internal conflict and emotional dependency, the song invites the reader to question the fairness of these traditional gendered expectations.

Mills' framework helps us analyze the subject positions in the lyrics, where the woman is depicted as both victim and willing participant.²⁷ This paradoxical positioning resonates with Butler's concept of gender performativity, where gendered behavior is both a result of societal expectations and an active

²⁵ Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*.

²⁶ Peter Manuel, "Gender Politics in Caribbean Popular Music: Consumer Perspectives and Academic Interpretation," *Popular Music & Society* 22, no. 2 (1998): 11–29.

²⁷ Mills, *Feminist Stylistics*.

performance.²⁸ In the song, the woman expresses a complex relationship with her suffering, questioning why she continues to allow herself to be hurt, even as she recognizes her own victimhood. This tension mirrors the performative nature of gender, where women are socialized to accept subjugation as an expression of love. The woman's willingness to endure emotional pain reinforces societal expectations that women should prioritize the emotional needs of others, particularly men, over their own well-being.

The woman's emotional suffering is exacerbated by her sense of emotional dependency, as seen in the lyric "طب وليه انا راضيه انك تجرحني وروحي فيك" (Why am I willing to let you hurt me while my soul is with you?). This depiction of emotional submission aligns with previous studies on emotional abuse in relationships. In a study by Lamon, the authors discuss how power dynamics in romantic relationships often mirror societal gender norms, where men assert dominance through emotional manipulation, and women, conditioned by social norms, are more likely to endure such treatment.²⁹ The lyrics in *Inta Eih* echo this dynamic, where the woman feels trapped in a cycle of emotional dependence, reinforcing the power imbalance where her feelings are dismissed and devalued.

The subject position of the reader in Mills' CDA framework is also critical in understanding the impact of the song's gender and power dynamics. The reader is invited to empathize with the woman's pain and frustration, creating a space for the audience to reflect on the justice of the man's behavior. Mills argues that texts with strong emotional appeals often encourage readers to align with the subject's experience, which in this case, positions the listener to question the male character's actions.³⁰ This empathetic positioning is a powerful tool in the song, enabling the audience to critique not only the specific relationship depicted in the lyrics but also the broader societal norms that perpetuate gendered power imbalances. The reader is thus encouraged to reflect on how cultural representations of gender influence emotional and relational power dynamics.

The concept of sacrifice is central to the power dynamics in *Inta Eih*. The woman's questioning of her emotional investment in the line "Isn't it wrong for you to deceive me in my love for you?" resonates with feminist critiques of the expectations placed on women to endure suffering in the name of love. This idea is explored in studies such as those by Horne and Johnson, who argue that women are often expected to perform emotional labor in relationships, sacrificing their own needs for the sake of the relationship.³¹ In *Inta Eih*, the woman's emotional labor is evident as she questions the fairness of her sacrifices, yet remains attached to the man. This dynamic reinforces the notion

²⁸ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Feminist Theory Reader* (Routledge, 2020), 353–61.

²⁹ Ellen Lamont, "Negotiating Courtship: Reconciling Egalitarian Ideals with Traditional Gender Norms," *Gender & Society* 28, no. 2 (2014): 189–211.

³⁰ Sara Mills and Louise Mullany, *Language, Gender and Feminism: Theory, Methodology and Practice* (Routledge, 2011).

³¹ Rebecca M Horne and Matthew D Johnson, "A Labor of Love? Emotion Work in Intimate Relationships," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 36, no. 4 (2019): 1190–1209.

that women are expected to bear emotional burdens without reciprocity, a theme that has been widely examined in feminist literature on emotional and relational power.

The lyric “لو كان نصيبي اعيش في جراح” (If my fate is to live in pain) reflects the woman’s resignation to her emotional suffering, which can be understood in relation to Foucault’s concept of power as something internalized and normalized.³² In Foucault’s framework, power is not only imposed externally but is internalized by individuals, shaping their perceptions of what is acceptable. The woman’s acceptance of emotional pain as her fate mirrors the way in which women internalize societal expectations that their suffering is both natural and inevitable. This resignation is often seen in patriarchal societies where women are socialized to accept emotional abuse and hardship as part of their roles within relationships. In *Inta Eih*, the woman’s acceptance of her pain reflects the way in which gendered power dynamics are reproduced through personal and emotional compliance.

Feminist scholars such as Eveline and Booth have explored how women are often positioned as objects of desire and suffering in male-dominated discourses.³³ In *Inta Eih*, the woman is portrayed as an emotional object, whose pain and suffering become central to the narrative. The lyrics “I will live in pain” highlight the normalization of women’s emotional suffering in romantic contexts, a theme that Cixous identifies as a key feature of women’s representation in patriarchal cultures. By positioning the woman’s pain as a central theme of the song, Ajram critiques the societal narrative that valorizes women’s suffering while ignoring their emotional needs and desires. This representation aligns with feminist critiques of how women’s emotional labor is commodified in romantic and cultural discourses.

The critique of emotional manipulation in *Inta Eih* is further supported by studies that examine the ways in which emotional abuse is portrayed in popular culture. According to Lammers et al., emotional abuse in relationships often involves manipulation and control, which is evident in the power dynamics depicted in the song.³⁴ The man’s emotional cruelty and indifference to the woman’s pain reflect a pattern of emotional abuse, where the woman’s suffering is trivialized and dismissed. This dynamic not only reflects the personal relationship but also speaks to broader cultural patterns that perpetuate emotional abuse as a normalized part of gendered interactions.

Lastly, by applying Sara Mills’ Critical Discourse Analysis, it becomes clear that *Inta Eih* by Nancy Ajram portrays gendered power imbalances where the woman is the object of emotional suffering, and the man occupies the dominant

³² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

³³ Joan Eveline and Michael Booth, “Gender and Sexuality in Discourses of Managerial Control: The Case of Women Miners,” *Gender, Work & Organization* 9, no. 5 (2002): 556–78.

³⁴ Marianne Lammers, Jane Ritchie, and Neville Robertson, “Women’s Experience of Emotional Abuse in Intimate Relationships: A Qualitative Study,” *Journal of Emotional Abuse* 5, no. 1 (2005): 29–64.

role. The power dynamics in the song reflect broader societal patterns of emotional abuse, dependency, and sacrifice that are deeply ingrained in patriarchal structures. Through Mills' CDA framework and support from previous studies, we can see how language in popular culture serves to reinforce these gendered power relations, ultimately encouraging listeners to question and critique the normalization of women's emotional suffering in relationships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of gender and power representation in Nancy Ajram's *Inta Eih* using Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) highlights the entrenched power imbalances between men and women. The song portrays the woman as the object of emotional suffering, while the man is positioned as the perpetrator, mirroring broader societal dynamics where women are often depicted as passive and emotionally dependent on men. Through the lens of CDA, the lyrics reveal how gendered subject positions, such as the woman's dual role as both victim and willing participant, reflect societal expectations and the performative nature of gender. The woman's emotional suffering, exacerbated by her dependency on the man, aligns with feminist critiques of emotional labor and relational sacrifice, where women are expected to endure pain for the sake of love. Additionally, the song critiques the normalization of emotional abuse in romantic relationships, a theme evident in both popular culture and feminist scholarship.

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