

# ALIENATION IN MOTHERHOOD AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE: A SOCIALIST FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF SWALLOW (2019)

Amelia Resti Iffadah<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, ([220302110021@student.uin-malang.ac.id](mailto:220302110021@student.uin-malang.ac.id))

Istiadah<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, ([istihumaniora@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id](mailto:istihumaniora@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id))

Noornajihan Jaafar<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, ([noornajihan@usim.edu.my](mailto:noornajihan@usim.edu.my))



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doi DOI : <https://dx.doi.org/10.30983/humanisme.v4i2.10941>

Submission: February 29, 2026	Revised: March 10, 2026	Accepted: May 25, 2026	Published: June 26, 2026
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## Abstract

The study explores about the representation of female alienation in *Swallow* (2019) by Carlo Mirabella-Davis using Alison M. Jaggar's (1983) socialist feminist framework. Previous studies on the film mainly focus on psychological trauma and bodily autonomy, while limited research analyses female alienation from Jaggar's feminist perspective. This study used qualitative descriptive methods with feminist film analysis. The data consisted of 11 key scenes that show power relations in the domestic and social spheres, analyzed based on Jaggar's two concepts of alienation, Motherhood and Intellectual Agency. The data were collected by watching the film repeatedly, transcribing relevant dialogues, and identifying scenes that show forms of alienation. The data were then interpreted through narrative characterization analysis and social context analysis. The findings show that *Swallow* (2019) represents motherhood alienation through control over the main character's body and pregnancy as part of family expectations and demands. Meanwhile, from the perspective of intellectual agency, female alienation is seen in the silencing of the main character's voice and the neglect of her decisions in both personal and social settings. This study contributes to feminist film analysis by showing how gender inequality is constructed and normalized in visual representation.

**Keywords:** Female Alienation; Film Analysis; Socialist Feminism; Intellectual Agency; Motherhood

## Background

Women often experience oppression and unequal treatment within patriarchal social structure<sup>1</sup>. In patriarchal society, women are frequently positioned within restrictive domestic

and reproductive roles that limit their autonomy and self-determination<sup>2</sup>. Social expectations often define women as wives and mothers, neglecting their personal identities, desires, and intellectual capacities. As a result, many women experience alienation, a condition when they feel disconnected

<sup>1</sup> Murwanti, 'Patriarchal Culture as the Cause of Gender Inequality in Indonesia', *Journal of Educational and Learning Innovation*, 2.1 (2025), 9–14.

<sup>2</sup> Rachmi Herdini Fabianti and Fajar Dwi Putra, 'An Analysis of Feminism in the Movie "The

Hunting Ground" Reviewed from the Semiotics of John Viske', *Commicast*, 2.2 (2021), 130–32 <<https://doi.org/10.12928/commicast.v>>.

from their bodies, emotions, and true selves due to social pressures and unequal power relations<sup>3</sup>. This alienation is closely linked to a patriarchal system that normalizes women's subordination and places men in a dominant social position.

Feminist perspectives have long examined how patriarchal structures perpetuate women's oppression through social, cultural, and economic control<sup>4</sup>. One type of feminism is socialist feminism, in which women's alienation is understood not only as a result of gender inequality but also as a consequence of patriarchal and capitalist systems that regulate women's reproductive roles and limit their intellectual abilities<sup>5</sup>. In this context, motherhood is often treated as a social obligation rather than a personal choice, while women's opinions, autonomy, and decision-making abilities are often undermined or controlled<sup>6</sup>.

These forms of alienation are widely represented in literary works, including films, a part of an audiovisual literary work that functions as a medium for conveying narratives with the power and ability to reach a wide audience and various social segments<sup>7</sup>. Films often represent social issues and gender oppression through visual narratives<sup>8</sup>.

*Swallow* (2019) by Carlo Mirabella-Davis, is a movie that represents women's alienation through motherhood and intellectual agency. The film portrays the life of Hunter, a pregnant woman who experiences psychological pressure and increasing

loss of autonomy within her marriage and domestic environment. Rather than being valued as an individual, Hunter is treated primarily as a future mother and an object of familial expectation. Her experiences reflect how patriarchal expectations surrounding motherhood can contribute to emotional isolation, psychological oppression, and the suppression of women's intellectual agency. Because of the unfair treatment towards Hunter, she feels pressured and alienated from her own life, so she starts doing strange things, such as swallowing dangerous objects until she experiences pica disorder, an eating disorder that makes someone eat non-nutritious foods or non-food objects that are harmful to the body<sup>9</sup>. Her pica disorder symbolizes psychological oppression and her attempt to regain control over her life.

When people around her found out about this disorder, her movements became increasingly controlled by her husband's family. Her autonomy becomes increasingly restricted by her husband's family. In fact, the pica disorder experienced by Hunter is one of the symptoms of the psychological oppression due to the pressure she feels. Through this behavior, Hunter attempts to regain control over her life and bodily autonomy<sup>10</sup>.

Through *Swallow* (2019), this study analyzes how the main character feels alienated as a result of the role of wife and mother-to-be, as well as limitations on her intellectual agency. This analytical approach applies a socialist feminist perspective, which is considered relevant because

<sup>3</sup> Ben Orcid, 'Parental Alienation – What Do We Know , and What Do We ( Urgently ) Need to Parental Alienation – What Do We Know , and What Do We ( Urgently ) Need to Know? A Narrative Review.' (2024), 0–33.

<sup>4</sup> Haradhan Kumar Mohajan, 'An Overview on the Feminism and Its Categories, *MPRA Paper* (2022), <<https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/114625/>>.

<sup>5</sup> Jiang Sen, 'An Exploration of Socialist Feminist Perspectives on Gender Difference: Patterns , Criticisms and Refutations', *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 5.18 (2022), 64–70 <<https://doi.org/10.25236/AJHSS.2022.051811>>.

<sup>6</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 2.4 (1869), 299-41, URL : <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25665666>.

<sup>7</sup> Sheik Mohamed, M. Nirmala, and S. Elango, 'An Analysis of the Contemporary Use of Film as A Medium for Investigating Social Issues', *La Ogi Is English Language Journal*, 10.02 (2024) <<https://jurnal.umsrappang.ac.id/laogi/issn>>.

<sup>8</sup> Ririn Pitaloka, 'An Analysis of Moral Values in The Movie Entitled “ Malignant”', *International Conference on the Teaching of English and Literature Bengkulu* (2021), 221–26.

<sup>9</sup> Neha Rajput, Keerthana Kumar, and Khayati Moudgil, 'Pica an Eating Disorder: An Overview', *Pharmacophore*, 11.4 (2020), 11–14 <<http://www.pharmacophorejournal.com>>.

<sup>10</sup> Domina Petric, 'Swallow : A Film about PICA', (2020), pp. 1–3.

it views women's alienation as a consequence of the patriarchal and capitalist systems. Within this framework, the experience of the main character Hunter, illustrates that women are often controlled by oppressive social structures and forced to comply with domestic expectations.

Alison M. Jaggar is an American Feminist Philosopher who developed Karl Marx's theory of alienation. Starting from Marx's argument that workers are meaningless due to the alienation carried out by capitalists, Jaggar developed this argument through the perspective of women, also known as a socialist feminist. Jaggar believes that women are alienated in different ways, not only alienated by the capitalist system, but they are also alienated by the patriarchal system that favors men. Because gendered social expectations place women in more vulnerable positions within patriarchal systems<sup>11</sup>.

In the book *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (1983), Jaggar presents an in-depth analysis of various feminist issues that developed until the early 1980s<sup>12</sup>. Socialist feminism begins with the view that gender is a social construction and focuses on the dynamic relationship between sex and society through activities regulated by gender norms, beliefs, and biology, which is "gendered". Jaggar divides the concept of alienation into 3 dimensions, including Sexuality, Motherhood, and Intellectual Agency. This study will focus on Motherhood and Intellectual Agency, which are related to the alienation of female characters in *Swallow* (2019).

According to Alison M. Jaggar (1983), women's alienation can be identified through several dimensions, including motherhood and intellectual agency<sup>13</sup>. Alienation in motherhood refers to the social pressure placed on women to fulfill reproductive and domestic expectations while losing control over their own bodies and personal choices. Meanwhile, alienation in intellectual agency appears through the restriction of women's autonomy, decision-making abilities, and self-expression within patriarchal structures. These dimensions are relevant to analyzing Hunter's experiences in *Swallow* (2019), particularly in relation to domestic control and psychological oppression<sup>14</sup>.

Previous studies on female alienation primarily focus on psychological trauma, gender injustice, and social oppression in literary works and films. Several scholars have analyzed women's alienation using feminist and Marxist perspectives, including study by Istianara and Sinaga, who see female alienation in the film *Fair Play*<sup>15</sup>. Ahmad et al. also studied another work by Toni Morrison entitled "The Bluest Eye" by highlighting the alienation of black women due to psychological conflict, racial discrimination, and patriarchal stereotypes<sup>16</sup>. Other studies also discuss women's marginalization in Indonesian literary works and gender inequality within domestic roles, including the research of Ahmad et al. which raised the topic of female alienation in the novel "Sula" by Toni Morrison, this study focuses more on the analysis of female friendship in literary works by referring

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<sup>11</sup> Terra Istianara and Hariati Sinaga, 'Alienation of Female Characters in the Movie Fair Play (2023) as Main Breadwinners in the View of Jaggar', *Journal of Language and Literature*, 24.2, 541–52 <<https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v24i2.8089>>.

<sup>12</sup> Ria Nita Anggreani, Atika, and Astinana Yulianti, 'Representasi Nilai Feminisme Dalam Novel "Aku Lupa Bahwa Aku Perempuan"' Karya Ihsan Abdul Quddus', *Jurnal Cakrawala Ilmiah*, 3.3 (2023), 805–18 <<https://bajangjournal.com/index.php/JCI/issue/view/231>>.

<sup>13</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa: NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Intan Ayu Familia Nur Janah and Hespri Septiana, 'Representasi Perlawanan Perempuan Terhadap Ketidakadilan Gender Dalam Kumpulan Cerpen Prosa Di Rumah Aja : Kajian Feminisme Sosialis', *Belajar Bahasa: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Penelitian Bahasa & Sastra Indonesia*, 7.1 (2021), 55–84.

<sup>15</sup> Terra Istianara and Hariati Sinaga, 'Alienation of Female Characters in the Movie Fair Play (2023) as Main Breadwinners in the View of Jaggar', *Journal of Language and Literature*, 24.2, 541–52

<sup>16</sup> Shabbir Ahmad, Fariha Chaudhary, and Ghulam Murtaza, 'Parental Hunger and Alienation in Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye'', *International Review of Literary Studies (IRLS)*, 2.1 (2020), 39–45 <<https://doi.org/10.53057/irls>>.

to the theory of alienation developed by Karl Marx and Erich Fromm<sup>17</sup>.

On the other hand, Odi et al. also studied the novel “Aib dan Nasib” from the perspective of female alienation. They found that female alienation in Indonesian literary works is heavily influenced by social stereotypes and patriarchal thinking<sup>18</sup>. Janah and Septiana used a socialist feminist approach to see forms of gender injustice in the prose short story “di Rumah Aja” written during the pandemic<sup>19</sup>. From the motherhood side, there are still a few who analyze it, one of them is Faradila, who analyzes Stella's mother in the film “Let Go” (2024). Her study confirms that Stella's mother plays a key role in shaping the family structure and bonds in the film, but the weaknesses in the analysis of the mother's role are not explored in depth<sup>20</sup>.

Previous studies on *Swallow* mainly focus on psychological trauma and eating disorders. Few studies specifically examine how patriarchal motherhood expectations contribute to women's intellectual alienation through socialist feminist perspectives. This study interrogates how *Swallow* (2019) constructs women's alienation through motherhood and intellectual agency using Alison M. Jaggar's socialist-feminist framework.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: “How does the film represent alienation through practices and expectations of motherhood?” and “How does the film represent alienation through the devaluation or control of the protagonist's intellectual agency?” By employing Alison M. Jaggar's socialist feminist framework, this study aims to enrich the understanding of women's alienation and

contribute to the broader discussion of feminism in film analysis.

### Research Methodology

This research is descriptive qualitative research with a Feminist Film Analysis (FFA) as the analytical approach. Qualitative research is appropriate for interpreting social and cultural representations that appear in literary and cinematic texts. In this study, FFA was applied to describe the phenomenon of female alienation as represented in *Swallow* (2019) as the research object to show the struggles of a woman experiencing alienation in the role of motherhood and intellectual agency experienced by the main character, Hunter. Rather than focusing on audience reception or technical film production, this study analyzes the interpretation of narrative representation, character interactions, and patriarchal power relations reflected in the film. Feminist film analysis was chosen because it allows the researchers to critically explore how women's experiences, oppression, and resistance are constructed within narratives.

The primary data for this study was the film *Swallow* (2019), directed by Carlo Mirabella-Davis. The data consisted of dialogues, character interactions, and narrative sequences related to the representation of female alienation. Scenes functioned as the primary units of analysis, while utterances, gestures, and interactions between characters showed as sub-units of analysis.

The data collection process was conducted through several stages. First, the researchers began by repeatedly watching the film to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative and the protagonist's experiences. Second, transcribing

<sup>17</sup> S. Ahmad, M. I. Mahmood, and S. Abbas, 'A Study of Alienation in Toni Morrison's *Sula: Passive Patriarchy, Marriage and Female Friendship*', *Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economics Review*, 1.4 (2020), 22-28.

<sup>18</sup> M A S Odi and others, 'The Concept of Alienation of the Image of Women in the Novel *Aib Dan Fate* by Minanto', *Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu Akademik*, 2.1 (2025), 577-83 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61722/jmia.v2i1.3572>>.

<sup>19</sup> Intan Ayu Familia Nur Janah and Hespri Septiana, 'Representasi Perlawanan Perempuan terhadap Ketidakadilan Gender dalam Kumpulan Cerpen Prosa di Rumah Aja: Kajian Feminisme Sosialis', *BELAJAR BAHASA: Jurnal Ilmiah Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 7.1 (2021), 55-84.

<sup>20</sup> Aldona Faradila, 'Stella's Motherhood in the Film *Let Go* (2024)', *LITERA KULTURA: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 13.1 (2025).

relevant dialogues, and identifying scenes that show forms of alienation. Third, scenes were selected based on specific criteria related to the concept of female alienation. The selected scenes included representations of patriarchal control, emotional isolation, restriction of autonomy, intellectual suppression, and pressures associated with motherhood. These criteria were determined based on Alison M. Jaggar's concept of female alienation.

The data analysis process was conducted systematically through several stages. First, the researcher reduced the data by selecting scenes and dialogues relevant to the research focus. Second, the selected data were categorized into two major themes of alienation proposed by Jaggar, motherhood and intellectual agency. Third, the data were interpreted using feminist film analysis to identify how patriarchal domination shapes the protagonist's psychological condition, social position, and resistance. The interpretation process focused on narrative context, character relationships, and behavioral patterns appearing throughout the film. Finally, conclusions were drawn by relating the findings to the broader context of socialist feminist perspectives on women's oppression and alienation.

The theoretical framework used is Alison M. Jaggar's (1983) concept of female alienation, which covers three aspects: sexuality, motherhood, and intellectual agency. This research only focuses on the two aspects, motherhood and intellectual agency, because these two aspects are most dominant in showing female alienation in *Swallow* (2019), while sexuality is not strongly presented as the main conflict in the film. The aspect of motherhood was operationalized through indicators such as domestic expectations, reproductive pressure, emotional burden, and loss of autonomy within family roles. Meanwhile, intellectual alienation was identified through the silencing of opinions, restriction of decision-making, emotional invalidation, and the limitation of the protagonist's intellectual freedom.

Completing this focus, the main character's pica disorder in the film is not discussed as a medical problem, but rather as a symbol of alienation and a form of resistance against patriarchal domination of women's bodies and intellectual capacities. To increase the credibility of the analysis, the researcher conducted repeated viewing and interpretive comparison throughout the research process. The interpretation of the data was continuously compared with feminist theories and previous scholarly discussions related to women's oppression and alienation. In addition, the researcher acted as the primary instrument in interpreting the data while maintaining awareness of potential interpretive bias during the analytical process.

## **Finding and Discussion**

The study identifies eleven significant scenes in *Swallow* (2019) that represent repeated patterns of female alienation experienced by Hunter after becoming part of a wealthy patriarchal family. These scenes were selected using Jaggar's socialist-feminist framework, focusing on female alienation of motherhood and intellectual agency. Instead of appearing as separate events, the scenes show how patriarchal power quietly works through family interactions, emotional dependence, and social expectations.

The findings are grouped into two main categories, female alienation through motherhood and female alienation through intellectual agency. Alienation through motherhood is reflected in scenes involving pressure surrounding pregnancy, control over Hunter's body, and constant supervision during her pregnancy. Meanwhile, intellectual alienation appears through the repeated neglect of women's opinions, limitations on self-expression, and the reduction of women's intellectual freedom in both family and social life.

### ***Female Alienation through Motherhood***

According to Jaggar's (1983), motherhood becomes alienating when women lose autonomy over reproductive processes and when pregnancy

is transformed into a social obligation controlled by others. In *Swallow* (2019), Hunter's pregnancy is repeatedly positioned as a collective family project rather than personal experiences.

### Scene 1 (07:35)



**The scene shows Richie happily announcing her pregnancy to her mother while Hunter looks worried.**

Richie: “*Mom. We’re pregnant!*”  
(*Richie said happily to his mother, but Hunter felt uneasy hearing that statement.*)

Richie announces Hunter's pregnancy by saying “*Mom, We’re pregnant!*” while Hunter looks uncomfortable and silent. The use of the pronoun “we” symbolically shows ownership of Hunter's pregnancy into a collective experience controlled by the husband and his family. Although pregnancy physically occurs within Hunter's body, the announcement centers Richie's excitement and excludes Hunter's emotional response.

Hunter's silence in this scene reflects the beginning of reproductive alienation. Rather than being encouraged to express uncertainty or fear, she is expected to accept pregnancy as a fulfilled domestic role. Jaggar (1983) explains that patriarchal systems often transform women's reproductive capacities into social property regulated by familial expectations<sup>21</sup>. The scene reflects how emotional suppression becomes normalized within upper-middle class domestic culture, where women are expected to perform happiness regardless of personal discomfort.

This finding also aligns with Nakiyemba et al., who found that family pressures raise maternal

anxiety and trigger coping behaviors pica<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, Hunter's condition is not merely as a personal problem, but also as a representation of systemic pressures.

### Scene 2 (11:30)



**Scene of Richie's mother advising Hunter to grow her hair long in order to match Richie's preference**

Mother: “*You will look pretty with long hair! You need to grow it out because Richie likes long hair girl.*”

When Richie's mother asks Hunter to grow her hair to match her son's preference, Hunter's body becomes an “object” managed by male desire. The statement from Richie's mother reflects how Hunter's appearance is regulated to male preference rather than personal choice. The phrase “*his girl*” positions women as extensions of male desire, reducing Hunter's individuality into an aesthetic object constructed for male satisfaction.

The scene shows how patriarchy operates not only through men but also through other women who internalize its norms. Hunter's body becomes a site of regulation, where femininity is measured through obedience to socially approved appearances. Jaggar (1983) argues that patriarchal structures often discipline women's bodies to maintain reproductive and domestic ideals<sup>23</sup>.

Furthermore, this scene supports the concept of the “male gaze”, positioning women as visual

<sup>21</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

<sup>22</sup> Olivia Nakiyemba and others, ‘Covariates of Pica among Pregnant Women’, *American Journal of Tropical Medicine*

and *Hygiene*, 105.4 (2021), 909–14 <<https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.21-0028>>.

<sup>23</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

objects for male pleasure<sup>24</sup>. The male gaze is a feminist concept that refers to visual art that specifically interprets women from male or heterosexual perspective and positioning them mainly as visual objects of pleasure<sup>25</sup>. This phenomenon is often depicted in contemporary cinema, as Hunter is positioned not as an independent subject but as a visual object to please Richie's preferences<sup>26</sup>. This condition is also related to the feeling of alienation experienced by women, which often arises when they lose autonomy over their own body and identity within a controlling social structure<sup>27</sup>.

### Scene 3 (40:00)



**Scene of Hunter being forced to live with a male nurse to supervise her pregnancy.**

*Richie: "He's a live-in nurse and he will help you around the house. He has sensitive behaviour but great."*

*Hunter: "wait....I'm not an old person...so, he will keep an eye on me?"*

*(the family force Hunter to accept a male nurse to live with them)*

This scene happens when the Richie family knows that Hunter has pica disorder, which could endanger the life of their unborn child. They don't want Hunter to harm their future heir, so the family decided to hire a male nurse to monitor Hunter's every move without considering Hunter's privacy or wishes.

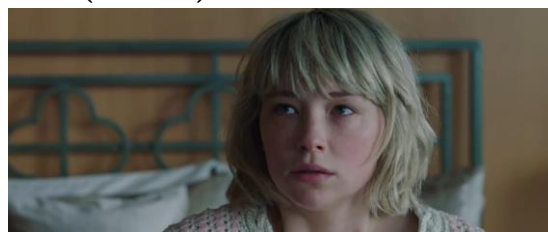
<sup>24</sup> Kexin Lyu, Zhenyu Cheng, and Dongkwon Seong, 'The Enduring Shadow of "Maternal Emptiness": From Hitchcock's Distorted Mother Image to Contemporary Cinema's Maternal Representations', *Humanities (Switzerland)*, 13.4 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.3390/h13040098>>.

<sup>25</sup> Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', (1975), pp. 1–23.

By imposing a live-in male nurse without Hunter's consent, Richie and his family reduce her body to an object of surveillance. Jaggar (1983) explains that alienation in motherhood occurs when women lose authority over reproductive processes and bodily autonomy. In this scene, care functions as a mechanism of patriarchal control, where surveillance is normalized through the discourse of protection and responsibility. This dynamic also reflects Foucauldian notions of disciplinary power, in which individuals internalize constant monitoring within domestic spaces<sup>28</sup>.

The scene also suggests that Hunter's pregnancy no longer belongs to her personally, but becomes a collective responsibility shaped by patriarchal authority and class-based reproductive expectations.

### Scene 4 (01:05:00)



**The scene where Hunter is forced to sign a rehabilitation agreement form is presented as non-negotiable**

*Hunter: "May I stay here with Richie and all of your? I know I went too far. It's only a game. A very stupid game."*

*Richie's Mother: "No, you need to get better. So, you have to go there."*

*Richie's Father: "Richie wants to divorce you if you refuse to go."*

*[Hunter signed the agreement under pressure]*

Hunter is losing control over her pregnancy because of the pressure from Richie's family. The

<sup>26</sup> Parth Maradia and others, 'Framing Perception: Exploring Camera Induced Objectification in Cinema', (2025) <<http://arxiv.org/abs/2504.10404>>.

<sup>27</sup> Taoran Yang, Rebecca Featherston, and Aron Shlonsky, 'Exploring Migrant Mothers' Experiences of Alienation in, *Child and Family Social Work*, 27.3 (2022), 567–82 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12904>>.

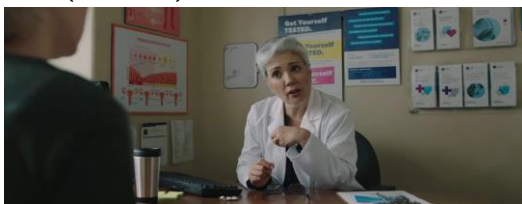
<sup>28</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

scene shows Richie's father threatening Hunter with divorce if she doesn't agree to their family's demands. They used this threat to force her to obey without thinking about her personal choice. So, Hunter had no other choice and had to accept the agreement.

The scene demonstrates how patriarchal power operates through coercion disguised as family concern. Hunter's reproductive condition becomes subject to institutional and familial intervention, while her personal consent is treated as secondary. Jaggar (1983) argues that women experience alienation when reproductive decisions are controlled by external authority rather than individual autonomy.

The threat of divorce also reveals the economic dimension of patriarchal domination. Hunter's dependency within a wealthy household limits her capacity to negotiate or resist family expectations. Rather than functioning as an equal partner, she becomes vulnerable to emotional and financial coercion. This finding supports Duan's argument that economic dependency frequently weakens women's reproductive agency within patriarchal family structures<sup>29</sup>.

### Scene 5 (01:27:18)



#### Scene where Hunter decides to end her pregnancy through abortion

*Doctor: "You need to take a pill here and wait for a day. After that, place two pills in cheek and four pills in your mouth. Please wait them until dissolve and swallow it."*

*Hunter: "Alright, thank you"*

Hunter's decision to do abortions at the end of the film shows an act of reclaiming her agency. Different from the previous scenes that showed control and pressure, this moment shows Hunter.

Jaggar (1983) explains that reproductive freedom is important in resisting maternal alienation because it allows women to have control over decisions related to their own bodies<sup>30</sup>. Hunter's abortion can also be seen as a form of resistance against the patriarchal system that had previously controlled her pregnancy. Throughout the film, her body is controlled through emotional pressure and the expectations of her family. By making her own decision about the pregnancy, Hunter challenges the system that treated her only as a reproductive object.

Taken together, the motherhood scenes in *Swallow* show that pregnancy is often presented as something controlled by social rules rather than a personal experience. Patriarchal power works through supervision of the female body, emotional pressure, and expectations about reproduction that place family interests above women's autonomy. The film shows that alienation develops slowly through everyday domestic practices that are often presented as forms of care, protection, and responsibility<sup>31</sup>.

### *Female Alienation through Intellectual Agency*

Intellectual agency in women happens when their capacity for thought, opinion, and expression is ignored. Jaggar (1983) defines intellectual alienation as the systematic denial of women's voices and knowledge, affirmed by patriarchal norms. In *Swallow* (2019), Hunter's intellectual alienation is seen through the ignoring her communicative contributions, doubts about her daily decisions, and acceptance of others' expectations. This film shows that the experience

<sup>29</sup> Jiale Duan, 'The Alienation of Women in the Context of Social Reproduction', *Social Science, Humanities and Sustainability Research*, 3.4 (2022), p34 <<https://doi.org/10.22158/sshr.v3n4p34>>.

<sup>30</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

<sup>31</sup> Dayoon Kwon and others, 'Association of Pica with Cortisol and Inflammation among Latina Pregnant Women', *American Journal of Human Biology*, 36.5 (2024), 1–11 <<https://doi.org/10.1002/ajhb.24025>>.

of women in domestic and social aspects is shaped by control of their capacity for thought, resulting in their choices, opinions, and actions.

### Scene 6 (06:09)



#### Scene of Hunter enthusiastically talking about the house while Richie ignores her

*Hunter: "It is a beautiful name of a flower, right? Morning Glories it means an awesome morning because I love it recently." [Sigh] "I'm so lucky" [She kept talking to get her husband's attention, but her husband still didn't care]*

*Richie: "Ha?"*

*Hunter: "I'm so ucky"*

*Richie: "Oh" [and back to his busy life as if*

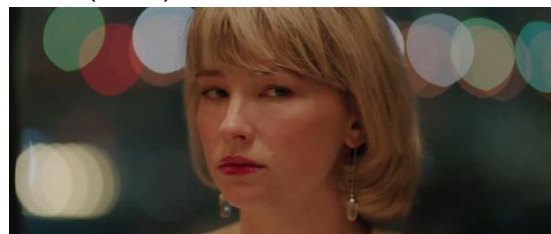
*Hunter wasn't there]*

Hunter enthusiastically speaks about their new house, while Richie responds only with brief disinterested reactions and still focused on his activities. Richie's response "Hmm," reduced Hunter's enthusiasm, showing that her voice holds little value even within the household. In an ideal marriage, a husband and wife should respect each other's opinions without feeling domineering. Through this scene, Richie shows his disinterest in Hunter's story. This shows that Hunter's thoughts and opinions are not valued by Richie. This interaction demonstrates conversational dismissal, where women's expressions are minimized through passive indifference rather than direct confrontation.

Jaggar (1983) suggests that intellectual alienation comes when a woman's thinking ability is underestimated or undervalued in everyday interactions. This scene also confirms the existing power structure: Hunter's views are not important

in the domestic aspect that should be a site of authority for homemaking decisions. This diminishes the sense of cognitive control vital to freedom of thought. Istinara and Sinaga also observe that domestic interactions often marginalize women's perspectives, reducing confidence and agency. The scene highlights how patriarchal power reduces women's voice in intimate settings<sup>32</sup>.

### Scene 7 (08:40)



#### Scene of Richie forcing Hunter to share a traumatic childhood story at the dinner table

*Richie: "Guys, you know what? Back then HHunter was a crazy kid too. Hunter, tell them the story about the guy on the road side, who.. uh" [While showing an intimidating look to Hunter to tell the bad story]*

*Hunter: "That's not..."*

*Richie: "No, No... It's good. Come on"*

The interaction demonstrates narrative control, where Hunter loses authority over her own experiences. Her trauma becomes a form of entertainment within a social gathering rather than a personal memory shared on her own terms. Although Hunter is encouraged to speak, the conversation ultimately prioritizes the interests of others rather than her emotional comfort.

In this scene, Hunter is forced to share her personal experiences in the midst of a conversation with her in-laws, even though she doesn't want to share her bad experiences. However, when she starts talking, the people there start to change the topic to business matters or things they consider "more important" than Hunter's story. This scene

<sup>32</sup>Terra Istinara and Hariati Sinaga, 'Alienation of Female Characters in the Movie Fair Play (2023) as Main Breadwinners in the View of Jaggar', *Journal of Language and*

*Literature*, 24.2, <<https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v24i2.8089>>.

illustrates a form of narrative exclusion where women's voices are diminished, cut off, ignored, or reduced to entertainment or mere public consumption material, without being seriously acknowledged.

Jaggar (1983) argues that intellectual alienation occurs when women are denied meaningful participation within communicative spaces<sup>33</sup>. Hunter's story is treated as socially consumable material rather than legitimate personal knowledge. The scene reflects patriarchal discourse that values women's voices only when they remain useful, entertaining, or non-threatening.

Furthermore, Richie's interruption reveals how domination can occur through conversational pressure that appears socially harmless. Hunter's hesitation signals discomfort, yet her refusal is ignored in favor of maintaining male authority within the conversation.

#### Scene 8 (14:25)



#### Scene of Hunter proudly sharing her household decision, but being dismissed by Richie

*Hunter: "I did something extraordinary today and I'm so proud of myself."*

*"I chose sky blue drapes."*

*Richie: "Oh wow. That's not so special. Are you sure choosing the right color? It's a bit boring." [talking without paying attention to hunter and only focusing on his cell phone]*

Scene 8 shows Hunter's conversation with Richie, where Hunter made decisions about their household. However, Hunter's pride in choosing household decor is quickly weakened by Richie's

sarcastic critique. This shows that even in the domestic aspect, authority is not honored, it is still dominated by men. Richie's small insults to Hunter's daily decisions are a form of systematic practice that undermines her intellectual abilities, representing an intellectual alienation because Hunter's opinions are seen as invalid or less valuable.

Jaggar (1983) explains that intellectual alienation occurs when women's thoughts and judgments are continuously undermined within daily interactions<sup>34</sup>. Richie's reaction may appear minor, yet its repetitive nature gradually normalizes Hunter's dependence on external validation and reduces her confidence in expressing personal preferences. The scene reveals that patriarchal control does not always function through direct restriction, but also through subtle emotional invalidation that weakens women's intellectual autonomy over time.

This pattern is similar to findings by Istinara and Sinaga, who argue that repeated dismissal in domestic communication contributes to women's cognitive marginalization and emotional dependency within patriarchal relationships. Furthermore, the interaction reflects unequal power relations within marriage, where male perspectives are unconsciously prioritized while women's contributions are treated as secondary or trivial<sup>35</sup>.

#### Scene 9 (16:15)



#### Hunter makes a mistake when ironing Richie's tie and gets scolded by him

<sup>35</sup> Terra Istinara and Hariati Sinaga, 'Alienation of Female Characters in the Movie Fair Play (2023) as Main Breadwinners in the View of Jaggar', *Journal of Language and Literature*, 24.2, 541–52 <<https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v24i2.8089>>.

<sup>33</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

Richie: "You did something wrong about the tie! It shouldn't be like this! It will damage the silk permanently."

Hunter: "Oh my god! I'm really sorry. You have another tie to wear, right?"

Richie: "The other doesn't match with the shirt!"

[Sigh] "Fuck!" "Now, what should I do?"  
[Hunter feels guilty towards Richie]

The scene shows Hunter's daily actions when ironing her husband's tie. However, what Hunter did was not in line with Richie's wishes. Hunter received criticism and anger from her husband. When Richie scolds Hunter, it shows that women's daily work is the target of criticism, not a form of praise for what they have done. What Richie should have done was to give Hunter proper instructions on how he wanted to do things without scolding her. Because in a household, good communication between husband and wife is the strongest foundation for maintaining good relations. In this scene, Richie shows a patriarchal attitude, which wants all his wishes to be obeyed by Hunter and considers himself more dominant than Hunter.

According to Jaggar (1983), intellectual alienation emerges when women's abilities are repeatedly questioned and evaluated under patriarchal standards<sup>36</sup>. Hunter's immediate apology and visible guilt indicate the internalization of these unequal expectations, where women become responsible not only for domestic work itself, but also for maintaining emotional harmony within the household.

Similar observations are presented by Barigozzi et al. and Leap et al. about how ignoring or criticizing women's actions in the domestic sphere results in a decline in their sense of agency<sup>37,38</sup>.

## Scene 10 (37:35)



### **Scene of Hunter in a therapy session admitting that her motivation is only to please Richie**

*"I just want to make Richie happy by stop eating weird stud and I want to spend our life together."*

When Hunter has a therapy session with a therapist to overcome her pica disorder, she really wants to stop the disorder to make Richie happy. She doesn't want Richie to be angry and hurt seeing Hunter eating non-nutritive objects that could harm their baby. This statement shows the internalization of patriarchal expectations, where Hunter prioritizes Richie's happiness above her own emotional wellbeing. Rather than expressing recovery as a personal need, Hunter frames healing as a responsibility to restore domestic stability and satisfy her husband's expectations. Her statement reflects how patriarchal ideology reshapes women's self-perception until obedience becomes emotionally normalized.

Jaggar (1983) explains that intellectual alienation involves not only external silencing, but also self-subordination, in which women gradually devalue their own desires and autonomy<sup>39</sup>. Hunter's motivation demonstrates how patriarchal control has been psychologically internalized, causing her sense of self-worth to depend upon male approval and relational harmony.

Hunter's pica behavior may also be interpreted symbolically as a bodily response to prolonged repression and emotional confinement. Since her voice and personal agency are repeatedly dismissed throughout the film, the body becomes

<sup>36</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

<sup>37</sup> Francesca Barigozzi and others, *Beyond Time: Unveiling the Invisible Burden of Mental Load*, *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2025 <<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5262808>>.

<sup>38</sup> Braden Leap, Marybeth C. Stalp, and Kimberly Kelly, 'Reorganizations of Gendered Labor During the COVID-19 Pandemic', *Sociological Inquiry*, 93.1 (2023), 179–200 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12488>>.

<sup>39</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

an alternative site for expressing distress and resistance. Therefore, Hunter’s condition reflects both submission and resistance simultaneously, revealing the complexity of female agency under patriarchal pressure rather than portraying women solely as passive victims.

Clinical studies on pica disorder further suggest that compulsive behavior may emerge as a psychological response to prolonged stress, emotional repression, and loss of control, reinforcing the symbolic dimension of Hunter’s condition in the film<sup>40</sup>.

**Scene 11 (45:50)**



**Scene of Richie exposing Hunter’s private issues to others despite her disapproval**

*Hunter: “I don’t want other people know about it.”*

*Richie: “Hunter...Are you mad at me? They are care about you. Your food is a huge bit and you should be happy about it.”*

*Hunter: “But, I can’t believe you fucking told them!”*

*Richie: “Okay, could you please not doing something bad on my special day? We’ll talk later.”*

The scene above shows Hunter's anger towards Richie because Hunter's personal problems were exposed to Richie's friends. When Hunter tried to get angry and protest about Richie's behavior, Richie instead scolded and blamed Hunter for trying to ruin the happy atmosphere at Richie's birthday party. The disclosure of Hunter's private struggles without her consent strips her of narrative control.

According to Jaggar (1983), intellectual freedom includes the ability to regulate personal boundaries and determine how one’s experiences are communicated to others<sup>41</sup>. By exposing Hunter’s condition without permission, Richie positions himself as the authority over her narrative, reducing Hunter’s autonomy over her own identity and emotional experiences.

The scene further reflects patriarchal power relations in which women’s emotions are often reframed as irrational or excessive whenever they challenge existing authority. Rather than acknowledging Hunter’s discomfort, Richie prioritizes his public image and social comfort, illustrating how patriarchal domination frequently operates through emotional manipulation rather than direct physical control. Consequently, Hunter’s resistance is silenced not because it lacks legitimacy, but because it threatens the stability of patriarchal authority itself.

This finding also reflects broader feminist discussions regarding the regulation of women’s emotional expression in public spaces, where female resistance is frequently reframed as socially disruptive in order to maintain existing gender hierarchies.

**Table 1.** Analysis Results of Each Scene

Key Scene	Jaggar’s Concept of Alienation	Form of Alienation	Mechanism of Patriarchal Control	Effect of Hunter
1	Female Alienation in Motherhood	Reproductive alienation	Collective ownership of pregnancy	Emotional suppression and loss of personal agency
2		Bodily objectification	Beauty regulation through male preference	Reduced bodily autonomy and self-

<sup>40</sup> Inês Miranda Paulo and others, ‘A Spongy Appetite: A Case of Pica’, *Cureus*, 16.8 (2024), 8–13 <<https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.66399>>.

<sup>41</sup> Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983).

			expressio n
3	Bodily surveillan ce	Medical monitoring and domestic supervision	Loss of privacy and reproduct ive control
4	Reproduc tive coercion	Emotional and economic pressure	Forced complan ce and dependen cy
5	Reclaimin g reproduct ive agency	Independe nt reproductiv e decision- making	Restorati on of bodily autonom y
6	Conversa tional dismissal	Emotional neglect in domestic interaction	Cognitive marginali zation
7	Narrative exclusion	Conversa tional pressure and interruptio n	Loss of narrative authority
8	Female Alienatio n in	Emotiona l invalidati on	Trivializatio n of women's decisions
9	Intellectu al Agency	Intellectu al undermin ing	Perfectionis t domestic expectation s
10		Internaliz ed oppressio n	Growing self- doubt and dependen cy
11		Narrative control	Loss of self- prioritizat ion
		Public exposure and emotional manipulatio n	Loss of personal boundari es and emotional legitimacy

The table explores repeated patterns of female alienation in Swallow's (2019) through interconnected mechanisms of patriarchal control.

The category of motherhood reflects forms of external regulation of women's reproductive autonomy, including bodily control, reproductive force, and objectification. Meanwhile, intellectual alienation operates through emotional rejection, narrative exclusion, and the neglect of women's perspectives in everyday interactions. In both categories, patriarchal domination gradually undermines Hunter's bodily autonomy, self-expression, and sense of empowerment in domestic and social spaces. These forms relate to Jaggar's (1983) perspective that women's intellectual agency is denied through both external control and internalized norms.

*Swallow* (2019) shows that patriarchal domination not only overpowers women's voices but also reshapes their self-perception and restricting thought and expression. In contrast from the previous research, which analyzes sexuality or household problems in general, this study shows how intellectual alienation is manifested through everyday interactions, showing how it operates silently but persistently within middle-class family dynamics.

## Conclusion

The finding of this study shows that female alienation in *Swallow* (2019) analyzed through Alison M. Jaggar's socialist-feminist framework is not a one side experience, but rather a structured and interconnected form of oppression. Alienation in motherhood and intellectual agency emerge as part of a broader patriarchal system that regulates both women's bodies and their capacity for autonomous decision-making.

In Hunter's case, alienation of motherhood is reflected in her limited control over her pregnancy and how her body becomes a site of external expectations shaped by her husband and family. At the same time, her intellectual agency is slowly controlled as her personal voice, choices, and judgment are repeatedly undermined in domestic relationships. These two forms of alienation are interconnected, suggesting that patriarchal control does not operate separately between the body and

the mind, but rather constitutes an integrated system of domination that limits women's autonomy as a whole.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings suggest that Jaggar's concept of alienation can also be read more broadly when applied to contemporary cinematic representations. While Jaggar emphasizes women's oppression within reproductive and social structures, *Swallow* (2019) explores that intellectual silencing is just as important as the experience of alienation. In this respect, the film reflects Jaggar's framework and highlights how patriarchal domination in a modern context can operate through physical regulation and cognitive oppression.

This study also offers practical implications for media pedagogy. Selected scenes from *Swallow* (2019) can be integrated into classroom discussions or critical film analysis activities, where students are encouraged to examine how cinematic elements such as dialogue, framing, and character interactions construct gendered power relations. Through guided questions and reflective viewing assignments, learners can develop a deeper awareness of how patriarchal norms are represented and normalized in everyday narratives.

However, this study has several limitations. The analysis has limited focus on the main character, Hunter, and examines women's alienation through two aspects of Jaggar's framework. Furthermore, as a qualitative film analysis, interpretations are influenced by the researcher's subjective reading of the scenes, which may not fully capture alternative interpretations. The theoretical scope is also limited to socialist feminism, without incorporating other feminist perspectives that might offer different insights into the same data.

Therefore, future research is encouraged to expand the analysis by including other female characters or comparing several films depicting motherhood and female agency in different social contexts. Further studies could also apply intersectional feminist approaches or alternative theoretical frameworks to enrich the

understanding of female alienation in contemporary cinema.

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