

A Feminist Analysis of Katy Perry's "Woman's World" Lyrics and Music Video

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Abstract. Music videos and song lyrics function as cultural texts through which gender ideologies are both reinforced and contested. Despite growing interest in feminist media studies, few studies have integrated lyrical and visual analysis of contemporary pop music using Simone de Beauvoir's foundational concept of women as "The Other." This study analyzes how Katy Perry's 2024 song "Woman's World" represents female identity and women's empowerment through its lyrics and official music video. Employing a qualitative descriptive method grounded in de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949/2011), and supplemented by postfeminist media criticism, this study examines verbal and visual data, including lyrics, costumes, body movements, and symbolic props through three analytical themes: the reversal of male-coded public spaces, female subjectivity, and symbolic resistance to gender stereotypes. The findings reveal that "Woman's World" constructs women as active, self-determining subjects who reject the subordinate position of "The Other" through dominant visual symbols and lyrical narratives. However, the analysis also identifies a recurring paradox in which feminist empowerment is simultaneously undermined by the entertainment industry's commodification of the female body. This study contributes to media feminist scholarship by demonstrating both the emancipatory potential and the commercial contradictions inherent in feminist representations within contemporary popular culture.

Keywords: *women's empowerment; gender representation; postfeminist media; feminist criticism; popular music*

Abstrak. Video musik dan lirik lagu berfungsi sebagai teks budaya yang merepresentasikan sekaligus mempertentangkan ideologi gender. Meskipun kajian media feminis terus berkembang, penelitian yang mengintegrasikan analisis lirik dan visual pada musik pop kontemporer dengan menggunakan teori feminis klasik Simone de Beauvoir masih sangat terbatas. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana lagu "Woman's World" (2024) karya Katy Perry merepresentasikan identitas perempuan dan pemberdayaan perempuan melalui lirik dan video musiknya. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif yang berlandaskan teori *The Second Sex* (1949/2011) karya de Beauvoir dan dilengkapi kritik media postfeminis, penelitian ini mengkaji data verbal dan visual meliputi lirik, kostum, gerakan tubuh, dan simbol-simbol visual melalui tiga tema analitis: pembalikan ruang publik berkode maskulin, subjektivitas perempuan, dan resistansi simbolik terhadap stereotip gender. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa "Woman's World" mengonstruksi perempuan sebagai subjek aktif yang mampu menolak posisi "The Other"; namun analisis juga mengidentifikasi paradoks berulang di mana pemberdayaan feminis sekaligus dilemahkan oleh komodifikasi tubuh perempuan dalam industri hiburan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian media feminis dengan menunjukkan potensi emansipatoris sekaligus kontradiksi komersial dalam representasi feminisme pada budaya populer kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *pemberdayaan perempuan; representasi gender; media postfeminis; kritik feminis; musik populer*

INTRODUCTION

Music is a form of cultural expression that serves as a medium for expressing a community's identity, values, and collective experiences. In a cultural context, music is not only a representation of tradition but also a means of understanding the relationship between tradition and change within a culture, demonstrating how a culture's identity continues to evolve over time (East End Arts, 2024). Furthermore, music possesses the ability to bridge cultural differences through increasingly intense cross-cultural exchange in the era of globalization. The development of music continuously undergoes transformation alongside technological advancements and the dynamics of global culture. As such, music can be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that relates not only to aesthetics but also to broader social and cultural structures (Cross, 2014). Music has also undergone significant transformation and spread globally, with the America playing a dominant role as the world's entertainment industry hub, influencing various global music trends through massive production, distribution, and commercialization (Meier, 2020), and Music in America has evolved and plays a major role in shaping both national and global culture.

Today, music is easily accessible through various digital media platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, and others, which makes it easier for artists to reach a wider audience (Walsh, M. J., 2024). Music and video are important parts of this popular culture that not only serve as entertainment, but can also be tools for conveying messages about social and political issues, even feminism and gender inequality. One issue that often arises in American popular music is feminism, gender representation, and gender inequality. Feminism is a social and political movement that aims to achieve equality between the sexes, especially in terms of rights, opportunities, and treatment (Presilla, 2024). Music as popular culture can have the power to shape society's views on the roles of men and women, especially on the issue of inequality. According to Aubrey and Frisby (2011), women in pop and hip-hop music videos are more often portrayed sexually than men, showing that popular media is still a space where gender inequality persists in subtle ways. In addition, with the development of digital media and the global music industry, popular music not only conveys entertainment narratives, but also articulates social experiences, identities, and resistance to patriarchal structures (Muslim, 2023).

As explained by Railton and Watson (2011), music videos are political spaces where identity and power are negotiated through symbols and images. With this in mind, music videos can be a creative and effective approach to rejecting gender inequality by challenging traditional images of women and presenting women as independent, strong, and free to make their own life choices. One American song that rejects gender inequality and incorporates feminist elements is "Woman World's." The song "Woman World's" itself is a song by Katy Perry released in 2024, an interesting example of how the issue of gender inequality is raised in modern pop music. Katy Perry is known as a global pop figure who often combines personal, social, and popular cultural themes in her work, such as in the songs *Firework*, *Roar*, and *Rise*, which are often interpreted as narratives of motivation and empowerment (Railton & Watson, 2011). Katy Perry's "Woman's World" is highlighted as one of her works that raises issues of feminism and women's empowerment amid a society that is still unequal. In this song, Katy Perry clearly affirms the centrality of women through her lyrics and music video.

One important contribution to feminist theory comes from Simone de Beauvoir, in her work *The Second Sex*, in which she reveals that women have historically been constructed as *The Other*, while men have been positioned as universal subjects

(Beauvoir, 2011). The concept of Woman as The Other explains that women are often represented not as whole individuals but as shadows of men. This theory is very relevant in analyzing cultural texts, including popular music, because the representation of women in the media often reflects this social construction. The concept of women's empowerment is one of the main goals in opposing gender inequality.

The concept of women's empowerment refers to efforts to help women obtain rights, self-confidence, and opportunities to participate in various fields such as economics, education, politics, and others. In addition, women's empowerment is also a movement to give women various rights without needing to look down on or belittle other genders. This also refers to the concept of self-love, self-love is understood as a process in which women develop acceptance of themselves, realize their self-worth, and cultivate confidence in their identity and choices (Mahbub, 2025).

Several previous studies have shown that the portrayal of women in popular music often reflects the tension between empowerment and patriarchal structures that persist to this day. Syafitri et al. (2025) reveal that female musicians use songs as a space to express women's life experiences and strength, thereby shaping the discourse of contemporary feminism. Earlier research, such as that by Pramadani, Mutahir, and Rizkidarajat (2025), has also identified the meanings and messages in the lyrics of the song "PMS" by Voice of Baceprot, within the context of women's struggle against gender inequality. Furthermore, Aprilia and Nesya (2022), in their study titled "Women Stereotypes in "Pretty Girl" Song Lyrics: A Critical Discourse Analysis Study," discuss the lyrics of the song "Pretty Girl," which position women as aesthetic objects, whose existence is constructed by society based on their physical appearance. Both studies are certainly valuable in providing insights. However, these studies still focus primarily on a single aspect, namely lyrics rather than visuals in music videos, so the relationship between the two has not been analyzed in depth, particularly using Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "The Other." Therefore, combining lyric and visual analysis is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of the representation of women's empowerment.

Furthermore, feminist studies of popular media tend to focus on films, advertisements, and television, while analyses of song lyrics and music videos have not yet received in-depth attention (Railton & Watson, 2011). Research on feminism in popular culture tends to emphasize the concept of empowerment in general. Until now, there have not been many studies analyzing how contemporary pop songs represent women as subjects and relate them to classical theories such as Simone de Beauvoir's "Woman as The Other." Furthermore, studies on Katy Perry's "Woman's World" remain limited, particularly in examining how its lyrics and music video simultaneously represent women's empowerment and reflect the commercial contradictions of the pop industry. Therefore, this study addresses the following research question: How do the lyrics and music video of Katy Perry's "Woman's World" represent and negotiate female identity in relation to Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as "The Other"? This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the verbal and visual elements of 'Woman's World' through the lens of Simone de Beauvoir's concept of 'The Other,' and to contribute to the growing field of feminist media criticism in the context of contemporary popular culture.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method to analyze the representation of gender inequality and women's empowerment in Katy Perry's song Woman World. Creswell

(2013) defines qualitative research as an investigative process used to understand social or human problems through the construction of holistic and complex descriptions, conducted in natural settings, and emphasizing the meanings generated by the participants. Therefore, qualitative research is very suitable for analyzing social issues such as gender inequality and women's empowerment. In addition, qualitative research is used because it allows for a more in-depth analysis and exploration of the textual and visual elements in songs and music videos. This approach allows researchers to interpret how gender inequality and women's empowerment are depicted and criticized in Katy Perry's work.

To analyze this issue, researchers used Simone de Beauvoir's theory of "The Second Sex" (1949). In this work, Beauvoir argues that women have been constructed as "The Other" who are always forced to submit to social constructs that limit their freedom and not as the main subject of "Self." Beauvoir wrote, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (Beauvoir, 1949/2011, p. 26). This can be interpreted to mean that identity is not constructed by oneself, but is determined by how men view women, emphasizing that gender roles are the result of social constructs. This theory provides a critical lens for analyzing how Katy Perry's song "Woman's World" challenges traditional gender roles and highlights the double standards women face in voicing female empowerment.

The primary data sources for this study are the official lyrics of the song "Woman's World" and the official music video uploaded to Katy Perry's official YouTube channel. The research data includes verbal and visual elements related to the representation of women, such as lyrics, costumes, body movements, and facial expressions of the characters, as well as visual symbols that appear in the music video. The analysis in this study focuses on lyrics and scenes that demonstrate women's empowerment, resistance to gender stereotypes, and women's rejection of "The Other." Some scenes were analyzed using time-stamps to ensure a more focused and systematic analysis process.

The data analysis process was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher identified lyrics and visual scenes related to the representation of women. Next, the data was organized and analyzed based on its relevance to the representation of women in the lyrics and visuals of the music video. Third, the data is analyzed using Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory, specifically the concept of women as "The Other," to understand the meanings embedded within the lyrics or visuals in the music video. Finally, the researcher draws conclusions based on the results of the analysis of the text and visuals. The selection of lyrics and scenes is based on their relevance to the research focus on the representation of women and the rejection of "The Other" position. The selected scenes and lyrics are parts that demonstrate symbols, expressions, and narratives related to women's identity in popular culture. To maintain consistency in the analysis, this study uses Simone de Beauvoir's concept of "The Other" as the primary foundation for interpreting the data. Interpretations were also conducted to examine the relationship between the lyrics, visuals, and meanings emerging in the music video "Woman's World."

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an analysis of the lyrics and visuals of Katy Perry's music video "Woman's World," this study found representations of women striving to break free from their subordinate position within patriarchal culture. Through various symbolic elements, the music video portrays women as strong, active figures who are in control

of their own lives. Furthermore, this representation indicates an effort to challenge the social constructs that have long placed women in the position of “The Other,” as articulated by Simone de Beauvoir. The discussion in this study is divided into three subthemes: the reversal of male-coded public spaces, female subjectivity, and symbolic resistance.

The Reversal of Male-Coded Public Spaces

One of the lyrics that affirms the rejection of women’s position as “The Other” and also the reversal of the male-coded public sphere is found in the song’s opening, with the line *“It’s a woman’s world and you’re lucky to be living in it.”* These lyrics clearly state that the world belongs not only to men, but also to women. Beauvoir states that, “Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him.” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. xxii). This quote stands in stark contrast to the lyrics mentioned earlier. Beauvoir argues that the world is dominated by men, so these lyrics can be seen as a critique or satire of that reality. In a patriarchal society, men are always regarded as the center or the self, while women are viewed as “The Other”, leaving women without full agency to determine the course of their own lives. Therefore, in these lyrics, Katy Perry voices her rejection of inequality by effectively turning the situation on its head. Furthermore, these lyrics directly subvert the patriarchal dominance that typically places men at the center of social power. The line positions women as the center of the social and public world. Perry asserts in her lyrics that the world today is a “woman’s world” and that men can only survive within it by being dependent. In other words, women are no longer in the position of “The Other” as a complement to men, but rather as the center of power over themselves. Thus, it can be interpreted that these lyrics highlight how Perry critiques and voices her opposition to social injustice within society, particularly within patriarchal culture.

Furthermore, in her lyrics *“Sexy, confident / So intelligent / She is heaven-sent / So soft, so strong”* Katy Perry also rejects the view that women are not whole persons, that women are often placed or given limitations in everything, especially in the eyes of men. In her book, Beauvoir states, “To emancipate women is to refuse to confine them to the relationships they have with men.” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 726). She believes that women should not be viewed solely from a “soft” perspective or as merely attractive to men, but should also be seen as independent and strong individuals. In other words, women are often seen from only one side, such as their beauty or softness, but other sides of themselves, such as their intelligence and strength, are often ignored or overlooked. With this, women are often referred to as “The Other,” where women are not whole persons, but only complements to men. In these lyrics, Katy Perry challenges this perspective by portraying women as beautiful and confident, as well as intelligent, gentle, and strong. This can be interpreted to mean that women are entitled to and deserve a complex and complete identity, and can be whole subjects rather than merely “The Other,” as criticized by Beauvoir. Furthermore, these lyrics also portray women as individuals possessing qualities that have traditionally been more closely associated with men in a patriarchal system, particularly in terms of self-confidence, intellectual ability, and social dominance. Traits such as self-confidence, intelligence, competitiveness, and strength are typically linked to masculinity and the public sphere, such as the workplace, leadership, and power. Therefore, when the lyrics describe women as **“confident”** and **“intelligent,”** it can be said that they are constructing an image of women capable of actively and powerfully engaging in social spaces previously dominated by men. Furthermore, the word **“sexy”** in these lyrics also demonstrates how women maintain

their feminine identity while entering public spaces. Thus, it can be interpreted that these lyrics reflect women's efforts to break free from the position of "the Other" a role long defined through a male-centered perspective and instead portray women as subjects who possess capability, self-confidence, and the ability to determine their own identities. These lyrics can also be interpreted as a form of subversion against the male-coded public sphere, as women are depicted as capable of possessing qualities and holding positions of equality in both social and professional life.



Figure 1. Woman's World Music Video (0:00 - 0:04)

In her music video, Katy Perry also shows her rejection of gender inequality in society. At (0:00 – 0:04), there is a scene where a woman sprays paint on a road sign that says "Men Working," changing it to "Women Working" by adding the letters 'W' and 'O' to the sign. Beauvoir states that, "To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man" (Beauvoir, 1949). This explains that women's liberation means rejecting views of women solely in relation to men, such as as mothers or as men's complementary partners. In her thinking, Beauvoir believed that patriarchal society often positions women as "The Other," so that women are frequently viewed only through domestic and relational roles, rather than as individuals possessing their own freedom, capabilities, and existence. In this scene, the text "Men Working" symbolically represents male dominance in public spaces and the workplace. Physical labor such as construction and industrial work is often associated with masculinity, thereby excluding women from these spaces. Therefore, when this symbol is changed to "Woman Working," it signifies an effort to reclaim public spaces which should not be dominated by men and transform them into public spaces for women. The change from "Men" to "Women" signifies a reversal of the patriarchal structure that has long placed men at the center of work activities and social power. Beauvoir also argues that, "Work alone can guarantee her concrete freedom (Beauvoir, 1949)", This demonstrates that work provides women with genuine freedom and independence in their lives. Beauvoir argues that when women are able to work in the public sphere, they are no longer entirely dependent on men, either economically or socially. Therefore, this visual represents women as active agents who can achieve freedom and recognition in the workplace and in social settings.



Figure 2. Woman's World Music Video (0:25 - 0:35)

Scene (0:25-0:35) clearly reflects the rejection of the concept of “The Other” in public spaces through acts of transcendence. The scene of a woman standing in front of a urinal wearing construction worker's clothing, which is usually used as a symbol of space and masculinity for men, affirms their existential right to be present in public spaces that were previously dominated by men. From Beauvoir's perspective, women in patriarchal societies are often confined to the domestic sphere and are not regarded as primary agents. However, in this scene, women have entered the public sphere by taking on active roles and gaining freedom there. Simone de Beauvoir argues that, “To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man (1949)”, Thus, it can be concluded that this scene depicts women as subjects who have the freedom to occupy public spaces originally dominated by men; consequently, this visual serves as a symbol of resistance against the position of “The Other.” However, this scene also reveals a form of ambivalence regarding empowerment within the commercial pop industry. Although women are shown having taken over masculine spaces and possessing freedom, this representation remains packaged with glamorous and sexual visuals to attract the audience's attention by showcasing clothing that still highlights the female body. This demonstrates that such representations still adhere to the logic of the entertainment industry by using the image of women as its main attraction. This demonstrates that empowerment in popular media often exists between two positions, namely as a form of women's emancipation and simultaneously as part of the commercialization mechanism of popular culture.



Figure 3. Woman's World Music Video (0:43 - 0:52)

Furthermore, another scene (0:43 - 0:52) shows Katy Perry dancing with other women on a construction site, wearing construction worker clothes. This scene reflects the concept of transcendence and rejection of the role of "The Other" in *The Second Sex*. In this scene, the construction site and the work clothes worn by the women in the video are a claim that they have fully entered the realm of transcendence, where they present themselves as active and productive subjects in the social environment. In addition, the form of rejection of "The Other" can be seen in the presence and dominance of women in public spaces that are usually dominated by men, which affirms that they reject the position of "The Other" by becoming active subjects. Beauvoir argues that, "Freedom is nothing else but a chance to be better (1949)", which explains that freedom provides women with the opportunity to grow and express their own abilities and identities. In her view, women should not be constrained by rules that place them in a subordinate position. This concept is reflected in the visuals of women confidently dancing together on a construction site. Furthermore, the setting typically associated with masculinity represents women's freedom to express their identity, solidarity, and presence in public spaces. However, this scene can also be interpreted as an ambivalence regarding empowerment within the popular industry. While women are portrayed as strong and capable of taking over masculine spaces, the visuals in this scene are still packaged in a glamorous and aesthetically pleasing manner. The women in this scene adopt fashion styles that are modified to highlight femininity and visual appeal. Thus, this scene exists on two fronts: as a form of resistance against patriarchal culture and as part of the commodification of women's imagery within popular culture.

Female Subjectivity

In other lyrics, Katy Perry also writes, "**She's a winner, a champion / A superhuman, number one,**" highlighting gender perceptions regarding ambition and achievement, which can be interpreted as Perry's assertion that women can be champions and successful individuals—even portraying women as super-humans. Beauvoir (1949) argues that in patriarchal societies, women are often seen as "The Other," that is, as secondary figures, supporters, or complements to men, who are considered the center (Self). Women are rarely seen or recognized for their successes, and are even deemed unworthy of being placed as winners or leaders. These lyrics also reflect female subjectivity because Perry positions women as strong, superior main subjects who are in control of themselves. The words "**Winner,**" "**Champion,**" and "**Number One**" signify superiority, achievement, and dominance qualities typically associated with masculinity and positions of power in the public sphere while the term "Superhuman" portrays women as extraordinary figures capable of transcending the limitations of traditional gender stereotypes. Thus, in these lyrics, Katy Perry indicates that women are no longer represented as passive figures but as individuals possessing ability, strength, and independence. In other words, these lyrics reflect an effort to secure women's position as the center or the "Self" rather than merely as "the Other."

In another lyric, "**She's a sister, she's a mother / Open your eyes, just look around and you'll discover you know,**" highlights the important role of women in everyday life. This lyric depicts women's subjectivity as key figures in social and family life. The words "sister" and "mother" signify women's roles as closely tied to love, care, and interpersonal relationships. Beauvoir states that "The day when it will be possible for the woman to love in her strength and not in her weakness... she will affirm herself" (Beauvoir, 1949). This explains that women should no longer be viewed as weak, passive, or perpetually dependent on men. In Beauvoir's view, women are

constructed solely as individuals whose value is measured by their devotion to others, such as their families. However, these lyrics do not portray that role as a symbol of women's weakness or limitations. On the other hand, the phrase "*open your eyes*" in these lyrics can be seen as an invitation to recognize women's significant contributions to daily life; in other words, women in these lyrics are portrayed as figures who possess the strength to fulfill their roles. Thus, it can be suggested that these lyrics demonstrate women's efforts to move beyond the position of "The Other" where women are not merely understood as domestic figures but also possess value, strength, and influence worthy of recognition which can be seen as a form of affirmation of women's identity.



Figure 4. Woman's World Music Video (2:21)

In the scene at 2:21, Katy Perry is seen with a woman wearing a T-shirt that says "Feminine Divine" dancing in her yard in front of the camera. This shows how women try to present themselves as free individuals. This scene represents an effort to reverse the position of women as "The Other" into someone or a whole subject. Beauvoir states that, "Her wings are cut and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly (Beauvoir, 1949)", this concept can be linked to the visual of Katy Perry in a residential setting while wearing flashy clothing that does not conform to traditional standards of femininity. The presence of other women beside her also demonstrates solidarity and support among women in social spaces. The ring light and cell phone used as a camera depict modern women who are shaping and presenting their identities within the digital realm, reflecting their ability to actively position themselves as subjects. Additionally, the text on the T-shirt reading "Feminine Divine" signifies women's efforts to reclaim the meaning of femininity, which has long been defined by men. This visual represents women striving to break free from the constraints of patriarchal norms regarding how women "should" dress, act, and present themselves in public spaces. This scene depicts women who are confident and embracing their power, yet it also illustrates the reality that women are still often bound by societal expectations regarding how they should look and behave.

Symbolic Resistance

In addition, Katy Perry also wrote the lyrics "*Fire in her eyes / Feminine, divine / She was born to shine / To shine, to shine, yeah.*" These lyrics depict a rejection of "the Other" and describe the struggle to achieve transcendence. Beauvoir argues that femininity is not a biological trait, but rather the result of a social construct shaped by society. Beauvoir states, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949). This implies that in social life, women are shaped into who they are based on

societal norms, culture, and expectations. When the lyrics mention “Fire in her eyes,” it symbolizes courage, strength, ambition, and spirit embodying the energy and power that signify a new awareness: that women possess the strength and right to determine their own lives. Similarly, with the lyrics “**Feminine, Divine,**” Beauvoir explains that “**feminine**” is a concept shaped by patriarchal society and not an innate trait of women. And “**divine**” serves as a symbol signifying that women possess value equal to anyone else, including men. In these lyrics, femininity is no longer viewed as a weakness; instead, Katy Perry transforms it into a symbol of strength. The lyrics “**She was born to shine / To shine, to shine, yeah**” express the belief that women are born with the strength and potential to shine both individually and socially. Therefore, it can be concluded that these lyrics depict enlightenment, freedom, and the ability to express one’s true self without being bound by patriarchal norms. In other words, these lyrics serve as symbols of resistance, empowering women to take on the role of primary agents and no longer be “the Other.”

And in another lyric, Katy Perry writes, “**She's a flower, she's a thorn / Superhuman, number one.**” This lyric shows and describes that women are complex beings who exhibit duality within themselves, reflecting the concept of women being placed in two opposing roles in *The Second Sex*. In other words, the lyric “**She is a flower**” serves as a symbol of femininity, portraying women as objects associated with gentleness or beauty. And the lyric “**she is a thorn**” serves as a symbol depicting that women can be strong and dangerous. Beauvoir discusses how women are placed in two opposing traits such as angel or devil, holy or seductress, and gentle or dangerous. According to Beauvoir (1949) “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other.” (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 26), which can be interpreted to mean that women are often not considered as whole human beings who can stand on their own, but are often defined based on men's views as complements or “The Other.” It can also be interpreted to mean that women are always seen through the male perspective as ‘gentle’ and “beautiful,” but this is not because of their true nature, but because these are the traits that men expect of women. Therefore, these lyrics reject this dichotomy and show that women can be both or flexible, emphasizing women's subjectivity, namely women as whole and complex individuals. The phrase “**Superhuman, number one**” also describes women as strong and special, and affirms women's position as whole, strong, and superior individuals. In other words, this phrase shows a rejection of “The Other” and depicts women who are aware of their own strength and no longer submit to patriarchal views that place them in a subordinate position. Overall, these lyrics represent a symbolic challenge to traditional gender stereotypes by portraying women as individuals who possess strength and the ability to define their own identities.



Figure 5. Woman’s World Music Video (0:20 - 0:24)

At (0:20 – 0:24) in the Woman World music video, Katy Perry is seen holding a bottle labeled “Whiskey for Women” and wearing 1950s-style clothing, including a red polka dot bandana, bright red lipstick, and a denim shirt, which is a symbol of the icon Rosie the Riveter. According to Belinda du Plooy (2021), Rosie the Riveter symbolized women’s participation in traditionally male-dominated work during World War II and later became a timeless feminist icon associated with women’s strength and empowerment. This scene represents the concept of *The Second Sex*, “Man is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other (Beauvoir, 1949)” Basically, drinks such as whiskey are traditionally considered drinks associated with masculinity. This scene challenges that dichotomy by featuring “Whiskey for Women.” Perry transforms a masculine symbol into a feminine one, thereby asserting that something considered to belong to men can also belong to women. The lyrics, which read “So Soft, So Strong,” also emphasize that women are not only seen from their soft side, but can also be seen from both sides, namely soft and strong. This is a form of deconstruction of gender stereotypes that is in line with Beauvoir's idea that women should be seen as whole individuals, not shadows of men. Katy Perry also shows that a woman's identity is not only defined by motherhood or passive femininity, but also by work, strength, and resistance. However, the empowerment portrayed in this scene is not entirely free from the logic of popular culture’s commercialization. In other words, the message of empowerment serves not only as a form of social critique but also as a pop industry strategy to build a strong, modern image that aligns with contemporary feminist trends. Although women are portrayed in this scene as active and free individuals, their appearance remains the visual focal point consumed by the audience. The Rosie the Riveter symbol used by Katy Perry in this scene represents a symbol of women’s struggle that has been transformed into a fashion and entertainment element within the context of a commercial music video. In this way, the scene not only represents women’s empowerment but also demonstrates how the pop industry can adapt feminist symbols for its own commercial interests.

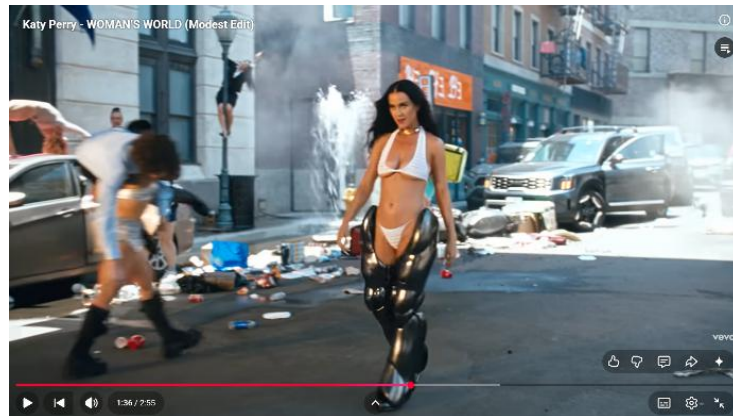


Figure 6. Woman's World Music Video (1:36)

At the 1:36 minute mark, the scene shows Katy Perry walking confidently amid the chaos unfolding in a city. The chaos, marked by scattered debris, explosions, and bodies seemingly being hurled about, can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of an unstable social system rife with domination. Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex*, states that “humanity is male, and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him (Beauvoir, 1949)”, meaning women are often defined from a male perspective. However, in this scene, Katy Perry is portrayed as a figure who is not easily swayed by this environment; instead, she continues to walk calmly and confidently, fully in control of herself. This demonstrates that women are no longer weak subjects but can be individuals who control their own lives. This portrayal aligns with the concept of women’s empowerment, wherein women possess the strength, self-confidence, and freedom to determine their own identities. However, Katy Perry’s confident walk in revealing and eye-catching outfits also presents a paradox in the representation of women’s empowerment within the commercial pop industry. Although the scene portrays women as strong and confident, the female body remains the center of attention commodified for the sake of entertainment and media consumption. This is because representations of empowerment in popular media often still rely on standards of beauty, sensuality, and female sexual appeal. Therefore, this visual not only represents women’s freedom but also illustrates how empowerment in the popular music industry can contain contradictions between women’s emancipation and objectification.



Figure 7. Woman's World Music Video (1:50)

Another clip that shows women's empowerment by rejecting traditional patriarchal culture is at (1:50), where this scene shows a woman pulling a large truck using a rope.

This scene reflects the strength and courage of women in conquering what is usually considered masculine. In the context of American popular culture, large vehicles such as trucks are depicted as representations of male gender icons. Trucks have become symbols of “power, control, and rugged masculinity” that have long been attached to American cultural values (Connell, 2005). Chris Lezotte (2019) argues that pickup trucks are culturally constructed as masculine vehicles associated with toughness, power, and male identity, causing women who enter this space to challenge traditional gender expectations. This scene shows a symbol of women who are able to dominate public spaces without gender restrictions in work or social roles. This is in accordance with Beauvoir's view that women's freedom can only be achieved if they are able to determine its meaning themselves without having to depend on validation or male authority, and can reject the roles imposed on them by social structures. “To emancipate women is to refuse to confine them to the relations they bear to men.” (Beauvoir, p. 283). Therefore, this scene is a form of visual resistance where women refuse to be defined by men and positioned as “The Other” and choose to become individuals who can stand on their own, strong and free. However, this scene can also be critically interpreted as a form of ambivalence regarding empowerment in the commercial pop music industry. Although women are portrayed as strong figures capable of actions that transcend traditional gender stereotypes, the visuals in the scene are still presented in a dramatic and aesthetically appealing way to create entertainment value. Women's bodies remain the visual center of the music video, so the empowerment depicted still operates within the logic of popular culture that commodifies the image of women as both symbols of strength and visual objects of media consumption.

Overall, the analysis shows that the lyrics and music video for Katy Perry's “Woman's World” portray women as active, empowered figures capable of challenging traditional gender constructs. Through the symbols, visuals, and lyrics presented, women are no longer placed in the position of “The Other,” but rather as subjects who have power over themselves. This representation can be seen through the reversal of male-coded public spaces, female subjectivity, and symbolic resistance to gender stereotypes. However, the representation of empowerment in this music video still reveals a paradox within popular culture. With representations packaged within the logic of the entertainment industry and commercial pop culture, “Woman's World” can thus be understood not only as a medium for expressing women's empowerment but also as a cultural product that illustrates how feminist issues are represented and commodified within the contemporary music industry.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Katy Perry's music video “Woman's World” portrays women as figures striving to break free from their subordinate position within patriarchal culture. Through the visuals, lyrics, and symbols presented, women are depicted as having power over their bodies, identities, and social spaces. An analysis of the three main aspects the subversion of male-coded public spaces, female subjectivity, and symbolic resistance reveals an effort by women to challenge their position as “The Other,” as articulated by Simone de Beauvoir, and demonstrates that the representation of women in popular culture no longer entirely positions them as passive objects but as primary subjects who exercise control over themselves.

The findings of this study also contribute to the field of media feminism by demonstrating that the concept of “The Other” remains relevant for analyzing and interpreting representations of women in contemporary popular culture. This study also

expands the discussion on how popular media, as a cultural product, can serve as a medium for conveying narratives of women's empowerment through complex visual and symbolic strategies. Furthermore, this study contributes to popular culture studies by highlighting the paradoxes in feminist representations within the modern entertainment industry. Representations of feminism in popular media can function as a form of resistance against patriarchal values, yet at the same time, they are presented within the commercialization of popular culture. Therefore, this study opens opportunities for future research to explore feminist representations in other forms of popular media, particularly regarding the relationship between women's empowerment, popular media, and contemporary consumption.

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