

The Representation of Women as the Other in 21st Century English Songs

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the representation of women as "the Other" in 21st-century English popular music through the lyrical narratives of Lily Allen, Pink, Paris Paloma, Halsey, and Taylor Swift. Employing a qualitative descriptive method rooted in textual and feminist literary analysis, the research utilizes Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism and a mimetic approach to deconstruct how female subjectivity, immanence, and patriarchal constraints are textually constructed. The analysis focuses on selected tracks, including Stupid Girls, Hard Out Here, The Man, Labor, and Nightmare. The findings reveal that the concept of "the Other" remains deeply entrenched in contemporary popular culture, operating through three distinct forms: confinement to domestic immanence, performative hyper-femininity, and structural double standards in the professional sphere. These songs expose how modern women are still systematically reduced to supportive roles, objectified based on physical appearance, and denied equal authority despite formal emancipation. However, this study also highlights that these musical narratives do not merely reproduce traditional gender hierarchies. By employing irony, visceral resistance, and non-compliant identities, the lyrics function as critical cultural spaces for female agency, articulating resistance against patriarchal structures and reclaiming autonomous subjectivity.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi perempuan sebagai *the Other* (yang lain) dalam musik populer berbahasa Inggris abad ke-21 melalui narasi lirik karya Lily Allen, Pink, Paris Paloma, Halsey, dan Taylor Swift. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif yang berlandaskan analisis tekstual dan kritik sastra feminis. Kerangka teori yang digunakan adalah feminisme eksistensialis Simone de Beauvoir serta pendekatan mimetik untuk mendekonstruksi bagaimana subjektivitas perempuan, konsep immanensi, dan berbagai bentuk pembatasan patriarkal dikonstruksikan dalam teks lagu. Analisis difokuskan pada beberapa lagu pilihan, yaitu *Stupid Girls*, *Hard Out Here*, *The Man*, *Labor*, dan *Nightmare*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep *the Other* masih mengakar kuat dalam budaya populer kontemporer dan termanifestasi dalam tiga bentuk utama, yaitu pembatasan perempuan pada ranah domestik (immanensi), tuntutan terhadap hiperfemininitas yang bersifat performatif, serta adanya standar ganda struktural dalam dunia profesional. Lagu-lagu tersebut memperlihatkan bahwa perempuan modern masih secara sistematis direduksi menjadi pendukung, diobjektifikasi berdasarkan

penampilan fisik, dan tidak memperoleh otoritas yang setara meskipun secara formal telah mengalami emansipasi. Namun demikian, penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa narasi musikal tersebut tidak semata-mata mereproduksi hierarki gender tradisional. Melalui penggunaan ironi, ekspresi perlawanan yang kuat, serta representasi identitas yang tidak tunduk pada norma patriarkal, lirik-lirik lagu tersebut berfungsi sebagai ruang budaya yang kritis bagi perempuan untuk menegaskan agensi, menyuarakan perlawanan terhadap struktur patriarki, serta merebut kembali subjektivitas yang otonom.

INTRODUCTION

Literature functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a medium through which social realities, cultural values, and power relations are represented and negotiated. As one form of literary expression, song lyrics employ poetic language, symbolism, and narrative structures to articulate human experiences and reflect broader social discourses. Therefore, songs can be analyzed as literary texts because they construct meanings in ways comparable to poetry and prose, revealing ideological assumptions embedded within everyday life. In the context of contemporary popular culture, music has become an influential cultural text that not only entertains but also shapes public understanding of identity, relationships, and social hierarchies. As (Alexander et al., 1997) argues, representation is a process through which meaning is produced and exchanged within culture, making cultural texts such as song lyrics important sites for examining how gender identities and power relations are constructed. Similarly, (Abrams, M. H. & Harpham, 2012) highlight that literary texts function as reflections of human experience while simultaneously reproducing the cultural values and ideologies of the societies from which they emerge.

Within 21st century English popular music, female singer increasingly use lyrical narratives to express women's emotional experiences, identity struggles, and responses to patriarchal expectations. Although these songs often foreground themes of love, vulnerability, longing, and desire, they also reveal how women's subjectivity is shaped through unequal gender relations rather than existing independently. Consequently, popular music becomes a space where both the persistence of patriarchal values and women's negotiations of those values can be observed. Previous studies have demonstrated that song lyrics reflect broader social and cultural constructions, including gender stereotypes and unequal representations of women (Aprilia, n.d.). Moreover, as (Storey, 2021) explains, popular culture should be understood not merely as entertainment but as a cultural arena where ideological meanings are continuously produced, circulated, and contested. These perspectives suggest that English song lyrics provide a significant corpus for investigating how women are represented within contemporary cultural discourse, particularly in relation to gender and power.

Despite the growing visibility of women in 21st century popular music, gender relations continue to be shaped by patriarchal structures that position men as the normative center of social and cultural life. Rather than functioning as neutral reflections of reality, cultural texts

frequently reproduce assumptions about femininity by portraying women through relational roles associated with emotional dependence, devotion, and self sacrifice. Consequently, women's identities are often constructed in relation to men instead of being recognized as autonomous subjects. This persistent asymmetry demonstrates that patriarchal ideology operates not only through institutional practices but also through symbolic representations embedded in everyday cultural products, including song lyrics. As a result, examining women's representation in 21st century music becomes essential for understanding how gendered identities and unequal power relations continue to be reproduced within popular culture.

A fundamental framework for understanding this phenomenon is provided by Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism in *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir argues that the unequal relationship between men and women is not rooted in biological difference but in a social structure that establishes men as the universal subject while positioning women as secondary. She writes, "Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 15). She further explains that "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 16). These statements establish the concept of the Other, in which women are understood primarily through their relationship to men rather than through their own autonomous existence. This existential perspective is particularly relevant for analyzing 21st century English songs because the lyrical narratives of female artists frequently portray women negotiating love, desire, vulnerability, and identity within gendered power relations, making song lyrics an important site for investigating how the condition of women as the Other is represented and articulated.

Previous studies have extensively examined the representation of women in literary and musical texts through various feminist perspectives. Meivitasari and Widyatwati (2023), for instance, employed Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminism to analyze gender inequality and women's resistance in the Indonesian novel *Layangan Putus*, highlighting forms of injustice and female rejection within domestic relationships. In the field of music, (Singarimbun, 2024) applied Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to reveal feminist messages of emotional and financial independence in Miss A's "I Don't Need a Man," while (Aprilia, n.d.) utilized Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how Maggie Lindemann's "Pretty Girl" challenges patriarchal stereotypes and conventional standards of femininity. Likewise, (Maemunah, S., & Rahmawati, 2025) investigated Paris Paloma's songs through Showalter's gynocritical approach, demonstrating women's transformation from patriarchal victims into autonomous subjects. Collectively, these studies confirm that literary and musical texts function as important cultural sites for exploring women's experiences, identity, and resistance within patriarchal societies.

Although previous studies have contributed significantly to feminist literary and cultural criticism, they primarily emphasize women's empowerment, resistance, gender stereotypes, and identity formation through semiotic, discourse analytical, gynocritical, or general feminist frameworks. Comparatively little attention has been given to women's existential position as the Other, particularly in contemporary English songs that portray emotional dependency, relational identity, and internalized patriarchal values. Furthermore,

existing studies generally focus on individual artists or single literary works rather than offering a comparative analysis of multiple female singer through Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist perspective. Addressing this gap, the present study examines selected songs by Lily Allen, Pink, Paris Paloma, Halsey, and Taylor Swift to investigate how women are represented as the Other within 21st century English songs. By employing Beauvoir's concept of the Other, this study seeks to extend feminist literary criticism beyond discussions of resistance and empowerment toward a deeper understanding of how female subjectivity is constructed and negotiated within contemporary popular music.

Building upon Beauvoir's existential feminist perspective, this study offers a different analytical focus from previous research by examining women's representation through the concept of the Other rather than through empowerment, resistance, or gender stereotypes alone. While earlier studies have demonstrated how female artists challenge patriarchal norms, they rarely investigate how women's subjectivity is simultaneously shaped by emotional dependence, relational identity, and the internalization of patriarchal values within lyrical narratives. Inspired by Beauvoir's argument that woman has historically been constituted as the "Other" in relation to man, this study explores how such existential positioning continues to appear in 21st century English songs despite contemporary discourses of gender equality. By comparatively analyzing selected songs by Lily Allen, Pink, Paris Paloma, Halsey, and Taylor Swift, this research extends Beauvoir's philosophical framework to contemporary popular music and demonstrates that modern female authored songs can function not only as expressions of resistance but also as cultural texts that reveal the continuing negotiation of women's subjectivity within patriarchal discourse.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate how women are represented as the Other in selected 21st century English songs written and performed by Lily Allen, Pink, Paris Paloma, Halsey, and Taylor Swift. Specifically, it seeks to identify the forms of women's otherness represented in the lyrics and to examine how these representations are constructed through narratives of emotional dependency, female subjectivity, and patriarchal power relations from Simone de Beauvoir's existential feminist perspective. By positioning contemporary English song lyrics as literary and cultural texts, this research contributes to feminist literary criticism by extending the application of Beauvoir's concept of the Other to 21st century music. Furthermore, it offers a broader understanding of how popular music not only reflects but also participates in constructing cultural meanings surrounding femininity, identity, and gender relations, while providing a foundation for future studies on women's representation in literary and cultural texts.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. The analysis is conducted using the mimetic approach in literary criticism. According to (Nurrachman, 2023), the term *mimesis* originates from the Greek word meaning "imitation" or "representation." In literary studies, *mimesis* refers to the representation of reality through artistic expression, where literary works imitate or reconstruct human experiences, social conditions, and cultural values. Rather than reproducing reality exactly as it is, literature presents an artistic representation of the

world shaped by the author's perspective and socio-cultural context. Since song lyrics employ poetic language, imagery, symbolism, and narrative voice, they can be analyzed as literary texts that represent women's experiences and gender relations within contemporary patriarchal society. The interpretation is conducted within the framework of feminist literary criticism, particularly Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist feminism in *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir's concept of the Other serves as the theoretical framework for examining how women are represented in the selected song lyrics and how these representations are constructed through patriarchal ideology. The mimetic approach is used to relate the representations found in the lyrics to the social realities they reflect, while Beauvoir's theory provides the conceptual basis for interpreting forms of women's otherness, structural gender inequality, and the social construction of femininity.

The primary data consist of the official lyrics of five selected 21st century English songs performed by Paris Paloma, Pink, Lily Allen, Halsey, and Taylor Swift. The data include words, phrases, lines, and stanzas relevant to the representation of women as the Other. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed using close reading. The analysis involved identifying textual evidence, classifying the forms of women's representation as the Other, and interpreting how these representations are constructed by relating the textual findings to the social realities reflected in the lyrics through the mimetic approach and Beauvoir's feminist existentialist perspective.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the selected 21st century English songs reveals that the existential positioning of women as the Other continues to adapt and persist within contemporary popular culture. By employing a mimetic approach, this study deconstructs the lyrical narratives of the selected tracks into three interconnected thematic findings. This section sequentially discusses these findings, beginning with the domestic confinement of women's labor, followed by the performative expectations of femininity, and concluding with the structural double standards that restrict female authority.

1. Immanence

Beauvoir conceptualizes women's oppression through the distinction between transcendence and immanence. She argues that human existence finds its meaning through transcendence, namely the freedom to pursue projects beyond one's immediate condition. However, when an individual is confined to repetitive and predetermined roles, transcendence collapses into immanence, resulting in a restricted existence. As Beauvoir states, "There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the '*en-soi*' the brutish life of subjection to given conditions-and of liberty into constraint and contingency" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 27). The lyrics of Paris Paloma's song "Labor" clearly depict forms of oppression in which women are constructed as the Other. Within the patriarchal structure, women are not viewed as fully-fledged subjects, but rather as objects that

support men's existence. This situation aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's fundamental critique of the concept of immanence in *The Second Sex*.

*All day, every day, therapist, mother, maid
Nymph, then a virgin, nurse, then a servant
Just an appendage, live to attend him
So that he never lifts a finger
24/7 baby machine
So he can live out his picket-fence dreams
It's not an act of love if you make her
You make me do too much labour*

The song represents Beauvoir's concept of immanence, in which women are confined to repetitive domestic and reproductive responsibilities that prevent them from exercising autonomy and self realization. This condition constructs women as the Other by reducing them to providers of domestic labor and emotional care for men. The representation is conveyed through the repetition of the phrase "*all day, every day*" and the accumulation of nouns describing multiple domestic and caregiving roles, including "*therapist, mother, maid, nurse, servant.*" The repetition emphasizes the endless and cyclical nature of women's labor, while the series of nouns suggests that women's identities are defined not by their own subjectivity but by the functions they perform for others. The lyrics portray women as individuals who are expected to continually shift between roles according to men's needs. The female figure becomes an emotional caregiver (*therapist*), a nurturer (*mother*), a domestic worker (*maid*), a sexual object (*nymph*), a symbol of purity (*virgin*), a caregiver (*nurse*), and ultimately a servant. This succession of identities demonstrates that women are denied an autonomous existence and instead derive their social value solely from their ability to satisfy the expectations of others. This representation reflects Simone de Beauvoir's argument in *The Second Sex* that patriarchal society positions men as the subject, whereas women are constructed as the Other. Rather than being recognized as ends in themselves, women are assigned instrumental roles that sustain men's lives and reinforce male privilege.

This unequal relationship is further emphasized in the lyrics, "*Just an appendage, live to attend him. So that he never lifts a finger.*" The word "*appendage*" is particularly significant because it suggests that women are treated as extensions of men rather than as complete and autonomous individuals. Their existence is reduced to facilitating men's lives, enabling men to remain free from domestic responsibilities. Likewise, the phrase "*he never lifts a finger*" exposes an unequal division of domestic labor in which reproductive and household responsibilities are transferred almost entirely to women. From Beauvoir's perspective, this arrangement confines women to immanence, as domestic life becomes a space that limits their freedom and prevents them from pursuing independent projects and self-development.

The metaphor "*baby machine*" reduces the female body to an instrument of reproduction whose primary purpose is to produce children in support of men's

aspirations for the ideal family. Meanwhile, the phrase "*picket-fence dreams*" symbolizes the culturally idealized image of domestic success that is commonly associated with male achievement, despite depending upon women's invisible and undervalued reproductive and domestic labor. Consequently, women's bodies are represented as instruments that enable men to realize their own ambitions and social identities.

This representation closely corresponds to Beauvoir's concept of immanence, whereby women are confined to repetitive domestic and reproductive activities that deny them opportunities for freedom, self realization, and participation in the public sphere. In contrast, men are able to pursue transcendence by engaging in productive work, exercising authority, and developing independent life projects because domestic responsibilities have been delegated to women. Men's freedom and social achievements are therefore made possible through women's unpaid and frequently unrecognized labor. The critique culminates in the lyric, "*You make me do too much labour.*" Here, the word "*labor*" extends beyond household work to encompass the continuous emotional and reproductive responsibilities imposed upon women. The song ultimately portrays women as *the Other* because their identities, labor, and bodies are organized around sustaining men's existence while their own subjectivity and freedom remain constrained. In Beauvoir's terms, the lyrics expose how patriarchal structures confine women to immanence, enabling men to achieve transcendence at women's expense.

2. Social Construction of Femininity

Patriarchal society produces an ideal image of femininity rather than recognizing women as autonomous subjects. Beauvoir explains that her discussion seeks to demonstrate "how the concept of the 'truly feminine' has been fashioned, why woman has been defined as the Other and what have been the consequences from man's point of view" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 28). This statement suggests that femininity is culturally constructed according to masculine expectations, positioning women as the Other whose value is determined by their conformity to patriarchal ideals. In 21st century popular culture, the construction of women as the Other shifts from traditional domestic subjugation toward performative objectification and superficial hyper femininity. This form of representation is reflected in Pink's "*Stupid Girl*," where women are represented as the Other through the social construction of femininity rather than through any inherent inferiority.

*What happened to the dream of a girl president
She's dancing in the video next to 50 cent
They travel in packs of two and three
With their itsy-bitsy doggies and their teeny-weeny tees
Where, oh where, have the smart people gone?
Oh where, oh where could they be?
Maybe if I act like that
That guy will call me back*

Porno paparazzi girls

I don't wanna be a stupid girl

The song exposes how popular culture constructs an idealized version of womanhood based on physical attractiveness, superficiality, and male approval, reducing women's value to their ability to conform to patriarchal expectations. This critique is introduced through the contrast between women's intellectual and political aspirations and their objectification in popular media, as illustrated by the lyrics, *"What happened to the dream of a girl president / She's dancing in the video next to 50 Cent."* Women are transformed into decorative companions whose presence merely reinforces male status rather than their own achievements. The representation becomes more explicit through the portrayal of *"porno paparazzi girls,"* which symbolizes the commodified visual object whose visibility is determined by hyper-sexualized media culture, and the recurring figure of the *"stupid girl,"* representing the infantilized consumer who willingly embraces intellectual shallowness and social conformity. Through these contemporary forms of alterity, the song demonstrates how patriarchal culture encourages women to internalize restrictive ideals of femininity, sacrificing intellectual autonomy in exchange for social recognition.

The representation of women as the Other in *"Stupid Girl"* is constructed through irony, rhetorical questioning, and performative images that expose the artificial nature of patriarchal femininity. Textually, this construction begins with a situational contrast that juxtaposes women's historical aspirations with their contemporary cultural regression. The concept of the *"truly feminine"* is not a natural condition but a socially constructed identity imposed upon women (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 28). The performative nature of femininity is further emphasized in the lyrics, *"Maybe if I act like that / That guy will call me back,"* where the verb *act* signifies that femininity is presented as a learned performance intended to secure male recognition rather than express an authentic self. Through this portrayal, the song demonstrates how patriarchal culture actively fashions femininity according to male expectations, reducing women's identities, values, and bodily expressions to instruments for external validation. As a result, women are positioned as the Other because they are defined through standards established from the male point of view rather than through their own freedom and subjectivity. By encouraging women to exchange intellectual ambition for beauty, compliance, and desirability, patriarchal ideology preserves men as the universal Subject while confining women to passive objects of recognition, thereby maintaining masculine authority over rationality, public life, and social power. Ultimately, the speaker's repeated declaration, *"I don't wanna be a stupid girl,"* functions as an explicit rejection of this patriarchal construction. The refrain challenges the ideological myth of the *"truly feminine"* by refusing the performative identity imposed upon women and asserting the possibility of authentic self-definition beyond the position of the Other.

Thus, *Stupid Girl* illustrates how the patriarchal ideal of the “truly feminine” functions as a mechanism through which women are positioned as the Other, a pattern that is further explored in Halsey's “Nightmare.”

"Come on, little lady, give us a smile"
No, I ain't got nothin' to smile about
I got no one to smile for, I waited a while for
A moment to say I don't owe you a goddamn thing
I, I keep a record of the wreckage of my life
I gotta recognize the weapon in my mind
They talk shit, but I love it every time
And I realize
I'm no sweet dream, but I'm a hell of a night
That I'm no sweet dream, but I'm a hell of a night

The song confronts the patriarchal myth of the “truly feminine” by revealing that femininity is not an innate essence but a socially constructed identity. The representation of women as the Other emerges through patriarchal norms that regulate women's appearance, emotions, and behavior, reducing them to identities that primarily serve the interests of the male subject. This representation is introduced in the opening line, “*Come on, little lady, give us a smile,*” where the phrase “*little lady*” infantilizes women by positioning them as passive and dependent figures, while the imperative “*give us a smile*” implies that women's emotions exist primarily to satisfy social and male expectations. As a result, women's value is measured not by their individuality but by their ability to perform culturally prescribed femininity. Such a representation reflects Beauvoir's argument that the concept of the “truly feminine” is socially fashioned, through which women are defined as the Other and confined within identities that serve the interests of the male Subject (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 28).

The speaker immediately resists this imposed identity through the response, “*No, I ain't got nothin' to smile about / I don't owe you a goddamn thing.*” Rather than fulfilling the emotional role expected of her, she rejects the assumption that women exist to provide comfort or emotional satisfaction for others. This refusal challenges the patriarchal demand that women suppress their authentic emotions in order to preserve an ideal image of femininity. However, the song also reveals that resisting such expectations is accompanied by psychological consequences. The lyrics, “*I keep a record of the wreckage of my life / I gotta recognize the weapon in my mind,*” suggest that patriarchal domination operates not only through external social expectations but also through their internalization within women's consciousness. Continuous pressure to embody the ideal woman generates emotional conflict, self-surveillance, and accumulated trauma. This transformation reaches its culmination in the refrain, “*I'm no sweet dream, but I'm a hell of a night.*” While “*sweet dream*” symbolizes the patriarchal ideal of the gentle, compliant, and emotionally accommodating woman, “*a hell of a night*” deliberately embraces an identity that resists such containment. By reclaiming the negative identity assigned to her, the speaker rejects the myth of the “truly

feminine” and reasserts herself as an autonomous subject. Thus, “Nightmare” demonstrates that the position of women as the Other is neither natural nor permanent, but a social construction that can be challenged through the reclamation of female subjectivity.

3. Structural Double Standards

In Chapter V of *The Second Sex*, “Since the French Revolution: The Job and the Vote,” Simone de Beauvoir examines how the expansion of women's legal rights and access to paid employment after the French Revolution did not fundamentally transform their social position. She opens the chapter by stating, “It might well have been expected that the Revolution would change the lot of woman. It did nothing of the sort” (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 131). This statement emphasizes that political and legal reforms alone were insufficient to dismantle patriarchal structures. Although women gradually gained greater access to education, employment, and public life, they continued to experience unequal treatment because the social values and institutions that privileged men remained intact. As a result, women were expected to participate in the public sphere while simultaneously conforming to traditional patriarchal expectations regarding femininity, morality, and domestic responsibility. This persistent contradiction gives rise to what this study identifies as structural double standards, whereby women are granted formal opportunities but are still evaluated according to unequal gender norms. Beauvoir's observation remains relevant in contemporary society, where formal equality has not eliminated patriarchal standards that continue to evaluate women and men differently. This structural contradiction is vividly represented in Taylor Swift's “The Man,” and Lily Allen’s “Hard Out Here.”

*I'd be a fearless leader
I'd be an alpha type
When everyone believes ya
What's that like?
I'm so sick of running as fast as I can
Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man
And I'm so sick of them coming at me again
'Cause if I was a man
Then I'd be the man
I'd be the man
I'd be the man*

Although women gradually obtained greater legal rights and opportunities to participate in public life, Beauvoir argues that patriarchal society continued to evaluate them according to standards different from those applied to men. Rather than depicting women as inherently less capable, in “The Man” the song exposes how patriarchal structures privilege masculinity as the universal standard of competence, leadership, and credibility. This representation is articulated through the recurring line, “Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man,” which suggests that women's economic independence and professional ambition alone are insufficient to secure

equal recognition. The same structural inequality is further reflected in the lyrics, "*I'd be a fearless leader / I'd be an alpha type / When everyone believes ya,*" where the speaker questions why authority and leadership are more readily acknowledged when embodied by men. This portrayal corresponds to Beauvoir's observation that "Men and women alike hate to be under the orders of a woman; they always show more confidence in a man," revealing that female leadership is perceived as an exception rather than a social norm. The recurring conditional statement, "*If I was a man, I'd be the man,*" functions as a hypothetical comparison that shifts the focus away from the speaker's competence toward the social conditions governing recognition. Rather than expressing a desire to become male, the speaker imagines an alternative reality in which identical qualities would receive greater legitimacy solely because they are embodied by a man. This strategy is reinforced through the lines, "*I'd be a fearless leader, I'd be an alpha type / When everyone believes ya,*" where the symbolic diction "*fearless leader*" and "*alpha type*" evokes culturally masculine ideals of authority, while the verb "*believes*" emphasizes that the central issue is not leadership ability but society's willingness to acknowledge female leadership.

This construction corresponds to Beauvoir's discussion in Chapter V, where she argues that women's unequal position in public life is produced by social conditions rather than natural inferiority. As Beauvoir states, "To tell the truth, one is not born a genius: one becomes a genius; and the feminine situation has up to the present rendered this becoming practically impossible" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 152), emphasizing that women's achievements are constrained by structural circumstances instead of individual ability. This argument is reflected in the lyric, "*Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man,*" where the speaker attributes delayed recognition not to a lack of competence but to patriarchal structures that privilege masculine authority. Thus, *The Man* portrays women as the Other by exposing how structural double standards continue to shape public recognition and leadership according to masculine norms.

Subsequently, in Lily Allen's "Hard Out Here," women are judged less by their competence than by their ability to satisfy patriarchal ideals of beauty, domesticity, and sexual attractiveness.

*If you're not a size six and you're not good looking
Well, you better be rich or be real good at cooking
You should probably lose some weight 'cause we can't see your bones
You should probably fix your face or you'll end up on your own
Don't you want to have somebody who objectifies you
Have you thought about you butt, who's gonna tear in in two
We've never had it so good, uh-hu, we're out of the woods
And if you can't detect the sarcasm, you've misunderstood
Sometimes it's hard to find the words to say
I'll go ahead and say them anyway
Forget your balls and grow a pair of tits*

It's hard, it's hard, it's hard out here

Rather than being recognized as autonomous individuals, women are expected to fulfill contradictory social expectations in order to gain acceptance. This structural double standard is evident in the lyrics, *"If you're not a size six and you're not good looking / Well, you better be rich or be real good at cooking,"* which suggest that women's social value is determined not by individual merit but by their conformity to patriarchal standards. Beauvoir similarly observes that modern women are "permitted to regard (their) body as capital for exploitation," indicating that female bodies become a form of social and economic capital rather than an expression of personal autonomy. The song further reinforces this contradiction through the lines, *"You should probably fix your face or you'll end up on your own,"* which portray appearance as a condition for social acceptance while simultaneously expecting women to achieve independence. Beauvoir identifies this contradiction as one of women's greatest handicaps, arguing that girls are raised with aspirations toward marriage, beauty, and domestic conformity rather than personal development.

The representation of structural double standards in "Hard Out Here" is constructed through satirical language, imperative expressions, and verbal irony that expose the contradictory expectations imposed upon women. *"If you're not a size six and you're not good looking / Well, you better be rich or be real good at cooking,"* establish a satirical conditional structure suggesting that women's value is determined not by competence but by their ability to satisfy patriarchal ideals of beauty or domesticity. Rather than presenting these expectations as legitimate, the song exaggerates them to reveal their absurdity. This critique is reinforced through the repeated imperative "you should" in the lines, *"You should probably lose some weight... You should probably fix your face or you'll end up on your own,"* where the repetition mimics the constant social regulation of women's bodies and appearance. The sarcastic question, *"Don't you want to have somebody who objectifies you?"* further exposes how objectification has been normalized as though it were an aspiration, while the ironic declaration, *"We've never had it so good... And if you can't detect the sarcasm, you've misunderstood,"* dismantles the illusion that contemporary women have already achieved genuine equality.

This construction reflects Beauvoir's discussion in Chapter V that women's apparent emancipation often conceals persistent structural inequalities. Beauvoir argues that although women have gained access to education and employment, they remain burdened by traditional expectations surrounding beauty, marriage, and domestic responsibility, making "the reconciliation of her family life with her role as worker... much harder than her husband's" (Beauvoir, 1956, p. 153). Likewise, she observes that modern women are encouraged to regard their bodies as *"capital for exploitation,"* reducing physical appearance to a form of social and economic value. These arguments illuminate the song's portrayal of women who are simultaneously expected to succeed in public life while continuously conforming to patriarchal standards of femininity. Consequently, "Hard Out Here" constructs women as the

Other by exposing how the promise of equality remains constrained by structural double standards that continue to regulate women's bodies, labor, and social recognition.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that 21st century English popular music provides a crucial, non-neutral literary space where the historical and existential mechanics of positioning woman as the Other are deeply interrogated. By expanding Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist framework into contemporary media culture, the analysis reveals that modern female autonomy is not yet absolute; rather, it exists within a continuous state of negotiation against updated patriarchal structures. Through a mimetic approach, the lyrical texts show that while the traditional boundaries of the domestic sphere have evolved, patriarchal ideology successfully adapts by shifting its methods of subjugation. Emancipation is frequently countered by new cultural traps: domestic labor is disguised as a romanticized dream, professional ambitions are policed by structural double standards, and female empowerment is constantly threatened by commercial hyper-femininity and bodily objectification.

The significance of this research lies in uncovering how contemporary pop music functions as an arena of dialectical tension. The lyrical strategies analyzed, ranging from biting irony to visceral, non compliant declarations, prove that positioning women as the secondary Other is an unstable social project. Instead of passively internalizing patriarchal conditioning, these female artists leverage their cultural platform to expose the artificiality of the "truly feminine" myth. In doing so, they dismantle masculine authority over rationality and emotional control, successfully transforming a position of structural vulnerability into a site of active, autonomous female subjectivity. Ultimately, this study enriches feminist literary criticism by proving that pop songs are not mere commodities of leisure, but sophisticated cultural texts capable of disrupting gender hierarchies and redefining the limits of female agency in the modern era.

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