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WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN TAYLOR SWIFT'S SONG BETTY

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada representasi perempuan dalam lirik Betty karya Taylor Swift. Penelitian ini berasumsi bahwa lirik lagu tersebut mewakili ketidaksetaraan gender dalam hubungan antara laki-laki dan perempuan yang merugikan perempuan. Selain itu, penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis wacana kritis Sara Mills untuk menganalisis fenomena yang meliputi analisis makro, mikro, dan penulis-pembaca dalam penyajiannya. Namun penelitian ini terutama akan membahas keterwakilan perempuan dalam analisis tingkat mikro. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan data yang diperoleh dari dokumentasi dan kajian pustaka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan Betty karya Taylor Swift menempatkan perempuan pada posisi objek dalam penceritaan sedangkan laki-laki sebagai subjek penceritaan. Analisis mikro menunjukkan perempuan dihadirkan dalam lirik-lirik tersebut melalui judul lagu pilihan, penggunaan kata ganti "she" dan karakter perempuan dijelaskan dari sudut pandang laki-laki. Posisi penulis dan pendengar menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada keterikatan antara penulis dan pendengar namun ia memfasilitasi lirik agar dapat diterima oleh pembaca.

Kata kunci: Representasi Perempuan, Analisis Wacana Kritis, Sara Mills, Media Massa, Lirik Lagu.

Abstract

This research focuses on women's representation in the lyrics of Betty by Taylor Swift. This research assumes that the song's lyrics represent gender inequality within a relationship between a man and a woman that disadvantages the woman. Moreover, this research used Sara Mills's critical discourse analysis method to analyze the phenomenon which covers macro. micro, and author-reader analysis in the presentation. However, this research will mainly discuss women's representation in micro-level analysis. This is qualitative research with data acquired from documentation and literature - review. The result shows Betty by Taylor Swift puts women in the object position in the storytelling while men as the subject of the storytelling. The micro-level analysis showed women presented in these lyrics through the song titled choice, the use of the pronoun "she" and the women's character being explained from the men's perspective. The author and listener position showed that there was no engagement between the author and listener yet she facilitated the lyrics for readers to accept and understand the values of the whole songs

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Mills, Mass Media, Song Lyrics.							

INTRODUCTION

Taylor Swift is one of the most Streamed Artists of 2023 on the Spotify platform. In Indonesia, Taylor Swift topped a trend on TikTok under the hashtag Mbak Taylor. In this trend, user often share stories about their past experiences such as love, friendship, and life stories. The trend escalated fast since it allowed users to share their stories as if they had a direct conversation with Taylor Swift. Swift could get a massive fanbase and influence throughout her career since her works often show her stance towards women's empowerment. This stance is presented in her song lyrics which share a message to women empowerment, such as The Man, The Last Great American Dynasty, Betty, etc.

Discussion about women and gender inequality has always been an interesting and never-ending topic to talk about. Feminist beliefs center around the idea that gender should not be a barrier to determining one's opportunities and experiences in life (Merdeka, 2023). Numerous researches exist focusing on the interactions between gender and media (Krijnen, 2020). Women's representation in media is crucial because of the power the media holds in shaping public views through its representation mechanism (Aladi & Okoro, 2021). Following the advancement of feminism, women's representations exist in multiple media from conventional to the latest ones. Since, the importance of sharing messages of gender equality has become easier and people is having a better awareness to achieve the gender equality.

Modern mass media have an essential part of socialization, which allows a person to gain personal awareness of their culture and understanding of the social orders (Shamilishvili, 2019). Mass media reflects the social situation as well as able to influence the way society thinks about certain issues. Towards a mass media, a messages or ideas that being shared could reach bigger exposure and bigger audience. Mass media has a role in sharing messages that influence society (Sazali et al., 2024). Mass media is also known as an agent of change, because of having a huge exposure in today's society (Ramadhan, 2022). The importance of these is that, there would help on sending message faster and increasing the number of awareness that people have towads certain issues.

The representation of women does not solely exist in academic research, but also as well expanded in literary work, such as novel, movie and another one of them is in song lyrics. Lyrics is like the soul of the song which give most of the nuances and the stories that presented in a song. Song lyrics have certain meanings that make the song work more enjoyable and have an important role in representing the feelings of the listener and the author (Ginting.S et al., 2022). As it is more enjoyable, the idea or messages that conveyed through song is easily digestable to people in general which made songs became a tool to share messages. Songs have become more than a tool to express one's self. Songs also reflect cultural beliefs, norms, and ideologies (El-Nashar & Nayef, 2023). Women are also often used as inspiration in song lyrics (Yazid et al., 2019). Since the topic of women and gender equality still been an interesting topic to discuss on. Specifically, since the representation more often than not still represent woman in a disadvantages position.

Women's representation in mass media is still entitled to patriarchal cultures in society. Women are often expected and described as gentle, dependent, and nurturing (Aprilia & Neisya, 2022). Stereotypes in society assume that men and women have different traits and qualities, which makes them

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be treated differently in society depending on their physical conditions (Noor & Missal, 2024). These traits reflected on the stereotypes that men is strong and logical since they are bigger physically than woman. In the contrary, women are expected as weak, emotional as they have physical condition that weaker than men in general. This ideology has been challenged in society. Gender constructs the idea that certain behaviors are expected in certain physical conditions in society. Examples of this such as women being entitled to feminine and men being entitled to masculine traits.

Gender stereotypes oftentimes represent imprecise opinions between men and women. Started from general things as women should stay at home whilst men outside the home, women should be mild, caring, and cannot take a lead (Shamilishvili, 2019). On the contrary, men are described as adventurous, strong, and brave (Kiprotich & Chang 'orok, 2015). Gender generalizes the behavior that men and women should have as if it is a fixated thing (Rofidah, 2021). In fact, men and women are equal, both are the same human being that have to be traited fairly without any barriers that limit themselves due to their personal physical situation.

The gender-based double standard gives more benefits to men compared to women (Siregar & Ulfa, 2022). The feminist movement exists to fight the problem of equality. Feminism is seen as a movement that fights for women's independence (Cindy et al., 2022). This happened because of multiple stereotypes towards women that disadvantage them. Feminism fights for the full equality right between men and women (Nuriana & Ikrarini, 2022). Since men and women are equal and deserve equal rights. Gender inequality problems that escalated in society such as male domination, and social injustices toward women. Gender equality has become one of the fundamental rights between men and women (Pesik et al., 2024). With the advancement of feminism, a lot of mass media came with a message to debunk these stereotypes and promote equality. These can be seen in the form of movies, for example Raya and The Last Dragon, Brave, etc.

The rise of discourse regarding gender inequality has been accessible in multiple ways within society. The discussion varies from expert to common understanding that people have towards this issue. Music has become one of the most accessible discourse platforms since it presents the message in an easily accessible for people. The musical discourse has the power to represent a variety of different subjects and issues in the song, such as through the lyrics or music video (Kayany & Dar, 2019).

As the topics of gender inequality have been discussed, a lot of musicians have expressed their stance through their artwork such as Ariana Grande in God Is a Woman, Little Mix in Power, Beyonce in Run the World, and Taylor Swift. Oftentimes, these are reflected in their song lyrics, and music videos that reflect the gender inequality issue. Discourse these days has a more significant role in social construction that would lead to social changes (Kurniawati, 2021).

Language is one of the most important things that have helped humans throughout history. Language allows humans to have an extraordinary ability to verbalize emotions, enabling individuals, to express feelings of delight, grief, and dissatisfaction precisely with meticulousness and lucidity (Adika & Budiarsana, 2023). Language is influenced by ideology and language analysis (Kayany & Dar, 2019). Furthermore, this resulted in languages becoming an important role in conveying information in the form of ideas, and thoughts directly (Widiyanti, 2022). Language also able to determine one's identity, personality and belief towards the words or phrase that their using in their messages. Lyrics themselves are not merely words, lyrics come with meaning, and the literary assumption that the author has in their

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song is the message that they want to share (Lestari et al., 2022). Lyrics interpretation would help the audience understand the song, the nuances of the song, and the value or issues that the author explains.

Regarding song lyrics and feminism, Betty is one of Taylor Swift's songs released in 2020 on her album Folklore. Folklore by Taylor Swift has a trilogy called Teenage Love Triangle that has related stories to one another. The songs in this trilogy such as Cardigan, August, and Betty. Betty specifically, is the last song in this trilogy with 4 minutes and 54 seconds length. Betty shares a story of man's perspective that completes the whole story in this trilogy. This research aims to analyze how the women represented in Taylor Swift's song Betty.

The story in this trilogy mainly talks about the teenage love triangle relationship between Betty, James, and Augustine. Their relationship represents the gender inequality in their relationship that puts women at a disadvantage. In relationships, especially intimate ones, the position of leader who can lead the relationship is more often held by men. The lyrics of Betty mainly talk about a man's perspective in the middle of a dispute with his lover. Furthermore, this song is narrated and written by a female.

In conclusion, researchers have an interest in conducting a critical discourse analysis through Betty's song lyrics because it's a study that provides an explanation and critique of the messages represented in a discourse in this research Betty's song lyrics by Taylor Swift.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Yazid's research (2019) about women's representation in the song "Laki Den Hobi Baburu"/My Husband Likes to Hunt, using Sara Mils's critical discourse analysis which resulted in the woman being placed as the object in the storytelling as man becomes the subject that tells the story. Furthermore, the result showed women being represented as a weak figure and a victim of their husbands who are biased towards tradition and culture. Moreover, this result also shows that the listener accepts the idea that women don't have significant power through the subject and object position in the song lyrics (Yazid et al., 2019)

Another research that discusses women's representation is from Widjanarko's research in 2023 titled Representasi Perempuan dalam Lirik Lagu Album T.R.I.A.D by Ahmad Dhani/Women using Sara Mill's critical discourse analysis. The result shows the objectification of women in the song's lyrics in Ahmad Dhani's song, while men as the subject in the storytelling. Another research was done by Hariyana in 2020 that mainly discussed how women are represented in the dangdut song Bojoku Galak (Hariyana et al., 2020).

Micro-level or textual analysis from Sara Mills is used to see how language formed and placed certain subjects and objects in particular positions. This analysis mainly focused on the messages that exist in the text. Furthermore, this analysis is also used to find the writer and reader's position in the text. Mills emphasized the position of actors and ideas were placed in the text.

Table 1. Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis Model (Eriyanto in Yazid 2019)

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Level	Analysis			
Position of Subject-Object	How an event is perceived, from whose point of view the event occurs, and who is the object in storytelling. Does each actor and social group have their chance to present themselves, their ideas being displayed by another group or person.			
Position of Writer - Reader	How the listener is placed in the text. How listeners positioned themselves in the present text. To which group do the listeners classify themselves.			

METHOD

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This research is a qualitative method and was conducted by using critical discourse analysis Sara Mills model focusing on the level of microanalysis. The research data acquired from phrases, or sentences that show the shape and meaning of the subject-object position and writer-listener position if the discourse is displayed in the lyrics of Betty's song by Taylor Swift. The researcher used data collection techniques in the form of documentation and library research of Betty's song lyrics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted using Sara Mills's critical discourse analysis model focusing on the microlevel analysis. This analysis determined the subject - and object position and writer-reader position in the text. This position will see how the nuances in the text, and their position which analyzed through the sentence structure that exists in the song lyrics.

The song lyrics put the woman named Betty as the title as object of the storytelling, and the man as the subject. Although this song was narrated and written by a woman, the lyrics represent a man's perspective of solving problems with his lover named Betty. The position of women as the subject can be seen firstly by the title decision which reflects a woman named Betty. The woman's position as the object of the storytelling is indicated as well by the use of the word "Betty" and the use of the pronoun "she" which is the pronoun refers to women in most of the lyrics.

The song began with a sentence "Betty I won't make assumptions about why you switched your homeroom, but I think it's cause of me". This sentence presents the woman namely Betty as the object that the narrator that presents in the first person point of view with "I" talking about. Furthermore, this sentence explained as well they have been in a relationship and some problem happened between them that leads into an assumption of Betty's action.

The story continues in a sentence "Betty, one time I was riding on my skateboard. When I passed your house, it's like I couldn't breathe". This sentence shown the problems that might get seriously between them that would impact their whole relationship terribly. Since the phrase "I couldn't breath" tend to be condition when someone's having a particular health issues or a physical response

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reaction that happen for example having panic or stress. This sentence, still positions woman named Betty as the object in the storytelling as the story is centered around her.

Another sentence that shows women positioned as an object in this storytelling through the lyrics "you heard the rumor from Inez, you can't believe the word she says. Most times but this time it was true" This sentence showed another woman character named Inez, which can be seen by the use of the word "she" that refers to Inez as a woman. Moreover, this sentence also presents the stereotype towards women by the use of the word "rumor" then followed by "you can't believe the word she says" presents that Inez is a woman who likes to tell rumors or lies. The second line itself clarify that the problems might be acknowledged between two parties, the narrator and Betty.

Moreover, the story continues with the sentence, "The worst thing that I ever did, was what I did to you". This sentence shown that narrator accepted the assumptions mentioned in the beginning about having a mistake to Betty that distant their relationship. The object position still being placed with woman although it has not mentioned explicitly as before. The word "you" refers to Betty that mentioned in the previous sentences.

The song continues with the sentence "but if I just showed up at your party. would you have me? would you want me? would you tell me to go fuck myself or lead me to the garden?. This sentence represents the actions that might have been taken by the character Betty and is explained by James as to how he expected it would be. This represents Betty as the object that James projected, how her behavior would look like. This sentence is the ordinate part of the song which been repeated in the song lyrics in a lot of time. The sentence showed the narrator efforts to approach Betty after the circumstances that they had within in their relationship.

Moreover, the story continues with the sentence "in the garden would you trust me. If I told you it was just a summer thing?". This sentences expands the narrator's effort of reconciliation with Betty. Furthermore, the phrase "it was just a summer thing" presented that the problems happen in the summer between the narrator and Betty. The position of the object is represented with the use of the "you" pronoun which refers to the title, Betty.

The story continues with the lyrics "I'm only seventeen, I don't know anything. But I know I miss you". This sentences explained about the problems that happened between the narrator and Betty occur in their teenage age, specifically when they are seventeen years old. The time setting also been emphasized when they are as teenagers in the phrase "I don't know anything" which reflects naiveness in young age due to lack of experiences and knowledges. The object position is not been explained explicitly with Betty's name for example, but it exists by the use of "you" which refers to Betty.

The song continues with the lyric "Betty I knew where it all went wrong your favorite song was playing in the far side of the gym". This represents narrator's contemplation on his relationship with Betty, and started to acknowledged that the whole circumstances happend due to the narrator's fault. Moreover, this idea also emphasized in the next lyric "I was nowhere to be found. I hate the crowds you know that, plus I saw you dance with him". This sentence strengthens the narrator problems with Betty, as reflected in the phrase "I was nowhere to be found". This sentence shows the narrator, James in the story explaining his actions by himself and further explaining more about his current situation of Betty. This phrase might signify the guilty feelings towards Betty, as the narrator disappears. The placement of subject is still on the narrators point of view that explains the whole stories with Betty as the object in the storytelling. The existence of the problems between narrator and Betty gets clearer as explained in the

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phrase "plus I saw you dance with him". This phrase reflects that Betty has been with another person and leaving the narrator.

The lyrics continue with the sentence "I was walking home on broken cobblestones. Just thinking of you when she pulled up like a figment of my worst intentions". The first sentences about "walking in broken cobblestones" could represent the narrators brokenhearted feelings towards the problems that happened with Betty. Furthermore, the guilt feeling escalated worst by having the phrase "when she pulled up like a figment of my worst intentions" that represents the intentions that could make the problem worst. In this sentence there's another actor existed which refers as "she" that positioned as the object in the storytelling as well. The subject positions is by the narrator through the used of the use of the first person point of view of how the story happened.

The story continues with the lyrics "she said, "James get in, let's drive" those days turned into nights". This sentence showed the identity of the narrator is a man named James. The relationship between James and another anonymous character refers to "she" has bonded over some long time that happened "days" and "nights" which reflects that some amount of time has passed between their relationship. This sentence shows there is the third person in the story is addressed as "she". In the lyrics James "get in" indirectly shows that he can choose to stay loyal to Betty or go with the "she" girl.

The story continues with the sentence, "slept next to her but I dreamt of you all summer long". This sentence presents how James could have control over the relationship between the two girls. This presented the gender inequality towards women in a relationship. Because, in the current situation of an intimate relationship respect is necessary to stay loyal to your partner which has been violated by James. Moreover, when he thinks that he wants to be with Betty, then he simply apologizes and expects everything to run back to normal despite the damage that he caused to her feelings. James showed a behavior that was entitled to patriarchal culture, that thinks women like a thing that he could chase and let go depending on him.

The story continues with the lyric "Betty I'm here in your doorstep and I planned it out for weeks nw, but it's finally sinking in", This sentence presented the another attempt from James to reconcile with Betty. This story is still being explained in James's first-person perspective and his feelings in more detail explanation to be able to get the problems solved with Betty. This situation emphasized more in the next lyrics "Betty, right now is the las time. I can dream about what happens when you see my face again". This sentence presents James's hope to fix things up with Betty for the last time.

The song continues with the lyrics, "so I showed up at your party" which repeated three times. This part reflects the situation where they could meet each other personally and solve the problems between their relationship. Furthermore, the situation explained further in the next sentence "will you have me? will you love me? will you kiss me on the porch in front of all your stupid friends?". This part emphasizes James's feelings and contemplation towards the problem and Betty's reaction towards it. The position of the object mainly focused on Betty, as James expected how her reaction would be.

The story continues with the sentence "if you kiss me, will it be just like I dreamed it? Will it patch your broken wings?". This sentence shows James's longing towards the reconciliation that he attempted with Betty. This sentence represent James's hope to share a good feelings in to his relationship with Betty. The phrase "will it patch your broken wings?" represents James's hopes to be able to fix the problems that he occurred at the beginning of his relationship with Betty.

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The song lyrics then continues with the sentence, "I'm only seventeen, I don't know anything. But I know I miss you" This sentence re-emphasized the time setting when this problems happened in their teenagers age. Moreover, this position showed James's acceptance of the problems that he caused due to his lack of experience and knowledge. The subjects in these lyrics are focused on James and Betty as the objects by the use of the word "you" which refers to her.

The song ends with lyrics "standing in your cardigan. Standing in my car again. Stopped at a streetlight you know I miss you". This lyrics represents the reconciled situation between James and Betty after the problems that had escalated between them. The situation explained by the use of words "again" after the activities mentioned in the lyrics. These lyrics showed their favorite activities they did together before the problems occured which they missed for a while and now finally they could experienced all of that again.

Besides the actor analysis, this research also discussed about the writer and listener position in the song lyrics. In Sara Mills's critical discourse analysis, readers or listeners in this case should be taken into account to determine how the text is interpreted. Moreover, writer's and reader's position also influences the way the message in a text could influence people. In this song, the writer, the singer, and the narrator of the story Taylor Swift are placed as a man or the subject as she explains the perspective of the whole song, using the first person point of view. Taylor's explained the perspective of a man which is James in this story to reconcile his relationship with Betty. Usually, the narrative about women in song lyrics are made from male actors and perspective on woman. Furthermore, the message that conveyed in the text in male perspective and women still entitled in patriarchal culture. In this song specifically, Taylor presented the idea that women is not be the one whose dependent towards a relationship and the cause of a failing relationship not solely happened by women mistake but men also hold accountable. The author didn't make an engagement attempt toward the listeners in this text since no invitation sentence exists within the text. In this song, the author brings the listener to understand the whole story that exists in this song as a whole. The lyrics that are written facilitate the readers to accept the values and the story that exist in the song lyrics.

CONCLUSION

The song Betty by Taylor Swift placed women in the object position that represents men's perspective. In microanalysis, Betty the woman in the characters is explained by James the narrator about her behaviour which reflects Betty as the object of the storytelling. Moreover, the lyrics also entitled with stereotypes that exist between women such as gossipping and can be chased and let go depending on men's feelings. The author brought the readers or listeners to understand the whole story without positioning any engagement attempt within the text such as having inviting sentences. The gender inequality shown in the relationship between James and Betty where James has more power to dictate and lead the relationship actively while Betty have the consequences.

Oftentimes, when there is a problem in a relationship, a woman usually is the one whose being blamed for the unsustainable relationship. That blaming could come in the form, you're not dressing well enough, being less nurturing and so on which reflects gender social constructs in society. Furthermore, the effort of fixing up the relationship and reconciling again is also expected to come from women as they are dependent on men in their lives within society. The song Betty represented the polar opposite of it. Betty

shows that men are capable of feeling the loss of a relationship and putting in the effort of reconciliation with women in the relationship.

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