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# An Analysis of Feminist Criticism in The Lyrics of "The Man" Song by Taylor Swift

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to find out the kinds of feminism and analyze the literal meaning of "The Man" Song by Taylor Swift. This research paper using a qualitative approach with a content analysis design. The data of this research is lyrics of "The Man" Song by Taylor Swift and the data was taken from YouTube. This research data collection using observation and documentation techniques. The finding of this research shows that there are 14 kinds of feminism which are divided into 5 psychoanalytic feminisms, 5 liberal feminisms, 2 Marxist feminisms and 2 radical feminisms. In The Man Song by Taylor Swift, a deep meaning is found in the representation of women's feelings of having to move quickly to match the steps of men. The women in the song feel that the world is too unfair for women who are considered weak creatures by the world in various aspects of life.



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### INTRODUCTION

Literature is created from social reality. Moody (2016) stated that "Literature brings us back to the realities of human situation, problems, feelings and relationships". So, students who are exposed to literature are exposed to different aspects of real-life situations and this makes them understand certain conditions they would not have been able to comprehend in real life. Studying literature gives them insight into real life possibilities. Even in scientific and technological era, literature remains a vital subject of the curriculum.

Related to the literature remains a vital subject of the curriculum, in English Education Department Study Program in University of Mathla'ul Anwar Banten there is Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) 2018 Curriculum. The Indonesian National Qualifications Framework (KKNI) 2018 Curriculum is a qualification framework for Indonesian human resources

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that equalizes and integrates the education sector with the training and work experience sectors in a work capability recognition scheme that is adapted to the structure in various work sectors.

In the curriculum at 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, students had studied literature in Reading for Literary Appreciation course. At that course, the students had introduced about prose, poetry and drama. At 7<sup>th</sup> Semester there is Literary Appreciation Course. Literary Appreciation Course is a continuation course from Reading for Literary Appreciation course which discusses all types of literary criticism. In literary criticism there are types of criticism such as Structuralism, Postmodernism, Postcolonial, Narratology, Stylistic, Marxist Criticism, Feminist Criticism and so on.

Based on the types of literary criticism above, literary criticism is used in criticizing types of literature such as poetry, prose, drama and music. When talk about music, Scholichatunisa (2021) stated that music is one of the most popular works of literature or art in society. There is now music is not a stranger to hear by the public, almost every time music present as an inseparable necessity of life. Music unknowingly has an important influence on community social life. Music is closely related as media of expression and media of entertainment. Through music, one can express emotions, ideas, thoughts as well as his or her feelings. Music can also be a friend at times one feels happy or sad. Furthermore, music has been incarnated as a medium of thought provocation and human behavior because it contains a moral message, ideology, and social criticism.

Regarding the function of music as social criticism, there are many social issues that occur in society, such as Women Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Negative Stereotypes and Women Violence, even in educational environment. The Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Union (FSGI) recorded 10 sexual violence against children in schools from early January to 18 February 2023. From that incident, 86 students became victims of sexual violence (Kompas.com -21/02/2023).

Artist, singer and songwriter like Maudy Ayunda also gets Negative Stereotypes from society. When she decided to studying at Stanford University, she was scorned that women who go to high school end up staying at home. In connection with this, the researcher also experienced firsthand how she was looked down upon and given negative stereotypes by her environment when she wanted to continue her education because she thought it would not be useful for her life. Women only need to go to Senior High School (SMA) because their job after marriage is to take care of the house. This is one of the reasons researcher is interested in choosing Feminism as a research study compared to other literary approaches. The reason why the researcher choose "The Man" Song by Taylor Swift as the object of her own research because the song succeeded in making a strong satire on people who practice patriarchal culture, insinuated by every lyric that contains deep meaning, such as women's stories in the form of songs.

Based on the example of social criticism that occurred to women in the educational environment, it can be criticized using Feminist Criticism. Feminist Criticism often used as a corner musician's point of view in depicting the female figure through his or her works of art in the form of songs or poetry. Besides that, there are also different types of Feminist Criticism with different perspectives on various social and political issues. Therefore, it is natural that there are differences of opinion within feminist groups on various issues. Based on the Feminist Thought book by Rosemarie Tong and Botts (2018), there are seven kinds of feminism such as Marxist, Liberal, Radical, Psychoanalytic, Postmodernism, Multicultural and Ecofeminism.

Taylor Swift is a singer and writer songs that often translate social reality from perspective and her personal experience into Taylor's style of music. Many of her songs are about love and take women as objects. On August 23, 2019, Taylor Swift's seventh album named "Lover" is album that is honest. She tries to insert a story his or her personal life through several singles on the album. One of his singles "The Man" contains lyrics songs with complex meanings and social

codes which talks about the position of women in social life and how people think if she were a man.

Through “The Man” Song by Taylor Swift, the researcher was inspired by the lyrics and the meaning of the song. The meaning of the song describes how discrimination occurs against women in all social aspects. The negative stereotype of women is also explained by the singer in every verse of the lyrics that is played. In “The Man” Song there are also kinds of feminism.

**METHOD**

This research using a content analysis design and a qualitative approach. According to (Suwastini, 2020) qualitative research is a type of research that aims to comprehend the circumstances of the subjects of the study whose findings are explained through a written or verbal description.

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes or concepts in certain qualitative data (text). Therefore, researcher had finished to compile, explain, analyze and conclude the data to be research. This can be interpreted that the research method used in this research aims to analyze the lyrics of The Man' Song by Taylor Swift.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This research focuses on finding the kinds of feminism and literal meaning in the "The Man" song by Taylor Swift. In this research, the researcher classifies based on the kinds of feminism and describes the literal meaning according to the kinds. The results of the findings of this research can be seen in the following table.

1. I would be complex, I would be cool  
 They'd say I played the field before I found someone to commit to  
 And that would be okay for me to do  
 Every conquest I had made would make me more of a boss to you

Table 1. Observation Checklist of First Stanzas

| No | Lyrics                                     | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |  |
|----|--|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|--|
|    |  | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |  |
| 1  | <i>I would be complex. I would be cool</i> | ✓                 |    | ✓    |    |    |    |    |  |

Table 2. The Result of First Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1  | Psychoanalytic    | The lyric <i>I would be complex, I would be cool</i> explain that a woman trying to be more complex and become cooler so as not to be looked down upon. Even so, she still experience oppression from society that a woman who has not committed with men is considered only will playing all his life. Even though she is degraded, it is not a problem for women if do a job that makes it more powerful like a boss or leader.  |
| 2  | Liberal           | In the first stanza there is a kind of <b>Liberal</b> and <b>Psychoanalytic</b> feminism because of the psychic violence that can take from this song is women refuse to be considered trivial before marriage, when women are official being husband and wife then like it or not women have to submit to the husband with his managing role household, managing finances, educating children and take care of husband. Women's expertise in conquers all domestic activities makes himself superior to men, because not all men do the opposite. Women are aware of gender |

injustice in the domestic area he will out into the public area.

2. I'd be a fearless leader  
 I'd be an alpha type  
 When everyone believes ya  
 What's that like?

Table 3. Observation Checklist of Second Stanzas

| No | Lyrics                          | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|
|    |                                 | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |
| 1  | <i>I'd be a fearless leader</i> | ✓                 |    |      |    |    |    |    |

Table 4. The Result of Second Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1  | Liberal           | <p>The lyric <i>I'd be a fearless leader</i> explain that "Women" will act as a leader who doesn't knowing fear means being ready to face anything and the risk. The men who will be the Alpha type fully aware and understand what he wants, and do not allow others to dictate or say what he can and can't do in life. From the verses of this song it shows that "I" as a woman has a character that is brave, strong and confident can achieve success without controlled by men, until the right time, all people will actually admit it.</p> <p>The kinds of feminism in the verse is <b>Liberal</b> feminism because the verse shows how the character <i>I am</i> really want to prove its existence so that there is a desire for women to be considered equal to men if they become leaders, namely to be considered brave, strong and responsible.</p> |

3. 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

Table 5. Observation Checklist of Third Stanzas

| No | Lyrics   | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |
|----|--|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|
|    |  | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |
| 1  | <i>I'm so sick of running as fast as I can</i> | ✓                 |    |      |    |    |    |    |

Table 6. The Result of Third Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning   |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 1  | Liberal           | <p>The lyrics <i>I'm so sick of running as fast as I can</i> clearly explain that women are fed up with having to run two steps faster than men. Women in the meaning of the lyrics are starting to become angry with the existing gender injustice, women are forced to match their steps with men because they are shaped by patriarchal cultures that confine all their movements. In this</p> |

lyric, it is included in the type of Liberal feminism because there is inequality in the rights of women and men, women want equality which does not discredit women, that women and men must be equal in the social aspect

4. They'd say I hustled, put in the work  
 They wouldn't shake their heads and question how much of this I deserve  
 What I was wearing, if I was rude  
 Could all be separated from my good ideas and power moves

Table 7. Observation Checklist of Fourth Stanzas

| No | Lyrics                                       | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |
|----|--|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|
|    |  | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |
| 1  | <i>They'd say I hustled, put in the work</i> |                   | ✓  | ✓    |    |    |    | ✓  |

Table 8. The Result of Fourth Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1  | Psychoanalytic    | <p>In the lyrics <i>They'd say I hustled, put in the work</i> explain that people will say that she as a woman likes to rush in finish the job. While behind a work that women have done until the demands other sacrifices on themselves are still considered commonplace so women get less appreciation and sometimes the amount of income received above work tends to be inappropriate.</p> <p>The meaning in the lyrics of this song contains criticism against the economic violence that women invoke fulfillment (pay) commensurate with the labor already squeezed which is then enjoyed by others. How women's appearance is not uncommon to get negative spotlight, when wearing clothes that being open is considered impolite to the point of causing lust male lust which is the cause of harassment sexual. As a result of the achievements and quality that is owned women will be separated because of the standard of morality formed by society.</p> <p>The lyrics are included in the kinds of <b>psychoanalytic feminism</b> because they are related to the ego of a man</p> |
| 2. | Radical           | <p>Based on the lyrics <i>What I was wearing, if I was rude Could all be separated from my good ideas and power moves</i> have a literal meaning that she as a woman judging not from his performance and good ideas but from what clothes he wears, the researcher also marked the lyrics contain <b>radical feminism</b> because men see women based on the clothes they wear as sexual objects.</p>   |
| 3  | Marxist           | <p>The lyrics also belong to the kinds of Marxist feminism because this kind of feminism reveals that men dominate strategic work and women are labeled only to work in domestic midwives.</p>   |

5. And they would toast to me, oh, let the players play  
 I'd be just like Leo in Saint-Tropez

Table 9 Observation Checklist of Fifth Stanzas

| No | Lyrics                                      | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |  |
|----|---|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|--|
|    |   | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |  |
| 1  | <i>I'd be just like Leo in Saint-Tropez</i> | ✓                 |    |      |    |    |    |    |  |

Table 10 The Result of Fifth Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1  | Liberal           | In the lyrics Taylor Swift compares herself as Leo, an actor from the United States whose full name is Leonardo deCaprio. Not without the meaning of quoting the name, the figure of Leonardo deCaprio famous for dating younger women from him. In the lyrics, it is implied that if a man dates many women, they will have a label of being dashing and great, but if women do the same thing, they will be given negative stereotypes from society. In this verse there is a type of <b>Liberal</b> feminism because women are always in the spotlight of society if they do things that are considered taboo if done by women but it is an exception if men do it. |

6. 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

Table 11 Observation Checklist of Sixth Stanzas

| No | Lyrics  | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |   |
|----|---|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|---|
|    |   | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |   |
| 1  | <i>I'm so sick of running as fast as I can<br/>                     Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man</i> | ✓                 |    | ✓    |    |    |    |    | ✓ |

Table 12 The Result of Sixth Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning   |
|----|-------------------|---|
| 1  | Liberal           | In the lyrics <i>I'm so sick of running as fast as I can Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man</i> explain that "I" as a woman feel tired and she tries to do more work to achieve its goals, can it match position of men in terms of work. This matter invite curiosity to be able to get position or rank higher than men. But in the world of work, women are the reason principal by people to discriminate attitudes women who are too obsessed, emotional and not able to think logically. Unlike men, she will still be considered reasonable for achievement and attitude. |
| 2  | Marxist           | In this stanza there are kinds of <b>Liberal</b> , <b>Marxist</b> and <b>Psychoanalytic</b> feminism due to social inequality in the world of work which is included in liberal feminism. Then, class problems that cause differences in the  |

|   |                |   |
|---|----------------|---|
| 3 | Psychoanalytic | function and status of women in the world of work so that women have to run two times faster than men because of discrimination. In the next type, there is psychoanalytic because in this stanza it alludes to the problem of "women who are too obsessed, emotional and able to think logically", in the definition of psychoanalytic feminism is "Psychoanalytic believe women's way of acting is rooted deep in women's psyche" |
|---|----------------|---|

7. What's it like to brag about raking in dollars  
 And getting bitches and models?  
 And it's all good if you're bad  
 And it's okay if you're mad  
 If I was out flashin' my dollas  
 I'd be a bitch, not a baller  
 They'd paint me out to be bad, so it's okay that I'm mad

Table 13 The Result of Seventh Stanzas

| No | Lyrics   | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |
|----|--|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|
|    |  | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |
| 1  | <i>If I was out flashin' my dollas, I'd be a bitch, not a baller</i> |                   | ✓  |      |    |    |    |    |

Table 14 The Result of Seventh Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1  | Radical           | <p><i>If I was out flashin' my dollas</i></p> <p><i>I'd be a bitch, not a baller</i> in that lyric <i>character I</i> voice the contents of a person's heart women as victims of sexual violence promised monetary rewards if they served the sex needs of the man, which incidentally is experienced by prostitutes and models. Then, your character here pointing to the response of men who do not want to admit his actions violated the norm. When a woman opens the upper voice experience of being sexually harassed get scorn from society, are looking for attention, and create a sensation. Even though they have the same rights to be respected and get defense. Critiques about psychic violence that can be taken in the lyrics of this song is a cornered woman for being a victim of sexual harassment should get scorn from society because of position her as a victim. The sneer/scorn becomes a wound inner self in women so that it can add to the pressure in women, giving a feeling of insecurity (shame), instead of defending but blaming blame the more perpetuate patriarchy.</p> <p>Meanwhile, criticism about sexual violence is one can take away from this song is what power should be owned by men is not to reduce the dignity and the dignity of women and should be men stop the action by controlling their minds.</p> <p>In seventh stanza, there is Radical Feminism because in each of these lyrics it is implied that women are used as sexual objects.</p> |

8. I'm so sick of running as fast as I can  
 Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man (You know that)  
 And I'm so sick of them coming at me again (Coming at me again)  
 'Cause if I was a man (If I was a man)  
 Then I'd be the man (Then I'd be the man)  
 I'm so sick of running as fast as I can (As fast as I can)  
 Wondering if I'd get there quicker if I was a man

Table 15 The Result of Eight Stanzas

| No | Lyrics   | Kinds of Feminism |    |      |    |    |    |    |
|----|--|-------------------|----|------|----|----|----|----|
|    |  | LF                | RF | PSYC | EF | PM | MC | MX |
| 1  | <i>I'm so sick of running as fast as I can</i> | ✓                 |    | ✓    |    |    |    |    |

Table 16 The Result of Eight Stanzas

| No | Kinds of Feminism | Meaning  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1  | Liberal           | <p>In this state I as a woman feel tired as he tries to do more work to achieve its goals, can it match position of men in terms of work. This matter invite curiosity to be able to get position or rank higher than men.</p> <p>But in the world of work, women are the reason principal by people to discriminate attitudes women who are too obsessed, emotional and not able to think logically. Unlike men, he will still be considered reasonable for achievement and attitude.</p> <p>In this stanza, the researcher analyzes that there is a kind of Liberal feminism because of inequality in the world of work which causes women to run after positions that are equal to men while men easily get these positions without feeling what women feel and Psychoanalytic because here the <i>character I</i> as a woman always labeled "selfish, emotional, illogical" and so on.</p> |

Based on table 1 until 16, the researcher can conclude that in the song there are 14 kinds of feminism which are divided into 4 Psychoanalytic feminism, 6 Liberal feminism, 2 Marxist feminism and 2 Radical feminism.

Feminism is a series of social, political and ideological movements that have the goal of building and achieving gender equality in all aspects, starting from politics, the economy, the personal sphere, to the social sphere. Many people often misunderstand and think that feminism is an ideology that hates men. In fact, both men and women both benefit when there is no unequal relationship between the two. Feminism is divided into several kinds based on the level of discrimination experienced by women.

In this research, the researcher using theory from the Feminist Thought book by Tong and Botts (2018). The researcher using descriptive qualitative research and feminist criticism approach. This research does not use human as an object, this research analyzes every lyric in "the Man" song by Taylor Swift.

Based on the first research question, it can be seen that there are several findings related to the kinds of feminism in "The Man" song by Taylor Swift. This researcher has found several kinds of feminism including Radical, Liberal, Psychoanalytic and Marxist feminism.



The kinds of feminism were found by the researcher because the researcher looked at each verse of the lyrics related to social inequality, sexual violence, discrimination, negative stereotypes conveyed directly by Taylor Swift in each verse of the song.

The researcher analyze in understanding a person or a particular event that will be written into a text. In this research, the communicator in the song "The Man" is Taylor Swift. This song describes her unpleasant experience as a woman. Then, in this song Taylor Swift wants to voice women's resistance due to imbalance, difference and powerlessness of women who are always dominated by men. Not without reason, Taylor Swift wants to prove to women in the world that women are not weak and backward. Women can appear aggressive, fighting and can make life choices without being overshadowed by the figure of a man.

Basically, every human being has the right to protect himself from the actions of cause discomfort. The song "The Man" arose from Taylor Swift's discomfort over the sexual harassment case she experienced in 2013, which happened during a meet and greet concert with a DJ named David Mueller who slid his hand under Taylor Swift's skirt and grabbed her buttocks while taking a photo together. The case ended with a verdict that Taylor Swift was the victim of that action. The impact of Taylor Swift's experience of sexual harassment was traumatic and had an impact on her psychological condition, especially her position as a public figure. After the case, Taylor Swift also donated part of her money to support organizations that fight for survivors of sexual harassment in the United States.

The case above is an example of the many cases of violence and sexual harassment that occurred. Based on the reason Taylor Swift created this song because of the bad experiences she experienced in the past, it is proof that the trauma experienced by victims of sexual harassment makes such a deep impact. Furthermore, women also often receive unfair treatment in social aspects such as being discriminated against in the world of work, considered weak, emotional and illogical in decision making. Various negative stereotypes are practiced by society towards women, patriarchal culture which makes women stuck and unable to express themselves freely.

Apart from abroad, in Indonesia there is also a song written based on personal experience that has the meaning of feminism. As an example, is a song by famous Indonesian singers, Raisa and Isyana Sarasvati entitled "*Anganku Anganmu*". The song explains that no one can limit all the dreams that women have because women believe that they can.

The theme or topic raised in "The Man" song by Taylor Swift is a phenomenon about injustice that often experienced by women. There is a difference in angles view of the world from the perspective of men and women. If noticed in detail that *I am* in this song implied describes a woman who stake his position in the world of work and careers where men usually take precedence get a promotion than women. Even though women are able to do the job the same as men, still men have certain advantages over women due to the law existing laws, biases and social norms.

According to the results of the data, the literal meaning in the song explains that women today are very upset and angry to see and receive very unfair treatment in all social aspects. Taylor Swift also gives very sarcastic satire to men who always feel they are first-class human beings.

## CONCLUSION

This research aims to find the kinds of feminism in the lyrics of the song "The Man" by Taylor Swift and the literal meaning of the song. After analyzing the lyrics of "The Man" song by Taylor Swift, the researcher found several kinds of feminism in the song. In each collection of lyrics containing elements of feminism, the researcher found 14 kinds of feminism including 6 Liberal, 4 Psychoanalytic, 2 Radical and 2 Marxist feminism. From several kinds of feminism that have been found, the liberal kinds of feminism is more common because some of the lyrics mean that women

in this world want freedom, equality and to be treated the same as men without any restrictions that misinterpret the word gender.

In this research, there is also the literal meaning contained in "The Man" song by Taylor Swift. As explained in the previous chapter, this song contains or describes how social inequality for women occurs in society. Taylor Swift clearly gives sarcastic allusions to men in every of her song lyrics.

Based on this research question, the researcher concluded that the existence of kinds of feminism in "The Man" song by Taylor Swift is evidenced by the results in accordance with the research procedures that have been carried out and the literal meaning that has been explained using the accuracy of the analysis and theory that supports this research.

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