

A Woman's Expression for Freedom in Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather": A Radical Feminist Reading

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i4.1198>

*Ganeshiwi Intan Pebrawannggil, Sulasih Nurhayati^{ab} 

¹²Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

Corresponding Author: ganeshiwi@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

The depiction of female liberation in mainstream media has emerged as a critical focus within feminist discourse. This article examines how Sabrina Carpenter's music video "Feather" represents women's defiance against patriarchal oppression through radical feminist theory and Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze particular visual scenes and symbols, including religious imagery (church altars, coffins, and crosses), outfit selections (black bridal dress, pink sporty outfit), gestures, facial expressions, and narrative irony (e.g., scenes of male catcallers being hit by a truck), in order explain themes of female autonomy. The signs are examined through the lenses of denotation, connotation, and myth. The findings indicate that "Feather" converts patriarchal religious and cultural symbols into instruments of emancipation and critiques societal conventions related to gender, authority, and female visibility in public spaces. This research highlights that pop media, when critically analyzed, can function as a platform for feminist resistance and ideological transformation.

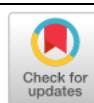
Keywords: Radical Feminism; Semiotics; Patriarchy; Music Video; Female Empowerment

Article History:

Received 04th July 2025

Accepted 28th July 2025

Published 01st August 2025



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, feminist portrayals in popular media have received heightened visibility and critical attention especially through music videos that contest societal norms and promote gender equality. Artists like Beyoncé and Billie Eilish have utilized visual and lyrical narratives to critique patriarchal systems affecting women's identities. Beyoncé's "Flawless" champions the celebration of womanhood and empowerment, whereas Billie Eilish's "Not My Responsibility" explores personal autonomy and societal expectations of femininity. Their works function as incisive critiques of the commodification of feminism, frequently depicting the complex realities of women's experiences within the broader cultural context of neoliberalism, which may supposedly seem supportive of feminism yet often perpetuates existing power hierarchies. (Lee, 2024)

The depiction of women's autonomy and opposition to patriarchal standards in modern popular culture is being increasingly examined in feminist media studies, especially through the analysis of music videos. Audiovisual narratives act as important cultural texts that mirror societal values and serve as instruments for the construction and reinforcement of gender ideologies. Studies demonstrate that music videos frequently reinforce prevailing societal norms related to gender, serving as a medium that normalises specific behaviours and appearances (Duncan-Shepherd & Hamilton, 2022). Research indicates that the representation of women in music videos, especially within rap genres, often highlights hyperfeminine and sexualized characteristics, thereby objectifying them as visual stimuli for male audiences (Rodgers & Hust, 2018). The disproportionate representation of genders in media can exacerbate social-identity threats for women, leading them to either conform to or challenge

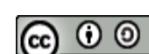
these stereotypical portrayals (Ju et al., 2021). With the rise of feminist movements online, an increasing number of female artists are utilising music videos to contest and undermine patriarchal narratives related to femininity, sexuality, and power dynamics. Research indicates that innovative musical expressions in these videos can foster discussions surrounding female empowerment and subjectivity; however, this representation is not devoid of contradictions, as it may inadvertently reinforce certain patriarchal norms (Lu, 2023). Thus, music videos serve as a medium for women's resistance and empowerment, yet they operate within a complicated framework where empowerment becomes commodified, leading to a nuanced interplay between feminist critique and societal norms (Cheruiyot et al., 2020). The interaction among music, visual representation, and gender underscores the opportunities and constraints of modern media as a platform for feminist advocacy and social transformation. To comprehend how media representations of gender contest patriarchal systems, it is crucial to examine the theoretical foundations of feminist critiques. Radical feminism is a significant perspective that offers a framework for examining both gender representation and the structural foundations of women's oppression in society.

Radical feminism originated in the 1960s as part of the second wave of feminism, mostly in Western countries such as the United States, Canada, France, and England. This period was characterized by considerable change in society and was closely associated with various leftist movements, including the civil rights movement, student protests, and the rebellions of the hippie movement. Radical feminists argue that the oppression of women is fundamentally embedded in patriarchal structures, requiring a complete transformation of societal norms and values to achieve genuine equality (Liang, 2023). The belief in inherent differences between men and women is central to radical feminist ideology, with some radical feminists arguing that women may have distinct moral and ethical qualities, which would support their quest for sexual and personal independence from male dominance (Husain et al., 2024).

This movement emphasizes the importance of women's lived experiences and perspectives, aiming to reframe the linguistic and philosophical frameworks that have historically long excluded or sidelined female identities (Khadka, 2021). The contributions of notable radical feminists, including Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett have helped articulate this principle, directly confronting the sexual politics embedded in social structures (Ahmed & Abdelmoghni, 2022). Through this literature, critical attention is drawn to these conditions, encouraging women to redefine their roles and sense of self outside patriarchal boundaries (Khanum & Soley, 2024).

The radical feminist perspective acknowledges the complex dynamics of oppression and seeks a fundamental societal transformation rather than basic reforms. In intersectional contexts where race, class, and sexuality intersect, it presented an impressive challenge to conventional concepts of gender and sexuality and highlighted the ongoing relevance of women's liberation (Jerslev, 2017). Nonetheless, women continue to be regarded as subordinate activists within these groups, with machismo and androcentrism evident in their organization, including sexist behavior, relegation to administrative posts, and disregard for women's views, among others (Tong, 2018).

The data used in this research is a music video entitled "Feather" which is echoed by a white American artist named Sabrina Carpenter, she is not only a singer but also a songwriter, actress and model. The music video "Feather" was officially released in 2023 on the YouTube platform as well as other streaming platforms and managed to captivate many people with her work and by carrying out the theme of freedom of expression and women's independence and if examined more carefully. The song represents the freedom and autonomy experienced after exiting an unstable relationship or circumstance. The lyrics and visuals in this music video give a comprehensive representation of women's expression of emancipation from repressive conventions, so reinforcing the objective of this research to figure out the message of women's freedom and empowerment. The music video presents various visual elements – such as colors, symbols, objects, and facial expressions – that convey deeper meanings



associated with the theme of liberation and radical feminist ideology. Those visual elements in the music video "Feather" will be analyzed in this research and those visual elements are very important because they symbolically describe the meaning of women's freedom and independence, which is in accordance with the theme of radical feminism.

This research aims to find, analyze and investigate two primary questions to achieve this objective the application of radical feminism in Sabrina Carpenter's music video "Feather," also analyzes how the music video represents stereotypes of women, focusing on visual representations that may symbolize societal expectations and limitations set on women. Secondly, it analyzes how the music video represents women's protests of freedom from these stereotypes, highlighting scenes and symbols that represent freedom and resistance. This research applies Roland Barthes' semiotic method to explain the hidden meanings within the visual and narrative symbols presented in the video, so strengthening the comprehension of the feminist topics it integrates. The application of radical feminist theory to Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather" will try to solve these problems and will be analyzed at three main concepts in Roland Barthes' semiotic theory: denotation, connotation, and myth.

This research applies radical feminism as an approach to explore the theme of women's freedom in music video "Feather" by Sabrina Carpenter. Radical feminism argues that patriarchy is the primary root of women's oppression and that women's freedom can only be achieved through significant structural change. Radical feminist theorists such as Shulamith Firestone and Andrea Dworkin focus on how patriarchy controls women through the regulation of sexuality, gender roles, and male-controlled social power (Willis, 1984). In this context, the theory of radical feminism is relevant because it helps analyze how music video "Feather" expresses women's resistance to patriarchal control through the theme of personal and emotional freedom. This approach allows us to see how the representation of women in this video reflects radical feminism's idea of freedom from oppressive systems, by providing space for women to express their independence and self-freedom (Willis, 1984).

This research has reviewed relevant literature and previous studies to reinforce the issues addressed. Various that are relevant prior studies might be used as references for this research. The study of radical feminism in modern music videos, especially those related to Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather," highlights a notable gaps in current research. The majority of research has concentrated on textual or cinematic analyses, which have emphasized traditional forms of storytelling over the intricate visual narratives that are featured in music videos. For example, whereas study such as '*Radical Feminism Analysis in the Novel Kim Ji Young, Born 1982*' (Hastuti et al., 2024) examines various forms of radical feminism in literature, it frequently misses the ways in which musicians like Sabrina Carpenter utilize visual media to express themes of female empowerment and opposition to patriarchal limitations. '*Analisis Resepsi Generasi Z pada Video Musik Sabrina Carpenter "Feather"*' (Siahaan, 2024) examines the reception of "Feather" from a generational perspective, exploring how various audiences perceive the themes of women's agency and resistance to sexual abuse. This argument fails to apply radical feminist theory comprehensively, hence missing the semiotic obstacles present in Sabrina Carpenter's work. In contrast, '*Unveiling Reproductive Oppression : An In-depth Analysis of Radical Feminism in Joyland*' (Riaz et al., 2024) examines of reproductive oppression offers a perspective on the ways in which patriarchal norms limit the autonomy of women. However, it does not apply its findings to music videos, which can be effective platforms for feminist dialogue. This research's findings seeks to address the research gaps by applying radical feminist theory to analyze "Feather," and Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to interpret the video's visual symbolism. This research will deepen the comprehension of radical feminism in popular media and add to current discussions regarding female expression and autonomy in the contemporary cultural society.

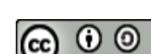
METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method combined with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis to examine the representation of radical feminism in Sabrina



© 2025 The Author. This article is licensed CC BY SA 4.0.

Visit [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).



Carpenter's "Feather" music video. The research was to explain how visual and symbolic elements—such as colors, gestures, and repeating signs—articulate concepts of women's freedom and resistance against patriarchal norms. Barthes' three levels of meaning—denotation, connotation, and myth—were used to interpret these symbols. Denotation is the literal meaning, connotation is the cultural or ideological association, and myth is a connotative meaning that has been naturalized to support dominant social values (Griffin, 2011). This research examines selected visual scenes at two levels to investigate how common objects (e.g., crosses, coffins, dresses) and expressions (facial gestures, body language) convey deep feminist meanings. The analysis subsequently discusses how these symbols either construct or contest gender-related myths, which Barthes identifies as the third layer of signification—myth—where cultural ideologies have become natural. These semiotic interpretations were subsequently framed within radical feminism, a movement that emphasizes female liberation and critiques structural gender oppression. The combination of these methods facilitated a critical yet interpretive analysis of the feminist message conveyed in the video.

The data source for this research is Sabrina Carpenter's music video "Feather" released in 2023, but not all clips will be included in this research. Furthermore, the lyrics of the song "Feather" were analyzed as a component of the supporting data. The lyrics offer an essential emotional and narrative background that emphasizes the themes of freedom and escape from controlling relationships or circumstances. This research combines visual and narrative analysis to offer a comprehensive exploration of how the music video communicates themes of radical feminism within the context of popular culture.

There were a number of steps taken to gather the visual sources needed to collect the data. First, the music video "Feather" was watched several times to make sure that all of its content was fully understood. Afterwards, screenshots of scenes that were relevant to the study were taken for more analysis. To help with a structured analysis, these visual data were then put into groups based on their themes. This process was meant to give a thorough look at how "Feather" expresses radical feminist ideas in popular culture, with a focus on how visual media can be used to express and criticize feminist ideas.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This part of the chapter talks about the research's results. The analysis is divided into several principal categories, such as the visualization of radical feminist resistance to religious norms and the expression of women's liberation from gender-based stereotypes. The goal of each part is to find the deeper meanings that the visual and symbolic elements in the "Feather" music video convey, using radical feminist theory and Barthes' semiotic framework as an overview.

Visualization of Radical Feminist Resistance to Religious Norms

The intersection of feminism and religious frameworks, especially within Catholic, has been a contentious issue in American society. A lot of Americans have criticized the Catholic Church's adherence to traditions that frequently reinforce gender hierarchies. This critique begins with a historical viewpoint, wherein the Church's doctrines are perceived to subordinate women in both societal and religious contexts, aligning with Simone de Beauvoir's concept of women as the "Second Sex," who stated that social and religious structures restrict women's autonomy by setting them subordinate roles (Vaal et al., 2023). The norms created by the Church are frequently perceived as outdated, creating a wider discourse on female autonomy and expression. The Catholic Church's representation of women within a restrictive framework—evident in rules regarding dress, behaviors, and involvement—has motivated feminist analyses indicating that these restrictions reinforce patriarchal systems (Gervais & Turenne Sjolander, 2015). According to (Rowland, 2020) Radical feminism provides an argumentative critique of the Catholic Church's historical involvement in perpetuating the concept of women as the "Second Sex." This argument states that religious institutions function



© 2025 The Author. This article is licensed CC BY SA 4.0.

Visit [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).



as both spiritual authorities and cultural mechanisms that perpetuate gender inequality through symbolic and doctrinal control.

This critique is represented in the music video scene where Sabrina Carpenter performs before a Catholic altar, surrounded by pastel-hued coffins and crosses, symbolizing the metaphorical end of the patriarchal system veiled in religious authority. In the music video "Feather," Sabrina Carpenter critiques norms of society by combining religious elements related to the Catholic Church in a way that challenges the sanctity of those traditions. Her work represents a form of resistance, representing radical feminist critiques that highlight the Church's role in perpetuating female marginalization. Researchers have observed that the Catholic Church's doctrines frequently overlook the ontological equality of genders, as expressed by theologians such as Deborah Savage and Margaret Harper McCarthy, who have criticized the ramifications of patriarchal interpretations of Christian doctrine (Colley & White, 2019; Greenberg, 2018). Moreover, feminist perspectives among women in religious orders highlight a collective discontent with the Church's male dominance, demonstrating that both lay and religious women encounter systemic marginalization from leadership and decision-making positions within the Church (Gervais & Turenne Sjolander, 2015).

Sabrina Carpenter's use of symbols in a contemporary music video functions at a pivotal intersection between historical narratives of oppression and contemporary feminist discourse. The contrast between the Church's inflexible doctrines and a more liberated portrayal of femininity in her work critiques religious dogmas and advocates for a reassessment of female roles in society, aligning with broader feminist movements that seek to dismantle entrenched gender hierarchies. This cultural analysis highlights the influence of feminist narratives and the persistent challenges encountered by women in conventional patriarchal religious settings (Corrin, 2018).



Figure 1. MV "Feather"

In figure 1, the visual composition is layered with semiotic meanings that resonate with themes of radical feminism and the deconstruction of patriarchal symbolism. The woman stands at the altar of a church, adorned in a provocative short black dress complemented by a transparent black veil, singing the repeated lyric "*Like a feather, like a feather, like a feather.*" This refrain evokes a strong sense of lightness and liberation, suggesting emotional and social emancipation. The juxtaposition of her captivating performance against the somber background of two pastel-colored coffins—marked with crosses—alongside traditional candles and flowers creates a surreal tableau that challenges conventional religious iconography.

Denotatively, the coffins symbolize death, which in this context can be interpreted as the demise of oppressive patriarchal and religious norms that traditionally govern women's roles and identities. Their placement on an altar further signifies the burial of a repressive moral framework that has historically restricted women's autonomy through religious directives of purity and obedience. The church, often associated with patriarchal authority, is reimagined here as a site of liberation rather than subjugation, aligning with contemporary

feminist critiques of religious institutions (Barnett et al., 2016). Within this semiotic framework, the altar transforms from a symbol of obedient submission to one of newfound freedom, as the woman reclaims her agency and repurposes the sacred space.

The connotation surrounding the imagery of the woman's performance is equally critical. By singing "*Like a feather*," she effectively communicates a broader feminist narrative that champions autonomy and self-acceptance. This radical departure from religious iconography suggests not just a rejection of societal constraints but also a reinvention of what it means to embody femininity within a patriarchal context. The emotional weight conveyed through her expressions highlights the complexities of women's experiences under patriarchal rule, marking a significant leap towards redefining feminine ideals in a space traditionally dominated by male narratives (Hamdy & Hudri, 2022).

This scene ultimately constructs a new myth in which women's liberation is not merely a personal achievement but is depicted as a sacred act, thus challenging deep-seated societal norms. By repositioning the church—typically a bastion of patriarchal power—as a background for empowerment and self-expression, the music video boldly asserts that freedom and individuality are not only attainable but also intrinsic to the feminist experience.

Expression of Women's Freedom from Stereotypes

In this sub-reading, Sabrina Carpenter shows an expression of relief, freedom and happiness just like a feather, after leaving the church and after the death of the man who bothered and harassed her. Several scenes depict Sabrina Carpenter with sarcastic expressions that initially appear melancholic, yet upon closer examination, reveal layered symbolic meanings related to emotional resistance and autonomy. The same goes for her song lyrics, "*I feel so much lighter like a feather with you out of my life*", in which "you" in the lyrics can be interpreted as men as dominant in the patriarchal system or society's stereotypes towards women.

In the music video '*Feather*', Sabrina Carpenter conveys a sense of freedom and emotional relief as she exits a church, smiling while dressed in a dramatic black gown and a gold cross necklace. This moment, combined with her joyful expression, represents a rejection of the restrictive norms typically linked to patriarchal religious traditions. The church, historically viewed as a symbol of moral and behavioral restrictions, particularly for women, now serves as a setting for rebellion. Sabrina Carpenter's exit from the church symbolizes a metaphorical liberation from the burdensome expectations enforced on women by patriarchal system, related to the lightness and freedom symbolized by a feather. This visual aligns with the lyric, "*I feel so much lighter like a feather with you out of my life*," wherein "you" can be understood as both a specific individual and a broader symbol of systemic patriarchal authority.

In this context, Sabrina Carpenter's smile and calm demeanor serve not only as expressions of personal relief but also as symbols of defiance—undermining the myth of the submissive, religious woman perpetuated in patriarchal religious ideologies. Her clothing, setting, and attitude collaboratively reinterpret the religious imagery, turning it into a platform for feminist empowerment. (Issoui, 2023) states that this visual liberation challenges traditional representations of gender and redefines women's presence in male-dominated environments. This scene enhances the feminist argument by challenging religiously-based gender hierarchies and redefining women as autonomous individuals. This interpretation aligns with Barthes' concept that mythologized representations influence public consciousness and reinforce inequality unless systematically deconstructed (Silaban et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021).

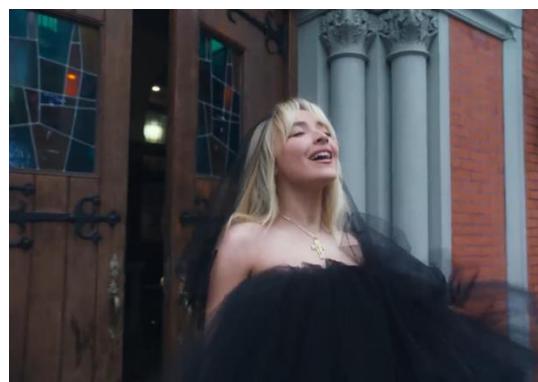


Figure 2. MV "Feather"

In the figure 2, a woman emerges from the church, her face radiant with joy and relief, clad in an extravagant black dress accompanied by a veil reminiscent of a bridal garment and adorned with a gold cross necklace. This striking tableau unfolds against the backdrop of a church interior marked by stained glass windows, creating a visually potent symbol of liberation from institutional constraints. Symbolically, the church transcends its role as a mere place of worship; it is recontextualized here as an emblem of the patriarchal social structure that has historically dictated women's roles through strict moral codes – including notions of virginity, obedience, and the sanctity of marriage (Ruck, 2015).

The black dress, traditionally associated with mourning or defiance, subverts the conventional white wedding attire, suggesting a rejection of imposed identities. Moreover, her act of exiting the church rather than entering, coupled with her joyful demeanor, subverts the myth that women are merely "property" within the institutions of marriage and religion. This notion critically interrogates the expectation that women must be "offered up" to validate their worth. Through this act of defiance, the woman's expression encapsulates a radical feminist resistance against societal norms that limit women to domestic and religious roles beneficial to the patriarchal order (Pokharel et al., 2018).

The interplay of denotation and connotation in this scene reinforces its significance: exiting signifies liberation while the act of wearing a traditionally bridal gown indicates a transformation of its associated meanings into symbols of empowerment rather than subservience. The cheerful smile of the woman emerges as a powerful repudiation of the ideologies of purity and obedience that have historically governed female behavior (Aune & Holyoak, 2017). This resonates deeply within radical feminist discourse, which advocates for women's emancipation from socially constructed limitations, thereby inviting a reexamination of how femininity is constructed and valued in society (Lirola, 2022).

Ultimately, this scene articulates a new mythos where women's liberation becomes a celebrated and sacred act rather than a transgression, resonating as a clarion call for radical redefinitions of gender roles and identities within and beyond the religious sphere. In doing so, it not only critiques existing structures but also paves the way for a reimagined narrative wherein women actively assert their agency and redefine traditional frameworks of femininity in pursuit of genuine autonomy and self-expression (Yang et al., 2023).

Radical Feminist Resistance to Toxic Male



Figure 3. MV "Feather"

The woman is seen going down a city sidewalk wearing a maroon T-shirt with bright blue lettering, a blue cap, headphones, and eye-catching accessories. While singing the lyric "*I finally cut you off*," the woman displays a carefree and indifferent attitude, as a white truck suddenly hits three men in the background who had previously engaged in catcalling, reinforcing a symbolic act of feminist retaliation.

Connotatively, this scene represents resistance to sexual harassment, particularly verbal forms like catcalling, which are frequently seen as irrelevant. The woman not only ignores the harasser, but also delivers symbolic "revenge" in the form of an accident. The lyrics "*I finally cut you off*" are both ironic and symbolic, presenting that women are capable of not only refusing, but also completely severing the influence or disruption caused by predatory men. The image that the woman is the center of power in this scene is further reinforced by the stark contrast between the gloomy street background and the bright colors of her clothing.

The myth that women have to accept or "be receptive" with harassment in public spaces is debated by this scene from a mythological perspective. The video illustrates that harassment is not to be tolerated and can be dealt with severe revenge through graphic imagery, which shows men suffering catastrophic consequences. It also affects the myth that males are in control of public spaces; in this instance, they are symbolically punished by a narrative system that prioritizes women's rights.

Resistance to Male Dominance and Control in Public Spaces

In modern feminist discourse, public spaces are acknowledged as contested domains where male dominance can manifest through implicit as well as explicit methods of control. Workplaces, streets, and recreational areas frequently function as venues where women's agency is persistently contested. The music video for Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather" illustrates this tension, focusing on a narrative of defiance against male interference in traditionally male-dominated spaces. The female protagonist's self-assurance in the face of male reactions highlights a significant defiance against the normalization of male dominance in social contexts. This representation corresponds with academic discourse emphasizing that women's physical presence and assertiveness in public spaces can resist established gender norms, as women actively engage with their surroundings instead of passively accepting constraints (Aberman et al., 2018; Clarke et al., 2024).

Research indicate that women face increased risks of harassment and marginalization in public domains, requiring their involvement in "safety work" to navigate these environments effectively (Clarke et al., 2024). In environments dominated by cultural and gender limitations, such as conventional family and societal roles, women's access to public spaces may be restricted (Fathi et al., 2021). These constraints highlight broader societal dynamics that restrict women's involvement in public life, rendering Sabrina Carpenter's portrayal significant as it critiques power imbalances and reasserts visibility for female autonomy.

Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather" provides a framework for analyzing the consequences of women's assertiveness in public spaces. The video both entertains and criticizes the conventional expectations imposed on women, providing an alternative narrative to the frequently passive portrayals of females in mainstream media. This concept aligns with modern feminist media studies, which highlight the significance of female narratives in transforming public discourse regarding gender and power (Saputri, 2022). Such representations enhance a collective comprehension of women's rights and agency, cultivating an environment where female empowerment is progressively evident.

Furthermore, the assertion of agency in public spaces can be transformative, allowing women to negotiate their identities and resist hegemonic masculinities (Aberman et al., 2018). As women, represented by Sabrina Carpenter's protagonist, assert their presence in the public space, they resist the systemic frameworks that aim to constrain them. Consequently, music videos such as "Feather" represent contemporary feminist discourse and significantly influence societal perceptions of gender roles, encouraging a cultural transition towards enhanced equality.



© 2025 The Author. This article is licensed CC BY SA 4.0.

Visit [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

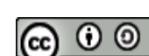




Figure 4. MV "Feather"

Denotatively, the scene depicts a woman dressed in a pink sporty outfit, with braided hair and makeup, placed in a boxing gym in the midst of a group of men. The men seem to argue and put their hands on her, while the woman shows an uneasy and uncomfortable expression. The lyric subtitle reads, "*Your signals are mixed, you act like a bitch.*"

Connotatively, the color pink on the woman's outfit and accessories, traditionally associated with femininity and softness, sharply contrasts with the aggressive masculine energy that surrounds her in this boxing gym scene from "Feather." This juxtaposition visually underscores the challenges women face in navigating male-dominated spaces where their presence is often undermined. Her braided hair and delicate makeup further reinforce the stereotypical "good girl" imagery, which becomes a source of emotional tension when placed in environments that privilege masculinity. The men's chaotic behavior, marked by exaggerated gestures and verbal dominance, mirrors patriarchal entitlement and competition, reflecting a setting where women's autonomy is continuously tested (Bonnes, 2022). The lyric "*Your signals are mixed...*" encapsulates a cultural tendency to misinterpret or dismiss female agency, echoing broader societal narratives that often blame women for male frustration or rejection—narratives rooted in hegemonic masculinity that vilify assertive femininity (Ai et al., 2024; Bonnes, 2022). This reinforces gendered expectations where women must maintain passive roles to avoid conflict, contributing to a psychological burden that conflates emotional expression with weakness (Balsamo & Carlucci, 2020; Mayor-Silva et al., 2025). Ultimately, this scene—through its strategic use of pink costume, symbolic expressions, and lyrical cues—highlights the emotional discomfort and performative resilience women adopt in public settings, calling attention to the systemic control exerted by patriarchal norms and reinforcing the importance of feminist critique in reclaiming female agency within such contested spaces (Meehan, 2021).

The societal myth portraying women as public property subject to male scrutiny reinforces harmful stereotypes and shaming tactics, especially toward those who resist traditional expectations (Dove-Medows et al., 2021; Hitchens et al., 2017; Ibrahim, 2020; Sattar et al., 2022). The boxing gym, a symbol of male-dominated space, underscores the challenges women face in environments historically shaped by masculine authority, where their presence often triggers scrutiny, aggression, and a reassertion of patriarchal control (Domingos & Smith, 2024; Rosenfeld et al., 2018; Rubio et al., 2022). As women disrupt these norms, male reactions frequently expose underlying insecurities about gender roles (Chan et al., 2024; Hayes et al., 2020). Reframing femininity as a source of strength thus challenges hegemonic power structures, fostering new narratives of empowerment across both social and professional spheres (Angehrn et al., 2021; Fuchs et al., 2023; Gasparini & DeWitt, 2023; Headley & Wright, 2019). This shift calls for a reevaluation of patriarchal values that restrict female autonomy, asserting that women's agency in public space is both valid and powerful.

CONCLUSIONS

This research analyzes Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather" music video using Barthes' semiotic framework and radical feminist theory, revealing how popular media can express

resistance to patriarchal norms. The video examines symbolic scenes, including the subversion of religious iconography, the presence of women in male-dominated spaces, and ironic retribution against harassers, reclaiming visual and narrative elements historically employed to oppress women and reconstituting them as declarations of autonomy and strength. The protagonist repudiates the roles dictated by patriarchal institutions through symbols such as the black bridal dress, the departure from the church, and the retribution against harassers.

This research enhances the discourse on feminism in popular culture by revealing that music videos—frequently regarded as mere entertainment—can convey profound ideological critiques when analyzed through the perspective of radical feminism. "Feather" deconstructs myths of female submissiveness and serves as an artwork that connects feminist theory with modern visual media, challenging and redefining public narratives regarding gender and liberation.

REFERENCES

Aberman, N.-L., Behrman, J., & Birner, R. (2018). Comparison between different D-Dimer cutoff values to assess the individual risk of recurrent venous thromboembolism: Analysis of results obtained in the DULCIS study. *International Journal of Laboratory Hematology*, 38(1), 42–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijlh.12426>

Ai, W., Cunningham, W. A., & Lai, M. C. (2024). Camouflaging, internalized stigma, and mental health in the general population. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 70(7), 1239–1253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207640241260020>

Angehrn, A., Fletcher, A. J., & Nicholas Carleton, R. (2021). "Suck It Up, Buttercup": Understanding and Overcoming Gender Disparities in Policing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147627>

Aune, K., & Holyoak, R. (2017). Navigating the third wave: Contemporary UK feminist activists and 'third-wave feminism.' In *Feminist Theory* (Vol. 19, Issue 2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700117723593>

Balsamo, M., & Carlucci, L. (2020). Italians on the Age of COVID-19: The Self-Reported Depressive Symptoms Through Web-Based Survey. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(October), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.569276>

Barnett, M. D., Sligar, K. B., & Wang, C. D. C. (2016). Religious Affiliation, Religiosity, Gender, and Rape Myth Acceptance: Feminist Theory and Rape Culture. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33(8), 1219–1235. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516665110>

Bonnes, S. (2022). Femininity Anchors: Heterosexual Relationships and Pregnancy as Sites of Harassment for U.S. Servicewomen. *American Sociological Review*, 87(4), 618–643. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224221110535>

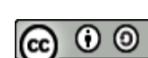
Chan, J., Hurst, M., Easterbrook, M. J., & Miles, E. (2024). "That's Just, Par for the Course": Social Class, Objectification, and Body Image among White Working-Class Women in the United Kingdom. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 49(1), 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843241271147>

Cheruiyot, C. B., Okemwa, C., & Bwocha, N. (2020). Social Strategies Used by the Kipsigis Women to Contest Patriarchal Structures as Highlighted in the Songs of Diana Chemutai Musila and Babra Chepkoech. *East African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 2(1), 100–112. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajis.2.1.215>

Clarke, J., Wendt, S., & Mayer, W. (2024). Exploring the Theological Context to Domestic and Family Violence. *Violence Against Women*, 31(10), 2482–2504. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012241254849>

Colley, L., & White, C. (2019). Neoliberal feminism: The neoliberal rhetoric on feminism by Australian political actors. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 26(8), 1083–1099. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12303>

Corrin, J. P. (2018). The English Catholic New Left: Battling the religious establishment and the politics of the Cold War. *Social Sciences*, 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7040060>



Domingos, T., & Smith, C. M. (2024). When Femininity Is Irrelevant: Gender Similarities and Racial Differences in Fatal and Nonfatal Police Violence in California, 2016–2021. *Socius*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231241258378>

Dove-Medows, E., Thompson, L., McCracken, L., Kavanaugh, K., Misra, D. P., & Giurgescu, C. (2021). I Wouldn't Let it Get to Me: Pregnant Black Women's Experiences of Discrimination. *MCN The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing*, 46(3), 137–142. <https://doi.org/10.1097/NMC.0000000000000707>

Duncan-Shepherd, S., & Hamilton, K. (2022). "Generally, I live a lie": Transgender consumer experiences and responses to symbolic violence. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 56(4), 1597–1616. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joca.12482>

Fathi, B., Nadrian, H., Hashemiparast, M., Nikookheslat, S., Esmaeilzadeh, S., & Khodayari-Zarnaq, R. (2021). "I feel too lethargic to do physical activity": Perceptions of Iranian adults on the barriers to perform regular physical activity. *Health Promotion Perspectives*, 11(4), 476–484. <https://doi.org/10.34172/hpp.2021.60>

Fuchs, O., Werczberger, R., & Guzmen-Carmeli, S. (2023). "Not Being Counted": Women's Place and Religious Space in Jewish Orthodox Communities During the COVID-19 Crisis. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 63(1), 181–195. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12885>

Gasparini, J. M., & DeWitt, A. L. (2023). 'We're always handed the children': women finding belonging in policing. *Discover Global Society*, 2(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44282-024-00033-z>

Gervais, C., & Turenne Sjolander, C. (2015). Interrogating and Constructing the 'Authentic' Roman Catholic Church: Feminist Perspectives Among Canadian Women Religious. *Review of Religious Research*, 57(3), 365–396. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13644-015-0207-4>

Greenberg, U. (2018). Catholics, protestants, and the tortured path to religious liberty. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 79(3), 461–479. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jhi.2018.0028>

Griffin, E. (2011). Chapter 26 - Semiotics of Roland Barthes. In *A First Look at Communication Theory* (8th ed.). 332–343.

Hamdy, M. K., & Hudri, M. (2022). Gender Based Violence: the Relationship of Law and Patriarchy in Indonesia. *EMPATI: Jurnal Ilmu Kesejahteraan Sosial*, 11(2), 73–85. <https://doi.org/10.15408/empati.v11i2.29751>

Hastuti, E., Grace, S., & Oswari, T. (2024). Radical Feminism Analysis in the Novel Kim Ji Young, Born 1982. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 7(05), 2639–2646. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v7-i05-12>

Hayes, B. E., Connolly, E. J., Wang, X., Mason, M., & Ingham, C. (2020). Chinese Police Cadets' Attitudes Toward Domestic Violence: A Pretest/Posttest Design. *Crime and Delinquency*, 68(2), 232–252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128719901110>

Headley, A. M., & Wright, J. E. (2019). National Police Reform Commissions: Evidence-Based Practices or Unfulfilled Promises? *Review of Black Political Economy*, 46(4), 277–305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034644619873074>

Hitchens, B. K., Carr, P. J., & Clampet-Lundquist, S. (2017). The Context for Legal Cynicism: Urban Young Women's Experiences With Policing in Low-Income, High-Crime Neighborhoods. *Race and Justice*, 8(1), 27–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2153368717724506>

Husain, W., Nasir, T., Husain, M. A., & Ijaz, F. (2024). The Perception of Feminism and the Inclination for Empowerment among Educated Muslim Women from Pakistan. *Middle East Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture*, 4(01), 11–19. <https://doi.org/10.36348/mejisc.2024.v04i01.003>

Ibrahim, N. (2020). Experiences of Abused Muslim Women With the Australian Criminal Justice System. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(3–4), NP2360–NP2386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520935487>

Issoui, L. (2023). Examining How Art Reflects and Challenges Political Ideologies and Power Structures in Lebanon. *International Journal of Arts, Recreation and Sports*, 1(1), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.47941/ijars.1332>

Jerslev, A. (2017). *The look of aging: Agelessness as post-feminist cool?* 67–84. www.smid.dk

Ju, M., Andler, C., Robinson, M., & Van Schaik, S. M. (2021). Gender Representation in Medical Emergency Training Videos Perpetuating Bias. *ATS Scholar*, 2(2), 168–171. <https://doi.org/10.34197/ats-scholar.2020-0122BR>

Khadka, G. (2021). Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on Informal Sector's Women in Damak, Jhapa. *Patan Pragya*, 8(01), 85–94. <https://doi.org/10.3126/pragya.v8i01.42423>

Khanum, S., & Soley, D. A. (2024). An overview of feminism. *International Journal of Research in English*, 6(1), 201–203. <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2024.v6.i1d.186>

Lee, S. (2024). The specific visuality of women of the global South in the media of the global North. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02578-x>

Liang, T. (2023). Is There a Need for a World Feminist Movement? *Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities*, 2(2), 33–37. <https://doi.org/10.56397/jrssh.2023.02.04>

Lirola, M. M. (2022). *Towards a Desconstruction of Symbolic Violence in a Sample of Advertising Discourse a Critical Discourse Perspective*. 2008, 336–354.

Lu, G. (2023). Analysis of the Korean Wave's Evolutionary Trends and Causes from a Feminist Perspective. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 22(1), 288–293. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/22/20231792>

Mayor-Silva, L. I., Moreno, G., Meneses-Monroy, A., Martín-Casas, P., Hernández-Martín, M. M., Moreno-Pimentel, A. G., & Rodríguez-Leal, L. (2025). Influence of Gender Role on Resilience and Positive Affect in Female Nursing Students: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Healthcare (Switzerland)*, 13(3), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13030336>

Meehan, C. (2021). 'I guess girls can be more emotional': Exploring the complexities of sexual consent with young people. *Sexualities*, 25(5–6), 821–841. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460721999275>

Pokharel, B., Timsina, T. R., & Khatri, B. B. (2018). *Feminist Perspective of Community Development Practices in Nepal*. 14, 63–65. <https://doi.org/10.15900/j.cnki.zylf1995.2018.02.001>

Riaz, F., Mohi, T., & Din, U. (2024). *Unveiling Reproductive Oppression: An In-depth Analysis of Radical Feminism in Joyland*. *Unveiling Reproductive Oppression: An In-depth Analysis of Radical Feminism in Joyland*. 2024(September). [https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024\(8-III\)41](https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2024(8-III)41)

Rodgers, K. B., & Hust, S. J. T. (2018). Sexual objectification in music videos and acceptance of potentially offensive sexual behaviors. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 7(4), 413–428. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000142>

Rosenfeld, R., Johnson, T. L., & Wright, R. (2018). Are College-Educated Police Officers Different? A Study of Stops, Searches, and Arrests. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 31(2), 206–236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403418817808>

Rowland, T. (2020). Feminism from the perspective of catholic theology. *Religions*, 11(11), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11110578>

Rubio, C. A., Grueso-Hinestrosa, M. P., Espinosa, J. C., & Turc, M. (2022). Workplace aggression, wellbeing, and job satisfaction: The specificity in border police organizations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13(October), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1004153>

Ruck, N. (2015). Liberating minds: Consciousness-raising as a bridge between feminism and psychology in 1970s Canada. *History of Psychology*, 18(3), 297–311. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039522>

Saputri, G. M. (2022). How Women Lead Podcast Series: Feminist Media Framing in Challenging Symbolic Annihilation of Indonesian Women Leadership. *SALASIIKA Indonesian Journal of Gender Women Child and Social Inclusion s Studies*, 4(2), 81–94. <https://doi.org/10.36625/sj.v4i2.78>

Sattar, T., Ahmad, S., & Asim, M. (2022). Intimate partner violence against women in Southern Punjab, Pakistan: A phenomenological study. *BMC Women's Health*, 22(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-022-02095-0>

A Woman's Expression for Freedom in Sabrina Carpenter's "Feather": A Radical Feminist Reading

Siahaan, T. A. (2024). *Analisis Resepsi Generasi Z pada Video Musik Sabrina Carpenter "Feather."* 4, 7748–7761.

Silaban, P. H., Chen, W. K., Nababan, T. S., Eunike, I. J., & Silalahi, A. D. K. (2022). How Travel Vlogs on YouTube Influence Consumer Behavior: A Use and Gratification Perspective and Customer Engagement. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/4432977>

Tong, R. (2018). Radical Feminism. In *Feminist Thought* (5th Editio, pp. 50–92). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429493836-3>

Vaal, A., Michel, G., & Rieunier, S. (2023). Lived religiosity and consumption: Dilemma and meaning-making among practising Catholic consumers. *Recherche et Applications En Marketing (English Edition)*, 38(1), 56–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20515707221143733>

Willis, E. (1984). Radical Feminism and Feminist Radicalism. *Social Text*, 9/10, 91. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466537>

Yang, W., Guo, J., & Arteel, I. (2023). What Is "Rural Feminism"? A Computer-Assisted Analysis of Popular Antifeminist Discourses in Chinese Social Media. *Social Media and Society*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231177952>

Zhang, W., Mei, J., Song, W., Evans, R., & Xiang, Y. (2021). Why Do Citizens Engage With the TikTok Accounts of Public Hospitals in China? *SAGE Open*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211061568>