

## FEMME FATALE IN MAX AND DAYA'S MUSIC VIDEO: A PSYCHOANALYTIC FEMINISM

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the representation of the femme fatale in Max's music video *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) through a psychoanalytic feminist framework. By integrating Freud's (1905) foundational theories of sexuality, power, and desire with Lacan's (1973) notions of the gaze and subjectivity, the research investigates how femininity is constructed and contested in contemporary popular music. Lyrical analysis identifies twenty instances that foreground seduction, identity, and gendered power relations, resonating with Freudian notions of male anxiety and female seductiveness. In parallel, ten significant visual scenes are examined to highlight Lacanian dynamics of desire and spectatorship. This interdisciplinary approach underscores the tensions between female agency and patriarchal structures, revealing how the femme fatale figure operates simultaneously as an object of desire and a challenge to dominant gender roles. The findings suggest that popular music both reproduces and destabilizes cultural scripts of femininity, offering a critical site for rethinking gender, sexuality, and power in mass-mediated texts.

**Keywords:** Femme Fatale, Psychoanalytic Feminism, Freud, Lacan, Gender, Popular Music

## INTRODUCTION

The femme fatale archetype, a prominent figure in psychoanalytic feminism, embodies male anxieties surrounding female sexuality and power, themes that are deeply rooted in Sigmund Freud's early work on sexuality. Freud (1905, pp. 23-64) provide foundational insights into this complex figure, particularly in terms of how desire, fear, and transgression intertwine. Freud's ideas on the castration complex (Freud, 1905, pp. 64-65) and the enigma of female desire (Freud, 1905, p. 61) emphasize how male-dominated societies have historically perceived female sexuality as both alluring and dangerous. These theories are reflected in the femme fatale archetype, a figure characterized by seductive charm, manipulation, and the ability to exploit male vulnerabilities. In contemporary media, the femme fatale is portrayed through a psychoanalytic lens, revealing deep-seated fears and desires that extend beyond surface-level depictions in visual and narrative forms (Kaplan, 1983, p. 52).

In the context of modern pop culture, the music videos for Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) serve as compelling examples of how the femme fatale archetype continues to evolve. These videos offer rich visual scenes and lyrical content that align with Freud's theories on female sexuality and power (Freud, 1905, p. 56). In *Sweet but Psycho*, Max portrays a woman who oscillates between allure and menace, a duality that resonates

with Freud's concept of the femme fatale as both desirable and dangerous (Freud, 1905, p. 61). Her unpredictable behavior, depicted through both lyrics and visual scenes, manipulates her environment and those around her, embodying the contradictions Freud explored regarding male anxieties over female autonomy and desire (Mulvey, 1975, p. 12). This visual interplay evokes Freud's theory of the castration complex, where the femme fatale's power threatens male control and stability (Freud, 1905, pp. 64-65).

Similarly, Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) challenges traditional gender roles and patriarchal expectations, aligning with Jacques Lacan's theory of jouissance, which refers to the transgressive pleasure found in defying societal norms (Lacan, 1973, pp. 75-78). The femme fatale archetype in Daya's video reflects a rejection of the passive, ornamental roles typically assigned to women. Through her refusal to conform, the protagonist asserts her autonomy, a defining trait of the femme fatale that not only resonates with Freud's ideas on female rebellion but also challenges Lacan's theories on the gaze and objectification (Lacan, 1973, pp. 80-82). The visual scenes in *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) highlight the protagonist's refusal to be controlled or defined by male desire, echoing the themes of female empowerment and autonomy (Freud, 1905, pp. 61-64; Kaplan, 1983, p. 47).

Analyzing these music videos through the lens of psychoanalytic feminism reveals how the femme fatale archetype continues to be relevant in the modern era. The femme fatale in both Max and Daya's videos not only reflects Freud's theories on sexuality as a tool of power but also connects with contemporary issues of female agency and gender expectations. Max's portrayal of a woman who embraces her unpredictability and power directly challenges the traditional notion of women as passive objects of desire (Freud, 1905, p. 23; Kaplan, 1983, p. 49). This aligns with psychoanalytic feminist theories, which explore how women navigate the constraints imposed by a patriarchal society through their sexuality and rebellion (Freud, 1905, pp. 56-61; Mulvey, 1975, p. 15). On the other hand, Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) critiques societal norms by depicting a woman who refuses to conform to the expectations placed on her, particularly in relation to beauty and submissiveness (Lacan, 1973, pp. 80-82; Kaplan, 1983, p. 53).

This study of Max and Daya's music videos is significant because of the vivid representation of the femme fatale archetype in both lyrical content and visual scenes. Both videos resonate with real-life concerns about female empowerment, gender norms, and societal anxieties regarding women who defy traditional roles. In Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the protagonist revels in her ability to manipulate her surroundings, a clear challenge to the passive role women are often expected to play (Freud, 1905, p. 23). This reflects Freud's idea of female sexuality as a source of male fear and fascination, a theme central to the femme fatale archetype (Freud, 1905, pp. 56-64; Kaplan, 1983, p. 47). Meanwhile, Daya's lyrics and visual scenes in *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) critique the objectification of women, portraying a woman who refuses to be shaped by male expectations, further emphasizing the archetype's power and relevance in modern feminist discourse (Lacan, 1973, pp. 75-78; Kaplan, 1983, p. 52).

Thus, the archetype of the femme fatale in Max and Daya's music videos functions as both a reflection and a critique of real-life societal roles and expectations for women. As Freud (1905, p. 23) noted, sexuality is often a tool of dominance, and the femme fatale uses this power to challenge and subvert the male gaze (Freud, 1905, pp. 61-64; Lacan, 1973, pp. 80-82). These videos, through their lyrical content and visual scenes, offer a modern reinterpretation of this age-old archetype, illustrating how the femme fatale continues to resonate in contemporary feminist and psychoanalytic thought (Kaplan, 1983, p. 55). The intersection of these themes demonstrates the enduring complexity of the femme fatale, as well as her importance in discussions of gender, power, and sexuality (Freud, 1905, pp. 23-65).

## **Review of Related Literature**

Literature, as Wellek and Warren (1949) and Abrams (1999) suggest, should not be confined to written texts but understood as a broad cultural category encompassing symbolic and aesthetic expressions across media. Within this framework, music videos can be treated as cultural

texts that construct meaning through narrative, imagery, and symbolism. Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) exemplify this expanded conception of literature, as their lyrical and visual elements invite critical interpretation. When analyzed through psychoanalytic feminism, these texts reveal complex negotiations of femininity, sexuality, and power that extend literary analysis into contemporary popular culture.

At the center of this inquiry is the femme fatale archetype, long examined through psychoanalytic theory. Freud (1905) and Lacan (1973) positioned her as a projection of male anxieties about female sexuality and desire, while later scholars such as Kaplan (1983, 1998) and Bronfen (1992) emphasized her role as a figure of both fascination and fear. The femme fatale embodies rebellion, autonomy, and the enigma of female desire, destabilizing traditional gender roles while highlighting unconscious cultural anxieties. In Max's *Sweet but Psycho* and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty*, she appears not as a passive figure but as one who resists control, asserting power through allure, unpredictability, and transgression. While prior studies on music videos often emphasize sexual objectification (Apuke, 2019) or historical constructions of femininity (Minowa, 2019), few consider the psychoanalytic dimension of desire, rebellion, and unconscious fear. This study therefore situates the femme fatale within psychoanalytic feminism to illustrate how the archetype continues to evolve in contemporary media as a symbol of both empowerment and cultural anxiety.

## **METHOD**

### **Research**

#### **Design**

This study, titled *Femme Fatale in Max's and Daya's Music Videos: A Psychoanalytic Feminism*

Approach, adopts a qualitative research design using content analysis. Content analysis, as described by Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010, p. 449), provides a systematic means of examining texts to uncover underlying meanings, making it particularly suitable for analyzing the layered representations of the femme fatale archetype. Both lyrical texts and visual imagery are treated as cultural artifacts that reveal gendered dynamics of power, sexuality, and identity. **Research**

#### **Approach**

This research employs a two-stage psychoanalytic feminist approach. Lyrical content is analyzed

through Freud's (1905) theories of sexuality, power, and desire, while visual scenes are examined using Lacan's (1973) concepts of the gaze and subjectivity. By integrating textual and visual elements, the study highlights how popular music both reproduces cultural anxieties about femininity and challenges dominant gender roles.

### **Research**

#### **Instrument**

This study employs document analysis as its primary research instrument, following Ary, Jacobs, and

Sorensen (2010, p. 449), who emphasize its role in ensuring qualitative data quality. In this framework, the researcher acts as planner, collector, analyst, and interpreter of findings. To support this process, systematic note-taking is applied, defined by Ray (2013, p. 34) as compiling essential information in an organized manner.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Procedures**

This study employs content analysis to examine how the femme fatale archetype is constructed. Research

questions were formulated to address lyrical and visual representations in Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016). The units of analysis consist of lyric phrases and visual scenes that convey femme fatale traits. A probability sampling method ensured representativeness, while a predefined coding scheme (Harliani, 2014) categorized data, supported by intercoder reliability checks (Krippendorff, 2004). Thematic and semiotic analysis was then applied to identify underlying patterns, highlighting how lyrical and visual elements converge or diverge in shaping the femme fatale (Flick, 2018).

#### **Coding data based on Freud's (1905) theory:**

FF : Femme Fatale

L : Lyrics

M : Max's music video

D : Daya's music video

#### **Coding data based on Lacan's (1973) theory:**

FF : Femme Fatale

S : Scenes

M : Max's music video

D : Daya's music video

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Procedures**

The analysis follows Miles and Huberman's (1994) three-step model: data reduction, data display, and

conclusion drawing with verification. Relevant lyrical excerpts and visual scenes illustrating the femme fatale were selected and simplified (Denzin, 2009). The data were then coded and organized, with lyrical themes of seduction, identity, and power set alongside visual portrayals of femininity. Triangulation through expert validation ensured interpretive reliability (Stake, 2006; Flick, 2018). Finally, conclusions were drawn by aligning the findings with Freud's (1905) theories of sexuality and Lacan's (1973) notions of gaze and desire, producing a rigorous account of the femme fatale in popular music (Moen, 2006).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

The findings are presented based on the three focus areas of this research, addressing the characteristics of the femme fatale archetype, its lyrical construction, and its visual representation in Max's and Daya's music videos:

#### **1. Femme Fatale Archetype Characteristics in Psychoanalytic Feminism**

Within the framework of psychoanalytic feminism, the femme fatale emerges as a central figure for interrogating femininity, sexuality, and power. Freud's psychoanalytic theories, particularly his exploration of sexuality and the unconscious, provide a critical foundation for understanding the femme fatale's destabilizing presence. As a cultural construct, she embodies allure, danger, and transgression, positioning herself at the intersection of male desire and fear. This archetype is vividly illustrated in Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still*,

*Look Pretty* (2016), both of which highlight the ways in which female agency, sexuality, and resistance disrupt patriarchal narratives.

Sexuality operates as a primary instrument of power in these representations. Freud emphasized the centrality of sexuality in shaping psychological development and social hierarchies, while also noting the profound anxieties it provokes in men. In *Sweet but Psycho*, the protagonist weaponizes her sexuality by simultaneously attracting and unsettling male figures, using seduction as a destabilizing force. Similarly, *Sit Still, Look Pretty* redefines empowerment by rejecting passivity and foregrounding self-determination. Both songs reveal how female sexuality, rather than reinforcing subordination, becomes an active tool of power, exposing deep-seated male anxieties about autonomy and control.

The persistence of Freud's castration complex is equally evident in these portrayals. Male characters confronted with women who defy passivity often experience feelings of emasculation and insecurity. This tension is central to the femme fatale archetype, as her presence embodies both desire and threat. In *Sweet but Psycho*, the protagonist's volatility reflects male fears of losing dominance, while in *Sit Still, Look Pretty*, the refusal to conform undermines patriarchal expectations of compliance. The femme fatale thus destabilizes masculine authority by exposing its fragility, underscoring Freud's claim that unresolved anxieties about female sexuality manifest in efforts to control, possess, or dismiss it.

Another key characteristic of the femme fatale lies in her enigmatic desires, which remain elusive to male comprehension. Freud positioned female desire as inherently opaque, contributing to its mystique and its destabilizing potential. In *Sweet but Psycho*, this opacity is reflected in the protagonist's unpredictable behavior and emotional extremes, which simultaneously attract and disturb. In *Sit Still, Look Pretty*, desire manifests as refusal, an assertion of independence that unsettles male counterparts who cannot define or control it. This inscrutability reinforces the femme fatale's power, affirming her position as a figure who resists being fully known within patriarchal logic.

The femme fatale also functions as a symbol of transgression and rebellion against societal norms. Freud's notion of the id, as the site of primal impulses, resonates with her rejection of moral and social boundaries. In *Sweet but Psycho*, the protagonist embodies unruliness and emotional volatility, breaking away from gendered expectations of rationality and submission. In *Sit Still, Look Pretty*, rebellion is articulated through lyrical defiance, critiquing the confinement of women to ornamental roles. In both cases, the femme fatale represents a refusal of patriarchal regulation, positioning herself as a disruptive force that seeks autonomy, even at the risk of destruction.

Finally, the femme fatale symbolizes the unconscious projections of male fears and desires. Freud's work on repression and the unconscious explains her simultaneous role as an object of fascination and dread. In *Sweet but Psycho*, erratic behavior signifies repressed anxieties about female unpredictability and dominance, while in *Sit Still, Look Pretty*, the rejection of passive roles unsettles men who struggle to rationalize female autonomy. These cultural texts reveal how the femme fatale surfaces as a projection of male insecurities, exposing the hidden dynamics of fear, repression, and desire embedded in patriarchal culture.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the femme fatale archetype operates as more than a seductive stereotype; she is a complex site where sexuality, power, rebellion, and unconscious fear intersect. Through the psychoanalytic feminist lens, *Sweet but Psycho* and *Sit Still, Look Pretty* illustrate how contemporary popular culture continues to reproduce, yet also reconfigure, the tensions at the heart of this enduring figure.

## 2. Lyrical Representation of the Femme Fatale in Max and Daya's Music Videos

The femme fatale archetype in Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016)

operates as a complex site of female agency, sexual power, and symbolic disruption. In *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the lyric "Oh, she's sweet but a psycho" (FF/L/M) foregrounds the femme fatale's duality, where sweetness is interwoven with danger. This construction reflects Freud's notion that female sexuality simultaneously evokes allure and fear, enabling control over the male gaze and desire (Freud, 1905, p. 23). The juxtaposition of "sweet" and "psycho" demonstrates how the femme fatale manipulates male desire by embodying contradictory traits, aligning with Freud's theory that female sexuality unsettles patriarchal expectations. Similarly, in *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016), the lyric "Could dress up, to get love, and guess what? I'm never gonna be that girl who's living in a Barbie world" (FF/L/D) reveals the protagonist's refusal to conform to male-defined standards of femininity. Her rejection of traditional beauty ideals underscores her capacity to regulate her own sexuality and resist submission to external pressures. Both examples illustrate the femme fatale's strategic use of sexuality as a mechanism of power, subverting conventional gender hierarchies and asserting autonomy against patriarchal norms.

The castration complex deepens this subversive potential, foregrounding the femme fatale's capacity to provoke masculine fears of emasculation and powerlessness. In *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the line "Grab a cop gun, kinda crazy" (FF/L/M) dramatizes a symbolic rupture of patriarchal authority, recasting the femme fatale not as a



victim but as an agent of disruption, a gesture that resonates with Freud's theorization of castration anxiety (Freud, 1905, pp. 64–65). A parallel challenge appears in *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) with “Could wake up, and make up, and play dumb / Pretending that I need a boy who's gonna treat me like a toy” (FF/L/D), which resists the discursive construction of femininity as ornamental and compliant. Both instances expose the fragility of male dominance, transforming female agency into a symbolic threat that unsettles entrenched gender hierarchies.

The enigma of female desire further complicates the figure of the femme fatale, as her desires remain unknowable and provoke both fascination and anxiety in male counterparts. In *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the refrain “At night, she's screamin' / ‘I'm-ma-ma-ma out my mind’” (FF/L/M) dramatizes emotional volatility, positioning the femme fatale as simultaneously alluring and unpredictable. Freud emphasizes that the inscrutability of female desire fosters male obsession and intensifies anxieties around control (Freud, 1905, p. 61). This dynamic reappears in *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) through the lyric “But I don't wanna be the puppet that you're playing on a string” (FF/L/D), which foregrounds her rejection of imposed control while cultivating an aura of elusiveness. Taken together, these articulations illuminate how the femme fatale mobilizes the opacity of female desire to destabilize male authority and reconfigure relational power dynamics.

Transgression and rebellion emerge as central strategies through which the femme fatale subverts patriarchal authority and societal norms. In *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the lyric “You'll be saying, 'No, no' / Then saying, 'Yes, yes, yes’” (FF/L/M) exemplifies the oscillation of consent, demonstrating her capacity to confuse and dominate male desire. This manipulation aligns with Freud's theorization of the id and its expression beyond socially sanctioned behavior (Freud, 1905, p. 56), highlighting how the femme fatale exercises emotional and psychological control to disrupt expectations of female passivity. Similarly, in *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016), the lyric “This queen don't need a king” (FF/L/D) asserts female independence and rejects traditional gender hierarchies, signaling a direct challenge to the societal mandate that women occupy submissive roles. Collectively, these lyrics illustrate the femme fatale's active rebellion, portraying her as an agent who destabilizes patriarchal structures through autonomy and defiance.

Finally, the symbolic dimension of the unconscious amplifies the femme fatale's disruptive power, reflecting male anxieties regarding female sexuality and autonomy. In *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the repeated line “She's poison but tasty” (FF/L/M) embodies the paradoxical allure and threat of the femme fatale, resonating with Freud's theory that women often represent the unknown and feared aspects of the male psyche (Freud, 1905, p. 90). Similarly, in *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016), the lyric “Oh, I don't know what you've been told / But this girl right here's gonna rule the world” (FF/L /D) articulates an overt claim to power, rejecting patriarchal control and exposing unconscious male fears of female independence. These instances demonstrate how the femme fatale functions as a symbolic site in which male anxieties, desire, and fear intersect, reinforcing her role as both captivating and threatening within the psychoanalytic feminist framework.

### **3. Visual Portrayal of the Femme Fatale in Max and Daya's Music Videos**

The visual construction of the femme fatale in Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) exemplifies how cinematic techniques embody Lacan's concepts of the gaze, objet petit a, and jouissance, thereby situating female desire and agency within psychoanalytic

frameworks. At the 0:22 timestamp in the music video (FF/S/M), the woman's pose, simultaneously inviting and evasive, manipulates the male gaze by drawing attention yet withholding full reciprocity. Her avoidance of direct eye contact creates distance, embodying Lacan's notion of the gaze as a destabilizing force, wherein the subject recognizes the impossibility of complete mastery. Fragmented close-ups of lips, hands, and facial details reinforce her function as *objet petit a*, the unattainable object of desire, while the tension between bright and dark colors evokes *jouissance*, pleasure verging on chaos. This interplay between allure and refusal establishes her as both the center of desire and a figure of resistance.

At 0:52 (FF/S/M), the tearing of fabric coupled with her refusal to return the viewer's gaze intensifies the disruption of patriarchal control. Here, defiance manifests visually through aggression and fragmentation, as the focus on hands and lips heightens her incompleteness, reminding the viewer of desire's perpetual lack. The destructive act of tearing aligns with *jouissance*, a pleasure that destabilizes symbolic order by conflating attraction with violence. Similarly, at 1:05 (FF/S/M), the seductive yet detached action of smoking amplifies her control of the gaze, presenting her as both inviting and resistant. The cigarette, coupled with fragmented close-ups, symbolizes unattainable allure, while the dimly lit environment and taboo associations reinforce the dangerous excess of *jouissance*.

This manipulation continues at 2:24 (FF/S/M), where the *femme fatale*, in a wedding gown, meets the gaze directly, controlling both the viewer and the passive male beside her. Her fragmented veiled face emphasizes *objet petit a*, as her partial concealment preserves mystery and deferral. The chaotic visual field, saturated with disorienting colors, dramatizes *jouissance*, merging pleasure with threat. At 2:34 (FF/S/M), her commanding downward gaze over a submissive male reverses the gaze dynamic entirely, asserting dominance while fragmented

close-ups of her eyes intensify her status as the unattainable. The chaotic lighting further visualizes the ambivalence of desire, an attraction inseparable from destabilization.

In Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016), similar strategies reinforce the femme fatale's elusive agency. At 0:18 (FF/S/D), direct eye contact with the camera manipulates the male gaze by simultaneously inviting and refusing total capture, while fragmented shots of her face and lace outfit underline her construction as objet petit a. The dark and neon-lit environment reflects jouissance, situating her allure within chaotic ambiguity. At 0:46 (FF/S/D), her partial concealment through fragmented close-ups and neon contrasts reiterates unattainability and danger. At 1:10 (FF/S/D), the interplay between her confident stance, ornate costume, and fragmented visual emphasis positions her as both object and agent of desire, while the excessive neon environment reflects jouissance's destabilizing pleasure.

This dynamic reaches a climax at 1:45 (FF/S/D), where her direct engagement with the gaze and central framing underscore her dominance, while fragmented body emphasis cultivates mystery. The vibrant colors and faceless surrounding figures situate her allure within chaos, reinforcing her role as both irresistible and threatening. Finally, at 3:19 (FF/S/D), the juxtaposition of her calm, indifferent demeanor with the surrounding shirtless men dramatizes the ambivalent power of the femme fatale. Fragmented shots of her lips and neckline evoke objet petit a, while the chaotic presence of male figures embodies jouissance, portraying excessive desire as destabilizing and potentially destructive.

Across both videos, the femme fatale is constructed not as a passive object but as an active manipulator of desire, embodying Lacan's triad of the gaze, objet petit a, and jouissance. Through strategies of direct confrontation, fragmentation, and chaotic visual excess, she destabilizes the symbolic order of patriarchal control. Her allure is defined by absence, mystery, and unattainability, rendering her a figure who simultaneously captivates and threatens. In this way, the archetype transcends simplistic representation, becoming a site where desire and power are negotiated, and where attraction cannot be disentangled from resistance and destruction.

## Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the persistence and transformation of the femme fatale archetype in contemporary pop culture, as exemplified in Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016). In psychoanalytic terms, Freud's concept of unconscious male anxiety surrounding female sexuality helps explain why these songs construct femininity as both alluring and destabilizing. In *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the lyrical and visual framing portray the femme fatale as an object of fascination whose unpredictability provokes both desire and fear. In contrast, *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) reconfigures this archetype by explicitly rejecting patriarchal expectations of passive femininity, thus shifting the femme fatale from a position of danger to one of refusal and resistance. This juxtaposition demonstrates how contemporary music engages the archetype not as a fixed symbol, but as a mutable site where cultural tensions surrounding gender and autonomy are negotiated.

From a Lacanian perspective, both *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) illuminate the dynamics of desire and the gaze. Lacan's notion of objet petit a, the elusive object-cause of desire, clarifies the femme fatale's enduring cultural appeal. In *Sweet but Psycho* (2018), the femme fatale embodies this elusive position, simultaneously available through her expressive emotionality yet unreachable due to her instability, which resists containment within normative romantic scripts. Meanwhile, *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) establishes the femme fatale's position through refusal: by declining to conform to the role of "pretty puppet," the subject withholds herself as an object of possession, thereby sustaining an unfulfilled desire in the gaze

of the Other. In both cases, the femme fatale functions less as a character and more as a structural role in discourse, dramatizing the impossibility of resolving tensions between masculine authority and feminine subjectivity.

A historical comparison underscores how these reconfigurations of the femme fatale diverge from earlier cultural depictions. Traditionally, as seen in classical Hollywood cinema, the femme fatale was often punished or eliminated, embodying anxieties about women's increasing social autonomy. *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) preserves elements of this tradition by portraying female desire as potentially dangerous, yet it simultaneously empowers the subject by granting her narrative centrality and emotional intensity. Conversely, *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) radically resists this older pattern by transforming the femme fatale into a figure of empowerment who refuses objectification and passive submission. Together, these texts suggest that the femme fatale in contemporary pop music no longer serves solely as a projection of male anxiety but increasingly functions as a symbol of agency, resistance, and female self-determination.

Integrating feminist psychoanalytic critiques deepens this analysis. The works of Irigaray and Kristeva emphasize how patriarchal discourse reduces female subjectivity to lack or absence. Within this framework, *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) reveals the lingering cultural anxieties associated with uncontrollable female emotion and desire, reinforcing Freud's claim that female sexuality provokes both fascination and dread. By contrast, *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) challenges this patriarchal reduction directly, positioning female subjectivity not as lack but as active refusal

of ornamental roles. Through this rejection, Daya's articulation of the femme fatale disrupts the symbolic order by refusing to operate within the confines of male fantasy. The coexistence of these two representations illustrates the dual nature of the archetype in contemporary media: both a reproduction of psychoanalytic anxieties and a vehicle for feminist resistance.

The broader implications of this comparative reading underscore the continuing relevance of psychoanalytic theory in understanding contemporary gender representations. *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) and *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) exemplify how the femme fatale remains a central cultural figure precisely because she embodies the tension between desire, fear, and autonomy. In both texts, the femme fatale destabilizes normative gender hierarchies, either by amplifying the threatening dimensions of female emotion (*Sweet but Psycho*) or by withholding herself from objectification (*Sit Still, Look Pretty*). This duality suggests that the archetype persists not simply as a relic of patriarchal imagination but as an evolving site of negotiation where female subjectivity confronts and resists cultural scripts of control. In this sense, the femme fatale's endurance across these two songs highlights her adaptability within global pop culture, affirming the archetype's ability to both reproduce psychoanalytic structures of desire and subvert them through feminist rearticulations.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the femme fatale archetype remains a critical site for examining the intersections of gender, desire, and power in contemporary pop culture. Through a psychoanalytic lens, Max's *Sweet but Psycho* (2018) illustrates Freud's anxieties surrounding female sexuality by framing the femme fatale as an unpredictable and destabilizing force, embodying both attraction and threat. Meanwhile, Daya's *Sit Still, Look Pretty* (2016) resists patriarchal discourses by redefining the femme fatale as a subject of agency and refusal, disrupting traditional notions of passive femininity. Together, these songs demonstrate that the femme fatale has evolved beyond her conventional cinematic origins into a dynamic cultural figure who reflects both the persistence of unconscious patriarchal fears and the assertion of female empowerment. The duality revealed in this analysis underscores the enduring relevance of psychoanalysis in cultural studies while affirming the archetype's adaptability in representing shifting gender dynamics within global popular media.

Future research could extend this discussion by exploring additional archetypes in contemporary music videos to better understand the evolving representations of gender and identity through psychoanalytic frameworks. Comparative investigations of the femme fatale across diverse cultural contexts may illuminate the ways global media negotiates anxieties and aspirations surrounding female subjectivity. Furthermore, systematic analyses of lyrical and visual dimensions across multiple genres could reveal deeper insights into the intersections of gender, power, and representation. Such directions would not only refine theoretical understandings of the femme fatale archetype but also broaden critical discourse on the shifting terrain of identity formation in popular culture.

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