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Romanticization of Women's Inner Struggle and Its Resistance in Kodaline's *Moving on*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the forms of feminist resistance and the representation of women's inner struggle in the lyrics of Kodaline's song *Moving On*. Using a feminist literary criticism approach, this qualitative descriptive research applies liberal feminism and post feminism as the main theoretical frameworks. The primary data is the full lyrics of the song, analyzed through close textual reading to identify passages depicting women's emotional pain, healing process, and romanticization, as well as subtle forms of resistance. The analysis reveals two major findings. First, the lyrics contain four forms of feminist resistance: resistance through reinterpretation (reading the song as a story of female resilience), resistance through agency (acknowledging the woman's ability to rebuild her life), resistance through subversion (undermining traditional gender stereotypes), and resistance through silence or absence (the woman's unspoken voice exposing the one-sidedness of the male narrative). Second, the song consistently romanticizes women's inner struggle by reducing the female ex-lover's complex emotional journey to an aesthetic and nostalgic backdrop for the male narrator's melancholy. Her pain, healing, and personal growth are filtered through the male gaze and transformed into poetic elements that serve his emotional needs. This study concludes that even conventional breakup songs can simultaneously reinforce and subtly challenge patriarchal ideologies, and that feminist readings of popular music remain essential for cultivating more equitable gender representations.

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1. Introduction

Popular music frequently reproduces unbalanced gender ideologies, in which women's emotional suffering and inner struggle are romanticized as aesthetic and poetic elements to support the male narrative. Rather than being portrayed as a complex experience requiring agency and resolution, women's pain is often reduced to a beautiful backdrop for male storytelling (McDermott, 2022). Large-scale studies have also shown gender bias and sexism in song lyrics over the past decade, where female representation is often reduced or romanticized.

Among many breakup songs that exhibit this tendency, *Moving On* by Kodaline (2015) was deliberately chosen as the object of this study. This song is particularly representative because it is narrated entirely from a male perspective and subtly romanticizes the woman's inner struggle while appearing to be a mature and reflective song about acceptance. Unlike more aggressive or overtly emotional breakup songs, *Moving On* uses soft,

nostalgic, and seemingly respectful language, which makes its underlying patriarchal romanticization more insidious and worthy of deeper feminist scrutiny.

The song depicts an unexpected reunion between the male narrator and his ex-lover who has already married happily. Several lyrics clearly illustrate the romanticization of women's emotional pain, such as: "I heard you settled down and that you married happily"; "I guess that all that time apart has done you well"; and "Oh, do you remember when I told you that I loved you to the bottom of the sea?" These lines portray the woman's healing process and new life as something poetic and emotionally touching for the narrator, rather than acknowledging the real pain, emotional labor, and inner struggle she must have experienced. The repeated chorus "I will keep moving on" further positions the male narrator as the resilient figure, while the woman's growth is used primarily as a nostalgic backdrop for his feelings.

This study specifically focuses on the romanticization of women's inner struggle in the process of moving on after a breakup. The lyrics subtly portray the woman's emotional turmoil and internal conflict as mere nostalgic backdrop for the male narrator's resilience, thereby diminishing her agency and personal journey of healing. From a feminist perspective, such representation reinforces patriarchal tendencies that aestheticize women's inner struggle rather than acknowledging it as a valid and complex experience deserving its own narrative space (Amanda et al., 2024; Caroline et al., 2023).

This study is relevant because popular music has a significant influence on shaping societal perceptions of gender. Damayanti et al. (2023) applied feminist literary criticism to Taylor Swift's 'The Man,' demonstrating how popular music can serve as a site for both reproducing and challenging gender ideologies. By analyzing *Moving On*, this research aims not only to uncover the mechanisms of romanticization but also to identify hidden forms of feminist resistance within the lyrics, thereby encouraging critical readings and more empowering interpretations for women.

Several previous studies have examined feminist perspectives on song lyrics, yet none have specifically addressed the romanticization of women's inner struggle in male-narrated breakup songs such as Kodaline's *Moving On*. Amanda et al. (2024) applied feminist criticism to Taylor Swift's *The Man*, focusing on resistance to gender stereotypes through direct lyrical confrontation. Large-scale computational studies by Betti et al. (2023), Chen et al. (2025), and Urbano et al. (2022) revealed widespread gender bias and sexism in pop lyrics but remained quantitative and did not explore subtle forms of feminist resistance. Postfeminist analyses by Chen (2024) discussed the aestheticization of female pain in popular culture, while Maemunah and Rahmawati (2025) employed gyno criticism on Paris Paloma's songs to highlight women's inner experiences. Zolkifli and Ghani (2024) examined figurative language in explicitly feminist songs. This study fills the identified gap by conducting a qualitative feminist reading of a conventional male-perspective breakup song, emphasizing subtle, implicit resistance against the romanticization of women's inner struggle.

Based on the background outlined above, this research identifies the following problems: (1) What forms of feminist resistance to this romanticization can be identified in the lyrics? (2) How is women's inner struggle represented and romanticized in the lyrics of *Moving On* by Kodaline? In line with these research problems, this study aims to identify and classify the forms of feminist resistance embedded in the lyrics, and to analyze the representation and romanticization of women's inner struggle in the lyrics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theory of Feminism

Feminism criticizes patriarchy that places women as emotional objects. Butler (1997) argues that the subject is constituted through power relations, and that resistance emerges

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from within the very structures that constrain it. Liberal feminism emphasizes equality and individual autonomy, while post feminism assumes equality has been achieved but often reproduces stereotypes through pop culture consumption (McDermott, 2022). These theories are used to critically analyze the lyrics and uncover potential sites of feminist resistance against the romanticization of women's inner struggle. This research combines two main streams, namely liberal feminism and post feminism, which complement each other to reveal gender inequality in contemporary popular culture.

2.2 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism emphasizes individual equality between men and women, with a focus on human rights, personal autonomy, and the removal of structural barriers that limit women, such as discrimination in the workplace, education, or media representation. This school has its roots in enlightenment thought and the first wave of feminism, where women are seen as rational individuals entitled to equal rights and opportunities. In the lyrical analysis, liberal feminism is used to critique how the male narrator in *Moving On* portrays women as a symbol of nostalgia or "settled down happily," thereby reducing women's autonomy and reproducing gender inequality. Liberal feminism is relevant because it advocates fair representation and equality in pop culture, including song lyrics that often reproduce gender stereotypes.

2.3 Post feminism

Post feminism emerged as a response to second and third waves of feminism, often associated with the 1990s to the present, where it was assumed that the goal of feminism (equality) had been achieved, so that feminism was considered obsolete or no longer necessary. However, post feminism often reproduces gender stereotypes through popular culture consumption, such as the romanticization of women's suffering as a form of false empowerment, body self-surveillance, or individual resilience narratives that rely on gender ideals. In the context of popular music, post feminism criticizes how women's emotional pain is romanticized as an aesthetic element or backdrop for the male establishment, creating a "feel-bad post feminism" in which emotional impasse is exploited without structural change. In the lyrics of *Moving On*, post feminism helps analyze how the hope of a reunion ("sometime in the future") reproduces patriarchal emotional control, while the phrase "I'll keep on moving on" can be deconstructed as resistance to such possessive narratives. This theory is relevant because pop culture like Kodaline's songs often assumes equality already exists, but actually reinforces inequality through the romanticization of women's pain.

These two theories complement each other: liberal feminism provides a normative basis for demanding equality and autonomy, while post feminism criticizes how such equality is faked in popular cultural representations. The gyno criticism approach (Showalter, 1979) is also used briefly to focus on the female experience in the text, so that lyrical analysis can reveal feminist resistance to the romanticization of pain as a patriarchal form.

2.4 The Concept of Romanticization

Romanticization in popular culture is the idealized portrayal of painful experiences as aesthetically appealing or emotionally desirable, often masking their harsh realities (McDermott, 2022; Weidhase, 2024). In breakup songs, women's inner struggle is romanticized by depicting emotional pain and heartbreak as poetic or transformative elements that serve as backdrop for male narratives, reducing women's suffering to an aesthetic spectacle rather than a legitimate experience (Amanda et al., 2024; Caroline et al., 2023).

The romanticization of women's suffering has profound implications for gender construction. It reinforces patriarchal ideologies by positioning women as inherently emotional and passive beings whose pain is consumable entertainment, while men are depicted as resilient agents. This process perpetuates harmful stereotypes, diminishes women's autonomy, normalizes suffering as a feminine trait, and hinders genuine gender equality by framing women's inner struggle as aesthetic rather than political or structural (Weidhase, 2024; James, 2020).

2.5 Women's Inner Struggle in Literature

Women's inner struggle refers to the internal psychological and emotional conflicts experienced by women as a result of patriarchal oppression, societal expectations, and gender norms. Common forms include self-doubt, emotional labor, identity negotiation, suppressed anger, and the tension between personal desires and social roles (Showalter, 1979; Maemunah & Rahmawati, 2025). In literary works and popular music, women's inner struggle is often represented through internal monologues, symbolic imagery, or emotional lyrics. However, these representations frequently romanticize or marginalize the struggle, turning it into aesthetic material for male narratives or audience catharsis rather than granting women full agency and voice (James, 2020; Weidhase, 2024).

2.6 Resistance in Feminist Theory

In feminist theory, resistance does not always mean explicit protest or open rebellion. Abu-Lughod (1990) cautions against romanticizing resistance, arguing that everyday forms of resistance must be understood within the specific power relations in which they emerge. In the context of popular culture, resistance can be subtle, implicit, or even unintentional, manifesting through alternative readings, deconstruction of dominant narratives, or the reclamation of agency within seemingly conformist texts (Weidhase, 2024; Maemunah & Rahmawati, 2025).

2.7 Forms of Resistance

a. Resistance Through Reinterpretation. This form involves re-reading the text from a feminist perspective to uncover hidden meanings and challenge the dominant patriarchal narrative, allowing the woman's inner struggle to be understood as valid and empowering rather than merely romanticized.
b. Resistance Through Agency. This occurs when the female figure is shown to possess control over her own emotions and decisions, asserting her autonomy and refusing to be defined solely by the male narrator's gaze or nostalgia.
c. Resistance Through Subversion. This form reverses or undermines traditional gender stereotypes by flipping expected roles, thereby exposing and critiquing the patriarchal assumptions embedded in the lyrics.
d. Resistance Through Silence or Absence. What is left unsaid or omitted in the text can itself become a powerful act of resistance, highlighting the erasure of the woman's voice and inviting readers to question the gaps in the male-dominated narrative.
e. Resistance in Popular Music. In popular songs that appear conventional, listeners and researchers can identify moments of resistance by examining subtle linguistic choices, contradictions, or shifts in perspective within the lyrics. Such readings transform seemingly passive texts into sites of feminist critique and empowerment.

3. Research Method

This study used a qualitative design with a feminist literary criticism approach as the main design. This design was chosen because it was appropriate to analyze the lyrics of the

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song as a literary text that reproduces or resists patriarchal gender ideology, especially the romanticization of women's inner pain in the context of the process of moving on from a breakup. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of meaning, gender representation, and forms of resistance through text interpretation, rather than quantitative measurement.

This design was qualitative descriptive, where the lyrics of the song *Moving On* by Kodaline (2015) were treated as a single primary data. The analysis focused on linguistic elements, gender representation, and ideological implications, with the support of liberal feminism and post feminism theories. This approach is in line with recent studies of feminist analysis of song lyrics, which often use qualitative methods to critique gender bias and sexism in popular music.

The data sources of this study consisted of two categories. The first was primary data: the full lyrics of the song *Moving On* by Kodaline (2015). The second was secondary data: articles, journals, interviews, and reviews related to the song, along with theoretical literature on feminist criticism, post feminism, and gender representation in popular music.

Data collection of this study employed documentation techniques within library research. The researcher collected data by systematically documenting the primary lyrics of *Moving On* and noting relevant passages from secondary sources (articles, journals, interviews, and reviews). This process involved careful reading, highlighting, and recording of textual evidence without any field observation, surveys, or interviews with respondents. All data were gathered purposively and systematically to ensure relevance, accuracy, and depth in analyzing the romanticization of women's inner struggle.

In this study, data analysis was conducted qualitatively using feminist literary criticism through the following systematic techniques:

1. Identification: Reading the lyrics thoroughly and marking passages that depict women's inner struggle.
2. Classification: Grouping the marked lyrics according to elements of romanticization and potential sites of resistance.
3. Interpretation: Analyzing the deeper meanings behind the lyrics by applying feminist theories (liberal feminism and post feminism).
4. Identification of resistance forms: Examining specific elements in the lyrics that can be read as subtle, implicit, or unintentional resistance against the romanticization of women's inner struggle.
5. Conclusion: Drawing conclusions on the forms of feminist resistance found in the song and presenting alternative empowering interpretations.

4. Discussion

The analysis is organized into two main sections that correspond to the two research questions formulated in the introduction. The first section identifies and classifies the forms of feminist resistance embedded within the lyrics, examining how these resistances, though subtle and implicit, challenge the dominant patriarchal narrative constructed by the male narrator. The second section analyzes the representation and romanticization of women's inner struggle, exploring how the female ex-lover's emotional pain, healing process, and personal growth are filtered through the male gaze and transformed into aesthetic and nostalgic elements that primarily serve the narrator's emotional needs. Throughout the analysis, the lyrics are treated as a literary text and examined through the lenses of liberal feminism and post feminism, supported by gyno criticism, to uncover the ideological tensions operating within the song. The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that *Moving On* operates on two levels simultaneously: on the surface, it romanticizes women's inner struggle as a

beautiful and emotionally consumable backdrop to male melancholy; beneath this surface, however, quiet but significant forms of feminist resistance emerge, opening space for alternative and empowering interpretations.

4.1 Forms of Feminist Resistance Identified in the Lyrics

Although *Moving on* by Kodaline (2015) is predominantly narrated from a male perspective and romanticizes women's emotional pain, a feminist reading reveals several subtle yet significant forms of resistance embedded within the lyrics. These resistances do not manifest as overt rebellion but appear through quiet contradictions, absences, and alternative interpretations that challenge the dominant patriarchal narrative. Drawing on the forms of resistance outlined in the literature review, this analysis identifies four types of feminist resistance in the lyrics: reinterpretation, agency, subversion, and silence/absence. The fifth category, resistance through popular music, is addressed implicitly within these four, as all resistance discussed here emerges from a critical reading of a popular song.

4.1.1 *Resistance Through Reinterpretation*

One of the most significant forms of feminist resistance in *Moving On* is resistance through reinterpretation. From the male narrator's perspective, the song appears to be a story of lost love and personal melancholy. However, when reinterpreted through a feminist lens, the same lyrics reveal a story of female strength and resilience. For example, the line "I heard you settled down and that you married happily" is presented with sadness by the narrator, but a feminist reinterpretation sees it as evidence of the woman's successful healing and ability to rebuild her life. Similarly, the repeated chorus "I will keep moving on" gains new meaning: while the man is still trying to move on, the woman has already done so. This reinterpretation transforms the song from a romantic ballad about male heartbreak into a quiet celebration of women's strength and capacity to recover.

4.1.2 *Resistance Through Agency*

Resistance through agency appears when the woman is shown to possess control over her own life and decisions. The line "I heard you settled down and that you married happily" strongly demonstrates this. Despite the romanticized tone, it acknowledges that the woman has actively rebuilt her life, entered a new relationship, and found happiness after the breakup. This act of moving on and settling down happily represents her autonomy and refusal to remain defined by the failed relationship. From a liberal feminist perspective, this asserts her status as an independent subject rather than a passive object of the narrator's nostalgia.

4.1.3 *Resistance Through Subversion*

Resistance through subversion occurs when the lyrics unintentionally undermine traditional gender stereotypes. The repeated chorus "I will keep moving on" is meant to portray the male narrator as resilient. However, it ironically reveals that the woman has already moved on successfully—she has settled down and married happily—while the narrator is still haunted by memories. This creates a quiet reversal of the common stereotype that men are emotionally stronger after breakups. The line "I guess that all that time apart has done you well" further subverts expectations by admitting that the woman has thrived during the separation.

4.1.4 *Resistance Through Silence or Absence*

The most profound form of resistance in the song is the complete absence of the woman's voice. She never speaks. All information about her life, feelings, and growth is filtered exclusively through the male narrator's subjective gaze. This silence is powerful

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because it exposes the one-sided nature of the patriarchal narrative. The absence of her voice invites the audience to question: What is her real story? How did she truly experience the breakup and healing process? By not giving her direct expression, the song paradoxically prevents her from being fully objectified and opens space for feminist listeners to imagine and reconstruct her perspective.

4.2 Representation and Romanticization of Women's Inner Struggle in *Moving On*

The textual analysis of the lyrics of *Moving on* by Kodaline (2015) reveals a clear pattern of romanticization toward women's inner struggle. The song is narrated entirely from a male perspective, portraying the woman's life after the breakup as an idealized, beautiful, and emotionally appealing image, rather than acknowledging the complexity of her emotional journey.

The romanticization is strongly reflected in several key lyrics: "I heard you settled down and that you married happily," "I guess that all that time apart has done you well," and "Oh, do you remember when I told you that I loved you to the bottom of the sea?" In these lines, the male narrator romanticizes the woman's healing process and new life. Her happiness and personal growth are not presented as her own achievement or victory, but rather as something that makes the narrator feel nostalgic and melancholic. The phrase "has done you well" implies that her success in moving on is viewed through the lens of how it affects the male narrator emotionally, not as an independent process of her inner struggle.

Furthermore, the narrator's longing is reinforced in the following lines: "It's funny how but it still bothers me, I know it's been so long but I did not expect to see oh how beautiful you are." Here, the woman's beauty and improved state of life are highlighted not to celebrate her, but to intensify the narrator's own emotional pain. The woman's inner struggle—her pain of moving on, emotional labor, self-doubt, and healing process—is completely erased and replaced with a poetic, aesthetic image that serves the male's feelings of loss and nostalgia.

Additionally, the repeated hope of a future reunion in the chorus: "Sometime in the future maybe we can get together, maybe share a drink and talk a while and reminisce about the days when we were still together" shows that the narrator still positions himself as part of the woman's future story. This subtly implies that her current happiness is temporary or incomplete without him, reflecting a patriarchal desire to maintain emotional control over her narrative.

Moving On does not give the female character a voice or agency. Her inner struggle is romanticized as a beautiful and emotionally consumable element for the male narrator's story, rather than being recognized as a legitimate, complex, and independent personal experience. This representation strengthens the patriarchal ideology that women's pain and growth exist primarily to serve male emotional narratives.

4.2.1 *Identifying Passages Depicting Women's Inner Struggle*

Although the song is narrated entirely from a male perspective, several passages indirectly reveal the woman's inner struggle by implying her emotional journey of healing, self-reconstruction, and personal growth after the breakup. Following the identification step outlined in the method, the lyrics were read line by line to map passages that depict the woman's emotional state, healing process, or internal conflict. This careful textual examination uncovered three significant passages that implicitly portray the woman's inner struggle, even though her voice is never directly heard.

"I heard you settled down and that you married happily." This opening line suggests that the woman has successfully rebuilt her life and found stability and happiness after the end of the relationship. The phrase "settled down" implies a long and difficult process of

emotional recovery, including dealing with grief, loneliness, identity negotiation, and the challenge of trusting again. However, her inner struggle is not explored in depth; it is condensed into a brief, positive summary. From a liberal feminist perspective, this framing denies the woman recognition as an autonomous individual whose healing journey belongs to her alone. Her achievement is co-opted into the male narrator's emotional landscape, serving primarily as a trigger for his nostalgia rather than being celebrated as her independent accomplishment. Post feminism would critique this as a form of "feel-bad post feminism" (McDermott, 2022), where women's suffering is aestheticized and consumed as entertainment rather than addressed as a structural or personal reality deserving of genuine narrative space.

"I guess that all that time apart has done you well." This line subtly acknowledges the significant period of separation during which the woman had to confront her pain, process complex emotions, and work through the psychological impact of the breakup. "Time apart" refers to a phase filled with emotional labor, self-reflection, and the difficult task of rebuilding self-worth. Yet, the narrator romanticizes this painful chapter by presenting it as something ultimately beneficial and graceful from his viewpoint. From a liberal feminist perspective, this statement undermines the woman's autonomy by interpreting her personal growth solely through its effect on the male narrator. Her emotional labor during that time is not recognized as her own effort but is reframed to comfort his melancholy. Post feminism would critique this as a form of "feel-bad post feminism" (McDermott, 2022), where women's suffering is aestheticized and consumed as entertainment rather than addressed as a structural or personal reality deserving of genuine narrative space.

"Oh, how beautiful you are." This passage reflects the woman's transformation after the breakup. Her "beauty" here symbolizes not only physical appearance but also emotional maturity, strength, and the positive outcome of her inner struggle. However, this growth is presented as surprising and aesthetically pleasing to the male gaze, turning her personal development into an object of admiration and nostalgia. From a liberal feminist perspective, this framing reduces the woman to an object of visual and emotional admiration, denying her full subjectivity and the legitimacy of her personal journey. Her achievement in healing is once again co-opted to intensify the narrator's emotional experience. Post feminism would critique this as a form of "feel-bad post feminism" (McDermott, 2022), where women's suffering is aestheticized and consumed as entertainment rather than addressed as a structural or personal reality deserving of genuine narrative space.

These identified passages demonstrate that although the woman's inner struggle is implicitly present, it is consistently filtered, romanticized, and subordinated to the male narrator's emotional needs. This sets the foundation for further analysis of how the song romanticizes women's emotional pain in the following subsection.

4.2.2 *Romanticization of Emotional Pain*

The textual analysis of the lyrics of *Moving On* by Kodaline (2015) reveals a strong tendency to romanticize the woman's emotional pain and inner struggle. Inner struggle refers to the psychological process of coping with heartbreak, including pain, self-doubt, emotional labor, and the journey toward healing. In these lyrics, however, this complex process is reduced to a smooth, idealized narrative.

The song consistently presents the woman's suffering not as a raw, difficult, and legitimate personal experience, but as something poetic, beautiful, and emotionally appealing from the male narrator's perspective. This romanticization serves to enhance the narrator's own feelings of nostalgia and melancholy while diminishing the woman's agency.

This pattern is clearly visible in several significant passages. First, in the line "I heard you settled down and that you married happily," the woman's long and painful journey of healing after the breakup is reduced to a single, pleasant statement. The phrases "settled

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down" and "married happily" imply that she has successfully moved on with her life. However, the process of reaching that point—dealing with heartbreak, loneliness, self-doubt, and emotional recovery—is completely erased. Her inner struggle is transformed into a smooth and idealized happy ending that exists primarily to highlight the narrator's sense of loss.

Second, the line "I guess that all the time apart has done you well" further demonstrates this romanticization. The expression "time apart" refers to the period when the woman had to endure emotional pain, loneliness, and the difficult work of rebuilding herself. Instead of acknowledging her suffering, the narrator romanticizes this painful phase by suggesting that it has improved her, making her struggle sound graceful, beneficial, and almost admirable. This framing turns her hardship into a positive transformation that benefits the emotional tone of the song.

Third, the line "Oh how beautiful you are" aestheticizes the woman's emotional growth. After going through a significant inner struggle, the woman has changed and become stronger. However, the narrator describes this change as "beautiful," turning her personal healing and transformation into an object of visual and emotional admiration. Her pain and growth are once again consumed as something pleasing to the male gaze rather than being recognized as her own complex journey.

Overall, these passages illustrate that the woman's emotional pain is never allowed to stand on its own. It is consistently filtered through the male narrator's nostalgic lens and turned into an aesthetic and poetic element. By romanticizing her suffering, the song reinforces a patriarchal ideology in which women's inner struggle exists mainly to enrich the male emotional narrative, rather than being acknowledged as valid, independent experiences deserving of their own voice and recognition.

4.3 Findings

The feminist textual analysis of Kodaline's *Moving On* (2015) yields two major findings that together reveal the complex gender politics embedded within the song's lyrics.

First, the analysis uncovers four meaningful forms of feminist resistance embedded within the lyrics, despite the dominant romanticized narrative. These resistances do not appear as overt rebellion but emerge through quiet contradictions, absences, and alternative interpretations that challenge the patriarchal narrative from within.

1. Resistance through reinterpretation allows the song to be read not as a story of male heartbreak but as a quiet celebration of female resilience—the woman has successfully healed and moved on, while the male narrator remains emotionally stuck.
2. Resistance through agency is found in the lyrics' implicit acknowledgment that the woman has actively rebuilt her life and found happiness independently, asserting her autonomy and refusing to be defined by the failed relationship.
3. Resistance through subversion emerges when the song unintentionally undermines traditional gender stereotypes: the male narrator claims to be moving on, yet ironically, the woman has already done so, revealing his emotional stagnation and reversing the stereotype that men are more resilient after breakups.
4. Resistance through silence or absence lies in the complete lack of the woman's voice throughout the song. Her silence is powerful because it exposes the one-sidedness of the male narrative and invites feminist listeners to question, imagine, and reconstruct her perspective. What is left unsaid becomes a space for critical engagement and alternative storytelling.

Second, the analysis finds that the song consistently romanticizes women's inner struggle by reducing the female ex-lover's complex emotional journey to an aesthetic and

nostalgic backdrop for the male narrator's melancholy. Throughout the lyrics, the woman's pain, healing process, and personal growth are never allowed to stand on their own. Instead, they are consistently filtered through the male narrator's nostalgic lens and turned into poetic, beautiful elements that serve his emotional needs. Lines such as "I heard you settled down and that you married happily," "I guess that all that time apart has done you well," and "Oh how beautiful you are" illustrate this pattern clearly. Her happiness and transformation are presented not as her own achievements but as triggers for the narrator's sadness and longing. The repeated hope of a future reunion further reinforces this dynamic by implying that her current happiness is incomplete without him. The woman is never given a voice or agency; her inner struggle exists primarily to enrich the male emotional narrative.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that *Moving On* operates on two levels simultaneously. On the surface, it romanticizes women's inner struggle by framing her healing as a beautiful, nostalgia-inducing backdrop to the male narrator's melancholy. Beneath this surface, however, a feminist reading uncovers quiet but significant forms of resistance that challenge the patriarchal narrative and open space for empowering alternative interpretations. These findings confirm that even conventional breakup songs are not ideologically innocent; they are rich cultural texts that both reflect and shape gender relations, and they are worthy of critical feminist analysis. The study ultimately shows that popular music can simultaneously reinforce and subtly resist patriarchal ideologies, and that attentive feminist reading can reveal sites of resistance even in texts that appear to conform to traditional gender norms.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the dual operation of romanticization and feminist resistance in Kodaline's Moving On (2015) through feminist literary criticism. The findings reveal that the song romanticizes the female ex-lover's emotional struggles, healing, and personal growth by framing her transformation through the male narrator's melancholy and gaze, as illustrated in descriptions of her happiness, recovery, and beauty. However, feminist resistance emerges through reinterpretation, the woman's agency in rebuilding her life, the contrast between her progress and the narrator's emotional stagnation, and her silence, which exposes the one-sidedness of the male narrative. Thus, Moving On simultaneously reinforces patriarchal representations of women's emotional experiences and offers opportunities to challenge them through alternative feminist readings. The study demonstrates that popular breakup songs are not ideologically neutral but reflect and shape gender relations, highlighting the importance of feminist criticism in uncovering subtle resistance and promoting more equitable representations of women's emotional lives.

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