

A Swift Spin On Literature: Taylor Swift's Feminist Reimagination of Male-Dominated
Literature

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Introduction

The song entitled "Wonderland" by Taylor Swift, which she describes as "a sort of twisted Alice and Wonderland" (@thisistors 2023) sets up a narrative for its audience that is more complex than the fictional setting of Wonderland itself. Upon first listening, the song is a clear adaptation of the original text, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll. However, Swift, unlike Carroll, allows the audience to hear from Alice herself, who is for the first time written by a female. Alice's emotions and experiences are more visible through this perspective, and this allows the readers and listeners to view Alice's narrative from a different lens. Swift writes,

Flashing Lights

And we took a wrong turn

And we fell down a rabbit hole

You held on tight to me

'Cause nothing's as it seems

And spinning out of control. (lines 1-6)

Similar to Carroll's book, the song starts with Alice going down the rabbit hole; however, in this version, she can speak for herself. By giving Alice agency over her own experiences, Swift reflects upon toxic and corrupt behaviors in the original story and sends a message of why it is so important for a woman's voice to be heard. By changing the perspective, she is also able to shift the ending to one that describes a toxic cycle, which causes every party involved to go insane. She writes, "And in the end in Wonderland, we both went mad" (line 54). Through the alternative

perspective, where Alice remembers the chaos that she endured, she can learn from it and grow for the better.

This particular song is not out of the norm for Swift and demonstrates, it is a common theme throughout her discography as she attempts to give women more power through her writing. Throughout all thirteen of her studio albums, Swift retells a variety of male-centric texts to provide a voice for female characters. By embedding different elements from male-dominated literature, she can offer a feminist lens in examining these texts.

Because Swift is a widespread phenomenon across the globe and has broken countless records in the music industry, her feminist work can reach a massive audience. To name a few of her many achievements, Swift is the youngest artist to ever receive a Grammy, the first woman to receive Album of the Year three times, and the most-nominated female artist for Song of The Year. Her song "All Too Well (The Ten Minute Version) (Taylor's Version)" is the longest in history to reach number one on the charts, and she is the first to claim all ten spots on the Billboard Top 100. In addition to her countless prestigious awards, Swift is one of the few successful artists to conduct a complete genre shift from country to pop. Her shift and awards are reflective of her ability to create new versions of herself throughout each era.

She is constantly creating new material to prevent herself from becoming obsolete, and she does so with confidence and grace. In her documentary entitled *Miss Americana*, Swift claims, "Female artists that I know have reinvented themselves twenty times more than the male artists. They have to or they're out of a job. Constantly having to reinvent ourselves" (Swift 1:10:15). While she is speaking of her person and persona here, this same concept can as easily be applied to her songwriting process. Swift's songwriting honors and embodies reinvention as she consistently recreates old texts into new, woman-centric anthems.

Within a wide range of her songs, Swift can reinvent male-centric literature to create contemporary new meaning from centuries of old texts. As she frequently reworks classic literature into pop and country songs, she "reinvents" elements of the texts, including but not limited to characters, narrative perspectives, word choice, settings, and plots to create new cohesive songs and videos that deliver a message of women's empowerment. Pulling from dozens of authors, Swift appears to play most closely with stories of tragic love and in some cases alters the ending from the original texts to allow for female characters to speak out. Swift notably works with texts from Shakespeare and Fitzgerald throughout her entire discography. She can reinvent these narratives through a feminist lens, offering women's perspectives that were ignored in the original texts.

Swift's storytelling ability is evident amongst many scholars, specifically Chloe Harrison and Helen Ringrow. In their article, "Disnarration and the Performance of Storytelling in Taylor Swift's folklore and evermore," the deliberacy in Swift's work is evident. Rather than individually creating each song, Swift can holistically create a story within her writing. Throughout her albums created within the pandemic "folklore" and "evermore," she builds on her storytelling abilities. The authors write,

The combination and creation of characters in her writing – personal, mythological, or otherwise – and the connections and references that are built up between and across her songs, mean that, famously, her lyrics are full of 'Easter eggs': significant references that fans and listeners paying close attention can identify and draw on to create new threads of meaning across her oeuvre. (Harrison and Ringrow 3)

By providing 'Easter eggs' for her listeners, she is creating a narration that asks audiences to consider the picture. Evident in the creation of her own stories, she is also able to apply this to previously written texts.

Additionally, it is significant to note that although Swift is adapting other authors, there are artists who continue to adapt her work. As she empowers women to use their voices to reflect on their experiences, artists such as Olivia Rodrigo use Swift's art to influence their own. Throughout Rodrigo's song "déjà vu," for example, she recounts a toxic relationship she endured and the pain she goes through to cope with this past relationship. Adapting not only the meaning but tone of Swift's "Cruel Summer," Rodrigo has adapted this song to make it her top hit. There are various instances of artists building upon Swift's work to create their own, which further promotes adaptations that occur. These adaptations from Swift demonstrate her influence on music and culture and demonstrate her adaptive impact across the entire music industry.

By writing from the perspectives of these female characters, Swift is not only reinventing herself but also retelling the stories of women and girls. She can reflect on her personal experiences from being a woman and translate these experiences into songs that are not only compelling and relatable but meaningful to women across the globe. Alice is only one example of what Taylor Swift has transformed, and as this argument progresses, her adaptations will develop a clear recreation and celebration of the female characters that were once silenced. Swift's discography is composed of pop-cultural feminist adaptations from old male-centric literature; specifically through her recreations of the female characters within *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. By reworking these texts throughout several songs and music videos, Swift creates adaptations that not only give a voice to silenced female characters, but also dismantle patriarchal paradigms of love, desire, and

marriage that these women are trapped in. Thus, she promotes women's perspectives while simultaneously critiquing the systems that oppress them.

Swift's Activism

As both an activist and an artist, Swift is able not only to write all of her songs but utilize these lyrics to spread a message to all of her audiences. In addition to using her voice for entertainment and income, she uses it as a creative and engaging way to educate people. In the more recent years of her career, Swift has expanded from reflecting on her personal experiences to becoming more political. Similar to the ways she reinvents her female characters, such as allowing Alice to speak up, she has reinvented herself to become a more prominent voice as a political advocate.

Evident in her promotion of women's equality and her participation in the #MeToo Movement, Swift's voice can cause an impact beyond just her songwriting. In 2013, when Swift was only twenty-three years old, she was sexually assaulted at one of her concerts. This set a match to the political flames she once held in and caused a four-year legal battle with the man who denied assaulting her. Throughout *Miss Americana*, she shares her experience by stating,

You walk into a courtroom and then there's this person in a swivel chair looking at you like you did something to him. The first thing they say to you in court is, why didn't you scream? Why didn't you react quicker? Why didn't you stand further away from him? Then he has a lawyer get up and just lie. There were seven people who saw him do this, and we had a photo of it happening. And I was so angry. I was angry that I had to be there. I was angry that this happens to women. I was angry that people are paid to antagonize victims. I was angry that all the details had been twisted. You don't feel a sense of any victory when you win, because the process is so dehumanizing. This is with

seven witnesses and a photo. What happens when you get raped, and it's your word against his? (56:41)

At this point in her career, Swift was being criticized by individuals who did not even know her, and she became much more outspoken about her feminist ideologies. After enduring sexual harassment, which occurs in one in four women, Swift was fed up. She utilized her voice not only in the courtroom, the press, and her songwriting, but later spoke out further in her documentary entitled *Miss Americana*. Not only did she speak of her commitment to women's rights, but she also began to advocate for the LGBTQ+ Community.

To be as deliberate as possible, Swift does not only reflect on her own experiences but constantly researches different political movements to be as true and accurate as possible.

Through her documentary, she claims,

I'm trying to be as educated as possible on how to respect people, on how to deprogram the misogyny in my own brain, toss it out, reject it, and resist it. We don't want to be condemned for being multi-faceted. (1:20:20)

By expressing her beliefs in the 2018 midterm election, she spoke against the candidate Marsha Blackburn, for trying to remove abortion rights for women in Nashville. Through her support of the candidate Phil Bredesen, Swift was able to boost voter registration immensely. She spread the message out to her fans and encouraged them to use their voices positively to shift change in a corrupt society. According to a 2018 article from CNBC, "65,000 Americans ages 18 to 29 registered to vote in the roughly 24 hours after the singer-songwriter's social media rallying cry" (Breuninger). Although Swift's political push was not enough to change the outcome of the 2018 election, the amount of registrations was astronomical.

Through each of her ten studio albums, Swift is the primary and, in most cases, only writer on each song. For her first six studio albums, *Taylor Swift*, *Fearless*, *Speak Now*, *Red*, *1989*, and *Reputation*, Swift was under contract with Big Machine Records. This contract from 2005 stated that she did not own any of the music she wrote, sang, and created. As of 2019, Swift's lyrics were no longer copyrighted and she would have had the opportunity to purchase these albums until Scooter Braun with Big Machine Records got to them first. Without her knowledge, Swift found out about this at the same time as the public. A statement of hers from today.com states,

All I could think about was the incessant, manipulative bullying I've received at his hands for years. Like when Kim Kardashian orchestrated an illegally recorded snippet of a phone call to be leaked and then Scooter got his two clients together to bully me online about it. Or when his client, Kanye West, organized a revenge porn music video that strips my body naked. Now Scooter has stripped me of my life's work, that I wasn't allowed to buy. Essentially, my musical legacy is about to lie in the hands of someone who tried to dismantle it ... He knew what he was doing; they both did. Controlling a woman who didn't want to be associated with them. In perpetuity. That means forever.

(Caldwell)

By taking control over her music, Braun was also taking control over her. Going against everything Swift stands for in the music industry, and society, she knew that something needed to be done.

Starting in April of 2021, Swift began to individually re-record and re-release her first six albums, beginning with *Fearless (Taylor's Version)*. By offering her fans new incentives such as *vault songs*, which have never been released, new merchandise, and new features, Swift hoped to

gain support and complete ownership of her music. To date, Swift has re-released all but two of her first six albums, *Taylor Swift* and *Reputation*. With only her name and reputation to take back, Swift continues to recreate and reinvent her old works and herself. As a woman, Swift has taken agency over her work, which mirrors the agency she provides for the female characters in her songs. By reclaiming her music, she is developing a professional trajectory that once belonged to a man. Given her prominence and power in the music industry, her success in re-releasing her albums is as much personal as it is political. She is making a statement about the importance of any artist, more specifically women, owning their music. Swift's music reaches out to newer generations, while additionally advocating for groups that have been marginalized in the past. As she adapts texts such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Great Gatsby*, her reinvention, and personal and political beliefs are a part of the narrative she aims to create. Through her tremendous impact on the industry, she notably aims to reach the youth to change the future.

Feminist Adaptation Theory

Feminism examines how women are marginalized due to their gender, whereas men are granted an invisible privilege that creates oppression in society. Although there are many ways to define feminism, Pat Maguire's definition helps to explain the particular kind of feminist work that Swift's adaptations contribute to. She writes

Feminism is: (a) a belief that [women] universally face some form of oppression or exploitation; (b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms and (c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression. (Maguire 79)

Texts written by Shakespeare and Fitzgerald are written to discuss the tragedies of men, and neglect to acknowledge the oppression women face. Through Swift's adaptations, she first

acknowledges that the exploitation of women exists through examining the lack of representation that is given to them in the original texts. Through her recreation of their stories, she commits to uncovering why women are marginalized and aims to inform her audiences. Lastly, through her collective works and pleas to her fans, she uses her voice to end this oppression and paves the way for women to tell their own stories.

For centuries, toxic love stories such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Great Gatsby* have been embedded in literary culture. Young girls seek models for how relationships are meant to develop, and stories such as these pass along misogynistic messages about a woman's role in society. The texts pass along messages such as the objectification of women, compulsory marriage, and manipulation. By further promoting patriarchal expectations, there is a clear disconnect between these texts and their 21st-century readers. Swift can recognize and deconstruct these single-minded narratives as she develops cultural feminist adaptations of these outdated texts. Swift's activism reflects her narrative shifts, as she takes old male-centric views, and creates new transformative works.

Adaptations can be described as a variety of ways that new authors and artists construct older materials into new, creative, and engaging works. While various theories of adaptation exist, throughout Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, she defines adaptation as "a creative and interpretive transposition of a recognizable other work or works, adaptation is a kind of extended palimpsest and, at the same time, often transcoding into a different set of conventions" (33). By recreating past works, authors and artists can include their personal experiences to influence these newly transformed stories. Swift's reinventions of these texts include shifts in character actions, alternate endings, and modern approaches to outdated interpretations. Adaptations are seen everywhere, whether something as short as a poem, or as large as an entire

film franchise. Some may argue that Swift's work merely alludes to classic literature; however, this thesis proposes that her discography is a form of feminist adaptation that is reflective of her own experiences as a woman and an advocate for other women. The references in her songs are readily apparent to any listener and push forth more than a mere allusion, as she develops sustainable transcodings over the body of her works. She reworks male-centric texts into an accessible, female-centric musical format that celebrates and elevates women's voices and dismantles toxic romantic narratives that objectify and oppress women.

The elements that allow works to be considered adaptations, can oftentimes be considered ambiguous; however, Hutcheon elaborates with concrete definitions and examples of what works fall into adaptations. She writes,

However, the same could be said of adaptations in the form of musicals, operas, ballets, or songs. All these adapters relate stories in their different ways. They use the same tools that storytellers have always used: they actualize or concretize ideas; they make simplifying selections, but also amplify and extrapolate; they make analogies; they critique or show their respect, and so on. But the stories they relate are taken from elsewhere, not invented anew. (3)

By extrapolating specific words and events from classic literary texts in her works, Swift can reinvent stories of the past. Swift's adaptations are visible within her songwriting, music videos, and movies, and throughout each work, the audience may begin to consider the original works in another capacity. While adaptation occurs in many different forms, Swift primarily focuses on songs and music videos. Her lyrics are a focal point for adaptations of *The Great Gatsby* and *Romeo and Juliet*, as are the videos she produces in conjunction with the songs.

Popular culture is an engaging place to create adaptations due to its accessibility amongst vast audiences. As Shakespeare and Fitzgerald were once considered popular culture, Swift is now utilizing her popularity to create feminist reimaginations of their texts. Through her songs and music videos, Swift can create active and engaging ways to create adaptations. Using catchy melodies, her audiences can memorize words to songs such as "Love Story" and "Wonderland" which retells classic literature. Rachel Carroll and Adam Hansen further support this argument within the text *Litpop: Writing and Popular Music*. The authors write,

Music helps people make sense of their worlds; it also helps us make (and remake) our worlds, actually or imaginatively. The proliferation of worlds built by writers discussed in this collection signals this: 'just as music's meaning may be constructed in relation to things outside it, so, too, things outside music [like novels or poems] may be constructed in relation to music'. We might counter this point by noting that the ways many people consume modern music through its technologies can make music seem a very private, even an antisocial, experience. (6-7)

Carroll and Hansen explain the importance music has, in the sense that it helps individuals make sense of their own lives and worlds. If a song is relatable to someone, it touches on the pathos of its appeal and makes it more desirable for audiences to consume. Swift makes her work desirable and meaningful by pulling from both well-known literary texts as well as her own intimate experiences of her life. By producing this, others can listen privately and reflect on their own experiences.

In making herself vulnerable to the public view, she shares her experiences with other popular artists, especially the song "Wonderland." As she reflects on her relationship with Harry Styles, she creates herself as Alice in a toxic relationship. As a woman, Swift received more

backlash from society than Styles, and this song is meant to highlight that throughout the lyrics such as "whispers turned to talking/ And talking turned to screams" (lines 27-28). She can make real-world connections from this original text, therefore preventing the story from becoming obsolete.

To solidify the example of "Wonderland," Hutcheon further emphasizes what the purpose of adapting a text is. She claims that it "is not something to be reproduced, but rather something to be interpreted and recreated, often in a new medium" (84). By interpreting Alice's experience, through the lens of her feelings and experiences, Swift can create a new variation of the text from a woman's perspective. Hutcheon additionally writes,

I have been arguing that adaptation— that is, as a product —has a kind of "theme and variation" formal structure or repetition with difference. This means not only that change is inevitable but that there will also be multiple possible causes of change in the process of adapting made by the demands of form, the individual adapter, the particular audience, and now the contexts of reception and creation. This context is vast and variegated.

(Hutcheon 142)

Alice's perspective in "Wonderland" encourages women to have a voice in their own lives, just as Swift used the text as a platform to voice her own story. In the original text of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice is perceived as a naive and aloof girl who is brought into a new world. Swift problematizes the novel with lines in her version such as "I should've slept with one eye open at night" (line 12). By pointing out that Alice is a victim of a new toxic land that is coated with enchanting images and figures, she exposes the horrific reality of her experiences. Her repetition of the events through Alice's emotions allows young women to take agency in their

own experiences. Although the voice does not change the ending, it allows audiences to consider other perspectives.

Gregory Machacek defines allusion in comparison to adaptation by claiming that it “distinguishes it from learned or indirect reference, where readers tend to be aware that they are missing something if the referent is unknown” (Machacek 527). He claims that an allusion merely passes by literary references, whereas adaptations rework the material. Some may argue that Swift’s works are merely allusions, however, Hutcheon’s definition proves that Swift is indeed participating in the creation of adaptations. By transcoding Carroll, Fitzgerald, and Shakespeare into a different set of conventions, she retells their stories to end the oppression of women in literature and celebrate their voices. Through each of Swift’s adaptations, there is more than a passing reference but the kind of “theme and variation” structure that Hutcheon argues for—that is, Swift questions the themes of her source material with both repetition and difference. Other critics may argue that Swift’s works alter too much of its original texts to be considered adaptations. However, Shelley Cobb emphasizes that such changes are not only acceptable but necessary for adaptation—especially feminist adaptation. Swift’s shifts offer a female narrative, therefore pushing,

The language of fidelity constructs a gendered possession of authority and paternity for the source text within adaptation: the film as faithful wife to the novel as paternal husband. In this way, fidelity legitimizes the relationship between the two texts and the act of (re)production. (30)

Here, Cobb rebuts an insistence on fidelity with the counter-narrative of infidelity. By offering a different perspective to the text, she argues that infidelity produces a more intriguing and complex narrative for consumers. She writes,

As soon as we try to fit it into a critical model, metaphor, or binary, it deconstructs those limits under its existence as both an original and a copy, while simultaneously being neither. I have found that a metaphor of conversation is productive for analyzing adaptations by women filmmakers, but it is possible that in another context the metaphor might reinstate the hierarchies I have been intent on critiquing. In the end, feminist interventions into adaptation studies need to be alert to the biased gendered, sexed, raced, and classed languages, however and wherever they are perpetuated, reproducing the unacknowledged cultural hierarchies and prejudices that affect the way that we perceive, consume, judge, and analyze cultural products. (36)

In pointing out the cultural hierarchies that come with fidelity, Cobb points out the need to stray away from original versions of the text and how feminist adaptation can begin to shift to a more just translation. The underlying views on women throughout texts were created decades to centuries before and are often inherently misogynist. The argument apparent is that Swift is a feminist adapter, Cobb's work supports that Swift is practicing a type of feminist adaptation in her infidelity to her literary source material. In creating adaptations today, the need for change is not only relevant but crucial to challenge these damaging narratives.

Relating to Swift's adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by altering the narrative perspective, she is also changing Alice's experience in Wonderland. Rather than being a young woman who has no recollection of her own experience, Swift allows her to own the memories and learn from them. Similar to Cobb's beliefs, by becoming unfaithful to the original text, Swift alters the gender bias presented in several canonical texts. In an engaging conversation with Carroll, Swift recreates and critiques the material she adapts, rather than faithfully replicating his narratives.

Swift's works, as Cobb would say, work as an unfaithful partner to a toxic masculine husband. Her adaptations are necessary for feminist reimaginings of texts. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism, and Gender*, edited by Louis von Flotow and Hana Kamal, discusses the innate need for women's voices to be heard. Men have historically been able to gain more power in society, and this has shaped the narratives created in storytelling. Elisabeth Gibels defines a shift from this male-dominated discourse and defines feminism as "(1) recognizing women's lived lives as valid for interpreting their experiences and needs, (2) raising the consciousness of institutionalized injustice, and (3) advocating the elimination of that injustice by challenging coercive power and authority" (Gibbels 173). By offering a female narrative to originally male-dominated texts, women's stories stand for gender equality in society. Swift is skillful in reflecting on her own experiences and creates these transformations as a result.

Swift has proven to be an activist in a variety of discourses, transforming her career into a musical and political mission. It is because of this, that the feminist grounding in adaptation is essential to analyze her work. Cobb writes "that gender hierarchies act as structuring principles of key cultural hierarchies. In this influential work, Stam rightly includes feminist theory as well as multiculturalism, postcolonialism, race, and queer theory" (Cobb 32). Swift's work attempts to deconstruct these cultural hierarchies with her music, and through her vast audience the message continues to grow. For example, throughout her song, "The Man," this message is reiterated as she writes,

Every conquest I made would make me more of a boss to you

I'd be a fearless leader

I'd be an alpha type

When everyone believes ya

What's that like?

I'm so sick of running as fast as I can

Wondering if I'd get there quicker

If I was a man. (lines 6-13)

As she reaches out to younger audiences, she is attempting to change these patriarchal hierarchies by altering the female perspectives in her lyrics. In this song particularly, she points out that men can escalate to the top quicker than women, and with less pushback. Specifically, she displays images of "running as fast as she can" to try and get to the top. Visible through her music, and political advocacy, and now grounded in a feminist adaptation theory, Swift offers a spin on literature and the music industry.

Hutcheon sets a precedent for Swift's ability to transcode novels and plays into songs and videos. Carroll and Hansen highlight the importance of pop culture by demonstrating the impression it leaves on a multitude of audiences. Cobb's fidelity model allows and encourages Swift's adaptive pieces to stray from original models. By incorporating these adaptive theories alongside a feminist lens, the importance of Swift's work is validated and needed. Changing the narratives and voices of old male-centric texts offers an alternative way for the way women may be seen in society, and why their voices matter in the world.

Shakespeare and Swift

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* romanticizes the suicide of two teenagers who cannot bear to live without each other. The play invites its audience into both Romeo's and Juliet's worlds through each character's soliloquies; however, while Romeo's voice is the most prominent in the play, Juliet's voice is the most prominent in Swift's songs entitled "Love Story (Taylor's Version)," and "White Horse (Taylor's Version)." Not only does Swift reinvent this text by

focusing on Juliet's point of view, but Swift also alters the ending of this text by playing out multiple possibilities in her songs. Similar to how one would cope with the loss of someone physically or emotionally, Swift toys around with what *could have been* for Juliet. By reflecting on the loss of some of her past relationships, Swift can meld her experiences into Juliet's as she creates her adaptation of the play. She participates in what Cobb would consider a conversation with Juliet and the play as a whole. Swift relocates the play to a more modern setting within her songs and music video. By doing so she can pull from her pain and insert this into the play.

While all characters speak within the play, the text is primarily told as Romeo's story. He is the first of the lovers introduced in the play, and the audience is granted more insight into his thoughts and experiences. Being abundantly visible for the majority of the play, there are only three scenes where both he and Juliet come together, and those include 1.5, 2.2, and 5.3. It is due to the lack of explanation of Juliet's feelings throughout each of these encounters that the audience is left to use their imagination to speculate Juliet's feelings. Through Swift's works, the audience is reminded of how absent Juliet is from the original story of her own life and death.

It is important to note that Swift includes fragments of *Romeo and Juliet* within her songs "Enchanted (Taylor's Version)" and "All Too Well (The Ten Minute Version) (Taylor's Version)" that add to the conversation that Cobb discusses in her definition. Swift most notably adapts *Romeo and Juliet* throughout her song "Love Story (Taylor's Version)" and its accompanying music video. By adapting the content of the play and simultaneously critiquing it, she acknowledges its position in the genre of the love story and love in general. Her lyrics appear to point out the toxicity that is promoted in the play about young love and the expectations it leaves for young girls. Swift explains her thought process while writing "Love Story" by stating,

That's the song I wrote on my bedroom floor because I liked a guy, and my parents didn't want me to date him. So I got this idea in my head, you were Romeo... It's usually something I'm going through at the time. It's very hard for me to just come up with some random metaphor if I'm not going through it, or I haven't recently gone through it.

@forswifties2021

Swift reflects on her adolescent relationships and builds from past literature to create a transformative adaptation. As Carroll and Hansen would say, Swift can imaginatively make sense of her world by recreating *Romeo and Juliet* in different dimensions. Her adaptation aims to create iconic but oppressive love stories and reworks them, to uncover how Juliet is oppressed within this narrative.

Romeo and Juliet's first encounter is described to the audience primarily from Romeo's point of view. Act 1, scene 5, magnifies the beliefs and feelings of 'love at first sight,' and from Romeo's perspective, these are electric. Romeo says,

She doth teach the torches to burn bright!

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night

As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear-

Beauty too rich for use, for Earth too dear.

So shows a snowy dove trooping with crows

As a younger lady o'er her fellows shows.

The measure done, I'll watch her place of stand

And, touching hers, bless my rule hand.

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight,

For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night. (1.5.51-60)

Clearly emphasizing the physical beauty of Juliet, Romeo believes that this woman is the most beautiful he has ever laid his eyes on. Notably, he focuses on her physical beauty here and objectifies her by comparing her to objects and animals, as if she is just something else to possess. In comparing her to a snowy dove and a shiny jewel, he describes her as something to awe at in beauty. He additionally exoticizes her by comparing her to an earring in an Ethiopian woman's ear, and quite problematically touches upon her whiteness as a dove. In comparing her to a dove amongst many crows, he focuses on her purity and skin color which is offensive to 21st-century readers of the play. Romeo's love for Juliet is physically and inherently selfish. He defines his love mostly as a desire to possess a physical object such as a "torch" or a "dove." Physically, Juliet is reduced to her visible qualities, and Swift radically departs from this to focus on the inner world of Juliet. Swift's perception focuses on the emotional factors of Juliet's meeting with Romeo.

Responding to Romeo's interpretation, she builds off of this physical beauty and considers the possibility of him rescuing her from a loveless marriage. She is captivated by his eyes and considers the possibilities to follow. Within "Love Story (Taylor's Version)," Swift writes,

We were both young when I first saw you
I close my eyes and the flashback starts
I'm standing there
On a balcony in summer air
See the lights, see the party, the ball gowns
See you make your way through the crowd
And say, "Hello". (lines 1-7)

As a parallel to the original text, in Swift's version Juliet meets her Romeo at a party where the two share a brief, yet powerful encounter. Through Swift's adaptation and conversation with the original text, she can recall Juliet's feelings about seeing Romeo for the first time. Before uncovering his true identity, Swift can encapsulate Juliet's feelings of passion and excitement. This is significant in creating her feminist adaptation because it is rare that the females in Shakespeare's plays can account for their own experiences. By reflecting on relationships in her own life, Swift considers the feelings of meeting someone who is nothing like her. Both she and Juliet share the spotlight in different settings and are forced to perpetuate relationships that are deemed 'appropriate' for their societal standards.

Later on in the play, Juliet uncovers the true identity of Romeo and is left with confusion and ambiguity. It is not until Romeo appears below her that she is taken by a desire to break the rules. Shakespeare describes the scene through Romeo's voice and writes,

She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?

Her eye discourses; I will answer it.

I am too bold. 'Tis not to me she speaks.

Two of the fairest stars in all of heaven

Having some business, [do] entreat her eyes. (2.2.11-15)

Romeo is speaking to himself, and he again is focusing on the physical beauty of Juliet by comparing her eyes to the stars. As Romeo continues to speak, Juliet remains a silent object when he professes his love for her. The audience is able to watch with him as she is unaware of his fixation. Juliet is constantly guarded by the nurse and must be overly cautious of what she says and does. The scene begins with Romeo's perspective, and both the audience and he can only hear a few of her thoughts and words. Swift considers that Romeo's forbidden name was the

allure to him in the first place. As Juliet imagines the possibility of what she and Romeo can become, she is willing to abandon her family to be with him. Juliet says,

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

Deny thy father and refuse thy name,

Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,

And I'll no longer be a Capulet.' (Shakespeare 2.2.36-39).

As Juliet is speaking to the sky, she is pleading that Romeo will go against his own family so that the two can be together. She is proposing a radical rejection of not only their families but against the higher institution of marriage. Their love is not just taboo, but a complete violation of social norms. As the audience and Romeo are eavesdropping on her private monologue, suspense is building to help further develop the plot.

As "Love Story (Taylor's Version)" progresses, Swift reconstructs the intensity and importance of Juliet's conflict. By writing as Juliet, she can plead with Romeo and express her deepest feelings of affection for him. In the original text, Juliet whispers, "If they do see thee, they will murder thee" (2.2.75). The quote signifies what the two are risking by being with each other: their lives. By reflecting on her adolescent relationships, Swift hones in on the feeling of having disapproving parents. She writes,

So I sneak out to the garden to see you

We keep quiet, 'cause we're dead if they knew

So close your eyes

Escape this town for a little while, oh oh

'Cause you were Romeo, I was a scarlet letter

And my daddy said, "Stay away from Juliet"

But you were everything to me

I was beggin' you, "Please don't go. (lines 17-24)

She again parallels Juliet's internal desires to escape the standards and violence of her family and town. Juliet is perceived by Romeo in the play as a dreamy girl, who he wants to be with for her purity and daintiness. In attempting to fill in Juliet's emotions, Swift touches upon the disparity she faces as she begs to be saved. Swift alludes to Juliet's fears of Romeo being taken from her because she thinks he is the only one who can save her. Claiming in her song that Romeo is everything to her, the desperation is solidified.

Swift's ability to rework this material is a conversation that is being discussed amongst different scholars across the world, specifically Yuxi Cao, located in China. Throughout her article entitled "The Love Story and Taylor Swift's Stylization," she discusses the deliberate changes Swift creates within "Love Story." Cao writes,

She stood in the perspective of Juliet who was also a teenage girl having close age with Swift and depicted the story in her understanding. Although in the original version from Shakespeare, the story was a tragedy. In Swift's version, she changed the tragic ending of this story into the kind of happy ending that she dreamed of. (115)

By adding to the conversation, Cao is one of the many scholars who is beginning to academically examine Swift's work. By commenting on the parallel between Swift and Juliet's age, the audience can add another similarity between Juliet and Swift. By adding to the conversation of these texts, Both Cao and Swift participate in ending the oppression of young women within toxic male-centric texts.

In the case of "Love Story," the lyrics are only a piece of Swift's adaptive work, as the accompanying video further develops her re-imagined *Romeo and Juliet*. Music videos are

influential towards society's views on women, and through the "Love Story" music video produced by Nathan Chapman and Taylor Swift, these views can be presented more favorably to young women. Jennifer M. Hurley discusses a music video's implications on feminism throughout her article entitled "Music Video and the Construction of gendered subjectivity (or how being a music video junkie turned me into a Feminist)." In her article, she writes,

In music videos, sexual iconography generally denotes that women are passive, submissive, and/or exist exclusively for the pleasure of men, though prominent exceptions do exist. Images of men in music videos are qualitatively different from those of women. The impact of this on adolescents who are actively constructing their gendered subjectivity is an under-researched and under-theorized issue. (Hurley 546)

Chapman and Swift's music video is an example of one of these prominent exceptions as they create a visual feminist adaptation of the original play *Romeo and Juliet*. Many components help develop the creation of a music video according to *Film Art* by David Bordwell, Kristen Thompson, and Jeff Smith. The elements of narrative form, *mise-en-scène*, and the narrative form are significant to Swift's video adaptation of the play. Each of these elements is reflective of Juliet's and Swift's experiences molding into one story. By placing herself as the character of Juliet in the video, Swift can hone in on the emotional state of Juliet.

Narrative form "begins with one situation; a series of changes occur according to a pattern of cause and effect; finally, a new situation arises that brings about the end of the narrative" (Bordwell 73). Essential to any type of film, this form is especially important to a shorter music video. Swift must be skillful in creating the distinction that she is portraying Juliet, even as she shifts back to herself in modern times. Swift is skillful through her portrayal of herself in modern times, and Juliet in medieval times. With each change of shot in the music

video, some parallels go back and forth between the same story. By going back and forth between a high school and Juliet's castle, the audience can indicate the paralleling narratives presented.

Bordwell states that this narration looks "for parallels that shed light on the ongoing action" (74). By switching back and forth between these perspectives the link to her and Juliet is drawn for the lyrics and video. The structure is set within the first ten seconds of the music video, as Swift appears as herself walking outside of a school and making contact with the boy underneath a tree. As soon as their eyes meet, the shot ends and switches to the two in a ballroom as Romeo and Juliet. He is whispering something in her ear, their hands almost touch and the shot ends. Immediately, the two are back beneath the tree. By doing this, the audience can develop both the plot and story and infer the parallels between Swift's relationship and Juliet's. The majority of the video remains from her perspective, unlike the original text of *Romeo and Juliet*. Seventeen out of the twenty times that the camera zooms in on the characters are of Swift herself, leaving only three for the actor portraying Romeo; this is surely Juliet's story. By acting as Juliet in her music video, Swift manipulates how the story is perceived by her audiences. The parallels suggest that this play is relevant today, even if that relevance is how this problematic love story continues to inform girls of what love should look like.

Chapman works to create a setting in which Swift can successfully act as herself and Juliet. By utilizing *mise-en-scène*, Chapman creates an adapted version of *Romeo and Juliet* by "giving settings an authentic look and letting actors perform as naturally as possible" (Bordwell 112). Utilizing setting, costume, color, and lighting, Champan and Swift are able to submerge these components to make it seem as though the story has shifted back into their rendition of Shakespeare's play. Swift's shift from herself to Juliet is visible not only throughout the change

of shot, but through the difference in costumes. Bordwell states that costumes and characters can be used as a motif. He states that one way to approach this is by having your main character "stand out boldly against the neutral gray background" (Bordwell 120).

The costume choices in the music video set a clear nod to the audience, when Swift changes roles. As herself, the music video begins with her in blue jeans, a black sweater, and her hair down. In the original frame of the video, Swift's hair is down and she wears jeans and a sweater. When she is transformed into Juliet, her hair is pinned up and placed back to signify the change in time period. The team considers the use of color in the music video to provide a more realistic adaptation of the play. There are very distinct color choices within the video which shift from dark to light. While Romeo and Juliet are primarily seen in colors such as yellow, white, and cream to represent their romance and purity, the backdrop differs. Her dress is white and poofy and alludes to her being at the party where Juliet first meets Romeo. The color of her dress being white is significant for a multitude of reasons. First, the color white is encompassed to represent purity and innocence, which aligns with the age and innocence of Swift and Juliet. Additionally, white is the traditional color of a wedding dress, indicating that is the desired end goal of the character.

As a contrast to the lovers the background is either blue, brown, black, or gray symbolizing their forbidden love. Not only do the colors serve as a symbol for their love, but the use of light colors on the main characters allows the audience's eyes to focus on Romeo and Juliet. By utilizing these colors, the team additionally toys with the naivety that Juliet has in the novel, and why this is problematic in the narrative presented in the original. The ability to demonstrate this to her audience is skillful, and ties into both her lyrics and the original text.

Essential to *mise-en-scene* the team considers the lighting and setting of the music video. To indicate when the lovers are in modern day, the team creates a natural lighting at a highschool where Swift meets her *Romeo* underneath a shaded tree. To indicate a change for the audience, the *flashback* begins when Swift as Juliet is singing off of the balcony of a castle. Within both the party scene and the lover meeting in the woods, the lighting shifts to candlelight creating a soft and romantic atmosphere. By lowering the lighting in this scene, it warns the audience of the passion and danger the two are pursuing. The play is meant to be performed, and as Swift reproduces it in the form of a music video she is able to bring the dialogue to life. She is able to fill in the audience's imagination by further intensifying Juliet's feelings for Romeo.

Act 5, Scene 3, describes the death of both Romeo and Juliet at different points, and what is significant is that both cannot stand to live without each other. Romeo and Juliet's chemistry is heightened due to the difficulty for the two of them to be together. The two are planning to be married to each other, which results in tragedy and the impending death of both characters. Upon finding Romeo's dead body next to hers as she wakes, Juliet exclaims, "Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. O, happy dagger,/ This is thy sheath. There rust, and let me die" (5.3.174-174). Juliet dies in a painful manner, as she stabs herself to death because she cannot be with her true love. Though the deaths of Romeo and Juliet are clear, the afterlife the two share is ambiguous, and Swift takes it upon herself to fill in the unknown.

Throughout the endings of Swift's songs "Love Story (Taylor's Version)" and "White Horse (Taylor's Version)," she deliberately creates two alternate endings to the story. Interpreting these as the 'afterlife' of Juliet, we see what could have been of the star-crossed lovers. "Love Story" is able to provide a picture-perfect fairytale ending, where Juliet may live happily ever after with Romeo. As Swift demonstrates, though, this is extremely optimistic even in the

afterlife. It is because of this that she counters her own narrative in "White Horse (Taylor's Version)" and "All Too Well (The Ten Minute Version) (Taylor's Version)" again in the afterlife but with a more sinister turn of events. The shift of power from Romeo to Juliet is most significant in these alternate endings and allows Swift to emphasize how controlled Juliet truly was. Making a statement about women in general, Swift takes back this power and control by reflecting off of the issues presented in the original text. By taking back this power and control, Swift embodies the third part of Maguire's definition of feminism and works to end oppression of young women by shifting these narratives.

Within "Love Story," Swift creates a world where Juliet's dad approves of Romeo and allows the two to get married. She writes,

Romeo, save me, I've been feeling so alone
 I keep waiting for you, but you never come
 Is it in my head? I don't know what to think.
 He knelt to the ground and pulled out a ring
 And said
 Marry me, Juliet, you'll never have to be alone
 I love you, and that's all I really know
 I talked to your dad, go pick out a white dress
 It's a love story, baby, just say yes. (lines 40-47)

By diving into Juliet's deepest desires, Swift creates the happy ending she felt may have been necessary at the end of the play. What is most interesting is her inclusion of Romeo asking her father for his approval, and him inevitably agreeing to the marriage. The lyrics represent a fantasy that the speaker is implicitly aware of, yet she clings to the happy ending anyway. She

imagines through this adaptation what would happen if *Romeo and Juliet* followed the typical trajectory of a love story. However, she is still able to acknowledge that this is a fantasy created in her song. As Cobb would say, Swift is having a conversation with the text as she acknowledges the classic go-to love story for its cultural readers. The two live happily ever after in this version, and Swift knows that this is not the only possible end.

As a compelling point for the audience, Swift reflects on the present systemic issues in society for women. Juliet did not believe there was a future without a man by her side, and Swift provides an alternate ending for this stigma as well. Within "White Horse (Taylor's Version)," Swift pushes the blame not just on Juliet for killing herself, but on Romeo for taking advantage of a thirteen-year-old girl. She writes,

Maybe I was naive, got lost in your eyes

And never really had a chance

My mistake, I didn't know to be in love

You had to fight to have the upper hand

I had so many dreams about you and me

Happy endings, now I know

I'm not a princess, this ain't a fairytale

I'm not the one you'll sweep off her feet

Lead her up the stairwell. (lines 14-22)

Through both this passage, the music video, and her other songs, there is a motif of eyes, as she states she "got lost" in them. Swift is reconsidering Juliet's infatuation with Romeo in the first place, wondering why she gave up her life to be with someone who inevitably left. Juliet

dreamed of running away with Romeo and living out a fantasy. In risking her status, family, and life she hoped to be nothing more than Romeo's wife. The song reinforces the tragic reality of Romeo dying, and Juliet feeling completely alone. Swift uses examples of being a princess, living out a fairytale, and not being swept off of her feet. She is able to use Juliet's example to warn young women of being naive in love. The purpose of highlighting this example is to state that the toxic relationship is not worth her life. By changing the narrative, Swift is able to problematize the relationship between Romeo and Juliet, in hopes that other stories will differ from this one.

As Swift develops multiple conversations with Romeo and Juliet, she redefines the significance of the young lovers' relationship. Within multiple instances of the play, Romeo objectifies Juliet by treating her as a prize to be won. Swift's interjections not only depict this but give Juliet a newfound voice through her transformative lyrics. Decades of young women have read the singular narrative of *Romeo and Juliet* and normalized toxic relationships. By offering a counter-narrative, Swift is able to reframe the possibilities of women's expectations in relationships. In offering a happy ending for the star-crossed lovers it seems that Swift may be trying to normalize healthy relationships. She suggests through the "Love Story" adaptation that passion does not have to be tragic, and that self-sacrifice is not the same love. In offering a women's voice to tell this narrative, she is additionally working to end the oppression that resides in silent female characters.

Fitzgerald and Swift

The Great Gatsby, similar to *Romeo and Juliet*, tells a tragic love story but in a different setting. There are clear parallels to the female characters represented in both texts, as Daisy, Myrtle, and Juliet are defined by their male counterparts. The similarities suggest that Swift is

specifically drawn to these two stories seeing as she revisits them in multiple songs. Both are tragic love stories that feature women who are reduced to objects. They additionally center around men who practice selfish love. Although Daisy and Juliet are stuck in toxic, patriarchal environments, the two portray acts of strength and defiance. Swift's songs take these acts of strength and defiance and recreate these women in a 21st-century dynamic, giving them the voice that they were denied.

Daisy Buchanan is from the East Egg where only those with old money can reside, but, trapped in an unhappy marriage, she turns to infidelity with Jay Gatsby. Similarly, her husband Tom Buchanan has an affair with Myrtle Wilson, causing chaos as the novel unpacks. Swift reinvents the characters and plots to provide a certain justice for Daisy and Myrtle. This is abundantly visible in many of Swift's songs, but especially relevant in "The Lucky One (Taylor's Version)," "Getaway Car," "This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things," and "happiness." Each song provides a female perspective for the novel and the female characters who are confined due to their gender.

Within the song "This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things," Swift cleverly recreates Gatsby's party scenes to set the scene for upper-class men and women within the novel. She writes,

It was so nice throwing big parties
Jump into the pool from the balcony
Everyone swimming in a champagne sea
And there are no rules when you show up here
Bass beat rattling the chandelier
Feeling so Gatsby for that whole year. (lines 1-6)

She intentionally uses similar wording to Fitzgerald who describes the summer nights with "In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars" (Fitzgerald 28). "This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things" is the first in her discography to address Gatsby, and she cleverly does so by similarly creating a party scene for her discography. Swift adapts Gatsby's infamous party scene towards a modern day tale about social class, gender, and deception. She writes "It was so nice being friends/ There I was giving you a second chance" (lines 14-15), to foreshadow Daisy's rekindled relationship with Gatsby.

Daisy is held to an incredibly high standard in society due to her husband's position and wealth. Her name itself resembles a delicate flower, which identifies her as nothing more than a dutiful wife. Her beauty and blissful ignorance encapsulate her identity as an obedient wife, and in a melancholic way, she wishes the same for her daughter. Daisy states, "And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool" (Fitzgerald 20). The gender expectations during the twenties limited a woman's choices without a man by her side. Daisy alludes to the idea that being intelligent will only make a woman see a more miserable reality. In contemplating the injustices she must face in this world, her beauty is the only thing that will provide her with any measure of power.

Swift clearly adapts this in her ironic song entitled "happiness," which appears to be about anything but this emotion. By using Daisy as an example, she knows and exposes the truth of society's perception of women. Swift writes,

I hope she'll be a beautiful fool

Who takes my spot next to you

No, I didn't mean that

Sorry, I can't see facts through all my fury. (lines 21-24)

It is significant that Swift uses the exact line as Daisy, and through her recreation further elaborates on why being a "beautiful fool" is easier for women. She suggests that being smart means knowing how corrupt the inequality between a man and a woman is, and that it will in turn only lead to a more miserable life to have this knowledge. As a dutiful wife, Daisy must apologize and submit to her husband, which is why it is even more important that Swift includes an apology in the song. She sarcastically apologizes for her "fury" to point out society's inequitable expectations of women's obedience. By exposing this tragic reality that women are not 'allowed' to be upset, Swift creates a new narrative for Daisy. By adapting one of the first conversations Daisy is a part of, the audience is able to note the oppression that women faced during the twenties, and how these connect to oppression that still exists today.

There are clear parallels between Swift and Daisy through the impossible standards they are held to as women in society. Through such parallels, Swift's being nearly a century later, she exposes the little change that has come to the scrutiny of powerful women. She elaborates on this pressure and unachievable standard within her song "The Lucky One." She writes,

And they tell you that you're lucky but you're so confused

'Cause you don't feel pretty, you just feel used.

And all the young things line up to take your place

Another name goes up in lights

You wonder if you'll make it out alive. (Swift, Lines 18-22)

Although both women have money and high status, the idea of becoming obsolete constantly echoes through their minds. She is pessimistic when she hopes for her daughter to be a "beautiful fool." Society often decreases the beauty and value of women as their age increases, meaning

that Daisy will only be relevant as long as she remains young and beautiful. By posing the idea that beauty is the path to power and fame, both women are forced to wonder if they'll "make it out alive." By exposing this truth, Swift aims to rid this awful reality to her audiences. Through Swift providing a voice for Daisy, she is equally providing justice for herself.

Daisy is a victim of society's impossible standards for women, and it is because of this that she must appear to be perfect to the public eye. This perfection is perceived by Jay Gatsby, and he falls in love with the idea of Daisy because of it. The narration from the story is built from Nick Carraway's biases, and through his perspective of Gatsby seeing Daisy he writes, "The officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at some time, and because it seemed romantic to me I have remembered the incident ever since" (Fitzgerald 48). He infers that every young woman wants to be looked at in the way Gatsby looks at Daisy, and objectifies her through this interpretation. By being perceived as a beautiful fool, she holds power over men in the only way she thinks possible. In describing the encounter as romantic, he neglects to mention the intentionality of Daisy's appearance as a woman. From Nick's perspective, Daisy's presentation allows men to fawn over her, but he neglects to mention why she is forced to do this in the first place.

Reflecting back on their past relationship, Daisy could not be with Gatsby due to his lack of money and stability. Nick Carraway narrates,

He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared at his possessions in a dazed way as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. (Fitzgerald 86)

Similar to Romeo, Gatsby associates his love interests with material possessions. Both men consider the women they pursue to be objects rather than individuals. Swift shatters these would-be possessions by giving these women a voice and a rich interior world that these men choose not to see. The passage elaborates on Gatsby seeking Daisy's approval on the materials he now has. Comparatively, Swift focuses on the resurfaced feelings Daisy has for Gatsby, yet her economic inability and standing to be with him. The security was not with Gatsby at the time of her marriage to Tom, and Swift alludes to the regret Daisy faces. In looking at the dialogue Daisy shares with Gatsby, she exclaims "You know I love you" (Fitzgerald 116). The readers are able to externally see the desire Daisy faces when around Gatsby, yet have no concept of her train of thought. Swift writes, "Sometimes when I look into your eyes/ I pretend you're mine all the damn time" (Swift lines 49-50). By again perpetuating Daisy's need to stay with Tom, she resurfaces her desire to be with Gatsby.

The green light at the end of Daisy's dock is a recurring symbol in the novel and represents Gatsby's love for Daisy and desperation to reach the American Dream. In Swift's song "happiness," she speaks as Daisy by commenting on her awareness of this dream. The green light reappears in Chapter Five as Nick Carraway narrates,

Daisy had put her arms through his abruptly but he seemed absorbed in what he just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a greenlight on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one. (Fitzgerald 87-88)

When referring to the "great distance" that kept the two apart, the audience can infer that Gatsby is referring not only to his fixation with Daisy but also his infatuation with becoming powerful enough to be loved by her. Within "happiness," Swift writes,

All you want for me now
Is the green light of forgiveness
You haven't met the new me yet
And I think she'll give you that. (lines 53-56)

By reconstructing the situation, as Daisy she is able to display the awareness and sorrow that Daisy has for not being with Gatsby. As she refers to the "green light of forgiveness," it is visible that she is faced with a large amount of pity and regret. As a symbol of Daisy's love and lifestyle, the green light was Gatsby's hope. Swift reconstructs this with a spin where Daisy calls out his true motives. As Cobb would say, Swift is able to be a part of the conversation and give agency over the light of her own dock. In this conversation, Daisy is able to vocalize her intelligence and speak for herself. The novel focuses on villainizing Daisy, and Swift is able to shift this perception of her. By adapting this chapter with a feminist spin, Swift is able to bring justice to Daisy's character and create a villain in society's standards for women.

Myrtle Wilson acts as a foil for Daisy, as she is developed as the complete opposite of Daisy. Again perpetuating a woman's need for a man during the twenties, Myrtle's husband George has no social standing and is defeated by a lack of money and power. Myrtle in terms has no means of living besides what her husband can provide. Through Nick Carraway's perception,

She was in her middle thirties, and faintly stout, but she carried her surplus flesh sensuously as some women can. Her face above a spotted dress of dark blue crêpe-de-chine, contained no facet or gleam of beauty but there was an immediately

perceptible vitality about her as if the nerves of her body were continually smoldering.
(Fitzgerald 37)

By using words such as "stout" and "smoldering," she appears as unappealing and of low standing to the reader. Additionally, she is described as wearing darker colors to offer a more gloomy and worn-out figure. Comparatively, Daisy is described with "bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth" (Fitzgerald 25). By contrasting the two as bright and gloomy, the audience can assume that Daisy conforms to a certain societal expectation of gender and class. Again solidifying the need for a man to do well in society, Daisy has the upper hand being married to Tom. Due to this, Myrtle pursues an affair with Tom to regain a paradise she never had.

Ultimately leading to her downfall, Myrtle was struck and murdered by Daisy with Gatsby's car. Looking at the power dynamics, two women of opposite lifestyles are pinned against each other by Tom Buchanan. The novel yet again extends the power of a man being the cause of another woman's tragic fall. As the tensions arise in Chapter 7, Tom becomes aware of Daisy's affair with Gatsby, and this inevitably leads to Myrtle's death. Although Daisy had known about Tom's affairs for years, it is not until he catches a glimpse of Daisy's that someone ends up dead. Swift transcodes Myrtle's death throughout her song "Getaway Car," and provides a certain justice for both women. Nick Carraway narrates Myrtle's death by stating,

The "death car," as the newspapers called it, didn't stop; it came out of the gathering darkness, wavered tragically for a moment, and then disappeared around the next bend. Michaelis wasn't even sure of its color— he told the first policeman that it was light green. The other car going towards New York came to rest a hundred yards beyond, and the driver hurried back to where Myrtle Wilson, her life violently extinguished, knelt in the road and mingled her thick, dark blood with the dust. (Fitzgerald 121)

The "light green" description again refers back to Gatsby's dreams, but this time leads to his undeniable end. Due to Myrtle's lack of money and power, her impending doom again foiled Daisy's future. Although it was Daisy who hit the car, it would be Gatsby who took the blame, and this would lead to his death. With a powerful man on Daisy's side, it is clear that she would leave this accident without any consequence.

Swift transcodes this scene throughout her song by first writing, "You were drivin' the getaway car/ We were flyin' but we'd never get far/ Don't pretend it's such a mystery" (lines 12-14). By acting as Daisy, she questions Gatsby for wondering why he could have ever thought the two could be together. In the first instance of her writing this in the song, she refers to the "you" as Gatsby driving the car. Daisy is aware that the only way she can escape the situation is to blame Gatsby, and by again having to look out for herself she makes an unthinkable decision. In the last verse Swift circles the experience by writing, "I was ridin' in a getaway car/ I was cryin' in a getaway car/ I was dyin' in a getaway car" (lines 63-65). She is able to display the emotional chaos that Daisy was feeling when killed Myrtle and had to make the decision to blame Gatsby. This adaptation gives the audience context into Daisy's feelings after the crash that were supplemented by Nick Carraway in the original text.

Throughout the second bridge of the song, Swift is able to provide more insight into Myrtle's death and Daisy's feelings. In the original text, the crime is presented through what is being viewed on the news. Swift is able to speak from Daisy's experience in the car as she writes,

It was the great escape, the prison break

The light of freedom on my face

But you weren't thinkin' and I was just drinkin'

While he was runnin' after us, I was screamin', "Go, go, go!"

But with three of us honey, it's a sideshow

And a circus ain't a love story, and now we're both sorry. (lines 23-28)

The "prison break" and "light of freedom" that she refers to hold a double meaning of both Daisy and Myrtle's lives flashing before their eyes. As Daisy hits her she knows that it is the end of life as she knows it, until Gatsby takes the blame. She is at this moment able to realize the mistakes she has made by falling in love with Gatsby, and now killing Myrtle.

She refers to the "three of us" as Tom, Gatsby, and herself, and makes the audience aware of her guilt. In comparing the relationship to a "circus" rather than a "love story," Swift seems to take issues with the canonical love stories offered as models of love. The stories are toxic and she deconstructs them through her feminist lens as she reveals what is malignant about them. Swift is able to give Daisy the words she was denied in the novel and dive into the many emotions she faced during this tragic scene. Similar to *Romeo and Juliet*, an alleged love story ends in the death of multiple characters. Both the song and novel expose the truth of how women are perceived in society and the problematic nature that resides within them. The way these toxic romances have been ingrained in our culture is a type of oppression that Maguire mentions in her definition. By dissecting and dismantling individual elements in both stories, Swift is attempting to uncover, expose, and end this form of oppression.

Myrtle's death spiraled into her husband's revenge in killing Gatsby, and then shooting himself. Fitzgerald is skillful in killing off the only character who did not come from "New Money," and allows Tom Buchanan to come out stronger than ever. As collateral damage, Daisy was forced to grieve silently and live out the rest of her life miserable with Tom. The novel ends with Nick Carraway narrating the unfortunate reality of Gatsby's death. He says,

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter — tomorrow we will run faster, stretch our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning — So we beat on, boats against our current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (Fitzgerald 154)

Reiterating Nick's own biases, the ending lingers with his grief for Gatsby and blame on Daisy. He reminisces on his love for Gatsby by again referring to that "green light," but does not allow for Daisy's perspective on his death to be visible. It is through this that he villainizes her, and does not allow her the smallest bit of redemption.

Swift adapts her own ending for Daisy by concurrently using “The Lucky One (Taylor’s Version)” and “happiness” to provide a counter narrative to Nick Carraway. Within the “Lucky One,” Swift is recounting Daisy’s experience of choosing to leave The East Egg with Tom. She writes, “It was a few years later, I showed up here/ And they still tell the legend of how you disappeared” (lines 25-26). She refers to “they” as not only Nick Carraway but F.Scott Fitzgerald for creating a damaging narrative. The story is told as “The Great Gatsby” and paints Daisy as the villain by omitting her side. Swift reverses that by offering Daisy a voice and closure.

Swift's adaptations within the songs "happiness" and “The Lucky One” provide the audience with Daisy's closure. Within “happiness” Swift writes,

There'll be happiness after you
 But there was happiness because of you too
 Both of these things can be true
 There is happiness
 In our history, across our great divide
 There is a glorious sunrise

Dappled with the flickers of light

From the dress I wore at midnight, leave it all behind

Oh, leave it all behind

Leave it all behind

And there is happiness. (lines 53-63)

Daisy was never able to publicly mourn the loss of Gatsby, and instead followed her husband and from Carraway's interpretation moved on. Rather than villainizing her like Nick Carraway, Swift adapts the final chapter of *The Great Gatsby* to allow Daisy to say goodbye. She admits that there was happiness because of Gatsby, but knows that there will be some after his passing. As she leaves the East Egg with Tom Buchanan, she is acknowledging that she was forced to leave Gatsby and her grieving behind.

In both of her adaptations of Shakespeare and Fitzgerald's adaptations, Swift allows for women to tell their stories in ways that the source texts did not. She allows for a happy ending for these women, even if they are different from the traditional stories of happiness. In each example, she is able to allow these women to take agency over their own happiness. She does not allow for tragedy to consume these women's lives, and instead allows them to reinvent themselves as she reinvents their texts. Each song dismantles a type of oppression that was originally created by these male authors, and opens up new possibilities for women. These toxic romances that girls are raised on measures to love and suffering, and through Swift's adaptations women are allowed to be happy whether they are with or without a man.

Conclusion

Critics may argue that Swift's pop-cultural feminist adaptations merely allude to these original texts. However, Swift holistically possesses a clear level of repetition and deliberacy

through her collection of works, as she retells *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Great Gatsby* across a number of songs. By problematizing and critiquing these texts she is expressing to her audience that these are toxic love stories, ones that she once bought into. Historically women have been silenced and stifled, and through Swift's reinventions, they can now be more heavily celebrated and respected.

Within her song "I Did Something Bad," she recreates *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller to pose herself as one of the witches on trial during the Salem Witch Trial. In doing this, she is exposing the horrifying truth to society's expectations and scrutinization of women. She writes,

They're burning all the witches, even if you aren't one
 They got their pitchforks and proof
 Their receipts and reasons
 They're burning all the witches even if you aren't one
 So light me up, light me up. (lines 40-44)

By including specific words such as "pitchforks" and "proof" she is skillfully criticizing the ways in which society judges women for being imperfect. Swift has taken a moment in history, which was then dramatized throughout Miller's play. By writing from the perspective of a witch, she hones in on the unruly behavior that women continue to be scrutinized for in society and celebrates it.

Cobb discusses the importance of straying away from being a dutiful wife to old male-centric texts. As Swift reinvents characters such as Alice, Juliet, Myrtle, and Daisy, she liberates them from the hands of their male authors. Swift gives these women a voice they could not have, and promotes justice for women across the globe.

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