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## Representation of Women in Paris Paloma's Songs: A Gynocritical Literary Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

*This research discusses the representation of women in four selected songs from Paris Paloma: Labour, Drywall, As Good a Reason, and Last Woman on Earth. The purpose of this research is to uncover how women's experiences are portrayed through song lyrics and how these representations fit into the gynocritical framework proposed by Elaine Showalter. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method, treating song lyrics as literary texts that express emotional burdens, bodily oppression, and women's powerlessness in the face of patriarchal structures. The research emphasizes that contemporary music, particularly lyrics written by female songwriters, serves as a meaningful medium to explore feminist literary expression. The data were analyzed by categorizing the lyrical elements into three aspects: emotional, bodily, and empowerment, based on gynocritical theory. Each lyric represents women not only as victims of societal norms, but also as agents who reclaim their voice and identity. The results show that the songs reflect different stages of women's consciousness, ranging from survival, resistance, and finally autonomy.*

**Keywords:** Women empowerment, gynocriticism, song lyrics, feminist literary criticism, Paris Paloma.

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## INTRODUCTION

Paris Paloma is a singer and songwriter from Ashbourne, Derbyshire, in the UK. Began her musical journey at the age of 14 and officially started releasing her work in 2020 (Unterberger, 2023). “Labour” gained widespread attention on TikTok, resonating with audiences through its depiction of the emotional and physical strain women often face in domestic roles. “Drywall” delves into the emotional trauma and psychological scars stemming from a broken relationship. “As Good a Reason” highlights the importance of shared experiences among women as a means of resisting patriarchal influence. “Last Woman on Earth” explores the complexities of female identity, societal expectations, and the yearning for liberation from objectification.

Through evocative lyrics and powerful melodies, Paloma articulates the challenges, sacrifices, and ongoing struggles endured by women under patriarchal systems. Yet, amidst themes of fear and hardship. Her songs champion women’s resilience and aim to inspire defiance against oppressive structures (Downs, 2024). To examine the representation of women in her lyrics, this research applies the gynocriticism approach, a branch of feminist literary criticism that focuses on women as writers and central subjects within texts. Gynocriticism seeks to build a theoretical foundation for analyzing literature based on women's experiences and perspectives (Eyvazi, Momen, & Poorkaramali, 2017).

Based on the above explanation, this research is novel because it analyzes the representation of women in song lyrics through Elaine Showalter's gynocriticism. Gynocriticism is the basis for understanding the voices and experiences of women as writers and actors. This approach is commonly used in analyzing literary texts such as poetry and novels, but in this case, the researcher uses it to analyze contemporary music texts.

The researcher divides the problem into two forms of questions, namely:

1. How does Paris Paloma portray women in the lyrics of each song?
2. How is this representation analyzed through gynocriticism?

This research focuses on analyzing the representation of women in four selected songs from Paris Paloma, namely “Labour”, “Drywall”, “As Good a Reason”, and “Last Woman on Earth”. The analysis centers on the meaning and experiences communicated through song lyrics as a form of female expression in contemporary popular culture. Using Showalter's gynocriticism as the primary analytical framework. This research explores how the lyrics reflect women’s lived realities, identities, and resistance against patriarchal norms. Ultimately, this research aims to amplify female voices that address gender inequality and promote social awareness through music.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research utilizes selected tracks by Paris Paloma as the primary data. All songs examined were released in 2023 and 2024, and no existing research has been found that specifically analyzes these particular works by Paloma. However, there are several previous studies that share similar themes relevant to this research.

Several studies have employed Elaine Showalter’s gynocriticism to explore women's voices in literature. Tarigan, Pardede, and Marulafau (2021) analyzed 28 poems from Rupi Kaur’s Milk and Honey,

highlighting themes of bodily objectification, autonomy, and inner strength, showing how poetry reclaims female agency. Similarly, Islam (2020) positioned Kaur's work as a gynotext that articulates love, trauma, and empowerment from a distinctly female perspective. Dasgupta and Sharma (2013) examined Anne Sexton's poetry, placing it within the "female phase" of literary development, with works like *In Celebration of My Uterus* and *Transformations* challenging patriarchal norms and emphasizing female autonomy. Pattiserlihun (2022) explored *Song of Songs* 3:1-5 through feminist criticism, arguing that the text reflects female desire, agency, and resistance in a religious context. Lastly, Mehrpouyan and Mathkari (2020) investigated Sylvia Plath's poetry, using Showalter's four models to reveal how her works express feminine consciousness and resistance to patriarchal structures. Collectively, these studies affirm the relevance of gynocriticism in uncovering the multifaceted representations of women's experiences in literary texts.

However, despite various feminist analyses of poetry, no research applies Elaine Showalter's feminist gynocriticism specifically to the analysis of song lyrics, especially songs from Paris Paloma. Most existing studies tend to focus either on traditional poetry or use broader feminist approaches when analyzing music. This study seeks to address that gap by applying a gynocritical lens to Paloma's lyrics, offering a deeper understanding of how female narratives, histories, and voices are constructed and conveyed within the framework of contemporary songwriting.

## METHODS OF RESEARCH

This research uses the method of Feminist Literary Criticism as gynocriticism popularized by Elaine Showalter. Showalter explains that feminist criticism has two directions feminist critique (women as readers) and gynocriticism (women as writers) to make feminist criticism not only a way of reading but also a way of understanding women's lives through art as a response to patriarchal dominance in literature and literary studies. Gynocriticism is the basis for understanding the voices and experiences of women as writers and actors. This approach is commonly used in analyzing literary texts such as poetry and novels, but in this case, the researcher uses it to analyze contemporary music texts.

### Instruments

Literary analysis involves the process of interpreting, evaluating, and examining a literary piece to uncover the deeper meaning conveyed by the researcher, often using symbolic language and ideas. Songs are considered literary due to their similarities with poetry, they incorporate rhythm, tone, and melody while expressing emotions through imaginative language (Moeliono, 2007, as cited in Erlangga, Utomo, & Anisti, 2021). Both songs and poems rely on deliberate word choice and aesthetic expression to evoke emotions and engage the audience. Rather than just listening, audiences are invited to feel and contemplate the underlying meanings in the lyrics. This is where music holds its power to move the listener in subtle yet impactful ways emotionally.

Songs are also reflections of culture, society, and personal experiences. This reinforces their classification as literary works. Typically, songs serve as a platform for expressing views on social conditions, personal narratives, or shared experiences. Thus, songs function not only as entertainment but also as tools for communication. According to Tagg, as cited in Kwiatek (2021), music operates as a group-

based communicative form, carrying emotional identity, social attitudes, and behavioral patterns of certain communities. The combination of poetic lyrics and melodious sound creates emotional resonance, allowing profound messages to be conveyed through thematic expression. Consequently, song lyrics deserve literary analysis in the same way poetry does.

Researchers gathered data from songs on Paris Paloma's Cacophony album, which served as the primary source for this research:

Labour (2023), The song explores historical and social forms of women's roles, particularly within the family. The song explores the oppression and struggles to gain recognition that many women face, depicting the emotional burden of both physical and emotional tasks imposed on them within a patriarchal society. The lyrics present a poignant critique of traditional female roles, emphasizing that women's voices must be heard and valued.

Drywall (2023), is a song that raises the experience of women who struggle for freedom in a toxic relationship, Paloma wants to invite women who are or have experienced this to dare to take action to break away and reclaim the power as a free individual, clearly depicted women are in male control and try to break the bond to gain freedom in expressing themselves.

As Good a Reason (2023), this song presents the belief in women's experiences that are often taught to other women. This song teaches solidarity and mutual support for other women, teaching women to challenge patriarchal acts that have the potential to limit women's space to move. The lyrics of this song contain an invitation to move to make changes that inspire listeners to free themselves from the limitations that exist in a patriarchal society and create a space of empowerment and encouragement for other women.

Last Woman on Earth (2024), Paloma presents the theme of self-discovery and empowerment amidst the pressures of a patriarchal society. This song tells the story of a woman's journey toward independence, emphasizing the importance of introspection and self-growth in the face of adversity. Through her deep and touching lyrics, Paloma describes the form of struggle and sacrifice experienced by a woman while celebrating the strength and ability of women to empower themselves.

Each song illustrates the relationship between feminist themes and emotional depth, providing strong evidence to analyze the representation of feminism through figurative language and lyrics. Each song not only showcases Paris Paloma's artistic expression but also invites listeners to critically engage with the messages conveyed regarding gender equality and women's rights.

## Procedures

This research uses document analysis as the primary method of collecting data. According to Sugiyono (2017), in qualitative research, data collection may rely on texts or documents. The steps taken include: Listening to each song carefully and repeatedly to understand its emotional tone and context, conducting a close reading of the lyrics to identify key passages related to female representation and gender power dynamics, Highlighting themes such as emotional/domestic burden, the female body, resistance, and solidarity, concerning Gynocriticism, Interpreting the lyrics through feminist literary theory to explore how they function as expressions of women's narratives and resistance.

## Data Analysis

The analysis in this research follows a descriptive qualitative method by combining close reading

and thematic interpretation of the lyrics through the lens of Gynocriticism. Following the model of Miles and Huberman (in Sugiyono, 2017), the process includes three main stages: Data reduction, where significant portions of the lyrics are selected and highlighted based on their relevance to gender representation and ideological meaning. Data display, by organizing themes and patterns that emerge from the lyrics in line with feminist literary theory. Conclusion drawing and verification, in which the themes are interpreted and synthesized to form a broader narrative about the representation of women. To strengthen the interpretation, the analysis is also supported by several more focused steps, tailored specifically to the aims of this research. These include: Contextual interpretation, to understand the social and ideological background of each lyric, especially concerning patriarchal systems. Thematic categorization, where recurring motifs such as emotional labor, silence, resistance, and body politics are identified and grouped.

Application of Gynocriticism, by linking these findings to the theoretical framework proposed by Showalter and other feminist scholars. Synthesis of findings, where the patterns across all four songs are combined into a coherent representation of female experience and voice. This layered analysis allows the research not only to identify surface level themes but also to uncover the deeper meanings constructed in each text, reflecting women's lived realities and resistance within patriarchal structures.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section situates the representations of women in Paris Paloma's songs Labour, Drywall, As Good a Reason, and Last Woman on Earth within the framework of feminist literary criticism, specifically Elaine Showalter's concept of gynocriticism. These songs portray women's emotional and social struggles with gender inequality, structural burdens, and the development of awareness and resistance. Gynocriticism offers a way to read these works as expressions of women's experiences, not through a male lens, but as autonomous narratives created by and for women.

### Women as Writers in Labour Song

Labour represents women as individuals burdened by multiple expectations in patriarchal relationships. Paloma narrates women as those who constantly bear domestic work, emotional burdens, and social and reproductive pressures, without equal rewards or reciprocity. Women's identities are shaped by roles that serve men's interests, making women complements or even tools in the household structure.

In Labour, Paris Paloma crafts a vivid narrative of a woman trapped within an emotionally and physically exhausting relationship. From the opening verse, the imagery of the "rope" and "island" immediately positions the woman in a state of isolation and emotional entrapment. The "rope" suggests both dependency and the threat of collapse, while the "island" symbolizes her loneliness, even within a relationship. The idea of an "escape plan" and diving into "the waves below" speaks to the woman's desire for liberation, even if the path to freedom is uncertain and fraught with risk. Here, the woman is no longer passive; she becomes a conscious subject seeking release from a structure that binds her.

Paloma continues to emphasize this internal struggle in the pre-chorus, where the woman questions, "Who tends the orchards?" and "Who fixes up the gables?" These rhetorical questions expose the invisible domestic labor women perform, emotionally and physically, within patriarchal households. The reference

to the “high table” evokes male dominance and power, underscoring how emotional control and systemic inequality are normalized. The climactic line “I’m gettin’ fuckin’ tired” is a symbolic act of rebellion it is the moment when exhaustion turns into resistance. This cry for acknowledgment marks the beginning of awareness and the rejection of normalized suffering.

The chorus deepens this emotional and physical burden. Repetition becomes a key element here; the line “The capillaries in my eyes are bursting” transforms emotional pain into a bodily wound. Likewise, references to “calloused skin” and “cracking hands” portray physical labor as a manifestation of emotional exploitation. The woman questions whether the end of love would truly be a tragedy, implying that the relationship has already deteriorated into something harmful. Paloma positions love not as a place of comfort, but as a space haunted by silence and injustice. Through this, women are portrayed not as idealized figures of sacrifice, but as laborers whose efforts remain unrecognized.

This theme is reinforced in the post-chorus, where the repetition of the word “labour” used nine times serves as a sonic representation of monotony, fatigue, and the cry to be heard. It reflects how women’s suffering is often repeated, dismissed, and only acknowledged when it is loud and persistent. Paloma uses repetition as an emotional strategy to signify that one confession is not enough for women to be believed or understood within patriarchal systems.

Verse two shifts the focus toward emotional manipulation and power imbalance. The speaker highlights how men benefit from women’s constant emotional labor represented by metaphors like “lapping from your flowing cup” and “stabbing with your fork.” The use of domestic objects in these lines highlights how everyday actions become symbols of systemic control. Paloma critiques the phenomenon of “weaponized incompetence,” where men feign inability to avoid responsibility, placing a heavier burden on women. This quiet, structured oppression forces women into the role of emotional caregivers, even as they’re being emotionally depleted. The verse reflects the ways in which patriarchy disguises dominance under the pretense of male fragility and passivity.

The second pre-chorus adds a generational dimension. The woman imagines a daughter enduring the same fate, which triggers a transformative realization: staying in a harmful relationship is not noble it is a mistake that risks being repeated. The lyrics “So now I’ve gotta run, so I can undo this mistake / At least I’ve gotta try” mark a decisive act of reclaiming agency not just for herself, but for future generations. It’s no longer only about survival, but about breaking the chain of systemic violence that women inherit.

The bridge is the most explicit section, listing the many roles women are forced to inhabit “therapist, mother, maid, nymph, virgin, nurse, servant” all simultaneously, and all in service of male desire and stability. Women are depicted as extensions of men, created to meet expectations but never allowed space of their own. The repetition of this section underlines the cyclical, inescapable nature of these roles. Paloma critiques how women’s value is tied to their reproductive capacity “24/7 baby machine / So he can live out his picket-fence dreams.” The song ultimately culminates in a rejection of coerced love: “It’s not an act of love if you make her.” Love, Paloma asserts, should not demand submission or unreciprocated sacrifice.

However, the song also raises the voice of resistance. Paloma, in her lyrics, voices exhaustion, realizes the inherited cycle of oppression, and begins to take steps to free herself. This shows a shift from the position of victim to a conscious and active subject. This analysis is in line with the perspective of feminist literary criticism, particularly the gynocriticism approach developed by Elaine Showalter. Gynocriticism encourages the reading of women’s works with a focus on women’s experiences, bodies, and



identities written from women's perspectives. Labour's song is a clear example of how women voice themselves as central characters, not objects of a male narrative. Through poetic yet sharp language, these lyrics articulate women's collective experiences, as well as a form of resistance to marginalizing patriarchal structures. The representation of women as both victims and fighters in Labour paves the way for a deeper analysis of the next song, Drywall, which features a similar dynamic but in the form of a more intense and emotionally closed violent relationship.

### Women as Writers in Drywall Song

If Labour depicts women as figures burdened by unequal domestic and emotional roles, Drywall brings this representation into a more intimate space filled with psychological tension. Drywall presents the narrative of women who live with emotionally unstable partners, yet remain in control of the relationship. In this situation, women are positioned as mood setters, peacemakers, and conflict absorbers a role that is socially attached to women in patriarchal cultures. This representation is in line with the tendency in women's works as analyzed through the gynocriticism approach, namely the depiction of women's experiences trapped in a value system that marginalizes their voices and agency. The following analysis will explore how the lyrics narrate women in Drywall as individuals who are trapped, yet simultaneously build awareness of the importance of freeing oneself from the cycle of violence hidden behind what appears to be a "normal" relationship.

In first verse, the imagery of a man "punching walls again" introduces an unstable partner whose violence has become normalized. The woman in this narrative is not portrayed as a catalyst of conflict but as someone who must navigate the volatility, acting as a silent absorber of emotional instability. Paloma describes the man's temperament as fragile, "eggshell," highlighting how the woman must constantly regulate her own words and behavior to prevent emotional explosions. This portrays the reality that many women live in constantly on guard, trying to preserve peace in imbalanced relationships.

Yet, even in this silent suffering, there is an undercurrent of agency. The line "he is paving the road for my escape way every time I scratch another line" implies that the woman is no longer passively enduring. Instead, she is quietly strategizing, observing, and marking her way out. Her endurance is not resignation it is resistance building strength. The woman is transitioning from emotional survival to conscious rebellion.

This growing awareness is echoed in the chorus. The phrase "I used to think of him as a caring thing, knuckles on his drywall" speaks volumes about how violence has been misinterpreted as emotional vulnerability. Women, socialized to nurture and fix, often misread outbursts as signs of inner struggle rather than control. Paloma critiques this dynamic by showing how the woman becomes not just a partner, but a maternal figure, responsible for the emotional stability of an adult man. The woman witnesses the collapse of male identity "ripping into ribbons the things he knows he isn't" yet she is never given space to process her own disintegration.

The pivotal moment arrives when she chooses to "sever ties." This cutting of the metaphorical rope is more than a personal decision it's a symbolic act of liberation. It marks the point at which love is no longer a justification for endurance. Through lyrics and the music video imagery, Paloma illustrates a transition from being bound and watched to becoming self-empowered and unbound. Each repetition of the chorus shows this transformation: from complaint, to contemplation, to action.

In the second verse, Paloma intensifies the critique of patriarchal power structures. The woman confronts the absurdity of male authority, embodied in the line “funny rationality.” Here, Paloma flips the societal narrative: men, often seen as rational leaders, are exposed as emotionally erratic. Despite this, they are still handed power. The woman’s disbelief “I’m floored you ever got there” is a raw acknowledgment of how the system upholds unworthy authority. Emotional instability is used as a weapon to dominate, and women are subjected to silent manipulation, fear, and psychological control.

The bridge solidifies this theme of entrapment. The haunting repetition of “never making good on silent threats” reflects a reality where violence is always looming, yet never fully enacted just enough to control. This constant threat suffocates the woman’s autonomy. Her exhaustion becomes more than emotional fatigue; it becomes a psychological imprisonment. Yet, she is not portrayed as broken. In the visual metaphor of holding a sword to her chest while a man kneels before her, Paloma presents a woman who is poised not to surrender, but to sever. She chooses confrontation over continued submission. This is the turning point: not of escape alone, but of reclaiming dignity and agency.

Overall, Drywall depicts women as individuals living under intense psychological pressure as a result of emotionally unequal relationships. Women are depicted as mood setters, burden bearers, and witnesses to their male partners' emotional turmoil, with no space to voice their thoughts. However, through a narrative that unfolds gradually, the song also shows women's awareness and courage to free themselves from this cycle. The representation built in Drywall serves as a strong thematic bridge to the next song, As Good a Reason, which takes the woman's narrative into a more complex phase, where self-liberation is not merely about the courage to leave, but also about how the woman redefines herself after leaving a painful relationship.

### Women as Writers in As Good a Reason Song

If Drywall depicts women in a phase of awareness and courage to break oppressive relationships, As Good a Reason takes the narrative to the next phase, when women begin to renegotiate their sense of self after leaving the relationship. This song represents women who are processing their wounds, disappointment, and anger, but not as weak figures, rather as individuals who are slowly rebuilding their self-esteem and identity.

In As Good a Reason, Paris Paloma positions herself as a writer who speaks from and for women’s experiences. Through rich, poetic lyrics and intergenerational dialogue, Paloma constructs a narrative in which female pain, wisdom, and self-realization are not only expressed, but passed on with purpose. From the very beginning, the encounter with an older woman with “lips so red” and a face “like spider webs” symbolizes age marked by experience not weakness. This woman is not written as fragile or pitiful, but as a guide and bearer of deep understanding. The moment when she “opened my eyes” becomes a pivotal shift in the speaker’s awareness, highlighting the role of older women as transmitters of hard-earned truths. Paloma’s writing doesn’t romanticize pain; instead, it acknowledges its presence and transforms it into power. The older woman offers not comfort, but clarity. When the speaker asks, “How do you be so in love with yourself?” the question itself exposes how distant self-love often is for women raised under patriarchal expectations. Here, Paloma gives voice to the kind of questions women are rarely allowed to ask out loud and answers them through the wisdom of female experience.

The chorus furthers this confrontation with systemic inequality. The older woman says, “Every time



you are succeeding, there's an old man somewhere seething,” exposing how female achievement threatens patriarchal order. “Spite” is reclaimed not as a vice but as a survival tool something that fuels resistance. The lyric “when you hate the body you are in... you’re actin’ just for him” critiques how beauty standards and self-hatred are tools of control. In this way, the female body is written not as a passive object, but as a site of struggle and resistance.

What makes this writing particularly powerful is the transformation that occurs in the second chorus. The voice shifts from “she said” to “I said,” marking the speaker’s transition from listener to speaker, from recipient of insight to bearer of narrative authority. This shift demonstrates Paloma’s ability to construct a lineage of consciousness where female voices build upon one another, echoing but not imitating.

The second verse extends this lineage. A young girl with “eyes so bright” appears, but her disillusionment is already taking root “she was already getting sick of life.” Paloma writes young women not as innocent or naïve, but as aware, pressured, and burdened from the outset. The imagery of “her arms... laden with his merchandise” speaks to the commodification of young women’s bodies and time. The question she asks “why I no longer try” forces the protagonist to reflect on her journey and, in turn, become a guide for someone else.

Here, Paloma is doing more than storytelling she is writing a legacy. Knowledge, struggle, and awakening are passed from woman to woman, not through abstraction but through lived realities. The characters in the song are not merely representations; they are embodiments of what it means to survive, question, and pass forward. Through *As Good a Reason*, Paloma asserts herself as a woman who writes women’s lives not for spectacle, not for the male gaze, but for truth, continuity, and rebellion. Her lyrics function as a collective voice that honors where women have been, names where they are, and gestures toward where they must go.

Paloma narrates women in *As Good A Reason* as individuals moving from self discovery to social and political consciousness. Through encounters with older women and younger women, the main character is in a transgenerational flow that shows how experiences, wounds, and consciousness are passed on from one woman to another. Women in this song are not only portrayed as victims of the patriarchal system, but also as survivors, voices, and successors of narratives that contain the power of resistance. The chorus that changes from “She said” to “I said” reinforces the transformation of the main character from a recipient of advice to an agent of spreading awareness. Meanwhile, her encounters with young women show how the narrative legacy continues, making women the guardians of knowledge and shapers of intergenerational solidarity. The song closes with a repetition of the initial lyrics “I met a woman with lips so red / Always remember the things she said.” This repetition emphasizes the importance of women’s memory as a tool to fight an oppressive system. In the context of feminist literary criticism, especially gynocriticism, this outro marks that women’s voices that were once ignored are now the foundation for understanding, revising, and building identity collectively.

### Women as Writers in *Last Woman on Earth* Song

After going through the phase of women’s consciousness and narrative legacy in *As Good A Reason*, in *Last Woman on Earth*, Paris Paloma crafts one of her most radical portrayals of womanhood: not as a figure seeking liberation within the system, but as one who chooses complete erasure from it. As a woman writing from a deeply internalized experience of pain and autonomy, Paloma articulates a voice that is not

crying out to be saved, but determined to vanish on her own terms. Through stark imagery and lyrical intensity, she constructs a narrative of self-erasure as an act of final authorship.

From the opening verse, Paloma presents death not as surrender, but as escape. The female character's desire to be "cremated" and to "scatter ashes" without leaving a "marker" subverts cultural expectations of how women should be remembered or honored. Rather than allowing her story to be claimed or interpreted, the woman in the song writes herself out of the narrative. The lyric "as they search on a treasure map for my headstone" critiques how society commodifies women's lives even their deaths by trying to assign meaning, symbols, or ownership. Paloma writes this character as someone who severs all ties not just with individuals, but with the entire machinery that has sought to define her.

This rejection intensifies in the chorus. The woman would rather be "left to the beasts and bears" than exist in a society that sees her only as desirable or consumable. Paloma flips the cultural concept of desirability often attached to women as a measure of worth into a burden that the protagonist can finally cast off. The line "For the first time since I drew breath, I'm undesirable again" is repeated five times, emphasizing a moment of reclamation. In undesirability, the woman finally feels invisible, unclaimed, and therefore, free. Paloma writes this not as tragedy, but as triumph: the disappearance of the gaze becomes liberation. The chorus reframes the female body as something that no longer seeks validation, attention, or memory it becomes untouchable by design.

Verse two expands this rejection through the image of the body itself. "I'll tattoo it just so they think it's ruined" reclaims the narrative of damage. The protagonist consciously alters her body to make it no longer desirable according to social standards, protecting herself from being consumed or fetishized. In this act, damage becomes strategy. The body, once the site of scrutiny and ownership, is now a shield. The lyric "If they think it's ruined, it's easier to save" reveals that undesirability provides safety a space outside patriarchal reach. The request to be "disposed of unceremoniously in the waves" finalizes this detachment. Paloma writes a woman who refuses ritual, refuses memory, and refuses to become a symbol in anyone else's mythology. Her body will not serve another story.

In the bridge, Paloma reaches the peak of narrative resistance. The protagonist declares she will "burn [her] flesh and bones," not in despair, but in control. "It will never be yours" becomes the most defiant line an assertion that her body, life, and end will not be captured, owned, or interpreted by others. Even in death, she demands autonomy. The lyric "I'll take the flame over desecration" prioritizes self-destruction over being violated or reduced. Paloma does not ask for understanding or permission her character asks only for one thing: that her choice be respected. "Swear to me you will" becomes a final plea for silence, not for help. The woman seeks no savior. She asks only to be left alone, intact in the void she chooses.

As a woman writer, Paris Paloma dismantles traditional narratives of female suffering, memory, and salvation. She constructs a protagonist who is not seeking rescue, visibility, or redemption but sovereignty. Through *Last Woman on Earth*, Paloma gives space to a kind of female resistance that is rarely told: the story of a woman who does not want to be known, claimed, or kept alive through memory. She writes the woman who walks off the page and refuses to return. This is authorship in its purest form writing that grants its subject the freedom not to be written by anyone else.

*Last Woman on Earth* closes the narrative of women's representation in the four songs in the quietest yet most radical way. In this song, women are no longer depicted in social relations or in efforts to voice resistance openly, but in a total decision to cut off all connections with the system that has been oppressing

them. The choice to disappear, burn her own body, and refuse to be remembered reflects an extreme form of reclaiming, taking back power over the body, identity, and the end of life. Through symbols such as cremation, refusal of burial, becoming “undesirable,” and self-burning, the woman in this song is represented as a figure who no longer needs validation or space in the social structure. She does not choose to die because she is defeated, but because she wants to finish life on her terms. This is the highest form of agency, where the woman determines how she lives and how she disappears. In the context of feminist literary criticism, especially the gynocriticism approach, this song depicts women who not only voice their experiences and wounds but also take over the structure of the narrative and its closure. The female character in this song is not a victim of other people's narratives, but becomes the author of her ending and chooses not to leave a closing chapter for anyone who tries to own it.

### Female Stage by Gynocriticism

Based on Showalter's three phases of women's writing, Paloma's lyrics align with the female phase, where women write from their own experiences rather than adapting to or reacting against male-dominated norms. Each song reflects different aspects of this self-expression: emotional and domestic exhaustion (Labour), psychological distress (Drywall), growing awareness (As Good a Reason), and radical detachment (Last Woman on Earth). These themes are further examined through four core elements of gynocriticism: female experience, the body, identity, and tradition.

**Table 1.** Identification of Female Stage

Song	Female Experience	Female body	Female identity	Female Tradition
Labour	The woman is portrayed as emotionally and physically drained in an unequal relationship. The line “I’m gettin’ tired” reflects growing awareness and resistance.	The body is described as worn and injured “capillaries ... bursting” suggests unseen labor and emotional pressure taking a physical toll.	Female identity is shaped by imposed roles “therapist, mother, maid” yet she gradually finds her voice and reclaims agency.	Captures repetitive burdens experienced by women, now being voiced as a form of critique against domestic oppression.
Drywall	The woman lives under psychological tension and begins recognizing patterns of emotional abuse. “Scratch another line” signals her silent planning to escape.	While not overtly mentioned, mental strain is expressed in ways that imply physical and emotional fatigue, reflecting internalized violence.	Identity is rooted in emotional caretaking but slowly shifts toward self liberation as she chooses to “sever ties” with the toxic cycle.	Highlights generational patterns of abuse, yet also a growing consciousness to end that inherited suffering through intentional action.
As Good a Reason	Through intergenerational dialogue, the woman processes wounds and transforms anger into	The body is seen as socially constructed: “when you hate the	The shift from “she said” to “I said” reflects a transition from passive	Female tradition appears in shared wisdom passed between women,

	awareness: “Spite... is a good reason” becomes a rallying call for resistance.	body... you’re acting just for him” critiques how women are taught to self-hate.	recipient of wisdom to an active voice in her own narrative.	forming a chain of awareness across generations.
Last Woman on Earth	The woman chooses disappearance as an act of autonomy. “Scatter ashes, leave no marker” reflects a conscious rejection of patriarchal control, even in death.	The body is reclaimed through symbolic destruction “I’ll burn my flesh” represents resistance against objectification and posthumous control.	Identity is not defined by social recognition, but by a radical decision to become untraceable and beyond possession.	Rejects inherited systems entirely by refusing remembrance, she creates a new form of tradition, one built on detachment and narrative control.

## Female Experience

A key aspect of the gynocritical approach is the recognition of women's lived experiences as the foundation for meaning-making in literary works. Female experience centers women's physical, emotional, and social realities within the narrative, not as extensions of male experiences, but as central and autonomous. In Paris Paloma's songs, female experience is presented explicitly through narratives of suffering, inequality, alienation, and the struggle to break free from oppressive patriarchal structures.

In *Labour*, the female figure experiences both physical and emotional exhaustion in a domestic relationship. She is expected to serve not only as a housekeeper but also as a constant source of emotional support, without reciprocity. This burden illustrates the often-overlooked emotional labor women carry in patriarchal society. In *Drywall*, the woman is portrayed living under psychological strain with an emotionally unstable partner, highlighting the mental toll such dynamics take. As *Good a Reason* presents female experience through intergenerational dialogue, showing how pain and awareness are passed down from one woman to another. In *Last Woman on Earth*, female experience reaches its most intimate and isolated form, as the protagonist chooses complete disconnection from the world to preserve the last fragments of her autonomy.

These four songs demonstrate that women's experiences cannot be reduced to domestic roles or personal issues. They represent a shared, historical burden filled with pain and awareness. Gynocriticism positions these experiences at the center of the discourse, rather than allowing them to be marginalized by patriarchal structures.

## The Female Body

In gynocriticism, the female body is a central element in redefining women's identity and experience. It is not merely a biological entity, but a symbolic space shaped by cultural, social, and patriarchal pressures. Through the body, women are often defined, controlled, and reduced to symbols of purity or sacrifice. Yet, women's creative works also reclaim the body as a site of agency and resistance.

In *Labour*, the female body is portrayed as a site of exhaustion and injury. Lines such as “the

capillaries in my eyes are bursting” and “the calloused skin on my hands is cracking” emphasize how domestic and emotional labor take a physical toll. The body is not idealized or sanctified, but depicted as worn and damaged rejecting the patriarchal image of the feminine body as delicate, beautiful, and selfless.

In *Drywall*, the body becomes a vessel for psychological suffering, particularly as the woman is forced to manage her partner’s emotions and endure verbal and emotional abuse. Although not described in physical terms, the body is implicitly present through ongoing emotional fatigue.

In *As Good a Reason*, the body becomes a space for negotiating self-worth, as the woman grapples with societal pressure to be desirable. The lyric “when you hate the body you are in... you’re acting just for him” reflects the internalization of masculine standards and the struggle for self-acceptance.

Finally, in *Last Woman on Earth*, the body becomes the last territory the woman can fully control. Her request to be cremated, discarded into the sea, or burned to nothingness reflects a refusal to let her body be claimed, ritualized, or memorialized. A body once controlled in life becomes entirely hers even in death. Across all four songs, the female body is no longer framed as an aesthetic object but as a battlefield. This aligns with gynocriticism’s aim to explore how women writers consciously represent their bodies, free from the male gaze.

## Female Identity

In gynocriticism, female identity is not seen as something imposed from the outside by men, social norms, or dominant culture but as something actively shaped through lived experience, gender consciousness, and relationships among women. The concept of female identity in this framework rejects the notion of woman as the “other” to man. Instead, it is constructed through narratives, language, and awareness rooted in women’s own experiences.

*As Good a Reason* offers the clearest representation of identity formation through intergenerational female connection. The protagonist’s encounters with both an older and a younger woman become reflective and transformative moments, where identity is formed not through relationships with men, but through the transmission of knowledge and shared consciousness among women. The line “she opened my eyes and I’ll never close again” signals the beginning of a new awareness, while the shift from “she said” to “I said” marks a transition from passive inheritance to active narration.

Conversely, *Labour* and *Drywall* portray female identities shaped by the burden of imposed roles. In *Labour*, the woman is forced into being a “therapist, mother, maid, nymph, virgin, nurse, servant” roles that reflect others’ needs rather than her individuality. This highlights how patriarchal society constructs female identity through external demands. However, the protagonist ultimately begins to renegotiate her identity by choosing to leave the oppressive relationship.

*Last Woman on Earth* presents an extreme assertion of identity: a woman who seeks total freedom beyond societal reach. She refuses to be remembered, marked, or claimed in life or death. Here, identity is no longer defined by how others perceive her, but by how she chooses to define her existence, even if that means erasing herself from social memory.

Across these songs, female identity emerges not from conformity to norms but from the conscious process of awareness, rejection, and self-redefinition. In the gynocritical lens, this is the essence of female identity—not one that is assigned, but one that is created through women’s own experiences and awakening.

## Female Tradition

In gynocriticism, the concept of female tradition refers to women's efforts to construct a cultural legacy and narrative rooted in their own lived experiences. It serves as a response to a literary history long dominated by male voices, which often reduced women to mere objects or symbols. Female tradition becomes a medium for establishing intergenerational continuity not only biologically, but also through shared experiences, memories, and emotional and narrative knowledge passed down among women.

As Good a Reason vividly embodies this tradition. The protagonist's encounters with an older woman and then a younger one form a chain of consciousness. The elder is not idolized, but presented as a woman who has undergone a long journey toward self-love. The wisdom she imparts is then passed on by the protagonist to another younger woman. The shift in narration from "she said" to "I said" illustrates that female tradition does not remain static, but evolves, moves, and strengthens through new experiences.

In Labour and Drywall, female tradition is also revealed through the near-universal experiences shared among women. The protagonists endure emotional exhaustion, burdensome roles, and imbalanced relationships, experiences that resonate with countless women across time and space. These songs affirm that female tradition does not consist solely of positive inheritance, but also includes generational wounds. Yet, it is from the awareness of these recurring wounds that new forms of resistance emerge.

Last Woman on Earth offers a different perspective, one in which the failure of tradition and social systems leads the female subject to break the chain entirely. However, in doing so, she creates a new space, a legacy not defined by submission, but by the courage to say "enough." By refusing to be remembered or marked, she leaves a silent but powerful message: female tradition can also take the form of total rejection of oppressive structures.

Within the framework of gynocriticism, these four songs demonstrate that female tradition is not merely passed down, it is also interrogated, reshaped, and transformed. This tradition lives in women's evolving experiences, not as a historical burden, but as fuel to shape a different future.

This research has explored how women are portrayed in four songs by Paris Paloma, consistently presenting them as subjects who face pressure, develop awareness, and resist patriarchal structures. The lyrical analysis reveals narratives that reflect women's lived experiences within domestic relationships, emotional strain, bodily constructions, and even a desire to vanish from oppressive systems. Through the lens of gynocriticism these songs are shown to go beyond individual stories, connecting to a broader collective narrative involving the female body, identity formation, and inherited traditions. These four works align with Showalter's concept of the female phase, where women begin to write and speak for themselves, independent of patriarchal values. Thus, the findings in this chapter indicate that popular music can serve as a powerful literary medium for expressing female experiences in a way that is honest, reflective, and critical.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion presented in the previous chapters, it can be concluded that the four songs by Paris Paloma, "Labour," "Drywall," "As Good a Reason," and "Last Woman on Earth" offer a critical and layered representation of women's experiences under patriarchal structures. These songs portray how women endure various forms of emotional, physical, social, and symbolic oppression both in



domestic relationships and broader societal contexts.

In response to the first research question regarding how women are represented in the lyrics, the songs reveal women as individuals burdened by invisible labor, emotionally alienated, and subjected to social expectations. However, these representations evolve from passive roles into active ones, as the female subjects gradually reclaim agency over their bodies, identities, and lives. This transformation also includes a form of resistance, sometimes through radical rejection of oppressive social systems.

Regarding the second research question, which explores the relationship between these representations and the theory of gynocriticism, the findings indicate that the songs embody the characteristics of the female phase as conceptualized by Elaine Showalter. In this phase, women articulate their voices and narratives, not as reflections of men, but as autonomous subjects shaped by collective female experience. These songs reflect female experience (emotional and symbolic burdens), female body (depicted realistically and as a site of resistance), female identity (shaped through personal awareness and resistance), and female tradition (inherited, questioned, and redefined across generations).

Thus, this research concludes that popular music, particularly Paris Paloma's songs, functions not only as artistic expression but also as a potent form of cultural and literary literacy. These songs reflect the complexities of womanhood and serve as a medium for critical reflection on gender dynamics. The research affirms the relevance of feminist literary criticism in understanding how cultural texts contribute to broader conversations on gender.

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