

UNVEILING FEMALE OBJECTIFICATION IN SOFIA ISELLA'S 'DOLL PEOPLE': A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Nissa Nursasi Fatika¹ & Dewi Sri Kuning²
¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi, Indonesia
²Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Nissa Nursasi Fatika E-mail: 2288203002@umko.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the representation of women and power relations in the song "Doll People" by Sofia Isella using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This qualitative study uses song lyrics obtained from the official Spotify platform as verbal data, analyzed through Fairclough's three-dimensional framework: text, discourse practice, and social practice. The findings indicate that, at the textual level, women are represented as objects through metaphors, passive constructions, and identity labeling, reflecting patterns of dehumanization and fragmentation. At the level of discourse practice, meaning and identity are constructed through external perspectives that position women as objects of observation and evaluation. At the level of social practice, the lyrics reflect unequal power relations associated with patriarchal ideology, while also presenting elements of resistance through a shift toward agency. This study suggests that song lyrics function as a discursive space where objectification is both reproduced and questioned, contributing to a deeper understanding of gender representation in contemporary music.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary cultural landscape, popular music has evolved beyond mere entertainment into a dynamic discursive space where young people negotiate identity and ideology (Lee, 2022). As a form of mass culture, music reflects complex sociocultural dynamics, including persistent narratives of gender inequality and discrimination (Samikova, 2021). Despite the visibility of progressive discourses, global patriarchal structures continue to shape social relations and adapt to changing contexts, maintaining their influence across cultural domains (Johnston & Meger, 2025). This persistence indicates that although feminist movements have undergone significant transformation across historical waves (Ikram et al., 2025), the struggle to challenge limitations on women's agency remains ongoing and deeply embedded in cultural production, including popular music.

Within critical linguistic studies, language is understood as a powerful instrument for constructing and reproducing social realities, including gendered stereotypes and representations (Aprilia & Neisyah, 2022). Language is not neutral; rather, it operates as a site where power relations are produced, negotiated, and sustained. In this regard, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a crucial framework for examining how texts encode and reproduce social inequalities (Mukminin et al., 2024). Previous studies on song lyrics have demonstrated that women are frequently portrayed through stereotypical roles, objectified identities, and unequal power positioning, often reinforced through metaphor, labeling, and narrative structures (Ajmal & Zainab, 2024); (Aprilia & Neisyah, 2022). While previous studies successfully identify patterns



of representation, they often focus only on surface-level linguistic features, neglecting how these representations operate within broader discourse and social practices. Furthermore, few have explored how contemporary alternative music simultaneously reproduces objectification and constructs resistance. To bridge this gap, this study adopts Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model as the primary framework, integrating micro-stylistic features with macro-social structures. To enhance the precision of Fairclough's textual dimension, Leech (2014) stylistic framework of figurative language is utilized as a supporting tool to decode the micro-linguistic metaphors in the lyrics. Concurrently, Nussbaum (1995) and Langton (2009) conceptual dimensions of objectification are embedded as a supporting theoretical lens within Fairclough's social practice dimension.

One contemporary artist who actively engages with these issues is Sofia Isella. As an American singer-songwriter associated with alternative and dark pop genres, Isella consistently explores themes of women's empowerment and social critique in her work. Her growing prominence, including performances alongside major artists such as Taylor Swift and Melanie Martinez, has expanded the reach of her discursive influence. Among her works, the song "Doll People" stands out as a particularly significant text due to its explicit, provocative, and symbolic use of language in addressing the objectification of women.

The song employs striking metaphors, such as the figure of the "doll," alongside grotesque imagery and fragmented body representations, to simultaneously depict and challenge the reduction of women into passive objects. These linguistic features make "Doll People" not only a reflection of patriarchal discourse but also a site of resistance that problematizes dominant representations. Therefore, its theoretical and linguistic complexity provides a compelling case for critical analysis.

In light of this, the present study aims to contribute to the existing body of research in several ways. First, it applies Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework to examine how meaning is constructed across text, discourse practice, and social practice by leveraging the sub-categories of Leech's figurative language and Nussbaum's objectification criteria as detailed analytical indicators. Second, it seeks to uncover how objectification and resistance coexist within the same discourse. Third, it provides a deeper understanding of how contemporary song lyrics function not only as reflections of social reality but also as tools for challenging dominant ideologies. Based on this background, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How is language represented in the lyrics of "Doll People" within the text dimension of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework?, (2) How do the lyrics represent discursive and social practices related to the objectification of women and power relations?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concept of Discourse and the Dynamics of Language Power

Discourse extends beyond a mere sequence of words; it constitutes a form of social practice in which language functions as a primary instrument for constructing social realities and shaping public perception. (Jun, 2023) argues that discourse operates as a strategic form of communication designed to establish particular systems of meaning across both local and global contexts. From a more dynamic perspective, language within discourse possesses the capacity to influence thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors, thereby triggering broader psychological and social



transformations (Akinbode & Akinbode, 2025). Importantly, discourse is never neutral. It inherently carries ideological content that reflects the interests and power of its producers. This suggests that language functions not only as a medium of expression but also as an active force that structures social relations. Consequently, the dominance of certain narratives is closely tied to who controls discourse production, reinforcing the idea that language is deeply embedded within systems of power and inequality.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Using Norman Fairclough's Model

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) seeks to uncover how power relations and ideologies are produced, reproduced, and contested through language. According to (Nisak, 2025), CDA is particularly significant in identifying dominant narratives in media discourse, which are often shaped by institutional power structures. Among various CDA approaches, Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model is widely recognized for its integrative nature, as it connects linguistic analysis with broader social contexts. This model consists of three interrelated dimensions. The first, textual analysis, focuses on linguistic features such as vocabulary, metaphor, and grammatical structures, which can reveal how meanings are constructed at the micro level (Ajmal & Zainab, 2024). The second, discursive practice, examines how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed, highlighting the role of discourse in shaping interpretation (Santoso, 2018). The third, social practice, situates discourse within wider sociocultural structures, demonstrating how texts both reflect and reinforce systemic inequalities (Müller, 2024). While previous studies have successfully applied CDA to identify gender bias and ideological patterns, many tend to emphasize textual features without sufficiently exploring how these meanings operate across discursive and social dimensions. This limitation underscores the need for a more comprehensive application of Fairclough's framework, particularly in analyzing contemporary cultural texts such as song lyrics.

2.3 Representation, Ideology, and the Objectification of Women

Representation in discourse is inherently tied to ideology and power relations. (Sukma et al., 2025) argue that artistic works, including music, reflect the personal and social ideologies of their creators, thereby functioning as a medium of identity construction. However, such representations often reproduce dominant ideologies that marginalize women. As noted by (Diko, 2024), music serves as a powerful channel through which discourses of power are transmitted, often influencing audiences at an emotional level. In popular culture, gender representation frequently positions women within limited and stereotypical roles. (Budi et al., 2025) demonstrate that song lyrics often reinforce negative stereotypes that normalize gender inequality. This aligns with (Aytatli, 2025), who emphasizes the urgency of dismantling patriarchal ideologies embedded in global music discourse. A critical issue lies in the normalization of objectification, which is often subtly embedded within aesthetic forms. Because such representations are disguised through artistic expression, they can operate more effectively in shaping subconscious perceptions of gender roles. This suggests that objectification in music is not only pervasive but also ideologically powerful, as it continuously reproduces unequal power relations in less visible ways.



2.4 Songs as a Medium for Critical Discourse

Songs function as a highly persuasive medium due to their ability to integrate linguistic and musical elements into a cohesive expressive form. The interaction between melody and lyrics enables ideological messages to be conveyed in ways that are both emotional and memorable (Diko, 2024). As a result, song lyrics should not be regarded merely as entertainment but as discursive sites where identities are constructed and social issues are negotiated (Akinbode & Akinbode, 2025). Moreover, songs possess the unique ability to penetrate personal and private listening spaces, allowing discourse to operate at an intimate level. This makes them particularly effective in shaping perceptions of sensitive issues such as gender and objectification. Consequently, analyzing song lyrics through a critical lens becomes essential for understanding how ideology is subtly embedded and circulated within popular culture.

2.5 Previous Studies

Previous studies have extensively explored the relationship between language, ideology, and gender representation across various forms of media. Research by (Ajmal & Zainab, 2024) and (Santoso, 2018) demonstrates how discourse in literary and media texts reproduces gender bias and patriarchal ideology. In the context of music, (Sukma et al., 2025) highlight how song lyrics reflect cultural identity and social values, while studies by (Nisak, 2025), (Budi et al., 2025), and (Aytatli, 2025) reveal that popular music frequently emphasizes physical appearance and objectification rather than women's empowerment. While previous studies identify general representation patterns, limited attention has been given to how objectification is constructed, negotiated, and resisted across Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework, particularly in contemporary alternative music. This study addresses this gap by analyzing Sofia Isella's song, "Doll People." Through its provocative language, fragmented body metaphors, and shifting narrative positions, the song serves as a significant case to examine how objectification and resistance are simultaneously constructed within contemporary song lyrics.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the underlying meanings, ideology, and power relations embedded in language. CDA is used to critically examine how language constructs, reproduces, and challenges power and ideology within a text. Specifically, this analysis focuses on how representations of objectification, domination, and resistance are constructed through the lyrics of Sofia Isella's song, "Doll People."

3.2 Data and Data Source

The data consists of verbal lyrics from "Doll People," sourced from Spotify and verified for accuracy. The song was purposively selected for its strong metaphorical and symbolic representations of women's dehumanization and objectification. The units of analysis comprise words, phrases, clauses, and sentences reflecting power relations, identity construction, and gender ideology. To strengthen the social practice analysis, primary data is supplemented by contextual information, including the artist's thematic focus and the broader sociocultural background.



3.3 Framework of Analysis

This research uses a three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis developed by Fairclough (2013). This model divides the analysis into three interrelated stages:

1. Text Analysis

At this stage, the researcher analyzes linguistic aspects of the text, such as vocabulary choice, sentence structure, and forms of representation that indicate the positions of subjects and objects in the song lyrics.

2. Social Practice

At this stage, the researcher connects the results of the text analysis and discourse practices with the broader social context, such as patriarchal ideology, the objectification of women, and power relations in society.

3. Discourse Practice

This stage focuses on the process of text production and consumption. The researcher analyzes how the song lyrics are produced by the singer as a form of social expression, as well as how the meaning of the text is interpreted by the audience.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Data collection in this study was conducted through documentation techniques, supported by close reading, listening, and note-taking methods. The researcher repeatedly examined the lyrics to identify linguistic units relevant to the research focus. A total of 28 data units were selected purposively based on the presence of linguistic features that reflect ideological meanings related to gender representation. To ensure analytical consistency, the selection and categorization process was guided by two supporting frameworks embedded within Fairclough's three-dimensional model:

Textual Level (Leech, 2014):

1. **Reification**: Metaphorical expressions reducing humans to inanimate, manufactured objects.
2. **Synecdoche**: Linguistic constructions fragmenting the female body into isolated physical parts.
3. **Simile**: Explicit comparative structures (e.g., using "like" or "as") aligning human anatomy with consumable substances.
4. **Paradox/Oxymoron**: Conflicting semantic combinations exposing systemic coercion and patriarchal contradictions.
5. **Asyndeton/Labeling**: Rapid listing of socio-functional titles restricting female identity into fixed roles.
6. **Metaphor**: Directly equating two different things based on their similarities.
7. **Imagery**: Using words that trigger sensory responses (imagining visuals, sounds, or tastes/feelings).
8. **Hyperbole**: Using deliberate exaggeration to add emphasis or dramatic effect, not meant to be taken literally.
9. **Irony**: Saying something where the intended meaning is the exact opposite of the literal words.



Sociocultural Level (Nussbaum, 1995 ; Langton, 2009) Objectification Theory:

To operationalize Fairclough's social practice dimension, the data were mapped onto ten distinct dimensions to evaluate how power relations target the female subject:

1. **Instrumentality:** Treating a person as a mere tool for the objectifies purposes.
2. **Denial of Autonomy:** Representing a person as lacking self-determination or independence.
3. **Inertness:** Depicting a person as passive, stagnant, and lacking agency.
4. **Fungibility:** Treating a person as interchangeable with other objects or commodities.
5. **Violability:** Portraying a person as lacking boundary-integrity, permissible to be violated.
6. **Ownership:** Representing a person as property that can be bought, sold, or owned.
7. **Denial of Subjectivity:** Ignoring a person's inner experiences, feelings, and voice.
8. **Reduction to Body/Appearance:** Identifying a person primarily by physical anatomy or sensory appeal.
9. **Silencing:** Representing a person as voiceless or structurally stripped of the capacity to speak.
10. **Resistance:** Capturing counter-hegemonic elements (e.g., action verbs, surrealist metaphors) that signal the reclamation of autonomy and liberation.

Data analysis in this study adapts Fairclough's three-dimensional framework to transition from textual properties directly into social dimensions, culminating in discursive synthesis. The process begins at the textual level by using Leech (2014) stylistic framework to map how figurative language is structurally organized. Next, the analysis moves directly to the social practice level to explain these findings within macro-sociological and ideological contexts, applying Nussbaum (1995) and Langton (2009) objectification dimensions to examine how patriarchal structures are either reproduced or resisted. Finally, at the discourse practice level, these elements are synthesized to interpret how text-level features and social dynamics intersect within institutional processes of text production, circulation, and consumption. To ensure consistency, each data unit is classified by its dominant representation, analyzing every data point as an active component within a wider socio-political system.

3.5 Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure the rigor and validity of the findings, this study applies four qualitative trustworthiness strategies. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement via repeated close reading and listening to the lyrics. Dependability was maintained by strictly following Fairclough's structured three-dimensional CDA framework throughout the research. Confirmability was ensured by grounding all interpretations in explicit textual evidence to minimize subjective bias. Finally, theoretical triangulation was employed by integrating Fairclough's model with Leech's figurative language framework and Nussbaum's objectification theory, allowing for a robust cross-examination of the data from both micro-linguistic and macro-sociocultural perspectives.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the analysis of Sofia Isella's song "Doll People" using Fairclough (2013) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), supported by Leech



(2014) figurative language framework and Nussbaum (1995) objectification theory. The analysis examines how linguistic choices construct objectification, power relations, and resistance. Data were collected from Spotify and analyzed using documentation and note-taking methods, resulting in 28 relevant lyric units. Data selection was guided by specific linguistic indicators, including reification, synecdoche, similes, paradox, and action verbs. Overall, the findings reveal a patterned progression: the earlier parts of the song construct women as passive objects, whereas the later parts introduce elements of agency and resistance. A summary of these findings is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Critical Discourse Analysis of “Doll People”

No	Lyrics	Text Analysis	Social Practice	Discourse Practice
1	The doll people are not men	Reification	Denial of Subjectivity	Challenging social categorization
2	They are made of ass and glass	Metaphor & Synecdoche	Reduction to Body & Fungibility	Satirizing mass media language
3	Our skin is clay and painted blue	Metaphor	Reduction to Appearance	Critiquing artificial beauty standards
4	Our head can detach	Hyperbole & Grottesque Imagery	Violability	Deconstructing human identity
5	We are statues with a pulse	Paradox / Oxymoron	Inertness	Exposing social surveillance & restriction
6	We are art you can fuck.	Metaphor	Instrumentality	Subverting exploitative beauty discourse
7	The doll people are quiet.	Irony	Silencing	Highlighting the exclusion of voices
8	Art does not interpret itself.	Metaphor	Denial of Autonomy	Exposing knowledge power imbalance
9	There are men with a day to save	Irony	Denial of Autonomy & Inertness	Critiquing the savior complex trope
10	We are paintings with legs	Metaphor & Oxymoron	Inertness & Reduction to Appearance	Critiquing reduction to ornamental utility
11	Drink the dolls.	Metaphor	Ownership	Exposing market consumption of lives
12	Legs spread like butter.	Simile	Violability	Deconstructing predatory sexual idioms
13	"Wife whore mistress maid mother."	Asyndeton & Labeling	Fungibility	Critiquing reduction to functional roles
14	Beauty and the buyer	Asyndeton / Labeling	Ownership & Fungibility	Exposing commercial consumer power
15	A woman who doesn't want it is hotter.	Paradox	Denial of Autonomy & Violability	Dismantling rape myth discourse
16	The doll people are alive or so they say	Reification & Paradox	Inertness	Exposing false liberation narratives
17	Never trust the art these days	Metaphor	Denial of Subjectivity	Exposing distrust toward women's voices
18	To be admired takes precedence	-	Reduction to Appearance	Exposing male gaze conditioning
19	To be desired over desiring	Paradox	Denial of Autonomy	Critiquing sexual agency double standards
20	Paint popping off of us	Simile & Dynamic	Resistance	Shifting from compliance to



	like rockets	Imagery		resistance
21	Stepped right of fantasy	Metaphor	Fungibility	Exposing entertainment artificial standards
22	The world still stuck to our pocket	Hyperbole	Resistance	Constructing a counter-discourse
23	They looked under our skirt	Synecdoche	Violability & Reduction to Body	Reflecting public voyeurism practices
24	But all they saw were maggots.	Grotesque Metaphor	Active Resistance	Subverting visual pleasure through horror
25	They bang their head on the wall	Hyperbole / Irony	Resistance	Exposing the fracture of dominant discourse
26	They fucked the art that afternoon	Metaphor	Instrumentality & Violability	Critiquing ultimate sexual exploitation
27	The dolls are running and laughing.	Irony & Reversal of Reification	Denial of Subjectivity.	Transitioning from passivity to agency
28	Swimming in the milk of the moon.	Metaphor	Resistance	Constructing an alternative liberated reality

4.2 DISCUSSION

4.2.1 Text Analysis: Dehumanization and Fragmentation of Body Representation

At the textual level, the lyrics deploy sophisticated figurative language to analyze the systemic objectification of women and their linguistic resistance. Following Leech (2014) framework, the dominant device is **Metaphor and Reification** (Data 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 17, 21, 24, 28), which strips away female agency by transferring inanimate qualities onto humans. Specifically, lines like “The doll people are not men” (Data 1), “They are made of ass and glass” (Data 2), and “Our skin is clay and painted blue” (Data 3) reduce women to passive canvases, aligning with Ajmal & Zainab (2024) regarding linguistic features that structurally disempower women. Furthermore, confrontational metaphors like “We are art you can fuck” (Data 6) and “They fucked the art that afternoon” (Data 26) expose blatant sexual objectification through vulgarity, yet act as satirical critiques; this supports Budi et al., (2025) assertion that transgressive language often unmask and normalizes the degradation of women's dignity. This passive transactional structure is reinforced in “Art does not interpret itself” (Data 8), “Drink the dolls” (Data 11), and “Never trust the art these days” (Data 17). Concurrently, metaphors are used for subversion: artificial beauty is exposed as a “fantasy” (Data 21), a visceral, Grotesque Metaphor disrupts visual pleasure through semantic horror in “but all they saw were maggots” (Data 24), and a Surrealist Metaphor constructs a liberated domain via “Swimming in the milk of the moon” (Data 28).

This structural paralysis and double standard are further highlighted by **Paradox and Oxymoron** (Data 5, 10, 15, 16, 19). The oxymorons “We are statues with a pulse” (Data 5) and “We are paintings with legs” (Data 10) clash animation with immobility to reduce women to mobile ornaments, while “a woman who doesn’t want it is hotter” (Data 15) presents a psychological paradox exposing the toxic eroticization of non-consent. This tension is reinforced in “The doll people are alive or so they say” (Data 16), which questions female liberation, and “To be desired over desiring” (Data 19), which pairs opposed verb forms to contrast forced passivity against active female sexual will.



Bodily distortion and extreme objectification appear as **Hyperbole and Grotesque Imagery** in Data 4, 22, and 25. The line “Our head can detach” (Data 4) isolates anatomy from the psychological self for external consumption, reflecting what Aprilia & Neisya (2022) explain as the dual capacity of song lyrics to both reinforce and challenge cultural stereotypes. However, a critical turning point occurs as the hyperbole shifts to a collective pronoun in “The world still stuck to our pocket” (Data 22) to seize back control, while “They bang their head on the wall” (Data 25) uses hyperbole to mock the oppressors' failure.

Semantic reversals are executed through **Irony** (Data 7, 9, 27) and **Simile** (Data 12, 20). Situational irony highlights the silencing of women into quiet property in “The doll people are quiet” (Data 7) and mockingly exposes the patriarchal “savior complex” in “There are men with a day to save” (Data 9). This subversion climaxes in “The dolls are running and laughing” (Data 27), executing a complete reversal of reification where inanimate nouns are empowered by active verbs. Meanwhile, the female body is portrayed as an accessible commodity via simile in “legs spread like butter” (Data 12), which contrasts sharply with the dynamic, explosive resistance of “Paint popping off of us like rockets” (Data 20).

Lastly, lesser-frequent devices like **Synecdoche**, **Asyndeton/Labeling**, and Aesthetic Priority demonstrate categorical reductionism. Synecdoche in Data 2 and 23 reduces human identity to sexualized body parts (“ass”) and garments (“under our skirt”), reflecting invasive surveillance. Asyndeton stacks functional role labels in rapid succession in “Wife whore mistress maid mother” (Data 13) to critique the reduction of women's complex lives, while “Beauty and the buyer” (Data 14) equates human attributes with commercial transactions, and “To be admired takes precedence” (Data 18) textualizes how social conditioning pressures women to satisfy the male gaze. Ultimately, a profound linguistic tension remains embedded within this strategy; while the song aims to criticize patriarchal objectification, its heavy reliance on explicit, highly objectifying vocabulary risks re-inscribing and reproducing the exact dominant discourse it seeks to dismantle, meaning the ultimate efficacy of this critique heavily relies on the critical literacy and interpretive framework of the audience.

4.2.2 Social Practice: Patriarchal Ideology and Manifestations of Resistance

At the level of social practice, the song's patterns connect directly to patriarchal power relations, specifically reflecting the dimensions of objectification theorized by Nussbaum (1995) and Langton (2009). The text exposes a systemic hierarchy reliant on the **Denial of Subjectivity** and **Denial of Autonomy**, where women are stripped of human status and meaning (The doll people are not men,” Data 1; “Art does not interpret itself,” Data 8; “Never trust the art these days,” Data 17). This asymmetry manifests Nussbaum's **Inertness**, equating femininity with passive, decorative immobility despite being biologically alive (“We are statues with a pulse,” Data 5; “We are paintings with legs,” Data 10; “The doll people are alive or so they say,” Data 16), while granting masculinity a monopoly on action and rescue (“There are men with a day to save,” Data 9). As Johnston & Meger (2025) explain, patriarchal ideology maintains hegemony by adapting to different cultural contexts like popular music, validating Edström et al., (2024) claim that patriarchal ideas can subtly re-entrench themselves even within seemingly progressive or critical texts. This hegemony manifests through corporate and sexual commodification under capitalist-patriarchal dynamics, where the female entity faces a severe **Reduction to Body**, **Reduction to Appearance**, **Ownership**, and **Fungibility**, reducing humans to fragile,



exchangeable parts and aesthetic norms designed for external consumption (“They are made of ass and glass,” Data 2; “Our skin is clay...,” Data 3; “Drink the dolls,” Data 11; “Wife whore...,” Data 13; “Beauty and the buyer,” Data 14; “To be admired...,” Data 18; “Stepped right out of fantasy,” Data 21). Furthermore, objectification normalizes violence through **Instrumentality** and **Violability**, treating women as raw tools for physical exploitation, public voyeurism, and predatory sexual myths where male gratification thrives on non-consent (“We are art you can fuck,” Data 6; “Legs spread like butter,” Data 12; “A woman who doesn’t want it is hotter,” Data 15; “They looked under our skirt,” Data 23; “They fucked the art...,” Data 26), reinforced by the systematic **Silencing** and erasure of women’s speech acts (“The doll people are quiet suicide,” Data 7).

Concurrently, the song introduces vectors of **Resistance**, charting a counter-hegemonic transition from forced passivity toward active revolt. This shift begins as the collective female group rebels against conformity (“Paint popping off of us like rockets,” Data 20) and seizes back systemic control (“The world still stuck to our pocket,” Data 22). Crucially, deploying the repulsive systematically denies the patriarchal pleasure of **Reduction to Appearance** by rupturing aesthetic expectations, causing psychological friction for the oppressors (“But all they saw were maggots,” Data 24; “They bang their head on the wall,” Data 25). This resistance culminates as subjects explicitly reclaim **Autonomy** and **Subjectivity** through dynamic action (“The dolls are running and laughing,” Data 27), which Afyanti & Binawan (2025) note signals a profound empowerment and reclamation of agency via action verbs in lyrics. This culminates in creating a free counter-hegemonic social space outside patriarchal surveillance (“Swimming in the milk of the moon,” Data 28). However, as Tripathi (2025) astutely notes, feminist resistance in popular culture often operates within existing institutional systems; consequently, the liberation articulated here remains partial, complex, and discursively entangled with the very patriarchal structures it aggressively challenges.

4.2.3 Discourse Practice: Production of Meaning and Control of Identity

At the level of discourse practice, the lyrics illustrate how meaning-making power and interpretive authority are systematically denied to marginalized subjects through institutional text production, consumption, and circulation. This discursive regulation strips away subject status (“The doll people are not men,” Data 1) and mimics mass media language that commercializes female anatomy (“They are made of ass and glass,” Data 2). The meta-linguistic line “Art does not interpret itself” (Data 8) marks a clear epistemic injustice where objectified individuals are deprived of the authority to define their own representation, aligning with Mukminin et al., (2024) on how the discursive positioning of subject and object shapes asymmetric power relations. Mass culture circulates texts conditioning women to prioritize appearance over active will (“To be admired takes precedence,” Data 18), utilizing double standards that silence agency while validating external scripts (“To be desired over desiring,” Data 19). By placing women as passive signs within market-driven phrases (“beauty and the buyer,” Data 14) or consumer verbs (“Drink the dolls,” Data 11), the transactional circuit reproduces a system where human lives are commodified. This policing of identity is further achieved by serializing feminine roles (“Wife whore mistress maid mother,” Data 13), forcing multidimensional experiences into rigid categories. As Jun (2023) notes, discourse institutionalizes cohesive systems of meaning; here, it restricts social identity to utility-based roles, reinforced by the entertainment industry’s



unrealistic projections (“Stepped right out of fantasy,” Data 21). Furthermore, dominant structures sustain harmful social myths, such as the patriarchal “savior complex” (“There are men with a day to save,” Data 9), rape myths that thrive on non-consensual desire (“A woman who doesn’t want it is hotter,” Data 15), and false narratives of liberation that mask ongoing surveillance (“The doll people are alive or so they say,” Data 16). This systematic exclusion erases marginalized voices, ensuring consumers continue to distrust women’s independent speech (“The doll people are quiet,” Data 7; “Never trust the art these days,” Data 17).

Nevertheless, the discourse practice of “Doll People” is explicitly structured as a counter-discourse designed to expose and disrupt these oppressive text-production practices. The text deconstructs whole identities into fragmented representations to mock synthetic beauty manufacturing (“Our skin is clay and painted blue,” Data 3; “Our head can detach,” Data 4) and exposes the paradox of individuals under constant surveillance (“We are statues with a pulse,” Data 5; “We are paintings with legs,” Data 10). It employs a confrontational subversion of art and beauty discourses that disguise exploitation (“We are art you can fuck,” Data 6) and turns predatory idioms inside out (“Legs spread like butter,” Data 12). This counter-discourse marks a critical shift from passive consumption to explosive, non-compliant text production (“Paint popping off of us like rockets,” Data 20), where the creator seizes back textual control (“The world still stuck to our pocket,” Data 22). By reflecting real-world voyeurism only to shatter it through the aesthetics of the repulsive and semantic horror (“They looked under our skirt,” Data 23; “But all they saw were maggots,” Data 24), the text disrupts objectified visual pleasure. As the dominant discourse fractures due to its failure to contain the subject (“They bang their head on the wall,” Data 25; “They fucked the art that afternoon,” Data 26), the text executes a full linguistic transition from a passive noun state to dynamic agency (“The dolls are running and laughing,” Data 27). This culminates in a utopian counter-discourse that constructs an alternative reality entirely liberated from dominance (“Swimming in the milk of the moon,” Data 28), aligning with Ikram et al., (2025) who argue that contemporary feminist discourse focuses on shifting cultural ideology by introducing disruptive, alternative forms. In this context, “Doll People” transcends being a passive reflection of social reality; it operates as an active site of discursive struggle, deliberately attempting to challenge and destabilize dominant societal narratives that position women as mere ornamental objects of consumption Nisak (2025).

4.3 Reflection on Linguistic and Cultural Representation

Overall, the comprehensive findings of this study suggest that the linguistic representation and objectification of women in alternative music remain deeply intertwined with institutionalized patriarchal structures, demonstrating that music functions as a critical discursive site where gender, body autonomy, and power relations are produced, negotiated, and contested. In line with Lee (2022), contemporary music serves as a vital pedagogical and cultural tool for younger audiences to decode their own identity and surrounding social issues; in this case, “Doll People” functions as a cultural mirror that reflects gender degradation and invites critical questioning of those realities, supporting Sukma et al., (2025) framework that songs represent and transmit cultural identity. However, this study expands this notion by indicating that the core mechanics of objectification, such as; Instrumentality, Silencing, and Fungibility are systemic, transcultural phenomena across alternative media landscapes, showing that while local interpretations vary based on socio-political contexts, the underlying patterns of reducing women to fragmented



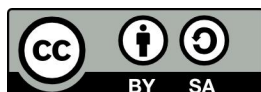
objects remain consistent. Operationalizing Akinbode & Akinbode (2025) assertion that music possesses an intrinsic, transformative potential to raise social awareness, the song deliberately moves across three distinct dimensions. At the textual level, it maps the anatomy of exploitation through a strict frequency hierarchy of reifying metaphors, body fragmentations, and limiting labels before initiating a linguistic breakthrough. At the level of discourse practice, these features expose how institutional text-production and consumption processes systematically deny interpretive authority to women by controlling identity through restrictive cultural categorization and harmful social myths. Finally, at the level of social practice, the song directly confronts patriarchal ideology by charting a progressive transition toward active Resistance, where silenced subjects reclaim Autonomy and Subjectivity to perform dynamic actions and occupy an alternative social space. Nevertheless, this symbolic revolt does not entirely dissolve entrenched power imbalances, underscoring a realistic model of resistance that struggles and negotiates from within the dominant system itself. Ultimately, this study illustrates that language in popular culture operates as a dual-edged sword; functioning simultaneously as a tool of ideological domination and as a potent vehicle for counter-hegemonic resistance, proving that analyzing song lyrics through Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, supported by Leech's figurative language and Nussbaum's objectification theory, provides a robust framework for understanding how language operates within asymmetric power relations and how it can be creatively mobilized to subvert them.

5. CONCLUSION

This Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Leech's stylistics, and Nussbaum's objectification theory, this study of Sofia Isella's "Doll People" concludes that language in popular music operates as a dual-edged sword where institutionalized patriarchal power relations are both systematically produced and aggressively contested. At the textual level, a frequency-based hierarchy of figurative language, such as; metaphor, reification, paradox, and synecdoche strips away human agency and fragment's female identity into manufactured, commodified objects, while simultaneously utilizing dynamic similes and grotesque subversions to initiate a linguistic rupture. At the discourse practice level, institutional text production and consumption deny interpretive authority to women by reducing them to passive marketplace signs, policing identity through rigid social labels, and perpetuating harmful patriarchal myths; however, the song successfully weaponizes these same strategies to function as a disruptive counter-discourse. Finally, at the social practice level, these linguistic choices reflect systemic dimensions of objectification like inertness, denial of subjectivity, fungibility, and silencing, yet a powerful shift toward resistance emerges in the song's final movement where transitioning from passive nouns to active verbs allows female subjects to reclaim their autonomy and create an alternative social space entirely outside patriarchal control.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR(S)

Nissa Nursasi Fatika is an undergraduate student in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi (UMKO), Lampung, Indonesia.

Dewi Sri Kuning, S.Pd., M.Pd. is a lecturer at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, specifically within the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi.

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