

LITERATURE

Throughout Dolly Parton's lyrics, the roles that women play in general society are continually depicted through majority of her music, particularly in these three excerpts. These excerpts view women in society as either stereotypical, or non-stereotypically, which indicates to the audience that there is more to a woman than the common perception. Though Parton exhibits typical female behaviour in her song lyrics, she also demonstrates her opinions of men by doing so, revealing either the lack of men's presence, or displaying that they are the sole cause of her female characters' breakdowns. Even though Parton shows her main focus as how women are being presented in society, the excerpts also subtly reveal her interpretation of men, as harmful beings that send women into misery.

In the 'To Daddy' and 'Jolene' excerpts, Parton demonstrates the stereotypical submissive woman throughout her song lyrics. 'To Daddy', for example, explores a typical housewife's life, viewed by her daughter. Parton continues to repeat the line: "If she did, she never did say so to daddy", reiterating that the song is from the female perspective, therefore ignoring any other perspectives, especially the males. Also, the narrator's mother constantly kept her emotions to herself, in hopes of keeping her family perfect. Parton also tells her audience that it seemed that her mother found that making "our house a home" and making "us happy" was the foundation of her happiness. Demonstrated by the word "seemed", which the narrator uses to depict her mother's hidden unhappiness, Parton displays that although her mother seemed content with her lifestyle, it was evident that she had aspirations outside of her family. Parton also demonstrates the same compliant attributes of a woman through her song 'Jolene'. Parton constantly repeats the name "Jolene", as well as begging of Jolene not to "take my man". Both of these lines demonstrate the narrator's insecurities within herself after finding out that her "man" is having an affair, which is made obvious by reiterating her pleading for Jolene to release her "man" from her deceiving grip. Fitting the insecure woman stereotype, the narrator also sings of Jolene's beauty, which she describes as "beyond compare". The narrator once again makes her lack of confidence obvious through her lyrics, stating that she cannot even think to "compete" with Jolene. Parton displays to her audience that this unworthy feeling is not only experienced by one, but is a universal emotion that all women experience at least once in their lives. Although Parton expresses the submissive female through her lyrics, she also exhibits women demonstrating strength.

Parton initially gives the impression to her audience that the females that she sings about are generally submissive; however, once the song progresses, she turns them into powerful figures. This is established in "Coat of Many Colours" and especially in 'To Daddy'. Parton makes this evident in the lyrics of 'Coat of Many Colours', when she begins with depicting her mother as a typical housewife, whose duty is to make sure her children are properly clothed and taken care of, but then changes this perception when she sings of her mother blessing her coat "with a kiss". This line specifically indicates that the narrator highly regards her mother, and by using the word "blessed", that she even places her up on a pedestal with God and Jesus. Parton not only uses this as an indication of how she views her mother, but also expresses this whilst reiterating that her "momma made just for me". This also reveals Parton's adoration for her mother, as well as making it known and obvious to the audience what her mother is capable of. Parton also demonstrates the female figure gaining power in her song 'To Daddy'. Once again, Parton originally presents the mother of the song as a quiet, insecure woman through her lyrics, afraid to have an input in her own life. However, after Parton sings of her mother's submissiveness, Parton then adds a twist to the story, revealing her mother taking a stand against her careless husband, whom she has tolerated for so long. She does this by writing him a letter, telling him that she has left to find "love I need so badly". "Momma" expresses her female dominance through this line, and contradicts her previous actions by finally leaving her partner. This also displays the mother's sense of strength, due to separation and divorce not only being frowned upon in society, but also forbidden in the Christian community, which would have been extremely difficult to deal with in those times. Parton displays her determination for women to become strong figures in society, making all of her female characters display their internal strength. She sets up her songs with the defenceless female, only

to completely change her audience's perception of her female characters, and challenge the typical female stereotype, as well as highlighting Parton's bias opinion towards her female characters and making them prevail against the male figure.

Throughout her lyrics, Parton chooses to focus on her female characters, demonstrating not only the typical female character, but also the female who has decided to fight against society and what it wants her to be. This is demonstrated in 'Coat of Many Colors', 'To Daddy' and 'Jolene'. In 'Coat of Many Colors', Parton sings in depth of her mother preparing her coat, "sewin' " every rag together "with love". Parton demonstrates here that a woman's role in her family is to ensure that her children are properly clothed, even if it means making them a coat of "rags". This housewife persona is also made obvious in 'To Daddy', when Parton states that her mother did not have any desire "to be more than a mother and a wife". This specific line suggests that "momma" never actually mentions her pain, which in her time, was the typical action of her stereotype. Women were known to keep their feelings to themselves, especially from their husbands, due to their fears of ruining their families and marriage. In 'Jolene', Parton changes the dependant female stereotype to a strong woman, confronting Jolene of her knowledge of her man's affair. Parton sings of Jolene's physical features, telling her audience of her "flaming locks of auburn hair", and her "eyes of emerald green". By doing this, Parton is revealing Jolene in a whole new light, explaining that although she has a beautiful exterior, Jolene is a very conniving woman. In these three songs, Parton's female characters are the centre of attention, whether they be submissive or dominant, although, by doing this, Parton also gives her audience the impression that Parton disfavours her male characters, always revealing them in negative ways.

In her music, Parton never displays her male characters as a source of good; always making them the sole purpose of a woman's misery, especially heartbreak. This is evident in 'Coat of Many Colors', 'To Daddy' and 'Jolene'. 'Coat of Many Colors' never actually mentions a male character, since the song was solely based on the narrator's mother and how much her daughter loved her. By doing this, Parton indicates to her audience that a father figure is never around, and he does not play an important role, or perhaps even a role at all, in the narrator's childhood. Similarly, men are also presented negatively in 'To Daddy', when Parton describes the father figure's actions in the story, telling her audience how "Daddy" left the narrator's mother "all alone", and how he never showed appreciation for his wife with "flowers" or "gifts". Parton again demonstrates that this male figure was hardly ever around, not only for his wife, but for his whole family. These lyrics also carry the undertone of an affair that the narrator's father may have been having at the time, since he was never around and lacked in showing his wife affection. The absence of the male figure and the fact that he never actually displays his love for his wife, only demonstrates that he must be giving it to another woman. Especially in 'Jolene', the male heartbreaker stereotype is obvious in Parton's lyrics. The female character's misery is based on her "man" having an affair with another woman, and letting her audience know that her heartbreak is because of this male and his mistress. Although Parton does not state that her lover is the cause of her misfortune, it is still evident throughout the song, displaying the female character's misery from her man's affair. Parton once again displays that these emotions are not only felt by one, but are felt by every single woman, due to men who are careless enough to put them in this situation. She demonstrates her outlook on the male figure, as the lying, cheating stereotype that they are all known to have. The negative view of the male figure emphasises not only Parton's dislike for the male gender and what effect they have on women, but also draws attention to her faith in women, and how they are just as capable, if not more, as the male sex.

Parton's touching music honours women for what they truly are; not what society sets them up to be. Her lyrics, written with ease, exemplify her humble upbringing, and demonstrate how in her time, women were regarded. On the whole, Parton uses her knowledge of women to also exhibit that men are responsible for a woman's wellbeing; being able to break them as easily as they are able to bring them joy.