Revenge Causing Image Change

Taylor Swift’s music video, “Look What You Made Me Do”, allows viewers to be able to see a new side of Taylor that differs from her past music videos. She shows a new side of her that changes from an innocent, pure, country singer to a dark, and vengeful new person. She really reveals her wealth and power, especially in the scene where she is laying in a bathtub submerged in diamonds (0:35). Taylor Swift is really trying to get the message out that the “old Taylor” is dead and that a new, powerful women is unfolding. Taylor Swift is changing her image from innocence to darkness through the revenge she is seeking out and the power that she is exhibiting.

Looking deeper into the music video, the scenes where Taylor Swift is presenting her power become more profound. The opening scene shows Taylor coming out of the grave, looking like she has not had any life in her for quite some time. This symbolizes how she is back from the dead and that a new Taylor is emerging. After showing Taylor lying in the grave, the scene then transitions to her lying in a bathtub filled with diamonds. This transition represents her upgrade to power and wealth. When she was laying in the grave she was full of dirt and did not look lively at all but when she was in the bathtub packed with diamonds all around her, she looked very put together with
bright red lipstick and her nails done as well. The scenes that follow continue to promote her superiority by showing her sitting on a throne, with snakes surrounding her, exemplifying that she is the queen and on top (1:04). Another scene where Taylor shows that she is above everyone is when all of the “old” Taylors are cowering below her with looks of fear and distress while the “new” Taylor is pushing them away to reveal that the “old” Taylor is dead.

The main point that is taken out from this music video is that someone treated or did something wrong to Taylor Swift and she is now seeking revenge and showing her worth. The source “Norms of Revenge” by Jon Elster summarizes revenge and how people act when they are seeking out revenge. Elster states, “People often act in impulsive, unreflexive ways, under the sway of emotions too strong to be resisted” (Elster 862). This declaration relates to the music video because Taylor acted in aggressive ways in some of the scenes. For example, there is a scene where Taylor crashes her car into a light post and the scene goes into slow motion really focusing on the crash (1:07). There was no reason for Taylor to crash her car which shows how it was an impulsive, and aggressive decision. Another scene that presents aggressive behavior is when Taylor robs a store and is swinging a bat in a forceful way, indicating rage and anger. During this scene Taylor sings, “The world moves on another day another drama, but not for me all I think about is karma” (1:36). These lyrics show how Taylor does not brush things off her shoulder, instead she gives revenge to people who she thinks deserves it. Going back to the article, it talks about how people who want payback tend to not forget whatever was done to them. This is obviously true in the
music video because Taylor Swift is showing how she is not going down without a fight and is striving to prove her power to her enemies. Throughout the music video, Taylor Swift follows the standards of revenge by demonstrating her strengths and power by acting out in more aggressive and belligerent ways.

Taylor Swift showing her superiority makes her differ from female norms. There are stereotypes that women are supposed to be reserved, modest, and put together. In her music video, Taylor shows a more wild side where she depicts rage and anger that varies from how women are “supposed” to act. She refutes the female expectations by showing a dark side of her that viewers had not seen before. Devor’s essay, “Becoming Members of Society: Learning the Social Meanings of Gender” talks about how masculinity is superior and how society values the male gender. He also talks about how there are certain expectations for each gender. Devor states, “As we move through our lives, society demands different gender performances from us and rewards, tolerates, or punishes us differently for conformity to, or digression from, social norms” (Devor 43). Taylor Swift really contradicts this stereotype in her music video and proves how she does not allow anyone, especially men, to walk over her and how she does not go down without a fight. “As patriarchy has reserved active expressions of power as a masculine attribute, femininity must be expressed through modes of dress, movement, speech, and action which communicates weakness, dependency, ineffectualness, availability for sexual or emotional service, and sensitivity to the needs of others” (Devor 51). Taylor goes against this quote and demonstrates how power is a female attribute as well. Taylor Swift deviates from female norms in this music video and shows a side
of her that differs from how most women are supposed to act by showing signs of rampage and fury instead of being collected and serene like how society thinks women should behave.

Taylor Swift is truly one of a kind, there are no artists that are similar to her. She differs from other musicians through her music and her lyrics. All of her songs are personally about herself which is why there are not many Taylor Swift covers. This is what makes her songs very unique and allows them to diverge from other pop artists’ songs. Taylor has always sung about her enemies and she even once stated that by listening to her songs you are basically reading her diary. She uses her songs to get her revenge which is another way how she is very distinctive. In the essay, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)”, Cohen creates seven theses in which allows readers to understand cultures through monsters and how they reflect humanity. The third thesis: The Monster Is The Harbinger of Category Crisis summarizes how the monster will refuse to engage in the categorization “order of things”. The monster rejects easy grouping, “This refusal to participate in the classificatory “order of things” is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration” (Cohen 6). Throughout the music video, Taylor Swift emphasizes her power and goes at her enemies through her lyrics. She strays from staying in normal structures because most people would let go whatever was done wrongly towards them but Taylor Swift sticks up for herself and shows her capabilities. Taylor Swift proves to her audience that she is unparalleled through the lyrics she creates and how she gets revenge through her music, she allows the audience to come
to the realization that she does not like to follow the systematic order of things by not allowing anyone to take advantage of her worth.

After looking deeper into the music video, the audience can tell that Taylor Swift is evolving into a new person. She used to have a more sweet and innocent look to her and now her image has changed to becoming more dark and vengeful. The music video shows how she is really trying to express her power and how a “new” Taylor is coming out. It is obviously prominent that someone caused her to change her image especially when she says the lyrics, “I got a list of names and yours is in red underline” (1:00). She never says exactly who she is talking about but the audience can tell that someone had treated her wrongly. Looking closely into the music video and analyzing the scenes and lyrics allows viewers to fully understand and interpret what is happening in the video.

Throughout this music video we are able to interpret the scenes in different ways allowing the audience to see different views about what exactly is happening. It is clear that Taylor Swift had gone through an image change and that she is acting more revengeful and aggressive. The scenes in this music video exemplify rage which differs from her past music videos which are mostly about love stories. Taylor is really trying to let everyone know her power and that she is not someone to mess around with. She wants viewers to know her superiority by going against the social norms about how women should supposedly act. In the music video, “Look What You Made Me Do” by Taylor Swift, Taylor alters her normally innocent image to a darker image by demonstrating rage through the revenge she is seeking out, through her unique lyrics
that are created for her enemies, and by acting out in ways that do not fit female expectations, proving that the “old” Taylor is dead.
Works Cited


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tmd-ClpJxA.


Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)“. University of Minnesota Press, 1996.