

**THE LYRIC VIDEO AS GENRE:
Definition, History, and Katy Perry's Contribution**

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Abstract

The Lyric Video as Genre: Definition, History and Katy Perry's Contribution

Since YouTube was founded in 2005, prosumers have been uploading karaoke-style “lyric videos” of their favourite songs in order to creatively and visually accompany the song, while making it available online to other listeners. In the last few years, more and more artists have adopted this trend and are releasing official lyric videos that follow and expand on this tradition, thus commanding immediate visual attention to new singles. Additionally, these videos control the images and sounds associated with the song and artist, while profiting from advertising revenue tied to online video content. Though scholarship on music video is increasing, there is no evidence of scholarly research on lyric videos. Seemingly simple, these videos create meanings that impact artistic personae, song and album reception, and genre identity formation. They are not merely promotional devices, or placeholders for “official” music videos.

Grounding my analysis in genre theory (Frow 2015, Brackett 2015 & 2016, Fabbri, 1982, Holt, 2007), I claim that lyric videos comprise a new visual genre of music video, following their own parameters, connections, and histories, while simultaneously participating in the ideologies and tropes of their musical genre. In order to illustrate the framework, I offer a history of the genre by focusing my analysis on the lyric videos released by Katy Perry over the course of seven years, from 2010 to 2017, from the promotion for four of her most recent albums. By offering a historical analysis, I show how the lyric video has emerged, evolved and become established as a distinct visual genre. I include brief interludes in my analysis to highlight other important moments in the development of the genre, and to discuss how the lyrics, sound, and images are diversely represented in lyric videos depending upon musical genre. Drawing from feminist theory (Gledhill 2000), as well as persona theory (Auslander 2004, Moore 2005), I conclude that lyric videos offer unique possibilities for artists to amplify the meaning of their song and the spectator's understanding of the lyrics, while portraying information about the artist's subjectivities, and as such, deserves more scholarly attention as a distinct visual genre.

Keywords: lyric videos, music videos, popular music, Katy Perry, media, kinetic/animated typography, genre, persona, prosumers, YouTube

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Chapter One: Introduction

When the website YouTube.com was founded in 2005, musicians finally had a new venue to host music videos outside of music television channels such as MTV or BET. Online, the videos they released were no longer designed to fit within the restrictions inherent to a TV format, such as censorship, scheduling or industry vetting (Vernallis 2013b, 208). In order to promote new songs, artists were able to experiment with the length and output of their music videos. For example, performers such as Beyoncé and Frank Ocean have released full-length “visual albums,” which are defined as “a hybrid medium between film and music video; like music video it promotes an audio album, and like film it is conceived as a whole work of art” (Harrison 2014). Recently, in contrast to visual albums where each song on an album is released as a music video, several artists have begun to release more than one music video for one song. These various types of *alternate* music videos include 360 videos,¹ vertical videos,² audio videos,³ and lyric videos. While many of these trends appeared a few times each, only for the trend to disappear a few months later, the lyric video has become firmly established as a promotional device on YouTube, and, I believe, has developed into a new visual genre, independent from traditional music video.

Definition of music video

Before entering into a discussion of lyric videos, it is important to differentiate them from traditional music videos. In 2013, Carol Vernallis argued in *Unruly Media* that it has become increasingly difficult to define music videos, as they can be simply “relations of sound and image

¹ A 360-degree video is a type of music video where viewers can explore a music video from every angle using their computer, for example Avicii’s “Waiting For Love” which also has a lyric video and an official video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edcJ_JNeyhg

² Vertical videos are music videos which are filmed in portrait mode, rather than widescreen. An example, “Havana” by Camila Cabello: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pz95u3UVpaM>

³ Audio videos typically feature a static image, these are used as a way to get the song on YouTube in an official capacity. Example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCjNJDZw8Y>

that we recognize as such.” If we restrict our definition to music videos that are released on the artist’s official YouTube or Vevo account, we have a clearer understanding, one Vernallis offered in her earlier book *Experiencing Music Video*, where she defines “music videos as products of record companies in which images were put to recorded pop songs in order to sell songs” (2004, x). In this book, she emphasizes the importance of the *music* being the most important element of music videos, as the songs were written first, and “the director normally designs images with the song as guide” (Vernallis 2004, x). Recognizing that that the music is only one part of the whole production, she organizes *Experiencing Music Video* around the dramatic effects that can be made in music videos through the interactions of seven elements that she explores: 1) the narrative, 2) editing, 3) actors, 4) setting, 5) props and costumes, 6) lyrics, and 7) musical parameters, arguing that “*no single element is allowed to predominate*” (Vernallis 2004, xi, emphasis added).

Definition of lyric video

When compared to Vernallis’ understanding of music videos as a combination of the seven elements listed above, lyric videos emerge as distinct, because they *are* defined by their insistence that one element, the lyrics, predominate. These videos offer a visual treatment of the lyrics of a song, presented in synchronization with the recorded music. Originally, they were created by prosumers⁴ as a way of making songs accessible online when they had not been uploaded as a music video by the official artist. They were initially fairly simple, depicting the lyrics in a similar fashion to a karaoke machine, with the words placed over a colourful background or photo of the artist.

As I will discuss below, these videos took an “official” turn as pop artists began to produce and release their own lyric videos. Lyric videos are now often released in conjunction with their

⁴ Carol Vernallis defines a prosumer as “a consumer who does production. The work can be semi-professional” (2013a, 465).

associated single or album release, and they are often followed shortly thereafter by an official music video. In order to maintain focus on the lyrics, there is rarely any dynamic change in the images or background that accompanies the words, and, though they are still sonically present, the artist is rarely visually present, so as not to distract from the lyrics. Lyric videos are typically quick and inexpensive to create in comparison to official music videos, yet, as they have developed and gained popularity, they have become more sophisticated, innovative and attuned to the mood or style of the tracks they promote.

Object of Inquiry and Research Questions

Though lyric videos are becoming more prevalent and more complex, they have not yet been studied by musicologists. There is no official description of what a lyric video is or how it is structurally different from an official music video, much less any academic insight as to what purpose a lyric video serves to promote the artist or contribute to the aesthetics of the artistic work. While it would be easy to overlook lyric videos due to their simplicity or view them as merely a placeholder for the official music video, I believe that there is more to discover through the deceptively simple format of words on a screen to accompany a song. So, in response to questions such as “That’s cute – but what’s the point?” (O’Keefe 2014), I raise questions such as: How does the lyric video shape the lyrics of the song through animation and cinematography and how does the aesthetic treatment of the words intersect with the musical content? How do these videos function as a visual genre, distinct from official music videos or “Audio” videos, and, more narrowly, what kinds of codes and conventions are present in these videos that allow them to be identified as lyric video as opposed to other visual genres? How do these videos serve to promote the artist, and what do we learn about their identity or persona through the images?

By raising the question of how the artist is represented in and through the lyric video, I

open my analytic investigation to the consideration of artistic subjectivities. In this regard, it is important to recognize that performance subjectivities—or musical personae⁵—are tied strongly to musical genres. By treating the lyric video as a genre, and also by considering how the lyric video genre intersects with the musical genre in which a given artist works, I hope to demonstrate that lyric videos offer complex meanings that are intricately linked to artistic personae and musical genres. Based on these foundational questions about lyric video, my research objectives are to examine 1) how lyric video has emerged and evolved throughout its recent development, 2) how lyric videos offer new ways of presenting an artist’s work and persona through a particularly constrained and focused visual genre, and 3) how the genre attributes of the lyric video intersect with the given musical genre.

As such a new development, there is no formal definition of the lyric video, but for the purposes of this study I will define it as an official music video, produced and released by the song’s artist, that visually presents, in time with the musical delivery, all the lyrics of the song.

Historical Contexts

One of the challenges for the study of music videos is that the field is constantly changing; music videos released today look very different from those that premiered on MTV. Carol Vernallis explores the challenge of the changing cultural form in her book *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema*, where she discusses how music videos have undergone “shifts in technologies and platforms, periods of intense cross-pollination with other media, financial booms and busts, and changing levels of audience engagement” (2013b, 207). She cites specifically the “media swirl,” where YouTube, music videos, and filmic conventions have “become intertwined in surprising ways [with] accelerating rates of interpenetration and

⁵ While these terms are slightly different, I use them interchangeably to describe the musical identity of the artist.

intertextuality [and] increasingly blurred boundaries among platforms and genres” (14). Lyric video is evidence of one of these “shifts.” As I will outline, it was highly influenced by two types of video: 1) official music videos that included the lyrics, and 2) prosumer lyric videos.⁶

The first influencing branch is reflective of the history of music video and consists of music videos from the era of MTV or earlier, where a few artists chose to heavily feature the lyrics in some of their videos. The first video considered to be a lyric video is Bob Dylan’s 1965 “Subterranean Homesick Blues.” In this black and white video, Dylan stands at a street corner with a stack of cue cards, each containing one handwritten word or short phrase. As the song continues, he removes each cue card as the word on it is sung until he is left empty handed and he walks off screen. As the only moving element in the video, the cue cards are the focus of the video, and, though not all the lyrics are included, the viewer gets a better sense of the lyrical content of the song, which was likely Dylan’s intention. Another example is Prince’s 1987 single “Sign o’ the Times.” Directed by Bill Konersman, the lyrics of the song are creatively displayed through colourful graphics and pulsing text. Guilia Gabrielli suggests that this format was chosen in this video to “facilitate the comprehension of the lyrics” which deal with significant themes of as AIDS, gang violence, natural disasters and space exploration (2010, 92). Every music video from this era that featured the lyrics accompanied songs that relayed important messages that the artist wanted to emphasize and ensure that their audiences understood.⁷

The second branch is perhaps more directly correlated to the emergence of the “official” lyric video: “prosumer” lyric videos. As I mentioned above, these videos were very simply created

⁶ The emergence of lyric video was also influenced by the nature of YouTube, which places official music videos released over the past fifty years alongside prosumer lyric videos for fans to watch, not to mention the infinite other types of videos on YouTube, from which some lyric videos draw inspiration.

⁷ Other examples include R.E.M.’s “Fall on Me” from 1986 and Talking Head’s 1988 “(Nothing But) Flowers” which both address environmental issues, and “Praying for Time” in 1990 by George Michael, who did not want to be in the music video so as to not distract from the lyrics which discusses social issues and poverty.

using basic movie making software and featured the lyrics of a song over a blank background, a photo of the artist, album cover, or any image that they decided to pair with the song. Some even featured video homages to other texts such as movies or TV shows where the song had been featured. These videos had several flaws. Often, they misspelled or mistranscribed the lyrics, or misrepresented the artist in some way.⁸ Other times, to avoid copyright infringement, they would use unofficial audio, either by using a cover version or modifying the audio in another way to avoid copyright infringement issues.⁹ Perhaps in response to these unofficial videos, some artists began to release their own lyric videos. While they have not stopped prosumer lyric videos from appearing, dozens of which are still being released every day on YouTube, these official lyric videos have taken the forefront and almost always have more views.¹⁰

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In order to address my research questions, in addition to exploring the industry and historical contexts that led to the development of the lyric video, I outline two concepts that will facilitate my research of lyric videos within a larger context: 1) how the internet functions through what Jenkins terms “convergence culture” and 2) how lyric videos function as part of the larger “paratext” which comprises other songs on the album, other music videos, cover art, and many other factors in popular music recording’s promotion and performance.

In addition to these concepts that pertain to the media dissemination of the lyric video, I will also consider this creative form as a *genre*, thus I will rely upon genre theory in order to

⁸ Examples are difficult to find because they often get removed or fixed quickly.

⁹ For example, a lyric video for “Hello” by Adele, uploaded by the account “Lyrics and More” has several million views on YouTube and yet it is not Adele’s official audio or vocals, but in fact an unmarked cover. No information is provided to show who the singer actually is.

¹⁰ A “view count” of “views” on YouTube connotes the amount of times that video has been watched. Each social media platform has its own way to count views. YouTube counts a view if the video has been clicked and watched for at least the first 30 seconds.

understand how lyric videos participate in both visual and musical genres. I will review the literature on genre theory, identify seven principal elements of genre, and evaluate how scholars have applied genre theory to the discussion of musical genres.

Finally, I will discuss persona theory to show how musical subjectivities are present in the performances, images, and audio of music videos. Although musicologists have not yet utilized genre theory for the study of lyric videos, I will review my theoretical approach to the lyric video as a music video genre.

Convergence Culture

Through the interaction between prosumer videos and artist intent, lyric videos have emerged from and developed within a site “where old and new media collide...where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways” (Jenkins 2006, 2). This is how Henry Jenkins defines “convergence culture” and, although his seminal monograph was written before YouTube was well established, it is easy to see how this concept could be applicable to the YouTube community, where viewer comments, ratings and popularity (view count) of videos have a direct impact on the content of the later videos. As a visual genre, it fits the parameter that “genres are therefore neither created from the ‘top down,’ nor are they created from the ‘bottom’ up by consumers, but are instead part of a larger collective process (Brackett 2016, 203–204). Within convergence culture, Jenkins uses three concepts: media convergence, which describes the innumerable ways that content travels “across multiple platforms;” participatory culture, which comments on the cultural shift that has occurred where “consumers actively look and make connections between dispersed media content;” and collective intelligence, which states that “consumption has become a collective process” in that “each of us knows something; and we can put the pieces together if we pool our resources and combine our

skills” (Jenkins 2006, 4). Many lyric videos rely on these concepts; they are often promoted by the artist on various social media sites, and their success depends on the active engagement of viewers, to recognize and understand codes and references.

Additionally, Jenkins discusses three terms, used by “industry insiders” to explain their desire for the broadest market possible and to push the idea of convergence from an industry standpoint (2006, 19). The first is “extension,” which refers to “their efforts to expand the potential markets by moving content across different delivery systems (19).” We can see this as artists can have a social media presence over a variety of platforms and use those sites to promote their music and videos. The second is “synergy,” discussing “the economic opportunities represented by their ability to own and control all of those manifestations,” a very clear example of how the music industry adopted the lyric video from the prosumers to regain control over the artist’s image (19). Finally, Jenkins discusses the idea of “franchise,” where, similar to a movie franchise, the industry is making a “coordinated effort to brand and market fictional content under these new conditions” (19). In my study of lyric videos, I have found that this is clearly demonstrated in the expansion of official content released online that is tied to each song,¹¹ whereas, several years ago, there would have been only one video present on the artist’s YouTube channel for each song: the official music video. These three terms— “extension,” “synergy,” and “franchise”—are important to the general development and emergence of the lyric video genre and its role in the larger promotional material of songs. In my analysis I will discuss specific examples of each term to highlight how they are manifested in certain lyric videos or to the general development of the genre.

Transphonography

With respect this expansion of promotional material, it is helpful to consider Serge

¹¹ These includes all the videos I mentioned above such as: audio only, lyric, behind the scenes, remixes, etc.

Lacasse's discussion of transphonography (Lacasse 2018). Here he adapts Gérard Genette's 1979 literary theory of transtextuality which discusses the relationships between and among texts, by adapting it to the media of sound recording. He introduces this model as a tool to show how all music interacts, but also how it enables us to "better understand our *own* relationship with the music, and with others" (Lacasse 2018, 44). I will be looking at music videos specifically, and will adopt three of his perspectives in my analysis of lyric videos:

(1) archiphonography, which links any text to another through a large abstract category, in my case musical genre, or the category of lyric video, both examples of musical or visual "worlds" (Lacasse 2018, 14);

(2) polyphonography, which links any songs that are assembled in anyway, by "selection, sequencing and function" (Lacasse 2018, 24). I will use this perspective when analyzing lyric videos of songs from the same album;

(3) cophonography which links "texts that are independent from each other but exist in the same space" which I will use when discussing any possible connections between a lyric video and its "official music video" (Lacasse 2018, 36).

Genre Theory

Finally, my study of lyric videos will draw upon theories of genre, not only from the domain of popular music, but also from film and literary studies. Genre theorists make it clear that genre is a very complex issue. There is no single resource that offers a comprehensive overview of the theory, so I will summarize the work of several genre theorists, as well as popular music scholars who have studied musical genre. It is important to note that these authors contribute to the genre theory discussion from different fields. John Frow's book, *Genre* (2015), attempts to be universally applicable, but for many reasons, including the historical context of genre theory and

his background as a professor of English literature, his perspectives are grounded in literary theory. Jason Mittell wrote *Genre and Television* (2004) as a tool for genre theory in televisual contexts and Christine Gledhill's "Rethinking Genre" (2000) discusses film genres from a feminist perspective.

Incorporating a discussion of genre into the musicological study of popular music is still fairly new, much like the discipline itself. While all of the authors I will mention here recognize the need for a more complete discussion, none have been able to provide a complete introduction to the area of musical genre, therefore each of them contributes to the discussion in different ways. Franco Fabbri introduced the field in 1982 with his ground-breaking article "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications," but it was largely ignored until 2007 when Fabian Holt brought up the cultural impact of genre study in his book *Genre in Popular Music*. David Brackett offers a comprehensive overview in *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music* (2016), and focuses on the industrial context of musical genres in "Popular Music Genres: Aesthetics, Commerce and Identity" (2015), while in "What Kind of Genre Do You Think We Are?": Genre Theories, Genre Names and Classes within Music Intermedial Ecology" (2015), Gabriele Marino analyzes and offers a taxonomy of the names of musical genres and how these names often display the ideological values of that genre.

Through my readings of these important writings on genre in literature, film, television, and popular music, I have identified seven elements that I believe offer a comprehensive digest of genre theory that is applicable to genres in any field. I will organize my summary of the above authors' discussions around these seven elements before using them as a basis for my own theoretical framework. Since lyric video has only recently emerged, this literature review will not address lyric video specifically, however the discussion below will provide a foundation for how

I will approach lyric video as a distinct visual genre in my analysis. The seven elements are summarized here, followed by a discussion of each:

- (i) genre is universal, in that every text participates in genre in some way;
- (ii) genres have no definitive point of origin or conclusion but rather emerge gradually and develop in complex ways;
- (iii) genres are maintained through both repetition and development of convention;
- (iv) genres shape fictional worlds;
- (v) genres have both industrial contexts and cultural contexts, based on how they are produced, which is not always the same as how they are received or used;
- (vi) genres function as part of a system through which they interact with other genres;
- (vii) genres reveal the cultural assumptions and subjectivities of those participating in them.

Genre Element i) Genre is universal, in that every text participates in genre.

The most basic understanding of genre relies on its universality. No text, whether it be a film, book, song, or email, is free of genre conventions. Therefore, each text participates in genre by adhering to a genre's conventions, while also participating in the shaping of that genre by developing different attributes.

When confronted with a text, most people will have expectations that are based on their previous encounters with other texts in that genre. Mittell encourages the questioning of these assumed categories, and invites deeper analysis to see how genres participate in culture and are shaped by media practices (2004, 1). Meanwhile Gledhill argues that genres, especially the naming of genres, are utilized as a way of communication by various groups of people for their own purposes, like audiences recommending films to their friends, critics writing about them, or the producers promoting a film as a particular genre. Through labelling an unknown text in a specific

genre, a comparison is being made and an expectation is shaped (2000, 221).

Similarly, just as every book, film, and TV show participates and contributes to a given genre, so too does every song that is written and performed. The difficulty in the domain of popular music is that the output is much greater. Books take years to get written and published; film and TV shows are constrained by budgets, schedules and large production teams, while a single musician can record, mix, and release an album or single in a very short amount of time with much more freedom to promote and distribute it over the internet. This makes the study of popular music more complex than any other genre. Furthermore, each track that is released can change or transform the genre slightly, leading to a faster pace of musical genre evolution (Holt 2007). Brackett calls the “issue of genre in the historical study of popular music... unavoidable” (2015, 190), and, though it is not always discussed, most listeners of popular music are likely aware of genre’s “fundamental structuring force” in the way that different styles of music influence how, where and with whom people experience and make music (Holt 2007, 2).

Genre Element ii) Genres have no point of origin; they emerge gradually and develop in complex ways.

Many audience members and scholars may claim that certain genres began or ended with a specific text, however, Frow claims that “genres have no transhistorical essence, only historically changing use values” (2015, 167). Gledhill makes a similar claim by saying that genres go out of fashion in time and come back with similar elements or codes, but different cultural meaning or name (2000, 226). She discusses some scholars that, due to this phenomenon, prefer the term ‘cycle’ over ‘genre’ (226). Mittell addresses this as well, by contrasting the nature of genre development to biological evolution. In biology, it is possible to follow the evolution of a species through its genealogy, however genres do not follow this same pattern of direct lineage, so, in

order to make connections, a scholar must do a very broad scan of texts in order to see connections (Mittell 2004, 15).

Just as with film and literary texts, musical texts remain stable while genres can shift around them.¹² Brackett brings up the argument that many musical genres were originally “comprehensible in contexts beyond those in which we imagine it might have begun,” so it would be difficult to identify a specific moment of origin (2015, 195). Holt argues that, unlike literature, “music is not referential,” in that it “does not have the precision of iconic or indexical representation” and it is therefore almost impossible to theorize the development of musical genres (2007, 5). Additionally, Brackett dismisses “the idea of authorial intention from an understanding of genre,” since genres, he argues, are the accumulation of multiple authors, or “collective creativity,” rather than developing from a single song or artist and a single point in time (2015, 195).

Genre Element iii) Genres are maintained through both repetition and development of convention

Codes and conventions are the shaping force of genre. They are established through the “repetition and citation” of elements that make the genres recognizable to audiences, based on comparison to other texts in the same genre. In addition to the elements that are repeated, texts also contribute to the evolution of genre as they introduce or adapt elements. Gledhill calls this ‘heteroglossia and dialogism’—an interaction between two or more voices—that work together repeating codes and conventions, while at the same time, shifting to “maintain credibility with changing audiences by connecting with the signifiers of contemporary verisimilitude” (2000, 238).

¹² We can see this especially as we look at popular music with genre labels such as “oldies,” or “proto-” genres. At the time that these songs were first performed, they were labeled as a different genre, but, while the songs themselves have not changed, they now fall under different genre categories.

These codes rely on an audience understanding, and, as Mittell argues, are sometimes the most obvious when two or more genres are mixing as “within more ‘pure’ generic texts, such conventions are often downplayed or unspoken to avoid appearances of formula or repetition” (2004, 151).

Rather than discuss generic elements, Fabbri, one of the first popular musicologists to write about genre, defines musical genres as “a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules” (1982, 7). These rules include formal, semiotic, behaviour, ideological, and economical rules that are the standard for any discussion of musical genres (10-14). Fabbri acknowledges that this an incomplete guideline, with the potential for more rules, and the reminder that different genres will give more importance to certain rules, while ignoring others (10). Brackett makes an important contribution to the discussion of codes and conventions in genre with his idea of “legibility” (2015, 195). This means that even if a song follows all the conventions to a genre, it may not be accepted as participating in that genre because the audience does not understand it to do so (195). This becomes an issue in popular music when artists attempt to cross genres, and are sometimes accepted, such as when Taylor Swift transitioned from a country artist to a pop artist, however, when Beyoncé, a pop and R&B artist, wrote “Daddy Lessons” using many country musical conventions,¹³ the country music community were not as accepting. Many country fans were disturbed when Beyoncé performed “Daddy Lessons” at the CMAs, because they did not accept it as a country song, ostensibly due to Beyoncé’s history as an R&B star (Robert 2016). Their reaction was also likely due to her being an African-American woman, when conventional country music stars are white men, with white female artists only taking approximately a fifth of radio play and positions on the billboard charts (Watson 2018).

¹³ Examples of country musical conventions in this song are: lyrics describing guns and the Bible, as well as the use of harmonica, fiddle, banjo, washboard in the instrumentation.

According to Jada Watson's research, women-of-colour are virtually non-existent in popular country music which explains why country fans would not have seen Beyoncé's "Daddy Lessons" as a country song (2018).

Genre Element iv) Genres shape fictional worlds

Much discussion of genre uses the term 'world' or 'worldmaking,' as Frow claims that "genres create effects of reality and truth which are central to the different ways the world is understood" within a text or group of texts (2015, 20). Gledhill terms this 'generic verisimilitude,' drawing the connection to "audience expectations of the world created by a text," though she makes it clear that "genres are fictional worlds, but they don't remain in fictional boundaries" (2000, 235). Discussions of genre happen in the real world all the time, as do the impact of these worlds through the way they shape audiences' understandings of the real world.

This dichotomy between reality and fiction is clearer in the musical world. The fictional world consists of the musical elements that create a musical world presented through assumptions of a time and place, with a specific type of people creating and listening to this music. Contrastingly, the real world is who is actually performing the music and where the music is being performed. Brackett gives an example of this through his discussion of "old-time music" which evokes a nostalgic world of "mountain men and hillbillies" that no longer exists, with an assumed audience of "rural, white Southerners" (2015, 198). While the assumed audience in that genre may have been fairly accurate, this is not always the case, and the reality may be quite different. Many genres also have assumed physical locations tied to them, however with the spread of the internet, listeners from all around the world can appreciate all kinds of music.

Genre Element v) Industrial contexts and cultural contexts of genre.

As I have discussed earlier, genre is often used as a way to communicate what kind of text

is being presented. This is used in both industrial and cultural contexts as many of the texts are being sold and marketed for profit, while also contributing to societal understandings. Gledhill argues that genres exist in three contexts: as an “industrial mechanism,” where texts are shaped to fit within a popular genre in order to be financially successful, “aesthetic practice” which is the codes and conventions that allow texts to be understood through that genre, and “an arena of cultural-critical discursivity,” where consumers discuss the meaning and importance of a text (2000, 223). Frow describes genres as culturally important in that they can include “information about the situation to which a text responds and in which it has a particular communicative point” (2015, 133). This is not always how the texts are used. Mittell calls scholars to “look behind the wheel” of a genre and, rather of looking at how a genre functions, instead look at the audiences, why are they watching? How does their interaction with the text influence our understanding *in a particular cultural instance?* (2004, 3-5).

Music is evidently of great cultural importance and yet it is also under industrial control. Brackett discusses the importance of genre classification for marketing purposes, as this affects how songs are promoted and charted, (2015, 194) in addition to the cultural purposes, which influences how critics and fans communicate about genres (Brackett 2016, 16). Marino also addresses how the classification of genre names communicate important elements of the genre using terms such as descriptive, prescriptive or locative (2015). She goes on to say that the names can represent “a precious key to understanding how communities understand and appropriate music, what they consider meaningful in it” (2015, 251). In the chapter “Crossover Dreams” in *Categorizing Sound*, Brackett discusses how genres are also heavily influenced by cultural issues such as appropriation or genre crossover (2016). Appropriation can bring attention to new genres that were originally marginalized due to the race of the artists originally performing them, and

genre crossovers has the reverse effect of bringing attention to marginalized artists once they transition to mainstream attention, such as Michael Jackson or Prince (Brackett 2016).

Genre Element vi) Boundaries vs. Interacting system.

Rather than being distinct entities with strict boundaries between differing genres, genres are understood to exist within a larger genre system. The texts that participate within this genre system are stable and may end up being categorized as different genres over time as the genre system evolves over time (Frow 2015, 166). However, while genres are often described through their rules and conventions (see genre element iii), they are also connected to other genres through understandings of how they are dissimilar (Brackett 2015, 193). While it could be argued that genre boundaries are becoming fuzzier as texts become more hybridized, Mittell and Gledhill both suggest that genre mixing helps solidify the organizing principle of genre (Mittell 2004, 151), with Gledhill going as far as saying that those moments of interacting between different genres is important because “desire is generated at the boundaries, particularly where social identities—gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality—are shifting” (2000, 237).

The musical genre system is similar to literary genre systems in that, as Brackett argues, musical genres are “not static entities with stable boundaries” (2015, 192). Musical genres are constantly evolving as new music is being written and released. Due to the immense and complex nature of the musical genre system, it is impossible to have a complete understanding of all the ways that genres interact. Brackett describes a “branching process” that could go on “indefinitely” (2015, 193), and Marino discusses the attempts that people have made to understand music through visual representations of the genre system (2015, 240). They have attempted to organize genres by affinity, genealogy, synchronicity, or even topography, but are never fully successful in offering a complete picture (Marino 2015, 240). Brackett states the importance of this genre system as it

relies on a system of difference, in that “genres become meaningful only in relation to one another” (2015, 192). How genres are organized, and how they distinguish themselves from each other through the elements that they emphasize reveal their priorities and values.

Genre Element vii) Genres reveal cultural assumptions and the subjectivities of those participating in them

Each text that participates in a genre is both consumed and created by people with cultural assumptions and subjectivities, therefore Frow emphasizes the importance of not only “deciphering textually inscribed meanings,” but of “understanding how those meanings are organized by high-level discursive structures such as those of genre” (2015, 133). According to Gledhill, genre enables us to look beyond what is presented, in order to reveal the “cultural work of producing and knowing the texts” (2000, 222), and Mittell argues that, “genre categories emerge, change, and impact our broader cultural contexts” (2004, 192). Thus, not only are cultural understandings being shaped by texts through genre, they are being influenced by the creators, whose subjectivities are ever-present and should be brought to light.

Similarly, in the music industry, genres reveal important meanings about the people creating, producing, and listening to the music. For the field of popular musicology, Brackett explains this aspect by saying “the question of genre in popular music is often inextricably tied to how people identify with different types of music, which, in turn, is bound up with basic forms of cultural identification in terms of categories such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, and nationality” (2015, 190). Brackett invokes Bakhtin’s notion of addressivity, to explore the way in which an artist imagines his audience and addresses them accordingly saying that “the style of the utterance depend[s] on those to whom the utterance is addressed, [and] how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees” continuing on to say that “each speech genre in each area of

speech communication has its own typical conception of the addressee, and this defines it as a genre.” (Bakhtin 1986, 95). At the same time, however, persona theory, discussed below, accounts for the ways in which, even while addressing an assumed audience, the artist is revealing his or her own personality through his performance. These assumptions of both performer identity and audience identity are critical to an understanding of genre.

Genre in Music Video

Since Fabbri’s article in 1982 on popular music genre, the examination of genre in popular music studies has become more established, however, it is only emerging in the study of music videos. One early example is Rob Strachan’s article “Music Video and Genre: Structure, Context, and Commerce” (2006). In this article he argues that “the structural elements of music video are inextricably linked to the ideological constructions and marketing processes of popular music,” including genre (2006, 187). Through an analysis of two music videos from different genres, Strachan shows how “the characteristics of music video are related to the structures of musical signification but are also grounded in the visual tropes and social conventions of individual genres” (187). He addresses all seven elements of genre that I have outlined, acknowledging that music videos participate in and shape genre; utilize and introduce conventions; create a fictional world; are produced and understood through industrial and cultural contexts; and take into consideration the identity of the performer and viewer. By only analyzing two videos, Strachan’s work points to the need for a broader overview of each genre and the larger genre system.¹⁴

Music videos are often organized into visual or narrative categories, without considering musical genres. This includes Carol Vernallis’ sliding scale of non-narrative to narrative videos (2004, 4); Joe Gow’s differentiating between conceptual and performance videos (1992); E. A.

¹⁴ Other examples of genre study in popular music is Burns 2016, and Watson & Burns 2010 and 2013.

Kaplan's categorization of music video into 1) romance, 2) social consciousness, 3) modernism, 4) opposition, and 5) nihilism (1987); and Diane Railton and Paul Watson's discussions of 1) pseudo-documentary, 2) staged performance, 3) art, and 4) narrative videos (2011) Such scholars assume that music videos from different musical genres have more in common with each other than not. Railton and Watson acknowledge that very little work has been done to connect musical genre to music video, and they believe that a video's visual genre cannot easily match the song's musical genre (2011, 43). Instead, they focus solely on visual styles, listed above, that are used to promote the artist, rather than the song. What none of these authors state is that, while these categories may be helpful, videos from some musical genre genres will be more likely to use certain visual styles over others. Two videos placed in the same category might look very different depending on the genre of the songs, yet genres are constantly being shaped by continual engagement (see genre element ii).

Music videos, in addition to individual songs, participate in this genre shaping, just as they are constrained in their production by genre limitations. Lyric videos, as a distinct visual genre, similarly participate and are constrained by genre, yet this development is much newer than the genre of music video. There is no literature that discusses how it functions as a genre, but my primary aim in this thesis is to outline, through my analysis of lyric videos, how each of the seven genre elements is present and evolves as the lyric video genre emerges and develops.

Subjectivity and Artistic Persona

Another of my aims with this project is to explore how an artist's persona is expressed in lyric video. This is particularly complicated since the genre is so restricted and constrained in its visual content. As Donald Hall writes in his book *Subjectivity*, the term "invites us to consider the question of how and from where identity arises, [and] to what extent it is understandable" (2006,

3). Given the unique attributes of musical genres as they interact with the genre elements of lyric video, it is challenging to discuss performance identities without also relying upon the work of popular musicologists in the area of persona theory. To demonstrate this briefly, I will outline Auslander's persona theory, Moore's discussion of "the persona-environment relation," and Railton and Watson's exploration of representation in music videos.

Drawing upon Simon Frith's analysis of performance, in his article "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto," Philip Auslander hypothesizes that what audiences see of a performer is a constructed persona that is performed through the artist's "costumes, make-up, and general appearance, along with any sets, lighting, props (including musical instruments), and visual effects they may use" (2004, 9). This persona is influenced by the artist's desire to self-promote and is constrained by the music industry and genre ideologies (9). It is also performed through what Auslander outlines as the "visual images used in the packaging of recordings, publicity materials, interviews and press coverage, toys and collectibles, and other venues and media" such as music videos (2004, 9). These personae must be accepted by the audience in order for the artist to continue to succeed or, as Auslander terms it, "part of the audience's pleasure in pop music comes from experiencing and consuming the personae of favourite artists in all their many forms and this experience is inseparable from the experience of the music itself and of the artists as musicians" (9). Therefore, an artist's constructed persona is "subject to delicate negotiations with the audience" with the risk of "anything from a temporary setback to the end of a performing career" (9). The cultural importance of these personae becomes clear in Auslander's case study, where he outlines rock artist Suzi Quatro's evolution as a performer and the groundbreaking ways she challenged the norms of femininity in not only the rock music world, but in society in general and was still accepted by her audiences (12). Gender presentation in persona

theory is an important element to discuss, as it is caught up in many of the constructions that Auslander lays out. For example, a performer's choice of make-up and wardrobe could enhance or underplay their chosen gender identity, which also is in negotiation with the ideologies of their musical genre. Auslander discussed how male glam rock performers were able to experiment with femininity (2004, 10), yet in many other genres, gender ambiguity would not be accepted by the audiences. The discussion of gender does not always need to be centred around gender ambiguity however, as presentations of traditional femininity and masculinity in pop music are common and help shape cultural understandings of gender, just as glam rocker challenged the societal gender norms of its time (Auslander 2004, 10).

In Alan Moore's article "The Persona-Environment Relation in Recorded Song," rather than analyzing solely how performances demonstrate an artist's persona, Moore focuses his attention on the musical—or "personic"—environment and how it relates to the song's persona (2005). Defining a song's persona as a fictional and often passive identity that is represented by the melody and the lyrics, Moore encourages researchers to expand their focus to include the environment of a song: the textual matters, harmonic setting and formal setting or narrative structure. He then offers a typology for the different ways that the environment of a song interacts with the persona, through genre and tone setting, as well as supporting, amplifying, explaining or contradicting the meaning of the melody or lyrics (Moore 2005).

I propose that the personic environment is transferable to the study of lyric videos when combined with the environment of the visual elements presented in the lyric video. In the same way that the musical environment of a recorded song accompanies the persona of the lyrics and melody, the visual effects in a lyric video can similarly affect the understanding of the song's persona by including new information that may support, amplify, or contradict the lyrical meaning.

This relationship between lyrical message, musical logic and visual presentation is one that Andrew Goodwin discusses in his book *Dancing in the Distraction Factory* where he argues that music videos have the possibility to “triumph over the song itself” if the lyrical message and musical logic are visualized successfully (1992, 86). If this is accomplished, he argues that “it is possible to identify three kinds of relations between songs and videos: illustration, amplification, and disjuncture” (86). Music videos utilizing “illustration” in their music videos “tell the story of the song lyric” or “involve the effort to signify a mood,” while “amplification occurs when the clip introduces new meanings that do not conflict with the lyrics,” and “disjuncture” can be when “the visual narrative either flatly contradicts the lyrics or perhaps unintentionally undermines them (86-88). In this thesis I will identify lyric videos that demonstrate illustration and amplification of the song or artist’s persona through the presentation in the lyric video.

Similarly, Railton & Watson look at performance, specifically in music video. In *Music Video and the Politics of Representation*, they offer an “examination of music video as a site where normative constructions of race, gender and ethnicity are put on display, confirmed, reinforced and, sometimes, challenged” (2011, 11). They compare how artists are represented in videos from female artists of different races, as well as artists who perform ethnicity in their videos, with the conclusion that gender is raced and race is gendered, particularly for female performers (87). While this is an important consideration to bring into music video analysis, Railton and Watson do not take genre into consideration, leaving a major gap in their analysis (Burns 2012). The artists that they discuss emerged from different genres, and therefore the videos they release follow different conventions, construct different fictional worlds, and participate in different industrial and cultural contexts.

I propose that, though lyric videos do not always feature the artist in the images, the

personae of the artists are still represented and conveyed through the images and text. Through analysis of the presentation of the lyrics, I make postulations about the subjectivity of the artist by continuing the work of Auslander, Moore, and Railton & Watson to see if these videos are reinforcing or challenging normative identities, be they gender or sexual, and how else the artist's subjectivities are being portrayed through the interaction between the presented persona and environment of the lyric video.

Method

Returning to my research objectives and my statement that lyric video is a distinct visual genre, I will study several lyric videos, predominately those of Katy Perry to show: 1) how lyric video has emerged as a genre and developed over time, 2) how artistic personae are expressed through lyric videos, 3) how lyric videos are able to convey cultural messages and meanings, and 4) how the evolution of the genre has contributed to the ability to express persona and meaning.

Given that lyric videos represent music through words and movement, I analyze each video by examining how the lyrics and the music are visualized, and how words and music interact with each other. As a way to ensure that each video is analyzed along the same visual parameters, I rely upon the following framework (Table 1) as a way to compile the musical and visual characteristics of each video, before applying my findings to the seven genre elements to reveal artistic subjectivities and genre truths.

Data Collection

The proposed framework is influenced by the approach proposed by Lori Burns and Jada Watson in their analysis of P!nk's live concert footage (2013).¹⁵ Through an in-depth analysis of P!nk's Live Concert Film, Burns and Watson analyze the four domains of music, lyrics, stage, and

¹⁵ A similar multi-dimensional analytic approach is used in their 2010 paper on the Dixie Chicks, but without showing the analytic table in the body of their paper.

film across three cross-cutting analytic parameters in order to “illuminate expressive content in each domain in order to facilitate the interpretation of social messages and meanings.” (2013, 107).

My adaptation of their multi-dimensional analytic approach is used in a similar way, in order to expose the individual elements of a distinct lyric video, and facilitate comparison of the music, lyrics, and images, according to three crosscutting analytic parameters of movement/temporality, narrative/story, and bodies.

It is important to note that my first domain, “music,” is used to analyze the entirety of the recorded song, incorporating both musical elements and lyrical content, thus combining the two domains of “music” and “lyrics” outlined by Watson & Burns. This change was necessary for my analysis in order to discuss the visual presentation of the lyrics as text as a second domain, distinct from the other visual elements in each video which I organize in my final domain of “images.” I will outline each of my parameters and domains more in depth below.

Table 1 Analytic framework

(Each analytic box is numbered so that the reader can follow the explanation of the framework below.)

	Movement/Temporality	Narrative/Story	Bodies (subject/object/setting)
Music	1) Tempo, feel	2) Dynamics, form, lyrical content, message/meaning song	3) Repeating riffs, hooks Subject/object of song
Lyrics	4) Speed, motion, agency	5) Placement and/or prominence	6) Colour, font, size
Images	7) Speed, motion, time, space	8) Narrative	9) People (including race, gender, sexuality), places, items depicted, background colour, texture
Interactions or moments of synchronicity	10)	11)	12)

The first horizontal row (1-3) accounts for particular elements of the original song, or *music*, by outlining 1) the tempo and rhythmic feel, 2) the narrative or structure of the song, including dynamic build and formal structure, as well as the lyrical content, message, or meaning of the song, and 3) any musical riffs or hooks that may be relevant in the analysis and the subject or object of the lyrics of the song, for example: who is singing, and who/what are they singing to or about?

The second domain of *lyrics* (4-6) focuses on how the words are presented and gives the opportunity to narrow our focus on the key element of this visual genre. They are organized through the three analytic parameters and show 4) the movement of the words move around the screen, and if they seem to have agency or are moved by another force, 5) the placement of the words on the screen and how prominently they are displayed, and 6) the graphic design of the words, including font, size, and colour.

The third row (7-9) notes any other visual elements or *images* that are presented onscreen, and again traces the following characteristics 7) movement on screen, 8) narrative content, and 9) subjects depicted.

The highlighted bottom row, “Interactions or moments of synchronicity” can only be filled in after all the other data has been entered, and the attention moves from each element individually, of music, words, and images, to the video as a whole and how all three elements interact. Are the music, lyrics and the background images completely distinct from one another, or do they interact? Here there are many possibilities, and I believe that they will present themselves differently for each stage of development in the genre of the lyric video. Sometimes for this stage of interpretation it is important to notice when there is no interaction and the two or three elements seem to be

completely distinct.

As Burns & Watson demonstrate, the analytic framework can be read horizontally across the domain of music, words, or images, as well as vertically, in which case the cross-cutting parameter is the focus of interpretive attention. The first column, “Movement/Temporality,” highlights all the rhythm and movement in the video, whether through the audio of the song or the onscreen movement of the words and images. Here the lowest analytic space highlights moments when the movement of two or more elements correspond, such as when the rhythm of the music is reflected in the motion of the images or background, or when the words appear in time as they are sung. Occasionally there many interactions to denote here, and other times the movement of each element indicates its own rhythm with no interaction between the others.

The second cross-cutting parameter, “Narrative and Story,” shows how the elements individually tell or suggest a narrative, and the final space here notes moments where the interactions between the music, words and images support a shared story. At times one element is placed in the forefront and the other elements support it, while other times they work together to relay the message of the song. Here the possibilities for moments of synchronicity could be whether the images reflect individual words from the lyrics, or if they depict a broader theme from the meaning of the lyrical message. The font of the words themselves could reflect the lyrical content as well.

Finally, the last column categorizes the subjects of the video, and the final analytic space in this column draws attention to moments where the bodies in the music, lyrics, or images correspond to each other. For example, the words onscreen in lyric videos are always an indication of interaction between the music and the lyrics, as the viewer is seeing what they are hearing in the form of words onscreen. Other examples could include when the artist is depicted in the images,

or when musical elements such as vocal delivery or instruments are illustrated visually in some way.

Genre Analysis

Drawing from the information to be gathered in the analytic framework, I will return to my seven genre elements to discuss each video as it fits within its genre.

i) Genre is universal, in that every text participates in genre

As every text participates in the shaping and structuring force of genre, I will begin the genre analysis of each chapter with a brief discussion of how the lyric video genre itself is understood and positioned within the realm of visual culture at that point in time. I will use this section to redefine the genre, and discuss the attributes that are shared across multiple lyric videos around that time to reveal the genre's solidification.

ii) Genres have no point of origin; they emerge gradually and develop in complex ways

After discussing the videos within the context of the genre as a whole, it will be important to note how they demonstrate how the genre has developed on a larger scale. These may be ideological, technological, or industrial changes in the videos, and they will be reflected in the modifications of the codes and conventions of the genre from each era that I analyze in the next genre element.

iii) Genres are maintained through both repetition and development of convention

As lyric video becomes established as a genre, it begins to develop its own set of codes and conventions that appear in many of the videos. These patterns may be affected by the role that lyric videos have in the promotion of new music at different times in the history of the genre, or the resources that artists invest in their lyric videos. These advancements in conventions are visible in the presentation of the words, images, and how the music is reflected in the video.

iv) Genres shape fictional worlds

I will consider what kind of world is presented in the videos, how they are created, and how fictional or true-to-life they are. The fictional world that is created often supports what cultural assumptions and artistic persona are being presented.

v) Industrial contexts and cultural contexts of genre

The industrial contexts such as the release date, promotion, and production value of each video will be considered alongside the cultural contexts. This will include any cultural references in the video, obvious social contexts, and popularity of the video to discuss how these contexts contribute to the understanding of the song.

vi) Boundaries vs. Interacting system

As these videos exist within a larger genre system, I will analyze any connections that exist between the lyric videos to their associated music video, other lyric videos or other visual genres. These interactions may reveal additional understanding as they participate in convergence culture, which as Jenkins discusses, requires the active engagement of spectators to acquire all the information possible through participatory culture and collective intelligence (2006, 4)

vii) Genres reveal cultural assumptions and the subjectivities of those participating in them

As evidenced above, analysis of genre elements iv, v, and vi have the ability to reveal deeper insights into the meaning of the song or message that the artists communicate through the videos. I take the opportunity in this final genre element to make any conclusions regarding how the fictional world presented in the lyric video, the industrial and cultural contexts surrounding it, and its participation in the genre system all contribute to cultural understandings or assumptions. Additionally, I comment on how the persona of the artist is revealed in the lyric video and how it has evolved from previous understandings.

Case Study: Katy Perry

One way in which to understand a genre is to show how it has developed throughout its history, rather than attempting to define it at a specific point of time. By offering an outline of the evolution of lyric video over the course of several years, it can be possible to fulfill my research objectives and to see 1) how lyric video has evolved as a genre, and 2) how lyric videos offer new ways of presenting an artist's work and persona. It would be impossible to offer a complete history that includes every lyric video that was ever released, especially since, according to my second element of genre, genres have no point of origin, but emerge gradually and develop in complex ways. Over the history of music video very few artists have released videos that feature the lyrics. When they did so, for example Bob Dylan's presentation of "Subterranean Homesick Blues," there was no distinction between "lyric video" and "official video," as only one video would have been released for each single.

Official artist lyric videos began appearing in 2010 though it was quite rare. Katy Perry can be seen as a frontrunner in this trend since she was not only an early adopter of the genre, but, at the time of this writing, she has consistently released lyric videos for most of her singles released over the past eight years. Throughout the course of seven years and sixteen lyric videos, she has experimented with all three elements of lyric video: music, lyrics, and images, and has introduced innovative practices in the genre that has influenced other lyric videos. Her videography an ideal case study for my analysis because of this history, as it is possible to observe the genre conventions for lyric video that develop and disappear throughout the sixteen videos. At the same time, each video offers examples of transformation and expansion in the genre as the technology becomes more advanced, and the ideas more innovative. By choosing to focus on the videos of one artist over an extended period of time, I hope to illustrate how the lyric video genre developed and to

explore the broader implications of the genre by referring to the work of additional artists, including Kanye West, Cee Lo Green, The Rolling Stones, The Chainsmokers, and Lady Gaga.

My goal for this analysis is twofold. Firstly, I aim to highlight the visual development of the genre: the technical innovations and special effects, in order to reveal how the conventions of visualizing the music and lyrics have developed and become established. I will draw on the first three elements of my framework for genre theory to delineate this. More specifically: i) the universality of genre, ii) the gradual development of the genre, and iii) the repetition and development of conventions. As lyric videos became more complex and established as a genre, so too did their ability to display the last four parameters of my framework: iv) the ability to shape complex and defined fictional worlds, v) the links to industrial and cultural contexts, vi) the interaction with other texts in the genre system, and vii) the reflection of cultural assumptions and artistic subjectivities

The analysis is organized into chapters that are structured around each of the four albums Perry released from 2010 to 2017. I believe that the videos from each of these albums provide a clear representation of contemporaneous lyric videos during that period of genre development. Each chapter presents a brief consideration of the lyric videos from the relevant album cycle in order to elucidate the visual development, before offering a more in-depth analysis of a selected video in order to explore potential musical and cultural meanings.

Contextual interludes

Although my analysis of Katy Perry's lyric videos is intended to offer a general overview of how the genre of lyric video has developed over several years, there are many videos outside of her videography that are equally important to the development of the genre. It will be important to briefly pause between each section of the Katy Perry analysis in order to offer commentary on

significant videos that were released around the same time, and to state why I think they are important to consider as influential over the lyric video genre. It is often the case that the innovative treatments of other artists have a material impact upon the Katy Perry videos, just as she influenced many others, therefore I will not delve into detailed analyses of these videos, but rather will allow the attributes to emerge in my analysis of Perry's work. Another important disclaimer is that even with the incorporation of these supplementary videos to my analysis, it is impossible to include or to know every video that was influential to the development of the genre, as there are innumerable possibilities.

Chapter Two: *Teenage Dream* (2010)

I begin with Perry's third studio album, *Teenage Dream*, released August 24, 2010, as it was her first album to utilize lyric videos as part of its promotional material. These four videos, one for each of the album's singles, are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2 Teenage Dream release timeline

Single	Single release	Lyric video release	Official video release
"California Gurls"	May 7, 2010	May 7, 2010	June 14, 2010
"Teenage Dream"	July 23, 2010	July 24, 2010	August 10, 2010
"Firework"	October 26, 2010	October 14, 2010	October 28, 2010
* "Not like the Movies"	n/a	Aug 3, 2010	n/a

*Promotional single

As early examples of the genre, each of the four videos is simple and unsophisticated. The first and the last videos, "California Gurls" and "Not Like the Movies," each use a promotional image of Perry as the visual background, with the text being the only dynamic element at the centre of the screen. The other two videos, "Teenage Dream" and "Firework," are slightly more intricate as they follow the same pattern of featuring simple white text at the bottom of the screen over ever-changing still images. The photographs were taken from the footage of the official music videos, though both these videos were released before the official videos were published.

When watching these videos, it is clear that Perry's team is still coming to understand and explore the role of the emerging lyric video genre. Throughout the videos there are successful, awkward, and inelegant moments that reveal how new and untested the style is, yet they offer glimpses of how lyric videos can be utilized in the promotion of new music. I briefly summarize

each video and include several screenshots below to provide enough information for the genre analysis that will follow.

“California Gurls”

“California Gurls” is likely the first lyric video ever released by a mainstream artist that is labelled as an official lyric video.¹⁶ The video begins by zooming in and out of the artwork for the single (Fig. 1a) before the image darkens and it becomes the backdrop for the white, slightly translucent lyrics (Fig. 1b and 1c). The words appear line by line in the center of the screen and their only movement is an initial expansion before disappearing abruptly. The font does not change during the Snoop Dogg verse, however, in order to accommodate to his faster cadence and pace of lyric delivery, the words are shifted and staggered on the screen. Fig. 1c demonstrates both the placement of the lyrics during the Snoop Dogg verse and how the words begin small and expand.

This first lyric video contains several flaws including mis-transcribed words, inconsistent punctuation, and incorrect capitalization (Fig. 1b shows an example of incorrect capitalization). These are errors that are more common for a prosumer video. One example of inaccurate text is: “*I like ass hanging out / bikinis, with kinis, martinis*” (Fig. 1c) instead of “*All that ass hanging out / bikinis, zucchiniis, martinis*”¹⁷ (mistranscriptions and correct spelling italicized).

This video was uploaded on the same day as the single was released, so these errors make it seem as if the video was created and uploaded hastily, without advance listening or an authorized copy of the lyrics to draw from. The background image was available online, and the lyrics were

¹⁶ While I would categorize “Subterranean Homesick Blues” and other early examples of lyric videos as such, this is the first example of an official video that is explicitly labelled as a lyric video, thus separating it from the official music video.

¹⁷ The lyrics in the video is compared with the lyric website Genius.com. Genius is a media company that allows users to provide annotations and interpretations of song lyrics, among other things. The lyrics are often verified by the artists which is why I am using it in my analysis rather than other lyric websites. <https://genius.com/Katy-perry-california-gurls-lyrics>

depicted using a commonly available font.¹⁸ Additionally, there is no information on the end screen regarding the upcoming album release, which appears at the end of both “Teenage Dream” and “Not Like the Movies” (Fig. 4c), nor is there credit given to a director in the video or the video description.¹⁹ Using easily available images, fonts, and free editing software, as well as not crediting the artist or director and containing grammatical and spelling errors were, and still are at the time of writing, conventions of prosumer lyric videos. While it is possible that this was an official video that followed prosumer patterns, the immediate improvement in quality in the lyric videos that followed “California Gurls” leads me to question its authenticity as an official product. Rather, it is likely that a prosumer made it and Perry’s industry team co-opted it, as part of what Jenkins would call “synergy,” in order to “own and control all of those manifestations” of “California Gurls” music videos (2006, 19).

Figure 1 Screenshots from “California Gurls ft. Snoop (Lyric Video)”



“Teenage Dream”

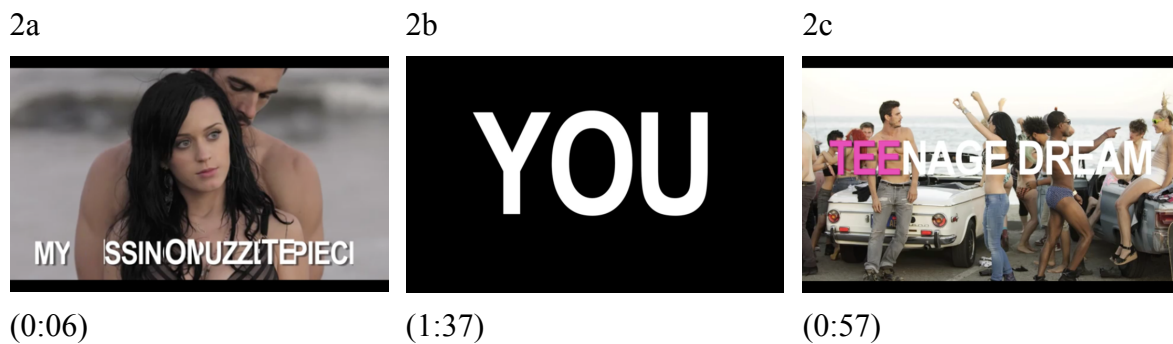
At first glance, the video for “Teenage Dream” could also have been made by a prosumer

¹⁸ The font is recognizable as Lucida Handwriting, available on Microsoft Office and many other writings and editing tools.

¹⁹ On YouTube, the video description appears below the video and contains the name of the video, the profile picture and name of the account, when the video was published, and any other information that the creator wishes to include. Often for music and lyric videos this will contain links to the album or single on iTunes, Spotify and other music hosting sites, the credits of the video, and the copyright information. An example is given for “The One That Got Away” and “Chained to the Rhythm” later in this paper in Figs. 14 and 30.

due to the basic editing style. The images often reflect the mood or energy of the music and lyrics, and there is some experimentation with the presentation of the words to similarly enhance the meaning of the lyrics, for example the shutter effect that is used to transition from the line “My missing puzzle piece,” to “I’m complete” (Fig. 2a). The moving white text draws focus from the static images of Katy Perry, who is shown in almost every frame. The only time this pattern changes is during the chorus, where the words appear syllable by syllable over a black screen (Fig. 2b), and each syllable of “Teenage Dream” is highlighted in pink as it is sung (Fig. 2c).

Figure 2 Screenshots from “Teenage Dream (Lyrics)”



This video was uploaded the day after the single was released, yet the images are drawn from the official music video, which was made public two weeks later. Once it was released more of the visual narrative was offered, including the couple’s backstory and more of the romance that is alluded to in the lyric video. Such a strong visual tie to the official music video supports the notion that at this point in the development of the genre, the lyric video’s role was not to be an independent video, but to preview and draw attention to the coming official music video, while also displaying the words.

“Firework”

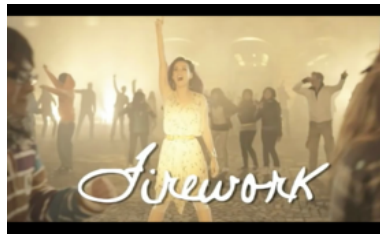
The lyric video for “Firework” is also quite straightforward, with the lyrics accompanying

photographs of Perry and others in a dark city, walking and dancing, with additional images of fireworks appearing during the chorus (Fig. 3). This video will serve as the case study for this chapter, therefore I will engage in a deeper examination in the genre analysis below.

Figure 3 Screenshots from “Firework (Lyric Video)”



(0:17)



(0:55)



(02:33)

“Not Like the Movies”

As a promotional single, no official music video was made for “Not Like the Movies” and therefore it was not able to borrow images from the music video shoot. Perhaps because of this, the lyric video contains only a single image that is revealed in the first strain of music (Fig. 4a), and remains static until the very end, when it is replaced with the album cover and information of the coming release (Fig. 4c). There is very little movement in the text, only changing in a few instances to reflect the lyrics, for example in the mimetic treatment of the word “spinning,” which spins around while it is sung (Fig. 4b). Though it may have similar features to “California Gurls,” I believe that this lyric video was not created by a prosumer because of the details included on the end screen and the accurate transcription of the lyrics.

Figure 4 Screenshots from “Not Like the Movies - Official Lyric Video”

4a



(0:12)

4b



(2:34)

4c



(4:02)

Genre Analysis

These videos are clear examples of the early period of the lyric video genre because they draw so heavily on the trends that were appearing in prosumer lyric videos and they appear to have been created using simple media tools. Even in these four videos it is possible to see the evolution of the genre and the introduction of visual practices that will later become established conventions. My analysis of the visual effects of these lyrics videos is organized around the first three elements of my genre framework to highlight examples of this progression.

i. Genre is universal, in that every text participates in genre in some way

To summarize my earlier discussion of this complex first genre element, every text participates in the genre structure and therefore contributes to the shaping of that understanding by strengthening it through the established conventions that it maintains or by modifying it slightly with any new elements that it introduces. Genre is also a structuring force, particularly through the naming of different genres, that guides people’s expectations of a text based on their previous experiences with texts from that genre.

The lyric videos discussed here are some of the first examples of the genre, and therefore

are quite influential in the initial shaping of not only the conventions, but of shaping audience expectations of official lyric videos. In comparison to the prosumer videos that many of the viewers would have encountered before, Perry's were marked as official through their presence on her official artist's YouTube channel. Furthermore, in order to identify these videos as distinct from the music video, the title of each video includes the word "lyric" or "lyrics."

ii. Genres have no point of origin; they emerge gradually and develop in complex ways.

As I highlighted above, "California Gurls" and "Not Like the Movies" fit many of the same parameters as prosumer lyric videos, but the other two videos began to mould the expectations of viewers through their introduction of new visual elements that prosumers could not replicate due to the unobtainable nature of the images drawn from the music video. The fact that these videos were released by the artist²⁰ and included behind-the-scenes footage shaped the genre significantly in its ability to further promote the artist and the upcoming music video more than prosumer videos.

iii. Genres are maintained through both repetition and development of convention

When analyzing a group of lyric videos released in the same era such as these four videos, the conventions that are becoming established begin to emerge. Of course, these videos mark the initial stages of development for this genre, therefore many of the established conventions are influenced by prosumer lyric videos. Official lyric videos begin to form their own patterns and conventions due to the additional resources they receive.

In the discussion below, I organize the conventions into three categories: music, lyrics and images. Firstly, I discuss how the music is visually represented in the videos, whether by reflecting the tone, style or mood of the song, illustrating rhythmic elements, highlighting formal patterns,

²⁰ The possible exception being "California Gurls" which may have originally created by a prosumer.

or any other musical element. Secondly, I consider how the lyrics are depicted, and how that encourages understanding of the lyrical meaning of the song. Here I look at elements such as placement, prominence, movement, font, and colour. Finally, if there are any images or background featured onscreen, I examine them to see how they support or distract from the lyrics or music. Some of these elements will overlap, in a multitude of potential ways. For example, the images could reflect the musical elements by including pictures of instruments, or the words could emphasize the rhythm of the song by appearing rhythmically as they are sung. Rather, they could mirror the lyrical content by being arranged in the shape of an object mentioned in the lyrics.

Teenage Dream: Music

Musically, the song is not often reflected in these lyric videos, as the priority is to prominently display the lyrics. Since the words are the only dynamic element in “California Gurls” and “Not Like the Movies,” there is not enough information to suggest the musical elements of the songs, like the rhythm, mood, or instrumentation. In “Teenage Dream” and “Firework,” the images from the music videos change at random intervals that are rarely reflective of the tempo or rhythm of the song, yet both videos follow the content of the songs by including images that reflect the tone of the music or the action in the lyrics. For example, the images displayed during the verses of “Firework” are all darker, feature Perry and the other characters looking sombre as they struggle with their identity, and this reflects Perry’s low register vocals and repeating string patterns. When Perry belts the chorus, backed by upbeat and inspirational chord and percussion, the young people in the images are dancing and acting uninhibited.

Teenage Dream: Lyrics

This is the most significant element of lyric video, and the presentation of the words is quite straightforward in these four videos. The lyrics materialize one line at a time, appearing as

the first word is sung. Though the placement may change on the screen depending on the background image, the lyrics in each of these videos are displayed throughout using a single colour, size, and font, regardless of what is happening behind them.

The words appear in the videos as white or yellow letters, with a different font for each video, for instance, the more fanciful script in “Firework.” “Teenage Dream” and “Not Like the Movies” sometimes utilised transitions and animations to highlight the meaning of the text as discussed previously, however they were not used in “Firework” or “California Gurls.” In the latter case it is likely due to lack of resources if it was originally a prosumer video. In “Firework” the practice may have been abandoned because the simple editing in “Teenage Dream” was very mimetic and would have been incompatible with the sophisticated tone that was set in “Firework.” Additionally, there are moments in “Firework” where the words are difficult to read due to the white lettering against images of bright lights. As the genre developed, artists discovered more innovative ways to creatively illustrate the lyrics without making it too simplistic while still ensuring their legibility.

Teenage Dream: Images

The images in these videos provide a backdrop against which the lyrics are overlaid. “California Gurls” and “Not Like the Movies” utilize only a single image of Perry. These two pictures promote her artistic image and the artwork for the single but they do not change throughout the video or contribute to the understanding of the lyrics, therefore, I will only be discussing the use of images in “Teenage Dream” and “Firework.” Both these videos use still images from the footage of the official music videos that followed them, thus drawing attention to that video and offering clues as to its narrative, without revealing too much. Many of the images are chosen to mirror a word or phrase in the lyrics. An example is in “Firework,” where an image of the moon

in the night sky is used to illustrate the line “even brighter than the moon.” While these are perhaps very obvious pairings, using images that directly reflect the text, or “see-what-you-say,”²¹ is a convention that remains constant throughout the development of the genre.

Table 3 Analysis of "Firework"

	Movement/Temporality	Narrative and Story	Bodies (subject/object/setting)
Music	Upbeat, steady rhythm	Anthem of empowerment Verses - low points of self-esteem Chorus - worth and excitement	“You’re a firework” Strings, percussion entering in first chorus
Lyrics	Short phrases No movement in text	N/a	White text, mix of cursive and print at the bottom of screen Chorus - slightly larger font
Images	No movement, still images	disjointed narrative	Katy Perry, large crowds dancing, brief shots of individuals in distress or marginalized positions
Interactions or Moments of synchronicity	The text appears in time with sung lyrics,	Images reflect mood of the song.	Text moves to the middle of the screen when background images interfere

Due to the variety and complexity of the videos, I use only one video to discuss how it functions as a genre text. “Firework” is the most complex lyric video from this album, and, as such, it offers more of an opportunity to see how lyric videos from that time were participating in the creation of the new visual genre.²²

²¹ “See-what-you-say” is an expression that Charlotte Audrey used to describe a common practice that she uses in her capacity as of lyric video creator, including for Ed Sheeran’s “Shape of You” in 2017, where she paired images of whatever word was being featured in the lyrics at that moment in the video.

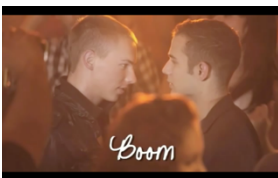
²² This video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3bkpyNiv8Y>

iv. Genres shape fictional worlds

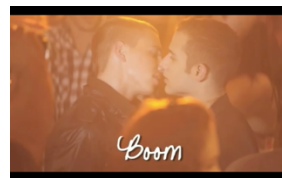
During this emergent period of the lyric video, the selected examples do not develop complete narratives. There are ways in which they are pointing toward that goal, but there is not enough information to complete an understanding. For instance, the official music video for “Firework” contains multiple stories of young people encountering hardship before resisting or overcoming their troubles. As they defy their oppression, fireworks shoot out of their chests to showcase their new confidence. Only small moments from these stories are included in the lyric video, so when watching the lyric video, the spectator has to attempt to fill in the narrative gaps.

Even without watching the music video there is still enough information to make some preliminary conclusions about the world that is being formed. Overall, the video seems to be set in a fairy-tale world. Perry is elegantly robed in long, beautiful dresses and her hair is softly curled. She resembles a youthful fairy godmother as she gazes over the old city or walks on cobbled streets through the crowds of young people. The world seems to be a place where there is hardship, yet it is also a place filled with light where people are free to dance and to dream. There are crowds celebrating with arms outstretched, and significant attention is paid to two young men kissing at the entrance of the Bridge section. Here, the images switch more rapidly than previously in the video, changing on the beat of each syncopated “boom,” with each image bringing the two men closer together as they go in for a kiss, followed by an image of them smiling at each other in the middle of the dance floor (Fig. 5)

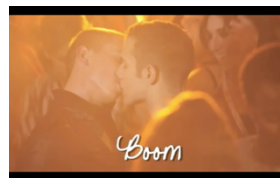
Figure 5 Screenshots from “Firework” bridge



(2:43)



(2:44)



(2:45)



(2:46)

Rather than simply experiencing the world in the lyric video, the spectator also sees *how* that world is being created through images revealing production elements of the music video. The very first image in the lyric video shows Perry behind a clacker board stating the name of the artist, song, director and producer (Dave Meyers and Colin Watkinson). Later images reveal large lights that were used during the night shoot to spotlight Perry, the rigging that was used to make it appear as if fireworks are erupting right out of her chest in the music video, and images of a lighter sky that hints at how long the video took to shoot. (Fig. 6)

Figure 6 Evidence of production in “Firework”



Normally a spectator will suspend their disbelief when watching a music video and pretend for a moment that what is happening is real. This is likely possible when watching the official music video for “Firework,” yet lyric video has not been established enough to hold the same convention of suspension of disbelief. Therefore, while the official music video depicts a world of freedom and acceptance, the lyric video reveals the fabrication of that world, possibly undermining the message of the song by revealing that it is not yet present in reality.

Conventionally, viewers are aware of artifice of lyric video because of the simulated presence of the words on the screen, however the evidence of the video’s production here is not a convention of lyric video but rather one from “behind the scenes” or “making-of” videos which I will discuss in genre element vi. This raises the question of legibility. Brackett states that texts have to be legible as fitting within a certain genre, and having elements from two genres, especially

when one is only just emerging and becoming established, confuses the viewer as to what type of video they are watching (2015, 195).

v. Industrial contexts and cultural contexts of genre

To show the industrial contexts of this video, I have included a timeline to show how its release fit in with other promotional material for “Firework” and *Teenage Dream*.

Table 4 "Firework" promotional timeline

<i>Album release</i>	August 24, 2010
<i>Lyric video release</i>	October 14, 2010
<i>“Teaser” video release</i>	October 15, 2010
<i>Single release</i>	October 26, 2010
<i>Official music video release</i>	October 28, 2010

This is an unusual release timeline. The typical order is as follows: the single and lyric video are released the same day, and the music video follows a few weeks later. If there is a teaser for a music video, its release would occur shortly before the official video, by no more than a week in order to draw and maintain excitement. In this case, the lyric video for “Firework” fulfills two roles: to introduce the lyrics, and to preview some of the content of the official music video. The teaser that immediately followed it seems to make the lyric video redundant as it also is sampling content from the official music video, however, it utilizes film footage from the music video rather than static images.

The lyric video typically comes out the same day as the single as it is part of the promotion, so that fans can listen to the song for free on YouTube while learning the words, potentially encouraging them to buy the single. Having a lyric video out before the single’s released changes this pattern, and could create confusion when fans listen online and then are unable to purchase the single on iTunes or hear it on the radio.

This leads me to believe that Perry’s team had not figured out the role of the lyric video

yet. Was it a placeholder for the official video, like the “Teenage Dream” lyric video seems to be? Seemingly not, as they also released a teaser video for “Firework” the day after its release. I believe that Perry’s lyric videos eventually serve a specific role that is separate from her other videos, yet at this point it was yet to be defined.

In terms of cultural contexts, Perry dedicated the official music video to the “It Gets Better Project” (Aswad 2010). The Project “inspires people across the globe to share their stories and remind the next generation of LGBTQ+ youth that hope is out there, and it will get better.” (Itgetsbetter.org). Both the music video and the lyric video show young characters who struggle with family trauma, sickness, body image, and sexuality, before ultimately overcoming their insecurities or source of oppression. Their empowerment is evidenced through the fireworks that they project from their chests. Most of these stories only receive momentary attention in the lyric video, but the emphasized storyline shows two boys kissing, which aligns itself the most strongly with the cause of the “It Gets Better Project.”

vi. Genres function as part of a system through which they interact with other genres

As part of the genre system, “Firework” interacts with both prosumer lyric videos and other official lyric videos, such as the one for “Teenage Dream,” since they share similar visual and editing styles. The most obvious link is to the official music video, which I have discussed.

There is also a connection to be made with “Behind the Scenes” or “Making of” videos, many of which Perry has also released throughout her career.²³ In these casual or candid videos the artist typically explains the inspiration behind the song, what they hope to convey in the music video and introduces any other characters. There is also typically footage of several scenes filmed from different angles, often showing the camera crew at work. While “Firework” only contains

²³ An example of a Katy Perry Behind the Scenes video is “Katy Perry – Making of the ‘Firework’ Music Video.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4X-f-TIsT5M&t=77s>

still images, it shares similar elements with Behind the Scenes videos in that they both show the camera equipment and the crew working behind the scenes to construct the world of the music video, as well as images from different angles than the official video. At this point lyric video is so new that its genre boundaries are soft and it draws conventions from other types of videos because it is not yet established enough to have its own set practices.

vii. Genres reveal the cultural assumptions and subjectivities of those participating in them

In this video Perry creates a fictional world that mirrors the message of her song: that you may feel disheartened or face challenges, but that ultimately there is hope for a brighter future because “baby you’re a firework.” She further supports this message by dedicating the video to a cause with a similar message. Additionally, she cast the video through an open casting call in Budapest to give her fans an opportunity to participate in the music video; the lyric video offers some glimpses of the extras having fun with her between takes and throughout the shoot. Through all these decisions, Katy Perry mobilizes the lyric video genre to present herself as a progressive and empowered female subject to her younger fans. She does so by featuring storylines of young people overcoming hardship including showing same-sex attraction as being accepted and even celebrated.

Physically, Perry’s appearance in the video matches the persona that she had crafted leading up to this video. Although the colours are more subdued from the bright and sexy “California Gurls” video, she appears ultra-feminine due to the light pink highlights in her long, softly curled hair, subtle makeup, delicate jewellery, and flowing dresses. Her ability to project fireworks from her chest gives her power, though it is reminiscent of the music video for “California Gurls” where she projects whipping cream out of her chest (Fig. 7). Especially when compared, these choices make her seem more serious, without losing the trademark attributes of

her image. Both images show her femininity, as her persona is still very gendered, yet it seems as if she is transitioning from a sexy starlet to a more maternal figure who cares for her young fans.

Figure 7 Comparison between “California Gurls” and “Firework” chest projections



(3:24) “California Gurls” music video



(3:38) “Firework” lyric video

Conclusion

In 2010, Katy Perry released four lyric videos in the promotion of her album, *Teenage Dream*. We can only speculate as to why she made this unprecedented decision; whether she was inspired by prosumer videos, or if she was motivated by other developments in the music video genre. Regardless of her intentions, these four videos show, even in a short period, how the lyric video genre evolved as the videos progressed from a single image with static lyrics, to multiple, changing images, and more complex movement of the lyrics. While all of the lyric videos of *Teenage Dream* are quite primitive, they experiment with placement of the words and how they are used to reflect the lyrics on a word-by-word basis, or, on a larger scale, the mood or message of the song. Though simple, they set a foundation for the possibility of an autonomous lyric video genre rather than a mixture of prosumer, teaser, behind the scenes video, or even a music video with incorporated lyrics, the last example of which I discuss below.

First Interlude: Early and Influential Videos

1. “Good Life” by Kanye West ft. T-Pain

This video was released on June 16, 2009, a year before “California Gurls,” considered to be the first official lyric video. I do not classify “Good Life” as a lyric video for several reasons. Firstly, it is not labelled as a lyric video, nor does it include all the lyrics. Additionally, it sometimes includes additional words, outside the. Secondly, the incorporation of the words in this video does not seem to be used as a way for fans to learn the lyrics, but to serve as a visual illustration of Kanye’s authorship over the song and to showcase his talent as a rapper. Finally, because it was the only video produced for “Good Life,” it had a larger budget than a lyric video from a similar time period would have had. The end result is that the animation and editing is much more sophisticated than the Katy Perry lyric videos from *Teenage Dream*.

The video begins with Kanye West, filmed in monochrome, penning the words “The Goodlife” in the air (Fig. 8a). When he flicks the marker at the end of the word, the ink splatters and flows to T-Pain’s feet, changes to colour, climbs up his body, and transforms into lettering when he sings “Welcome to the good life” (Fig. 8b). This is the last time any of T-Pain’s lines are visualized; the rest of the animated lyrics are dedicated to West’s raps and materialize as he sings them (Fig. 8c). The other animated images are similarly drawn directly from his lyrics, in bright colours, as if he was bringing them into existence.

Figure 8 Screenshots from “Good Life ft. T-Pain”



The aim behind including words in this video is not to highlight an important lyrical message, for example in Prince’s “Sign o’ the Times.” Instead, the goal is to draw attention to the writer of the words themselves. Though this video uses lyrics differently than most lyric videos, the creative animation of the text in “Good Life” will influence later lyric video creators to incorporate movement and agency in the textual presentation, as well as combining live action scenes in conjunction with animated words.

2. “Fuck You” by Cee Lo Green

The “Fuck You” lyric video is mentioned in almost every single online journalistic article that discusses the development of lyric video; many consider it to be the first, or most influential, lyric video (Cho 2014, O’Keefe 2014, Shinn 2015). “Fuck You” was released on August 19th, 2010, after “California Gurls” and “Teenage Dream,” but it does not follow the format Perry set. Its dynamic presentation of the text was not connected visually to the official music video, of which there was a clean version and an explicit version. This video only features the explicit version, though three other versions were released, all using the same English audio and the same kinetic typography technique, font, and colours, though with Spanish, German, and Italian words on the screen. The term kinetic typography is an important term for lyric video analysis, and is

defined as “the art of integrating movement with text... it attempts to engage a viewer’s attention by forcing them to visually track words which move across, up or down the page. It also uses colour, size and font selection to highlight particular words... causing a more immediate, involuntary reaction in the reader.” (Macmillan Dictionary). While in this case the words remain white throughout the video, the background colour changes in conjunction with the form of the song:

- Chorus – Blue (Fig. 9a)
- Each “Fuck You” – Red (Fig. 9b)
- 1st verse – Yellow (Fig. 9c.)
- 1st Pre chorus – Darker Yellow
- 2nd Verse – Green
- 2nd Pre chorus – Darker Green
- Bridge – Yellow, then alternating between blue and green

Figure 9 Screenshots from “Cee Lo Green - FUCK YOU”



The song is inspired by classic soul and funk music from the seventies which is reflected in the film grain of the image, like an old TV. Though the format of the video is simple, it was very engaging, especially compared to the other lyric videos of the time, and it drew a lot of attention online. Additionally, the introduction of kinetic typography in this video was very influential on later lyric videos, as will become clear in the lyric videos for Katy Perry’s second album.

Chapter Three: *Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection* (2012)

In the previous chapter I outlined the emergence of the lyric video genre as it distanced itself from prosumer lyric videos and began to explore the possibilities of a new visual genre. In this chapter I will discuss how lyric video is becoming more of an established genre with a defined role in the promotion of new singles, distinct from music videos.

Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection, a reissue of Perry's 2010 album, was released on March 23, 2012, and included three new tracks, three official remixes, and an acoustic version of "The One that Got Away." All were released as lyric videos, with one exception, a remix of six of her song's including two originally released on *Teenage Dream*. The release dates for each of the singles, lyric and music videos are outlined in Table 5. This proliferation of lyric videos for the promotional materials of this album reveals a dramatic progression of the industrial expectations of the lyric video genre. Furthermore, some of these lyric videos were not then followed by official music videos as would normally be expected; the priority in this case appears to be the lyric video, even if conventional music videos offer more extravagant elements such as special effects, guest stars and extended scenes.

Table 5 *Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection* release timeline

Single	Single release	Lyric video release	Official video release
“Part of Me”	February 13, 2012	February 12, 2012	March 21, 2012
* “E.T. feat. Kanye West”	February 16, 2011	March 16, 2011	March 30, 2011
* “Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F) feat. Missy Elliot”	June 6, 2011	August 7, 2011	n/a
“Wide Awake”	May 22, 2012	May 20, 2012	June 18, 2012
◦ “The One That Got Away”	n/a	January 17, 2012	n/a
“Dressin’ Up”	n/a	March 29, 2012	n/a

*connotes a remix of a track released on *Teenage Dream*

◦ connotes an acoustic version of a track released on *Teenage Dream*

Through observation of lyric video during this stage of development, we can witness that the lyric video genre has evolved into a distinctive style that has moved away from the convention of previewing content from the official music video. Instead, each video displays its own identity and style through unique lyrical presentation, style and use of background images. This progression has expanded the storytelling capabilities of lyric video and the ability to visualize the musical elements, for instance to feature the rhythm of the lyrical delivery in the appearance of the words.

All six lyric videos from *Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection (TD:CC)* showcase this evolution of convention, as they each have a distinctive font and movement that is reflective of both the lyrical and musical content of the song. I will briefly summarize each song and video below before engaging in my genre analysis.

“Part of Me”

“Part of Me” is a powerful break-up anthem that tells the story of the protagonist’s unhealthy relationship, before reasserting her independence. This video is much more sophisticated than any of Perry’s previous lyric videos. All the lyrics appear in the same worn-down and jagged font, highlighting the letter “A” (Fig. 10a). The words move around screen in creative and engaging ways against a blank background. There are many moments of synchronicity where, like the independent protagonist of the song, the lyrics seem to have agency as they mime what the lyrics are saying, like “watch your shadow” (Fig. 10b) or “I’m glowing” (Fig. 10c). The focus is always on the lyrics as they jump out against the blank background, and they match the rhythm of the song and appear in time with the words being sung.

Figure 10 Screenshots from “Part of Me (Lyric Video)”

10a



(0:03)

10b



(0:15)

10c

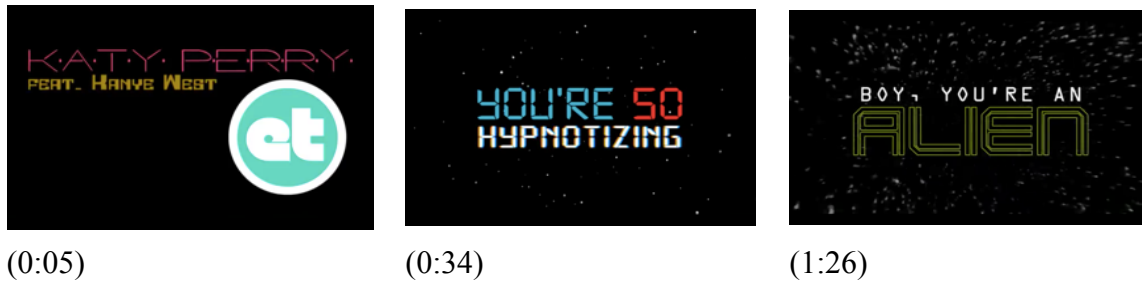


(2:15)

“E.T.”

This lyric video, for “E.T.” also uses kinetic typography, yet there is no unifying font like in “Part of Me.” Every line employs a new typeface, each inspired by science fiction or new technology. There are many references to computers and video games, as 3D fonts, to fit with the theme of space travel and falling for an alien. These elements visualize the electronic musical characteristics of the song.

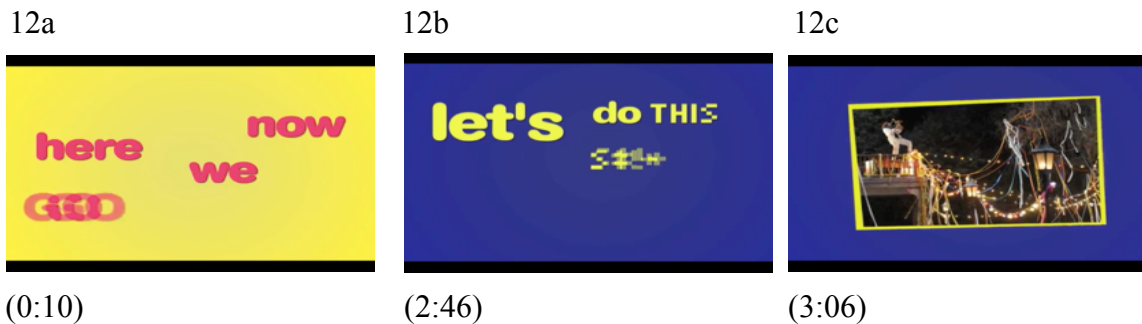
Figure 11 Screenshots from “E.T. (feat. Kanye West) Official Lyrics Video”



“Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.)”

Oddly, this lyric video came out almost a month *after* the official music video. While the music video uses the original audio, the lyric video promotes the remixed version. However, it still incorporates many images from the music video, including many images of the video’s main character “Kathy Beth Terry” and famous saxophonist Kenny G though his solo is altered and is unrecognizable as a being played on saxophone (Fig. 12c). The changes in audio during the new rap section and the remixed bridge are highlighted in this lyric video through the visualization of the animated words. During the last chorus, the video simply displays images from the music video, and does not feature the lyrics at all.

Figure 12 Screenshots from “Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.) [feat. Missy Elliott] Official Lyric Video”



“Wide Awake”

“Wide Awake” is organized around a Facebook timeline from 2012. The timeline runs

down the middle of the screen, with text bubbles emerging out of points on that line. The text bubbles alternate between the lyrics of “Wide Awake,” and genuine posts from Perry’s official Facebook page from 2010 to early 2012 (Fig. 13). The juxtaposition between the lyrics and social media posts amplify the meaning of the song. To better understand this, I will analyze this video in more depth during the genre analysis.

Figure 13 Screenshots from “Wide Awake (Lyric Video)”

13a



(00:09)

13b



(00:48)

13c



(03:40)

“The One That Got Away (Acoustic)”

This video features the lyrics as well as the guitar chords. Not only are spectators able to learn the lyrics and potentially sing along, they are able to play along with the track, which they are invited to in the video description. The chords appear only as the chords change however, with no advance forewarning, which makes it difficult to play along with the recording without extensive practice. Otherwise, this video is very simple, with the pink text fading in word by word over a white background (Fig. 14).

Figure 14 Screenshots from “The One That Got Away (Acoustic) Official Chord & Lyric Video”

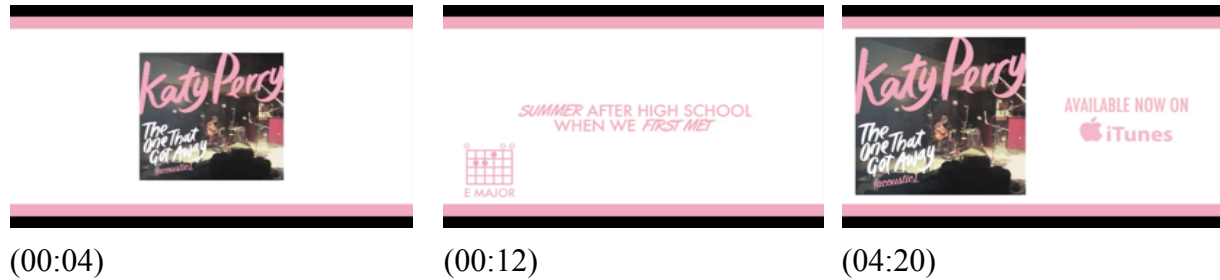




Figure 15 Video description of “The One That Got Away (Acoustic) Official Chord & Lyric Video”



Katy Perry 
Published on Jan 17, 2012

Watch this video to learn the official lyrics and guitar chords for Katy Perry's "The One That Got Away". Upload your covers to YouTube with the title 'My "The One That Got Away" Cover'. The best ones will be posted on <http://www.facebook.com/katyperry> and be put in a featured playlist on YouTube!

“Dressin’ Up”

This lyric version is the only video that Perry released for “Dressin’ Up,” as it was not released as a single. Though Perry often expresses her female sexuality in her music videos, for example by spraying whip cream from her chest in “California Gurls,” this song’s content, which describes romantic fantasies, was perhaps too risqué for an official music video. Releasing it as a lyric video was a safe way to visualize the many sexual innuendos in a less graphic way. Throughout the video, the words are presented in creative ways (Fig. 16b) and with a more detailed background than the simple black or white backdrop in earlier lyric videos like “Part of Me” (Fig. 16a). The movement of the song and the lyrics is captured visually with the sensual background of lace, ribbons, soft mood lighting, and gentle pulsing. This is especially expressive during the bridge, where the pulsing accelerates, along with Perry’s sighing, leading to a satisfying climax of the song (Fig. 16c).

Figure 16 Screenshots from “Dressin’ Up (Lyric Video)”

16a



(2:57)

16b



(0:32)

16c



(2:44)

Genre Analysis

i. Genre is universal, in that every text participates in genre in some way

As these videos are continually participating in the lyric video genre, they offer insight to the trends during that time period, specifically the focus on experimenting with the presentation of the text itself as a way to further emphasize the message of the song. Each video contains all the lyrics and presents them in engaging ways, without relying on footage of the artist or the official music video.²⁴

ii. Genres have no point of origin; they emerge gradually and develop in complex ways

These six videos, released over a one-year period (between March 2011 and May 2012), reflect the general developments in the larger visual genre. Not only does the larger number of videos reveal how common lyric videos are becoming at this time, these videos show an evolution in that they are no longer directly connected to their associated music video through their imagery. At this point lyric videos are emerging as independent projects. While they still participate in the interconnecting genre system and fit within the industry contexts of the album promotion, they

²⁴ One exception could perhaps be “Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F),” as it does include images taken from the music video, however those images only appear in the second half of the video and when the audio has been remixed, therefore the connection between the two videos is not as strong.

begin to resemble other official lyric videos, rather than other visual genres, such as prosumer videos, conventional music videos or behind the scenes videos. As I discuss below, this is accomplished through the use of more creative fonts for the entirety of the song that are more reflective of the mood and tone, to set the visuals apart and allow the video to have a unique style.

iii. Genres are maintained through both repetition and development of convention

When observing all six videos from Katy Perry's *TD:CC*, it is possible to see how the genre conventions are developing and stabilising, thus contributing to the genre becoming more defined. The variety that these six videos display demonstrates the creative possibilities for lyric videos. Meanwhile, their common elements also reveal what conventions are being repeated and established across the emerging genre.

Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection: Music

Visually, the music is much more represented in these videos than in Perry's previous album. Earlier videos used so few elements, only still images and white lyrics, which allowed for few clues as to the musical style, tone, or rhythm of the song. In comparison, upbeat and positive songs from this era like "E.T.," "Last Friday Night," and "Part of Me," are reflected by the bright colours and rhythmic movement of the words, and the more sombre and reflective songs, such as "Wide Awake" and "The One that Got Away," use soft blues and pinks with more gradual transitions. Although the words are often set against a solid backdrop, when there are visual elements and movement in the background of the video, like the stars in "E.T." and the lace pattern in "Dressin' Up," their motion reflects the tempo or momentum of the song. For example, behind the lyrics in "E.T.," the stars in the background appear to be flying past, as if the camera was moving through space. Then in the verse, the movement of the stars slow and when the instrumentation gets thicker and the high-hat enters at a brisk pace at 1:10, the stars zoom by again

as if the camera has also accelerated through space. Contrastingly, in “Dressin’ Up,” the lace background seems to pulse in time with Perry’s heavy breathing in the bridge section (2:20-2:33).

Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection: Lyrics

The lyrical presentation in these videos is also more attuned to each song, as the words appear rhythmically. Rather than appearing as an entire line of text like in the *Teenage Dream* videos, the rhythm of the melody is visually depicted by materializing one word at a time, on the beat as they are sung. Sometimes this rhythm is even further emphasized by words appearing one syllable at a time. This is a direct influence from the “Fuck You” lyric video which so successfully used kinetic typography to animate the lyrics. Occasionally this is further accentuated through the movement of the text as it demonstrates the actions the lyrics are describing. Words like “trembling” vibrate onscreen (Fig 16c), and “Go,” in Missy Elliot’s rap introduction to “Last Friday Night,” moves across the screen and mirrors how she elongates the word (Fig 12a). Additionally, the text emulates the electronic elements in the bridge of “Last Friday Night,” for example when Missy Elliot’s voice is run through a vocoder, and her words appear to be pixelated onscreen before quickly shifting back to the rounded font (Fig. 12b). These examples show the various possibilities of lyrical representation. The movement of the words can represent not only the meaning of the lyrics, but also performance gestures and technological effects.

These videos broadly use one font for the lyrics throughout the video, only occasionally alternating fonts for individual, significant words. For example, in “Dressin’ Up,” the word “vixen” is produced with a different font to illustrate the sensual connotation of that word (16b). Using one font throughout the video gives greater cohesiveness throughout, and using one that is more uncommon reinforces the distinctive identity of the lyric video from other visual genres at this point in time, particularly prosumer videos. “Part of Me” is a strong example of this because

the font is reflective of the theme of resilience that is expressed in the song, including lines such as “You ripped me off, your love was cheap / was always tearing at the seams.” The lettering mirrors this concept of damage by appearing worn down and with jagged edges. It also features one distinctive letter (A) that contrasts the others. Since it appears in Perry’s name and the title of the song at the beginning of the video, it continues to reinforce the connection to the artist throughout the video (Fig 10a).

A final development in the presentation of the lyrics in this genre is the arrangement of the lyrics to construct images. For instance, when the lyrics “my cookie monster” are arranged in “Dressin’ Up,” the placement of the words with the addition of two googly eyes look like the Sesame Street character’s face (Fig. 17). Similarly, the words are often animated in such a way that they directly reflect the action of the lyrics. There are multiple examples of this in “Part of Me,” such as when the text “drive[s] away,” or when the colour drains from the words “you drain me down.”

Figure 17 Cookie Monster



(0:47)



Image of Sesame Street’s Cookie Monster

Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection: Images

Though the presentation of the lyrics in these videos is innovative in creating images out of the words themselves, these videos do not rely solely on the lyrics to create imagery. In a few instances they include extra visuals to pair with the words. While it has recently become more common, the trend began to appear in “E.T.” where some images appear beside the words, such

as a picture of a brain beside the line “I got a dirty mind.” Additionally, many of these videos end with the artwork for the single, and “Last Friday Night” includes screenshots from the official music video.

Table 6 Analysis of “Wide Awake”

	Movement/Tempo rality	Narrative and Story	Bodies (subject/object/setting)
Music	Slow tempo, heavy backbeat	Song about heartbreak - reflecting on mistakes made and lessons learned	large reverb and gated drums
Lyrics	motionless text on scrolling timeline Word by word	Text appears in bubbles, imitating the social media posts	Pale Blue font, slightly darker than background
Images	Slowly scrolling up as posts get added and dates move forward in time	Older style Facebook timeline, Perry’s professional page, telling success story of <i>Teenage Dream</i> .	Real Facebook posts praising the success of Perry’s album and promotions, including date, and amount of likes, comments, shares - starting 2010 with the announcement of <i>Teenage Dream</i> (May 10, 2010), ending April 2012
Interactions or Moments of synchronicity	Text boxes fit in between social media posts	Combination and alternation between somber lyrics and positive promotional posts	Lyrical text is much bigger, bolder and capitalized, to distinguish it and ensure that it draws attention before the text in the Facebook posts.

I have chosen to offer an in-depth reading of “Wide Awake” through the lens of the last four genre parameters because it is the most innovative of the videos from this album through its expansion beyond a simple presentation of the words to tell a deeper story.²⁵ As I discussed in the introduction, Goodwin organizes music videos based on how the lyrical message and musical logic are visualized and separates them into three categories: illustration, amplification, and disjuncture” (86). Before this video for “Wide Awake,” lyric videos mostly fit loosely within the first of those three categories by reflecting the meaning of the song simply through highlighting the lyrics, and, at times, illustrating the words or tone of the song through colour and movement. In contrast, “Wide Awake” is an example of amplification, as it “introduces new meanings that do not conflict with the lyrics, but that add layers of meaning” (87). By including more than simple text and a twin image, Perry is able to go more in depth and visually illustrate a larger narrative.

iv. Genres shape fictional worlds

This video constructs a fictional space by combining two worlds that are often separated: that of internal emotions and thoughts (the lyrics), and public social media posts. These posts, drawn directly from Perry’s official artist Facebook page, outline her professional success, through systematically highlighting and celebrating the promotion and triumphs of her last album, thus presenting an image of achievement and overall happiness. The lyrics however, communicate a much more sombre story of heartache and disillusionment. When interspersed with the Facebook posts, the combined effect creates a dichotomy between the internal voice of the lyrics, and what is now understood to be a false front concealing this turmoil. Typically, song lyrics are understood as fictional, and social media assumed to be truthful, yet this lyric video seems to suggest the opposite: that the social media posts do not reveal Perry’s authentic reality, while the lyrics are

²⁵ This lyric video can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3D5FwwtNVM>

honest about her real-life experiences. This is an innovative juxtaposition and it mobilizes the lyric video genre to explore a storyworld in which the line between private and public is blurred. Combined, this video asks the viewer to absorb the meaning of both the lyrics and the social media posts as the timeline continuously “scrolls” up, imitating the never-ending social media loop that many people look at every day.

v. Industrial contexts and cultural contexts of genre

This video is very transparently situated within both industry patterns and cultural contexts. By setting the lyrics on a Facebook timeline, it situates itself within the world of social media, of which almost all viewers will be familiar. It is not a personal Facebook account, but rather a promotional site for Katy Perry’s public persona. It outlines her success as a pop artist and guest actress on *How I Met Your Mother*, and her profile picture is not a candid photo one would find on a personal profile page, but instead is the album cover for *TD:CC*. Additionally, due to the video’s format that features her promotional posts, the lyric video becomes not only an advertisement for the single, but an advertisement for every other lyric video, music video, and public performance that she had released during that two-year period. Multiple times throughout the video viewers are invited to “watch the video below,” and while it is only a recreation of a Facebook feed, with no active links to those videos, the content that is being promoted is real, and spectators could seek them out elsewhere if they wanted.

Another context of this video of which many of Perry’s fan would have been aware, is that in the two years between the releases of *Teenage Dream*, and *TD:CC*, Katy Perry married and divorced well-known comedian Russell Brand. “Wide Awake” is largely understood to be about her feelings of disappointment and grief following her short, 14-month, marriage. Though their romantic relationship is never depicted in the lyric video and the lyrical content only alludes to

heart break through lines such as “falling from cloud nine,” spectators who have followed her career and her personal life are able to understand that the song is about more than disillusionment in a general sense, but also specifically about a failed romantic relationship.

By depicting the lyrics in this video as an invitation into the personal realm of Perry’s life, she sets up the announcement of her documentary *KATY PERRY: PART OF ME* which is announced through the last Facebook post of the lyric video. The documentary offers her fans an even more intimate glance at her personal life, including parts of the breakdown of her relationship with Brand. Therefore, not only is this lyric video promoting the “Wide Awake,” it is promoting her earlier music videos, lyric videos, TV appearances, albums, singles and the upcoming film. By advertising so much content from different media types in a single lyric video which is imitating a social media feed, this video is an exemplary example of media convergence (Jenkins 2006). Meanwhile Perry is relying on the participatory culture of her fans to actively seek out that content through the various media platforms (Jenkins 2006).

vi. Boundaries vs. Interacting system

Unlike the lyric videos from the previous album, this lyric video does not imitate the conventions of videos from other genres, such as how “Firework” relied on the conventions of “Behind the Scenes” videos and teaser videos. Instead, the “Wide Awake” lyric video interacts in the genre system by pointing to other lyric and music videos, as well as to content from other larger genres, including social media, TV appearances, music releases, awards received, and the documentary. Its strongest boundary overlap is with social media posts, as it features them, and mirrors the format by inserting the lyrics in small text boxes.

There is also an important connection to the official music video. While the two videos do not share the same visual content like the music and lyric videos for “Firework,” both videos for

“Wide Awake” tell a similar narrative of personal struggles hidden behind public successes. The music video also refers to specific events from her music history, as it begins by showing Perry filming the music video for “California Gurls” and ends with her emerging onstage to sing “Teenage Dream” during her concert tour. Her journey between these two events are much more theatrical; in the video she journeys with her younger, more innocent self through a dark maze filled with deceptions and traps. Though they may seem quite different on the surface, the similarities between the videos are important to consider. When compared, they reveal how the lyric video genre is becoming more independent from music video, and no longer needs to rely on the more complex imagery and narrative of the music video. It can still relay a similar message through focusing on the lyrics.

vii. Genres reveal cultural assumptions and the subjectivities of those participating in them

The best way to summarize the message of this song and how the video supports it is through a line from the lyrics, “that everything you see / ain’t always what it seems.” Through the lyric video, Perry is able to apply that message to three narratives: 1) to tell the story of her personal heartbreak and disillusionment in love, 2) to express the cultural message that social media can hide personal anguish, and 3) that the artistic persona that she has presented before this video is not complete, and can be expanded upon to show more personal depth.

First, and most relevant to the song itself, is the dichotomy she presents between her professional success and her personal anguish. This is laid out clearly through the setting of the emotional lyrics against the promotional Facebook posts. Secondly, her visual presentation through the Facebook timeline offers an additional interpretation: that social media can be a false front. Utilising the Facebook posts in conjunction with the conflicting lyrics discussed above, offers a commentary, or critique, on how social media is often used. Here Perry is perhaps inviting

her audience to realize that a person's social media life does not often reflect their reality, and while they may seem happy and fulfilled, there is often heartache that does not get posted online. If this song were to have been written in 2017, the video could have used Instagram or Snapchat to make a similar argument, using filters and emojis.

Finally, by acknowledging her own participation in this kind of mediated social media presence, and by including her more melancholy moments that were not shared through social media at the time through the lyrics, Perry's vulnerability and sombre presentation broadens our understanding of her artistic persona. Up to this point, Perry has constructed a persona of a fun, quirky, energetic pop star whose most well-known songs were "Ur So Gay," "I Kissed a Girl," and "Teenage Dream." Due to the lyrical content in these songs, she was often seen as a superficial or juvenile starlet, who used her gender and sexuality to draw attention from fans and critics alike. This is demonstrated in the lyric video, where, in many of the Facebook posts and videos, Perry was habitually surrounded by bright colours and candy, with her femininity and sexuality emphasized. Meanwhile, everything surrounding these social media posts contrast those images, through the plain, pale blue font.

The official music video mirrors this juxtaposition, through contrasting scenes of her dark, mythical journey with scenes of her performing in bright colours. By highlighting these different versions of Perry's persona, both videos insinuate that she is aware of the colourful construction of her public image, and the lyric video in particular invites the viewers into her personal narrative. Of course, both of these videos, along with the documentary that the lyric video promotes, which also explores Perry's vulnerable and real persona, are carefully constructed to create this idea of maturity and genuineness.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of these six lyric videos has illuminated the developments that the lyric video genre has undertaken, as it became more established. Not only was its role becoming more clearly defined as a separate genre with a unique aim to feature the lyrics, it was also becoming more common for artists to release lyric videos more consistently. The experimentation with the movement, placement, and font of the lyrics, through kinetic typography or other editing styles allowed the music to be visualized more clearly, and for additional storytelling opportunities to appear.

These innovations will continue to appear in the lyric videos that followed, as many more artists began using lyric videos and experimenting with more than just animation and text manipulation to tell the stories in their videos.

Second Interlude: Retroactive lyric videos

All of the Katy Perry lyric video examples that have been examined thus far promoted songs that were released in the summer and fall of 2010 from the album *Teenage Dream*, and the summer of 2012, for her subsequent album, *Teenage Dream: The Complete Confection*. They serve to advertise the album, the singles, and the artist, including highlighting the persona that Katy Perry was presenting and molding at that time.

Official lyric videos were not only being released as part of promotional material for new singles or albums, they were beginning to be used to promote older songs as well. Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR) and The Rolling Stones are two bands that have experimented with lyric video in this way.

Creedence Clearwater Revival

Between 2012 and 2014, CCR released eight lyric videos for songs that were all originally released in 1969. The two lyric videos I have chosen to highlight were released on the same single on January 5th 1969, but were released as lyric videos two years apart, one in 2012 and the other in 2014. They each have over 10 million views on YouTube, which demonstrates the popularity and value of lyric videos even for songs that are almost 50 years old.²⁶

3. “Born on the Bayou” [Side B]

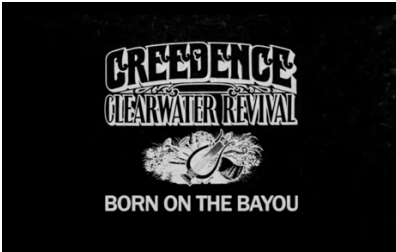
As evidenced in Figure 18, this video is very simple. It begins with a title screen presenting the name of the song and the band (Fig. 18a), then shows the text in white font opposite the original album artwork (Fig. 18b). During instrumental sections, a film reel showing photos of the band scrolls past slowly (Fig. 18c). Three other CCR lyric videos released between 2012 and 2014

²⁶ It is worth mentioning that there are other videos online of these songs that have up to 8 million more views, however they were uploaded several years earlier, and by unofficial YouTube accounts.

follow an identical visual pattern, each adapted with their own album artwork and lyrics.

Figure 18 Screenshots from “Born on the Bayou (Lyric Video)”

18a



(0:02)

18b



(0:27)

18c



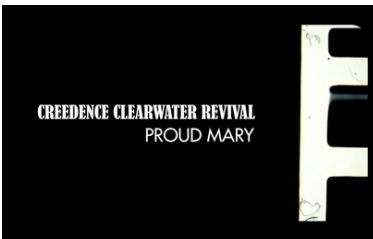
(1:35)

4. “Proud Mary” [Side A]

The lyric video for “Proud Mary” is more complex, as the text has a little more movement and is more reflective of the lyrical content. The most prominent element is how the text often spins on the word “rollin’,” or “turnin’” (Fig. 19b). Meanwhile, the background footage alternately shows roads, rivers, the artwork of the single and an image of the band (Fig. 19c).

Figure 19 Screenshots from “Proud Mary (Lyric Video)”

19a



(0:00)

19b



(0:31)

19c



(0:31)

The Rolling Stones

5. “Doom and Gloom”

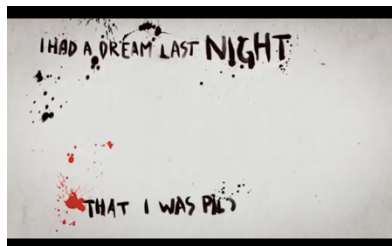
The Rolling Stones, meanwhile, originally began releasing lyric videos for new singles before going into their catalogue and creating some for some of their older hits. On October 11th

2012, the Stones released their first lyric video for their newly released single “Doom and Gloom.” This video follows the convention of other videos of the time by using kinetic typography and a consistent font throughout that reflected the tone of the song, in this case splattered orange and black paint (Fig 20).

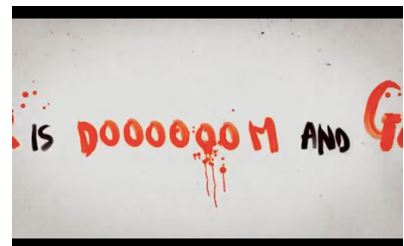
Figure 20 Screenshots from “Doom and Gloom (Lyric Video)”



(0:02)



(0:16)



(0:45)

6. “Paint it Black” and 7. “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction”

Both “Paint it Black” and “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction),” released May 6, 1977 and June 6, 1965 respectively, follow the trend set before them in “Doom and Gloom” (Fig. 20.) by using a handwritten font. “Paint it Black” also has paint splatters and only features three colours (Fig. 21). Meanwhile, “Satisfaction” draws on the nostalgia of the 50-year-old hit and includes original photos and performance footage of the band from the 1960s (Fig. 22). As these videos were created and released in 2015, they follow several of the genre conventions that I will discuss in Chapter 3, especially in the way that the text is placed and the artist is present in the videos.

Figure 21 Screenshots from “Paint It, Black (Official Lyric Video)”



(0:02)



(0:25)

Figure 22 Screenshots from “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction (Official Lyric Video)”



(0:07)



(0:21)

Conclusion

Many of these lyric videos rely on nostalgia, as they visualize older songs through grainy visual quality, pixelated images, original performance video, and black and white images, in addition to incorporating other historical visual elements such as older television sets and film reels. In contrast, the way that the lyrics are incorporated into these videos alongside the images follow the trends of the genre conventions of the time during which the videos were produced. These retroactive lyric videos are important to discuss because they show that lyric videos are not only relevant for current songs, but also for songs released many years previously. Additionally, the visual conventions in these videos are strongly reflective of the development of the present genre customs rather the visual conventions of when the song was originally released.

Chapter Four: *Prism* (2013)

At this point in the development of the genre, lyric videos were steadily gaining attention from fans and critics. This new interest, highlighted by the introduction of an MTV Video Music Award (VMA) for “Best Lyric Video”²⁷ likely influenced artists to make their lyric videos more complex and innovative to compete with the growing number of videos. Lyric videos had evolved from the few, simple videos at the emergence of the genre, to the more common kinetic typography videos that followed, to the period in 2013 and 2014 which I will discuss in this chapter, one of innovation where the conventions of the genre expanded beyond animation and therefore required more resources.

After releasing six lyric videos for *TD:CC* one for each new song and remix on the album, Perry altered her promotional strategy for her fifth album, *Prism*, released October 18, 2013. Though the album eventually had five singles, she only released four lyric videos, suggesting a strategic turn in the selection of singles for lyric video production (see Table 7).

Table 7 *Prism* release timeline

Single	Single Release	Lyric video release	Official Video Release
“Roar”	August 10, 2013	Aug 12, 2013	Sep 5, 2013
“Unconditionally”	October 16, 2013	Oct 18, 2013	Nov 20, 2013
“Birthday”	April 21, 2014	Apr 10, 2014	Apr 24, 2014
“This Is How We Do”	August 11, 2014	Jul 24, 2014	Jul 24, 2014

The reason for this decrease in the number of lyric videos produced is likely because, as they became more complex, they were no longer as inexpensive to produce. Perry’s lyric videos from *Prism* exhibits this progression, as most of them feature live-action scenes and animated

²⁷ I will discuss this event in the following interlude.

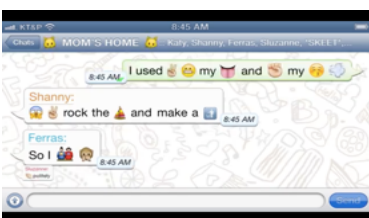
images to supplement the lyrics. To demonstrate the additional resources invested in lyric videos at this time, the description for each lyric video from *Prism* credits a director and/or producer. In all of Perry’s previous lyric videos, only “Dressin’ up and “Part of Me” credited a producer.²⁸ This increase in production to these videos results in greater complexity in the visual treatment of the songs. It also offers more opportunity to amplify the meaning of the song, however, it can also distract from the lyrics.

“Roar”

The lyric video for “Roar” utilises techniques new lyric video. Firstly, Perry presents the lyrics within the context of a text message conversation, replacing some of the words with emojis (Fig. 23a). Secondly, there are moments in the video where Perry “puts down the phone” and the camera zooms out to show her perspective as she goes about her life, including: waking up, going to the bathroom, working out in a gym, and cuddling with her cat “Kitty Purry” (Fig. 23b). This is the first instance of lyric video where the artist is present and interacting with the lyrics in a video, rather than the words being presented alongside images of the artist, if the artist is visually present at all. This video credits four people with production and direction: Joes Humpay, Aya Tanimura, Tim Aimmer and Tuan Le.

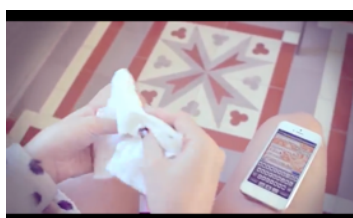
Figure 23 Screenshots from “Roar (Lyric Video)”

23a



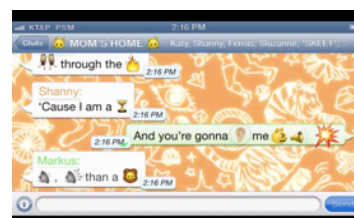
(0:22)

23b



(1:26)

23c



(3:17)

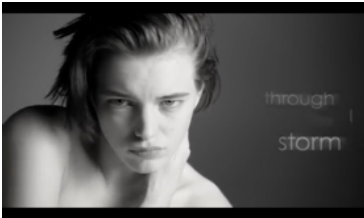
²⁸ The producers credited were Jesse McLaren for “Dressin’ Up” and Emilio Martinez for “Part of Me.”

“Unconditionally”

This video, directed and produced by Aya Tanimura, is presented in black and white, and features two actresses who appear naked. The video shows the woman on the right, Janelle Shirtcliff, lip syncing (Fig. 24b), while each word she sings appears and seems to float toward Erika Linder, the actress on the left before fading away. (Fig. 24a). I will analyze this video in greater detail below.

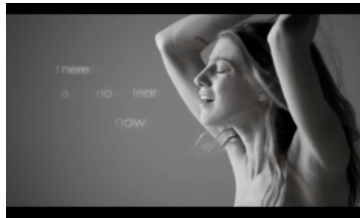
Figure 24 Screenshots from “Unconditionally (Lyric Video)”

24a



(1:27) Erika Linder

24b



(1:57) Janelle Shirtcliff

24c



(3:47)

“Birthday”

“Birthday” was one of the lyric videos nominated for the Video Music Award. Directed by Aya Tanimura and produced by Mandy Sellick, this is the first video Perry released in which the text is not animated in any way. Instead, the lyrics appear physically in the video, in the form of cake decorations, printed on baking utensils, or written in piles of flour or sprinkles (Fig. 25a). As the camera pans around the bakery, revealing all the text and cakes, a hand will often appear to turn a cake stand, or roll out some dough using a rolling pin with the lyrics written on it (Fig. 25b). At the end of the video the hands are revealed to be Perry’s herself (Fig. 25c).

Figure 25 Screenshots from “Birthday (Lyric Video)”

25a



(0:29)

25b



(0:35)

25c



(3:35)

Like “Dressin’ Up” from the previous album, the lyrical content of “Birthday” is full of sexual innuendos, yet the video is completely innocent. The imagery draws on the celebratory elements of birthdays, including cake and decorations. This could be an example of Goodwin’s third relation between song and videos, that of “disjuncture,” where the “visual narrative may either flatly contradict they lyrics or ... undermine them” (88). Goodwin describes disjuncture as an option for avoiding censorship issues, and in this case, it allows Perry to highlight a surface reading of the lyrics as a way to avoid controversy over the sexual nature of the song.

“This Is How We Do”

“This Is How We Do,” directed by Ben Nicholson, returns to the kinetic typography style reminiscent of the lyric videos from *TD:CC* especially that of “E.T.” and does not incorporate the new convention of live-action video. The level of sophistication of the animation has been enhanced; the words jump out to the viewer, appearing as if they are 3D and the detail in the animation is much more realistic.

Figure 26 Screenshots from “This Is How We Do (Lyric Video)”



(0:07)



(1:08)



(3:01)

Genre Analysis

i. Genre is universal, in that every text participates in genre in some way

At this point in the development of the genre, lyric videos have become more established; it was not uncommon for artists of various genres to release them as part of their promotional material. Each of these videos contained the lyrics and many included live footage of the artist, as I will discuss in this analysis and the interlude that follows.

ii. Genres have no point of origin; they emerge gradually and develop in complex ways

At this point in time, lyric video was still evolving and stabilising as a cultural form and visual genre; we have seen that in the discussion of lyric videos from 2009 leading up in 2014. Early lyric videos were simply precursors to the official video that used still images to promote the artist or the music video, with static text at the bottom of the screen. They then developed the common practice of utilizing kinetic typography, drawing more focus to the dynamic lyrics. At this point in the history, artists began to realize the possibility of expanding beyond the previous conventions of presenting the lyrics by including more images and video to interact with the words. Then, as lyric videos became more complex, came the need to invest more in the production of these videos. This is clear in the decision to hire directors and producers for these videos, as very few lyric videos before this credited a producer, and never a director.

iii. Genres are maintained through both repetition and development of convention

As a result of the continued evolution of the genre, there is less repetition of previous conventions, and more experimenting with new practices. Some of this experimentation is effective and will become established practice, while others do not achieve their goal, and therefore are not used again in subsequent lyric videos.

Prism: Music

These videos reflect the tone of the songs they are promoting, through the colours and the movement in the video. For example, the black and white colour scheme of “Unconditionally” and the slow camera pans between the two women capture the sombre and earnest nature of the song, while the other videos use bright colours and faster edits to mirror the up-tempo and high energy mood of the other three songs. “This Is How We Do” most closely reflects the music rhythmically and tonally, with its arcade-style graphics emulating the electronic dance-pop style of the song. For instance, Perry’s vocal stutter on “do” is matched with a visual repetition of the word at (1:36), and throughout the video the background bubbling synth sounds imitate the sounds of arcade games.

The “Roar” lyric video suggests the form and of the song by cutting to the live action sequences during instrumental sections, yet it does not visualize the rhythm of the song. While moments of intensity in the song are reflected in the flashes of colour and movement in the background of the phone (2:57-3:02), the shifting emojis and other images do not match the beat of the song, creating a slight disjuncture.

The departure from kinetic typography and animation in these videos makes it more difficult to visualize the rhythm of the songs. Instead, the focus on live-action film does not allow as many opportunities to show musical gestures and tempo. Katy Perry’s songs often rely heavily

on strong percussion in a 4/4 beat which was visualized easily in the lyric videos from *TD:CC* through the kinetic typography and animated background images, yet these qualities are absent from the more complex videos in *Prism*. This development demonstrates a new relationship between the music and images of lyric videos of this era, where the visual focus has shifted to prioritize the tone and message of the song rather than the rhythm or beat.

Prism: Lyrics

Though the musical focus has shifted, the stressing of the lyrics is still the primary goal in these lyric videos. The presentation of the words varies widely in the lyric videos for *Prism*. Since “This Is How We Do” follows more closely with the conventions set out by previous videos, especially those from *Teenage Dream: Complete Confection*, I will not discuss it in this section.

For the remainder of the videos, rather than playing with the fonts and or using the lyrics themselves to create images, the lyrics are concerned with placement, and not presentation. Put more simply, the producers of these videos are concerned with *where* the words are positioned, not *how* they are arranged. The words in these videos are imagined as objects in the video with which the actors interact. In some cases, they are physical objects, such as the decorations in “Birthday,” however in others they are animated, for example in the text messages written by Perry and her friends in “Roar.” By placing the lyrics within a text message conversation between Perry and her friends, many key words are replaced with emojis. This shows how familiar Perry is with the culture of the time, as emojis are becoming part of the way that many people communicate, and they are, in a way, a language themselves. While the emojis are not perfect “translations” of the lyrics, they are able to express the emotions of the song through the animation of the emojis perhaps more than the static words could. Additionally, having the names of the other people on the group message establishes a sense of community. All of the members of the text chain are

contributing to the recitation of the song. Though these two innovations create potential to tell the story: using emojis and placing the lyrics within a text message, I have not seen them repeated in other videos since. They likely still influenced other lyric video creators to experiment with language and storytelling formats.

Other than “This Is How We Do” which follows an advanced method of kinetic typography, only the text in “Unconditionally” appears one word at a time in rhythm, as the words appear to float out of the woman’s mouth as she sings each word. Some of the camera edits in “Birthday” produce the same effect (1:40-1:47), but otherwise the videos revert to the earlier convention of delivering the lyrics line by line. This is due to the way that most of the words in these videos are presented within fixed objects like on cake toppings or within a text message.

Prism: Images

At this point in the development of the genre, the images that surround, support, or interact with the words has evolved the most dramatically. This is clear in the lyric videos from *Prism*. Now, in addition to creatively displaying the lyrics through kinetic typography, these videos include actors, props, and animated images.

A challenge with including additional material in lyric videos, is that, where early lyric videos only contained lyrics and static images, there are now many competing visual elements that could draw attention away from the lyrics. In response, artists like Perry ensure that the images in their lyric videos interact directly with the words in order to not distract the spectator from the lyrics, such as when the lyrics are seemingly being sung into existence by an actress or when the words are staged on a cake. Another technique to coalesce the words and the images is through what Charlotte Audrey of Adult Art Club UK calls “see what you say,” where animated representations of the lyrics appear alongside the words themselves (Audrey 2018). This occurs

often in “This Is How We Do,” where many of the nouns like “tacos” or “Maserati” are visually paired with the images of each word. Contrastingly, in images in “Roar,” including the animated background and the names of the members in the text message conversation, do not always reflect what is happening in the lyrical content, and therefore could be distracting from the lyrics presented in the text messages.

Table 8 Analysis of "Unconditionally"

	Movement/Temporality	Narrative and Story	Bodies (subject/object/setting)
Music	<p>Syncopated percussion</p> <p>Steady rhythm</p> <p>Verses seem repressed, held back, muffled.</p> <p>Chorus percussion is open and unmuted</p>	<p>A love song -</p> <p>Build in intensity and dynamics to the chorus</p>	<p>Perry singing to unknown subject "I will love you"</p> <p>Some harmonies and echoes</p>
Lyrics	<p>words float across screen</p>	<p>Appear as sung</p> <p>Float from Shirtcliff to Linder</p>	<p>White, lowercase, wispy</p>
Images	<p>Shirtcliff – open body language, loose movement</p> <p>Linder – closed body language, scared/concerned facial expression</p>	<p>Shirtcliff seems to be singing to Linder, as if to convince her of her love, not in same frame until end</p>	<p>Monochrome</p> <p>Both women appear naked in empty grey room</p>
Interactions or Moments of synchronicity	<p>Intensity of dynamics and instrumentation reflected in Shirtcliff's movements</p>	<p>The lyrics, or Shirtcliff singing them, seem to influence Linder,</p>	<p>Shirtcliff sings Perry's words directly to Linder</p>

Though “Roar” was the most innovative visually, and “Birthday” was nominated for an MTV Video Music Award, I have chosen to analyze “Unconditionally” because it introduces practices for presenting the lyrics that can be used to tell a more complex narrative than had been seen in lyric video previously.²⁹ Not only does it incorporate and focus on two female characters, giving them equal attention to the words, the decision to film in black and white immediately asserts a sombre mood. “Unconditionally” is another example of what Goodwin terms “amplification,” where the visualization of the song “adds layers of meaning” (1992, 86). The lyric video for “Unconditionally” takes a song about unconditional love that could occur between any people, families, friends, or lovers, and applies it specifically to a lesbian couple. Perry has chosen to make a clear statement about same-sex attraction here and I will discuss how she accomplishes this through the following genre parameters.

iv. Genres shape fictional worlds

This video forms a fictional world through the colour scheme, the images of the women, their body language and facial expressions, and the movement of the text in relation to these subjects. Filming in black and white film provides a very stark contrast to earlier lyric videos from Perry which have all included colourful video. A comparable video in terms of message and style is “Praying For Time” by George Michael. This 1990 music video was also presented in black and white; this choice it seems to connote a desire for more serious attention be paid to the lyrics that discuss societal issues. The contrast between black and white is often compared to other dichotomies like darkness and light, good and evil, right and wrong. It immediately tells the spectator that this video deals with more serious and somber issues, especially when compared to the bright, energetic, happy videos from Perry’s other lyric videos.

²⁹ This video can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHimjVYsd6I>.

The text seems to also be given physical weight, as it only appears when “sung” by Shirtcliff before floating across to Linder. Like a wave crashing on a shore by her face, the movement of the lyrics illustrates the power of words in the way they may be able to affect other people similarly to physical actions.

The video nods to realism by representing the women as vulnerable and exposed. Not only do they not appear to be wearing clothes, they are not wearing makeup and the camera zooms in close, drawing attention their skin imperfections. Their hair is also unstyled and messy, and indeed they are both shown running their hands through their hair as if in frustration.

Their body language reveals how comfortable they are with this vulnerability. Linder, the woman on the left, often looks anxious or fearful. Her furrowed brow, and hunched body language has her closed off to the viewer as she looks down at the ground or at the camera in concern. Shirtcliff’s movements are freer; she often rocks back and forth and throws her arms wide open or up in the air. She never looks at the camera, only at Linder or up at the heavens. Linder, meanwhile, looks insecure about part of her identity by seeming ashamed or embarrassed. She also appears to fear condemnation as she is very aware of the camera, always looking at it in concern and hiding her body from its gaze. Meanwhile, Shirtcliff is unaware of, or does not care about, people seeing her. She is only concerned with Linder and making sure Linder knows she is loved. Shirtcliff makes no effort to cover herself, often making herself even more vulnerable with her open arms and closed eyes. At the end of the video, it seems as if Linder accepts the words Shirtcliff is singing, because at the end Linder finally turns, looks at Shirtcliff, and stands up straight without protecting herself.

This video invites us, the spectator, into this intimate scene and asks us to identify with the women, by either by proclaiming or accepting the unconditional love, despite any flaws that we

recognize in ourselves. By showing Linder's transformation at the end of the video, we see the power of love and acceptance. Though the world is fictional, these themes are universally felt.

v. Industrial contexts and cultural contexts of genre

The inspiration for the song itself is often an important context for how it will be interpreted. Perry stated that she was inspired to write this song after a humanitarian trip to Madagascar, and that she "decided to write a song that explored what it meant to love truly, honestly and purely" (Montgomery 2013). With this background, this lyric video could have had a very different goal, including being directed in a way as to visualize the platonic love that Perry saw between young children in Africa, yet I believe that it was crafted to relay a specific message; a call for acceptance of same-sex relationships.

The choice of actors was pivotal. Rather than casting any combination of people who could be in love, Perry chose to feature two women. Linder especially was a significant choice, as she is an openly gay model and actress and is well known for modelling both male and female clothing. Her androgynous image and reputation reinforce the queer reception of this video.

This video was released in 2013, just two years before same-sex marriage was recognized in every state in the USA, a period when homosexuality was a common and charged topic of discussion in our society. Many gay and lesbians likely identified with this video, either associating themselves with Linder, who was ashamed and hiding, or to Shirtcliff who represented the friends, partners, or allies encouraging others in their community to live their truth.

Finally, as evidenced earlier in her video for "Firework" and its dedication to the "It Gets Better" Project, Perry has long been a voice for marriage equality and LGBTQ support. With that background, it would not be unexpected for a Katy Perry video to be openly supportive of same-sex attraction.

vi. Boundaries vs. Interacting system

This video stands apart from the others of its time, since it does not resemble other lyric videos, nor does it obviously draw from other visual genres. Additionally, it is very unlike the official music video, which features many actors, including Perry, dancing in period costumes. The characters dancing in pairs depict several possibilities of the type of unconditional love between two people that this song could be about, including sexual, romantic, familial, and platonic, rather than focusing on one lesbian relationship like the lyric video.

The fact that this lyric video is different from the others in this album highlights the fact that the genre has become less formulaic. Instead, artists have more freedom to manipulate the presentation of music, image and lyrics in various ways to support the song's message.

vii. Genres reveal cultural assumptions and the subjectivities of those participating in them

There is no doubt that this song relays a powerful message of unreserved love and support; the context of the inspiration for this song and the connected music video really support the main message of the song which is summarized in the title and in the chorus, when Perry sings "I will love you unconditionally." When paired with the lyric video, however, other lines gain greater importance and weight. Through the world that Perry has created here, the vulnerability that is depicted in the lyrics, such as "your insecurities, all your dirty laundry." This is mirrored in the women's nakedness, showing that they have "come just as [they] are." Throughout the video, the spectator observes Linder struggling with her identity before finally sitting up and facing Shirtcliff. We can assume that she now believes the words of love that she is hearing, including "acceptance is the key to be free." I interpret this message as a gesture to the LGBTQ community, that not only are they loved, but that they are accepted. Though Perry herself is absent, both physically and symbolically, through symbols or colours that we associate with her artistic persona, it is her voice

we hear proclaiming her love for “You,” or anyone who feels unlovable. This message supports her existing persona as an advocate for young people and LGBTQ rights.

Conclusion

The four lyric videos that Katy Perry released for her 2013 album *Prism* reveal bigger production values, innovative editing decisions, and bigger risks in storytelling and messaging. Artists at this time had more freedom with which to design lyric videos as the conventions developed and expanded. Kinetic typography was still a popular technique, but it was no longer the dominant one. The lyrics were now beginning to be incorporated in videos through physical objects, text messages and emojis, and the words were often set against video footage rather than an image or patterned background. Alongside these developments, lyric videos not only began to become more popular among various artists, but they also began to receive more critical attention, as was made clear when they were recognized at the MTV Video Music Awards.

Third Interlude: MTV Video Music Awards

In 2017, in response to the growth in lyric video output by major pop artists, the MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs) introduced a new, fan voted category for “Best Lyric Video.” Amy Doyle, MTV’s executive vice president of music and talent programming strategy said, regarding the introduction of this category: “Lyrics are as important to music fans as ever, and the evolution of lyric videos is evidence of that. As we started discussing new categories for this year’s show we immediately gravitated to celebrating the emerging art form of the lyric video.” (O’Keefe 2014) This award and its nominations led to more critical attention being paid to lyric videos, as many articles and blogs were written around this time to dissect the new genre. Many of these articles look back to early examples of videos that feature the lyrics, including Bob Dylan’s “Subterranean Homesick Blues” and Cee Lo Green’s “Fuck You” (Cho 2014, O’Keefe 2014, Shinn 2015).

The five videos that were nominated offer a glimpse of the conventions of lyric video in 2014, outside of Perry’s which I discuss earlier in this chapter. Many of the same customs appear in these videos as well, as all but one of the videos include live footage, and all of them include representations of the song’s singer(s) (Fig. 27).

Figure 27 Screenshots from the lyric videos nominated for “Best Lyric Video”

“Don’t Stop”



(0:23)

“Problem”



(0:12)

“Really Don’t Care”



(0:01)

“Mmm Yeah”



(0:15)

“Birthday”



(0:44)

8. “Don’t Stop” by 5 Seconds of Summer

This video, “Don’t Stop” by 5 Seconds of Summer, is presented in a comic book or graphic novel format, with the four band members depicted as superheroes, a role they reprise in the live action official music video. It was well received, as it won the “best lyric video” award. Not all the lyrics are included in the video, just a word or two from each line. Additionally, it suggests a superhero narrative, but the lyric video only highlights moments in the story that are later fit into the larger plot of the music video.

9. “Problem” by Ariana Grande (featuring Iggy Azalea)

“Problem,” shot in black and white, prominently depicts the white lyrics in front of footage of Ariana Grande singing and dancing along. The camera is zoomed in so only part of her face is visible, and sometimes the image is upside-down. There are two fonts that are used throughout; they do not seem to correlate to lines sung by Ariana Grande or rap guest Iggy Azalea, who appears in the video during her rap verse.

10. “Really Don’t Care” by Demi Lovato (featuring Cher Lloyd)

“Really Don’t Care” visualizes what can be a goal of lyric videos, which is for the fans to learn the words so they may sing along when listening to the song. This creative video shows fans singing along to “Really Don’t Care,” when they were unaware of the camera and were singing while watching a performance of the song. Additionally parts of this video shows fans in a staged situation where they are asked to perform for the camera while singing or lip-syncing along, before being joined by Lovato. Having Lovato surprise fans while they did this adds to her persona of being down-to-earth and caring for her fans.

11. “Mmm Yeah” by Austin Mahone (featuring Pitbull)

This video begins with footage of an old, black and white disco TV show, before showing Mahone and several of his friends dancing on light up floors, underneath disco balls, in disco outfits, including big wigs. Though there are many indicators of disco visually, the song does not include musical genre conventions of disco in any way. Additionally, the featured artist Pitbull does not appear in the video, and Mahone lip syncs his lines.

12. “Birthday” by Katy Perry

As discussed in earlier in this chapter, the main visual innovation in “Birthday” is having the words enter the same material space as the artist, and that she is able to interact with objects that are marked with the lyrics of the song.

Conclusion

It is possible that, since it was a fan voted category, the songs nominated for this award have more to do with the popularity of the songs and the artists rather than the innovation and engaging nature of the lyric videos themselves. However, the attention that the genre gained because of this award will likely have influenced subsequent lyric videos.

The five videos that were nominated each have distinct aesthetic values including: varying use of colour, animation and placement of the lyrics; they also share a number of features, including incorporating a representation of the artist or group that released the song. Other than “Birthday,” each of these videos are the only the first or second lyric video released by each artist, demonstrating how new the genre was in 2014, and how more artists were beginning to engage with it. Some of these musicians utilized their video to promote their public personas, for example Lovato, by including footage of her interacting with her young fans, or Grande, by appearing in the background of the video singing along seductively and engaging with the camera. Meanwhile, Katy Perry and 5 Seconds of Summer, while still being represented in the videos, chose to highlight their lyrics by placing them in inventive settings such as atop birthday cakes or within a graphic novel. Though “Best Lyric Video” was only included as a category at the VMAs for a single year, lyric videos have since become more popular. The genre has continued to evolve, and I believe that if the category were to return, the nominations would likely include more diverse artists and innovative lyric videos.

Chapter Five: *Witness* (2017)

Katy Perry is known for her original approaches to promoting her albums. This was proven when she released lyric videos consistently before any other mainstream artist. By the time she released her sixth studio album *Witness* however, she no longer placed as much emphasis on lyric video, as she only released the following two videos. Instead, the day before the album was released on June 9th, 2017, every song on the album was released as an “audio” video on YouTube, using the album artwork and the only visual elements. Then, from June 8th to June 12th, she lived in a reality TV style house with dozens of cameras that live-streamed her activities for the four days, culminating in a live performance. Perry called this live-streamed event *Witness World Wide*. Throughout the four days, she reached 49 million views from 190 countries.

Though only a small part of her overall video promotional material for *Witness*, the two lyric videos she released highlight the continuation of development to the lyric video genre, and I will analyze them separately from the other visual content that was part of the album promotion.

Table 9 Witness lyric video release timeline

Single	Single release	Lyric video release	Music video release
“Chained to the Rhythm”	February 10, 2017	Feb 9, 2017	Feb 21, 2017
“Swish Swish”	May 19, 2017	Jul 3, 2017	Aug 24, 2017

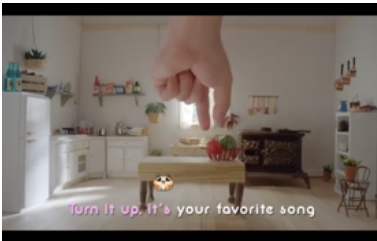
“Chained to the Rhythm”

In “Chained to the Rhythm,” the lyrics are placed at the bottom of the screen as the live action video fills the screen. This is reminiscent to some of the earliest Katy Perry lyric videos, namely “Teenage Dream” and “Firework,” though those videos used still footage and not live

video. A new addition to this lyric video is the “bouncing ball” effect,³⁰ with a cartoon hamster that bounces over the text, changing the words from white to pink as they are sung. The video depicts a miniature kitchen where several elaborate, yet miniscule meals are being prepared, (Fig. 28a), with the camera moving often to depict a hamster sitting on a lounge in the adjoining living room watching TV. The video on his TV screen shows a thin hamster endlessly running in his hamster wheel (Fig. 28b). At the end of the video, the hamster eats all the food, included several dishes that were not shown being made (Fig. 28c). While eating he makes a mess and lumbers away, and the TV continues to play in the background.

Figure 28 Screenshots from “Chained To The Rhythm (Lyric Video) ft. Skip Marley”

28a



(0:57)

28b



(1:15)

28c



(3:13)

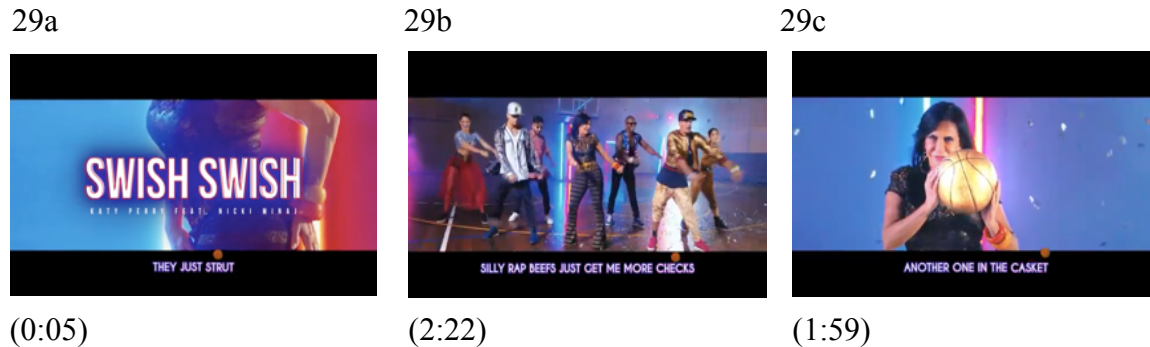
“Swish Swish”

This lyric video, whose YouTube title includes the words “Starring Gretchen” takes place on a basketball court, where Brazilian reality TV star Gretchen dances and poses for the camera while six backup dancers alternately dance around her and fawn over her. (Fig. 29b) The lyrics are again relegated to the bottom of the screen, though this time the bouncing ball icon is a cartoon red basketball, mirrored in the video by Gretchen as she poses with a gold one seemingly made of

³⁰ The bouncing ball is a device used in motion picture films and video recordings to visually indicate the rhythm of a song, helping audiences to sing along with live or pre-recorded music. As the song's lyrics are displayed on the screen, an animated ball bounces across the top of the words, landing on each syllable when it is to be sung. It was invented by Max Fleischer for use in Paramount Pictures in the 1920s.

gold (Fig. 29c). As the lyrics are sung, the words change from red to blue; both colours are prominently reflected in the video’s lighting.

Figure 29 Screenshots from “Swish Swish (Lyric Video Starring Gretchen) ft. Nicki Minaj”



Genre Analysis

i. Genre is universal, in that every text participates in genre in some way

At this point in the development of lyric video, there are few shared attributes across videos from different artists other than the presence of the lyrics. While earlier in the genre’s development, all lyric videos shared many of the same conventions and visual techniques, for example: kinetic typography in 2012, and a mix of live-action film with animated lyrics in 2013-2014, in 2017 and at the time of this writing, artists who commonly release lyric videos are now beginning to develop their own visual style. Now, all of an artist’s lyric videos will often follow a similar pattern, which distinguish them from the lyric videos from other artists and strengthen the connection between the videos and to the artist themselves.

In her lyric videos for *Witness*, Katy Perry has demonstrated this connection. Both videos follow similar conventions of having live-action footage with the lyrics being presented along the bottom of the screen with the bouncing ball motif drawing attention to the lyrics. This is not representative of lyric videos at this time, yet it distinguishes these videos as part of Perry’s style, though she is not visually present in either video.

In each of the previous albums that I have discussed, each video may have shared elements in terms of the techniques for presenting the words and images, but they applied them differently for each video. For example, all the videos in *TD:CC* relied on kinetic typography, yet their use of it varied widely, similar to how the video in *Prism* utilised live-action footage in conjunction with the presentation of the lyrics. The common element for lyric videos in 2017 and presently, is that artists are building their own unique style for all their lyric videos rather than following the larger genre conventions.

ii. Genres have no point of origin; they emerge gradually and develop in complex ways

Though Perry seems to be turning her attention to other visual mediums to promote this album, these videos still draw off previous innovations as well as introduce new content. At this point, Perry's lyric videos have fully adopted the live action scenes that she experimented with in her previous album cycle. The higher production value of these videos is indicated as more and more people are credited in the descriptions. Due to all the attention onscreen however, the words have lost their prominent place at the center of the screen. The lyrics now appear at the bottom, with the bouncing ball motif drawing focus and inviting the audience to sing along.

iii. Genres are maintained through both repetition and development of convention

These two videos follow a similar structure yet they interact with the song in very different ways. Both show the lyrics at the bottom of the screen with a bouncing ball, and show live action footage as the images, with no interaction between them.

Witness: Music

There is no consistency in how the music is visualized in these two videos. In "Chained to the Rhythm," there is no indication of the music other than the bouncing ball hitting the words as they are sung, and there is no other suggestion of rhythm, mood, tone, or style. Without the audio,

there are no visual cues of the musical elements of the song, even to give clues as to the musical genre the video was representing. In contrast, “Swish Swish” is a dance video, and therefore the rhythm of the song is obvious from the dancers’ movements, which include finger snaps and rhythmic choreography that highlight the beat. The bright colours in the background and in their wardrobe reflect the upbeat electropop style of the song, as do their energy and confetti drops. Even the aggressive facial expressions of the dancers suggest the lyrical content of this diss track.

Witness: Lyrics

These videos, especially when looking at individual screenshots, are very reminiscent of the earliest lyric videos of *Teenage Dream*, where the words remain motionless at the bottom of the screen, using a font that is consistent and is unique to the video. The biggest innovation of the lyrics in these videos is the bouncing ball and how its action changes the colour of each word as it is sung; this explicitly invites the viewers to sing along which was not implied in earlier videos. In many earlier instances, singing along was not even possible due to the text often appearing too late to read.

Witness: Images

At this stage of development, the focus in these videos has turned to the filmic action. While it is true that live action scenes and actors began appearing in the lyric videos in *Prism*, the characters or objects interacted directly with the words and participated in the narrative of the video. For example, without the lyrics appearing on the cakes and baking supplies, the lyric video for “Birthday” would not have been able to stand alone as a music video. Other than the tenuous connection of the audio singing about birthday cakes, and seeing them onscreen, the cakes themselves would not have been able to hold the attention of viewers. In these 2017 videos, there is no interaction between the words and the images, and if the lyrics were removed the videos

would still be engaging and hold the same meaning as with the inclusion of the lyrics.³¹

The images both reference cultural trends based on internet trends. Perhaps the producers were hoping for a self-fulfilling prophecy, for example by including featuring “GIF queen” Gretchen (Weber 2017), the video will invite more attention, and be more likely be turned into GIFs, memes, or any other shareable social media clip itself.

Finally, both of these videos must have included hours and hours of physical labour, rather than time spent electronically animating the words. Creating the tiny kitchen and living room with incredible detail, as well as cooking each of the six miniscule meals, would have taken a great deal of time and resources. Meanwhile, “Swish Swish” contains a featured actress and six backup dancers, all of whom likely had to learn and rehearse the choreography. All this production and physical labour is not typically necessary for Perry’s earlier lyric videos, with the exception of “Birthday.” These elements show that more attention is paid to the production of the images for these two videos, rather than the animation of the lyrics, which are quite simple and easily included in the video. Of course, the production level in “Swish Swish” is still much lower than the cameo-filled official music video that was also filmed at a basketball court and included two and a half minutes of additional dialogue and extra-musical action.

³¹ This is a bit problematic for me as a lyric video scholar because it can draw focus away from the text and therefore raises the questions of the preeminence of the lyrics.

Table 10 Analysis of “Chained to the Rhythm”

	Movement/Temporality	Narrative and Story	Bodies (subject/object/setting)
Music (Song)	Disco-inspired, upbeat	Criticizes culture of ignorance and capitalism	Skip Marley guest rap
Lyrics	Appear line by line Bottom of screen	Change from white to pink	Rounded “Utopia” font Lowercase Cartoon hamster bouncing ball
Images	Kitchen and Livingroom in hamster house	Hand prepares hamster-size meals Hamster watches endless TV and eats meals	Brown hamster Human hand
Interactions or Moments of synchronicity	Bouncing ball indicates rhythm of lyrics	Hamster watches TV showing hamster in a wheel	Neither Perry nor Marley appear in lyric video

Witness was Perry’s most political album to date, especially as it followed her staunch endorsement and support of presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election. Of the fifteen songs on the album, “Chained to the Rhythm” most explicitly relays a social and political message. The lyric video subtly contributes to the message that is presented in the song: of awareness and warning against being “happily numb” and blind to the problems of society.³²

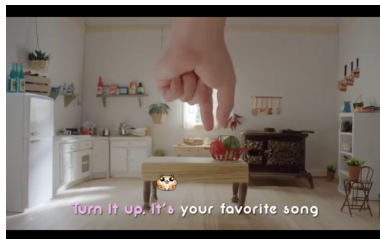
iv. Genres shape fictional worlds

This video takes place within a miniature house, large enough for the hamster that is shown to live in it. We are only shown two rooms of this house, as well as the two characters: the hamster, and the hand of the human who presumably created the house and cares for the hamster. There are two distinct worlds presented in this video, each reflective one of the two characters and the rooms they occupy. The first world is the kitchen (Fig. 30), where the hand of the godlike human

³² This video can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gsGhdZDC-0>.

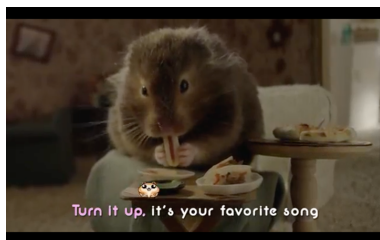
painstakingly creates elaborate meals with utensils and appliances a fraction of the size he would normally use. His movements are controlled and purposeful. The kitchen itself is brightly lit, with white wall, counters, and pale wood floors and island. It is a very tidy room, with everything in its proper place, even things that had to be adapted for the miniature size, like using a tea light in the stove instead of a wood fire.

Figure 30 The Kitchen



When the camera travels to the living room, its decor and inhabitant are shown to be drastically different (Fig. 31). The atmosphere inside is dark due to the brown wallpaper and the dark drapes which allow only a small amount of light into the room, unlike the gauzy white curtains hanging in the sunny kitchen. The room itself is cluttered and messy, with junk on the floor and paintings that are hanging askew. As the camera pans around, the room seems fuzzy and unfocused with the exception of the TV, which shines bright and clear in the dark room. The television screen, showing a never-ending loop of a white and grey hamster running on a gold wheel against a reddish-pink background, seems to entrance the hamster (Fig 28b).

Figure 31 The Living Room




Finally, the text at the bottom of the screen exists outside these worlds, as the only connection between the lyrics and the action behind them is the hamster shaped bouncing ball icon.

This icon, as I discuss below, as well as the font and pastel pink colour of the words is in fact more strongly connected to visual elements in the official music video rather than either world presented in the lyric video.

v. Industrial contexts and cultural contexts of genre

As outlined in the video description below, this video was the result of a large team, including recognition of several producers, directors, food creators and two hamsters (Fig. 32). Acknowledging these contributions reveals the development in industry involvement and production, even since the lyric videos from *Prism*, some of which had up to four producers.

Figure 32 Video description of “Chained To The Rhythm (Lyric Video) ft. Skip Marley”



Katy Perry 🎵
Published on Feb 9, 2017

Get “Chained To The Rhythm” off Katy’s new album ‘Witness’: <http://katy.to/witnessYd>
WITNESS: The Tour tickets available now! <https://www.katyperry.com/tour>

Directed by: Aya Tanimura
Executive Producer: Danny Lockwood
Produced by: Cailin Lowry and Nicholas Ruff
Director of Photography: Mario Contini
Production Designer: Audrey Rosenberg
Post-Production Services: Coyote Post
Editor: Sean Horvath
Colorist: Matthew Schwab
GFX: Vince Walker, Bogdan Ciornei, Adam Petke
Miniature Food: Walking With Giants

Starring Mr. Parsons the Hamster
and Rory Ruff

All food eaten by Mr. Parsons was made with hamster safe ingredients.
American Humane monitored the animal action. No animals were harmed. ©(AHAD 06701)
Miniature Food: Walking With Giants
<https://www.youtube.com/c/walkingwith...> / <http://www.jaybaron.com/>

Though he is not visually featured in the lyric video, it is worth mentioning that the featured artist, Skip Marley, is the grandson of Bob Marley, an influential reggae musician who performed songs about freedom from oppression and spiritual songs calling for peace, such as “One Love” and “Get Up Stand Up.” Including Skip Marley on this track ties it to those of his grandfather and gives this song more authenticity as a socially conscious and political song, likely a conscious decision on the part of Perry and her team.

This video also points to the cultural context of viral videos³³ that have been present since the inception of YouTube. By including elements from “tiny food” and “tiny hamster” videos,³⁴ “Chained to the Rhythm” draws off their acclaim, including the popular account Walking With Giants who has 800 thousand subscribers at the time of writing. For example, a similar video to “Chained to the Rhythm,” entitled “Tiny Hamster Eating Tiny Burritos,” has 12 million views. It shows the chef painstakingly cooking tiny burritos, setting up a dining room table, followed by the hamster appearing and eating all the food within 30 seconds.

vi. Boundaries vs. Interacting system

As mentioned above, this video overlaps with several elements of the tiny hamster and tiny kitchen genre of videos though those videos rarely, if ever, place their hamsters in such a gloomy setting as Mr. Parsons the Hamster is shown in this video. Otherwise, there are links to the official music video, which shows Perry in the futuristic amusement park “Oblivia,” where the signage features the same cartoon hamster used as the bouncing ball in the lyric video (Fig. 33). Oblivia is

³³ A viral video is a video that becomes popular on the internet through being shared rapidly across various social media sites or email.

³⁴ According to KnowYourMeme.com, “Tiny Hamster” “is a cute animal web series on YouTube featuring a hamster or other small rodent performing human-like activities in an elaborately constructed miniature environment, like a hamster-sized dining room, all shot in high-resolution and often at a close-up angle.” There are several channels devoted to this kind of content, most well-known being VanillaHamHam, and Hello Denizen, the latter of which was nominated for a 2016 Webby award for viral video. Webby awards are sometimes called the “Oscars of the Internet,” and celebrate online content, including web series, websites, advertising, apps, and celebrities.

a fictional world where everything is coloured in bright pastels and everyone is happy and heterosexual. The video contains not-so-subtle commentary of many problems of our day and age, including addiction to cellphones and social media attention, a “Fire Water” station, which references the controversial technique of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, to produce natural gases which sometimes results in flammable water, as well as a critique of “The American Dream.”

Figure 33 Oblivia sign



vii. Genres reveal cultural assumptions and the subjectivities of those participating in them

This song has a strong message and critique of modern society, who Perry claims to be “chained to the rhythm.” This negative “rhythm” seems to be an unawareness or avoidance of any pain or negativity in life. This is outlined in lyrics such as “happily numb, so comfortable we’re living in a bubble.” She implies that this is a choice that people are making and that by putting our “rose-colored glasses on and party[ing] on” they are becoming “wasted zombies” and dancing “to the distortion.”

Both the music video and the lyric video visualize this critique. In the case of the lyric video, the society is represented by the hamster who is living in his own utopia, though it is quite obviously darker than the paradise, or “Oblivia” shown in the official music video. Mr. Parsons the Hamster has everything provided for him, yet he is in his own way trapped in his own bubble, endlessly watching another hamster on TV. He even seems to stumble around like a “wasted zombie” after gorging on the food offered to him. Meanwhile, the song ironically plays on its own lyrics by its self-referential nature, for example the line: “turn it up, it’s your favourite song,” and the bouncing ball as it invites the spectator to sing along. The bouncing ball has never previously

been used in a major lyric video, so what could be understood as an invitation to sing along could also be interpreted as a command, just as the lyrics order the listener to “Dance, dance, dance to the distortion.”

Skip Marley’s verse calls for revolution and change or “breakdown the walls to connect, inspire,” but this is not evident in the lyric video as there is no change to the hamsters situation, nor does he seem to desire any transformation. Neither Marley nor Katy Perry are in this lyric video, yet by being sonically present their individual personas as influencers and cultural advocates draw from, and contribute to, the cultural message of the track.

Conclusion

Though the lyric videos no longer fill as large a part of the visual promotion for *Witness* as they had for previous albums, they nevertheless contribute to the evolution of the genre. Both videos follow a similar visual structure to each other, but they are otherwise very different in their treatment of the song’s musical qualities and lyrical message. They both reference trends in internet culture, including viral videos, and they contain no visual artist presence. This is a convention of Perry’s *Witness* videos and not of many other lyric videos at the time. Many artists at this point are beginning to cultivate their own style of lyric video, rather than following a generic style. As her most recent album, it will be interesting to see the next evolution of Perry’s lyric videos for this point on, if she chooses to release any.

Fourth Interlude: A Hit and a Miss

In this final interlude, I discuss an extremely popular lyric video to highlight a very successful example of the genre, before considering an example of a lyric video which received negative attention as it did not follow the most essential convention of lyric videos: to legibly display the lyrics.

13. “Closer” by The Chainsmokers

The lyric video for The Chainsmokers’ “Closer,” is the most viewed lyric video at the time of this writing, having reached over 2 billion views since it came out two years ago on July 29, 2016. The video alternates between a heterosexual couple looking through polaroid pictures at home of some of their favourite memories together, to flashbacks of those moments when the pictures were taken (Fig. 34a/b). The polaroid camera is visible in some of the flashbacks (Fig. 34c). The format of the video reflects the lyrical content of the song, which tells the story of an estranged couple reuniting years later at a party and reminiscing about their past relationship while they rekindle their romance. In the video, the lyrics seem to jump out at the spectator as they float in front of the images, and the handwritten words, with a different style for featured artist Halsey’s lines (Fig. 34b for Andrew Taggart’s lines, and 34c for Halsey’s). The handwriting offers a sense of intimacy that is present in both the lyrics and the images. The difference in the handwriting reinforces the heteronormative nature of the couple in the video, though the lyrics do not use any gendered language to describe the couple described in the song.

Figure 34 Screenshots from “Closer (Lyric) ft. Halsey”



The reflection of the narrative, and the engaging placement of the words may have contributed to the triumph of this lyric video. It also possibly reached this level of success due to the immense popularity of the song and the delayed music video, released three months later, which, as of July 2018, has only received 272 million views. Either way, as of this writing this video is the 19th most viewed video on YouTube of all time, and therefore is worthy of discussion.³⁵

14. “The Cure” by Lady Gaga

In contrast to “Closer,” the lyric video for “The Cure,” by Lady Gaga is worthy of discussion not because of its success but because of its failure. Released on May 1, 2017, this lyric video includes all the words to the song, but the lyrics are illegible as they swirl around the screen and consistently appear slightly too late to be read in time with the music (Fig. 35). The song follows standard pop structure, including 4/4 meter, alternating verse and chorus, and traditional pop instrumentation; there is nothing in the music that would be reflected in such a psychedelic visualization. YouTube comments captured shortly after the release of this video reveal how frustrated fans were with this decision (Fig. 36).

³⁵ Only two other lyric videos appear on the most viewed YouTube video list: “Something Just Like This (Lyric Video)” also by The Chainsmokers, featuring Coldplay at #68, and “Cheap Thrills (Lyric Video)” by Sia, at #94.

Figure 35 Screenshots from “The Cure (Lyric Video)”



(0:11)

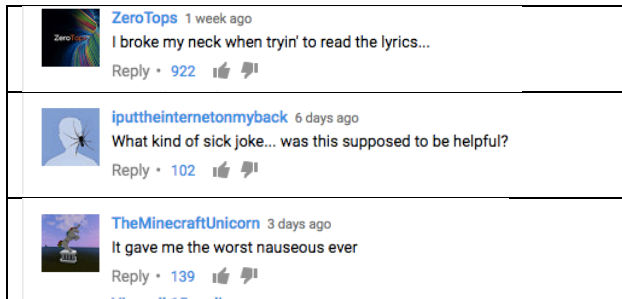


(0:21)



(1:56)

Figure 36 Screenshots of YouTube comments of “The Cure Lyric Video” taken May 15, 2017



“I broke my neck trying to read the lyrics...”

“What kind of sick joke... was this supposed to be helpful?”

“It gave me the worst nauseous ever”

Gaga had previously released two lyric videos in 2013 for “Applause” and “Aura,” which followed the conventions of the time, therefore this was clearly a conscious decision to design a lyric video that would not follow the conventions of the genre or aid in the understanding of the lyrics. Lady Gaga is known for playing with expectations in her music, videos, and persona; she has extended this aspect of her performance to this lyric video. This demonstrates that lyric video has become so well established that artists are able to experiment with fundamental rules of the genre without preventing their videos to be legible as a lyric video text.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I introduce lyric videos as a cultural form that emerged within the context of audio-visual culture after the establishment of YouTube in 2005. Through brief definitions of music videos and prosumer lyric videos, I call for the study and official definition of the lyric video genre. My research objectives were to examine how lyric videos offer new ways of presenting an artist's work through the interplay of music, images, and words. By placing the emergence of lyric videos within the history of popular musicians who included the lyrics in their music videos out of a desire to draw attention to the messages within the songs, as well as the context of prosumer lyric videos, I argue that lyric video falls strongly within what Vernallis calls the "media swirl" (2013b, 3). To elaborate that point, I discuss convergence culture and paratextuality as a way to provide a foundation for my analysis which often draws on the connections between media and consumers, as well as the relationships that texts have to each other. By reviewing genre theory and persona theory to ground my analysis, I summarize the discussions of several authors from various fields of genre study into seven genre elements. Outlining my method of lyric video analysis, I offer an explanation of how I collect data from each video through a cross-cutting analytic model, adapted from Burns & Watson 2013, looking at the domains of music, lyrics, and images, through the parameters of movement, narrative, and bodies. This model allows me to demonstrate how Perry visualizes the musical elements, lyrical content, and the lyrics as text, as well as how the presentation of each of these elements, individually or through their interactions, influence the messages and meanings that are conveyed. I discuss the seven genre elements as a methodological tool to raise questions such as: how do these videos fit within the greater development of the genre? What codes and conventions are being introduced or established? What fictional world is being formed? In terms of cultural and industrial contexts, what is happening surrounding the production of the video? How is the genre participating in, or expanding on, other

genres? Using the conclusions drawn from discussion of all seven genre elements, what meanings and messages emerge through the lyrics and how they are depicted, and what is revealed about the artist's persona or intention behind the song?

In my initial analytic chapter I introduce my decision to use Katy Perry's lyric videography as a case study. Here I set up my outline and goals for my analysis of the lyric videos of Perry and a few other artists to showcase the development of the genre over the course of seven years. I then analyze the lyric videos promoting her 2012 album *Teenage Dream* to show how these early lyric videos were inspired by and similar to prosumer videos through their simplicity and reliance on still images rather than video. This second chapter outlines the early shift from prosumer style to a distinct, official lyric video style. I discuss how, though these videos were primitive, they set a foundation for this emerging genre. The analysis of "Firework" highlights the strong connections that these early lyric videos maintain with their paired official music videos, through how both videos for "Firework" convey similar cultural message of freedom through the fictional world depicted in their imagery.

In the third chapter I turn my attention to *Teenage Dream: Complete Confection* to discuss the era around 2012 where lyric video, while not common, was beginning to become established as a defined genre, separate from other visual genres, with its own rules and distinct role in the promotion of new music. This style is defined by a unique font and text that has agency and movement through kinetic typography, thus providing a visualization of the rhythm and tone of the musical values of the song. *TD:CC* was Perry's most prolific period in terms of lyric video, and the six videos show the expansion of innovation and creativity. She uses this originality to tell an amplified narrative in her video for "Wide Awake," which uses her real Facebook timeline in conjunction with the lyrical content to convey the theme of disconnection between public success

and private heartache, while also promoting and shaping her artistic persona. In this chapter I demonstrate how lyric video was becoming more sophisticated at that point in history, thus allowing an expansion of storytelling capabilities and engaging visual content which was gaining attention and approval.

Chapter four proves this development of the genre further by showcasing the expansion of resources and attention that lyric videos were receiving from a production standpoint, as the lyric videos from Perry's fifth album *Prism* had evolved beyond the kinetic typography style that was so common in the genre leading up to this era. Instead, Perry experimented with incorporating more images and live-action footage in her lyric videos for this album. Here the words are integrated in such a way that they participate and interact with the people in the scene, rather than existing in a separate dimension. This offers more opportunity for extra meaning to be conveyed. I analyze "Unconditionally" to show this, as it uses new lyric video conventions to narrow the message of the song to convey a strong, specific, and important message about homosexual identity, shame, and unconditional love.

The fifth chapter completes the narrative of Perry's lyric video development, from 1) when her lyric videos were some of the first to ever be officially released and were thus simply produced, 2) to being innovative and engaging, as well as being used for a large part of her album promotion, 3) to bigger productions that expanded on the messages of the song itself, and finally 4) in 2017, when she only released two lyric videos for *Witness*, amidst other, more elaborate, promotional material. These last two videos show the development of the genre through the introduction of the bouncing ball technique of presenting the words and the many convergences with other online videos and viral stars. The lyrics onscreen no longer participate in the action behind them, instead they directly interact with the viewers as the new technique invites spectators to sing along. My

analysis of “Chained to the Rhythm” reveals Perry’s shift to more politically conscious pop and the subtleties of visualising that goal. On a larger scale, I discuss how lyric videos are becoming more influenced by their artist’s video style rather than the conventions of the genre. They are also less essential in the promotion and online presence of new singles, as artists are experimenting more with other alternate videos, including audio videos and, in Perry’s case, a four-day livestream: *Witness World Wide*.

At the end of each of these chapters I highlight notable influences and contributions to the genre that deserve to be mentioned in addition to Perry’s videos. I discuss videos by many artists, including Kanye West, Cee Lo Green, Creedence Clearwater Revival, The Rolling Stones, 5 Seconds of Summer, Ariana Grande, Austin Mahone, Demi Lovato, The Chainsmokers, and Lady Gaga. Through these examples, I offer a glimpse of how lyric videos functioned outside of the context of Katy Perry’s videography at the time of their release. I discuss lyric videos that were: early examples or influencers of the genre, released several years after the song’s original publication, publicly recognized through award nominations or YouTube popularity, and one example that fails to convey the lyrics in a legible way. These interludes offer a more complete picture of the development of the genre, while supporting my analysis of Perry as a consistent and influential producer of lyric video content.

Limitations and Future research

The biggest limitation for this paper was restricting the number of lyric videos to analyze. It would be impossible to consider every lyric video ever released in order to identify every influential moment in the history of the genre as it evolved, though, as the first genre element concludes, every text participates in genre and helps shape it. Additionally, I discuss the role of prosumer videos at the emergence of the genre, yet including examples of these videos throughout

my historical analysis would have expanded my data pool even more. Moreover, prosumer videos and accounts are less stable than those of mainstream artists and they could be removed or edited at any time.

In light of these limitations, I focus my analysis on Katy Perry's lyric videos. To support my analysis of her videos, I generally chose lyric videos by other pop artists, or by artists who have achieved similar levels of mainstream success, to show how the visual styles were reflected across comparable artists' work. Including case studies from additional genres and analyzing them to the same depth as the Perry lyric videos would have gone beyond the scope of this paper. This leaves room for exploration into the contributions to lyric video development from artists from other musical genres, especially as more and more artists outside of mainstream pop are beginning to release lyric video more consistently. An example of an alternative artist to consider would be Of Monsters and Men, who released lyric videos for every song on *My Head Is an Animal* and *Beneath The Skin*.

In my analysis of *Witness*, I raise the question of Perry's continued contribution to the development of the lyric video genre. In 2017, her promotional consideration shifted to other, novel styles of visual content, therefore if this project were to continue beyond this time period the subject of the historical survey would likely need to be transferred to an artist who has overtaken Perry's role of innovator of the genre. I am not sure yet who, if any one artist, would be an ideal replacement for Perry, but it is worth considering in future research, especially as a growing number of popular artists, such as Ed Sheeran, Bebe Rexha and George Ezra, have released lyric videos which demonstrate their own unique styles.

Another area to be explored is the role that lyric videos play in musical appreciation in the deaf or hard of hearing community. I was able to find one blog post that discusses this issue, but

there is room for more scholarly engagement. Through the way that these videos will often visually represent the rhythm and tone of the song, they are “by far the most entertaining way to learn the words to favourite tracks” (O’Dell 2017). As a hearing researcher, I do not feel as if it is my place to explore this issue, but I raise the question for future scholarship.

Finally, there is need to explore how the genre of lyric video fits within the ever-growing environment of pop artists’ multimedia output on YouTube, Spotify, Instagram, and other social media sites. This project could be expanded to answer more questions including: what is the benefit of releasing multiple different types of video for one song, both financially or in terms of popularity, and how are artists able to create content that is different enough from other videos in order to maintain their audience’s attention?

Final Thoughts

My hope is that this thesis inspires academic attention to this emerging genre, and provides a foundation for future research as other academics incorporate artist’s lyric videos into their research. I believe that the analysis of lyric videos can be incorporated into other popular music and digital media scholarship to provide insight of artistic performance, lyrical analysis, artistic persona, representation, and many others. They are also a really great way to learn the words so we can sing along to favourite songs, both new and old.

Appendix A – lyrics: “Firework”

[Verse 1]

Do you ever feel like a plastic bag
Drifting through the wind wanting to start again?
Do you ever feel, feel so paper-thin
Like a house of cards one blow from caving in?
Do you ever feel already buried deep?
Six feet under screams, but no one seems to hear a thing
Do you know that there's still a chance for you?
'Cause there's a spark in you

[Pre-Chorus]

You just gotta ignite the light
And let it shine
Just own the night
Like the Fourth of July

[Chorus]

'Cause baby, you're a firework
C'mon, show 'em what you're worth
Make 'em go, "Aah, aah, aah"
As you shoot across the sky-y-y
Baby, you're a firework
C'mon, let your colors burst
Make 'em go, "Aah, aah, aah"
You're gonna leave them all in awe, awe, awe

[Verse 2]

You don't have to feel like a waste of space
You're original, cannot be replaced
If you only knew what the future holds
After a hurricane comes a rainbow
Maybe a reason why all the doors are closed
So you can open one that leads you to the perfect road
Like a lightning bolt, your heart will blow
And when it's time, you'll know

[Pre-Chorus]

You just gotta ignite the light
And let it shine
Just own the night
Like the Fourth of July

[Chorus]

'Cause baby, you're a firework
C'mon, show 'em what you're worth
Make 'em go, "Aah, aah, aah"
As you shoot across the sky-y-y
Baby, you're a firework
C'mon, let your colors burst
Make 'em go, "Aah, aah, aah"
You're gonna leave them all in awe, awe, awe

[Bridge]
Boom, boom, boom
Even brighter than the moon, moon, moon
It's always been inside of you, you, you
And now it's time to let it through

[Chorus]
'Cause baby, you're a firework
C'mon, show 'em what you're worth
Make 'em go, "Aah, aah, aah"
As you shoot across the sky-y-y
Baby, you're a firework
C'mon, let your colors burst
Make 'em go, "Aah, aah, aah"
You're gonna leave them all in awe, awe, awe

[Outro]
Boom, boom, boom
Even brighter than the moon, moon, moon
Boom, boom, boom
Even brighter than the moon, moon, moon

Appendix B – lyrics: “Wide Awake”

[Intro]

I'm wide awake
I'm wide awake
I'm wide awake

[Verse 1]

I'm wide awake
Yeah, I was in the dark
I was falling hard
With an open heart
I'm wide awake
How did I read the stars so wrong?
I'm wide awake
And now it's clear to me
That everything you see
Ain't always what it seems
I'm wide awake
Yeah, I was dreaming for so long

[Pre-Chorus]

I wish I knew then, what I know now
Wouldn't dive in, wouldn't bow down
Gravity hurts
You made it so sweet
'Til I woke up on, on the concrete

[Chorus]

Falling from cloud 9
Crashing from the high
I'm letting go tonight
Yeah, I'm falling from cloud 9

[Verse 2]

I'm wide awake
Not losing any sleep, I picked up every piece
And landed on my feet
I'm wide awake
Need nothing to complete myself, no
I'm wide awake
Yeah, I am born again, outta the lion's den
I don't have to pretend
That it's too late
The story's over now, the end

[Pre-Chorus]

I wish I knew then, what I know now
Wouldn't dive in, wouldn't bow down
Gravity hurts, you made it so sweet
'Til I woke up on, on the concrete

[Chorus]

Falling from cloud 9
Crashing from the high
I'm letting go tonight
Yeah, I'm falling from cloud 9

[Bridge]

Thunder rumbling, castles crumbling
I am trying to hold on
God knows that I tried
Seeing the bright side
But I'm not blind anymore

[Interlude]

I'm wide awake
I'm wide awake, yeah I'm

[Chorus]

Falling from cloud 9
(It was outta the blue, I'm)
Crashing from the high
You know, I'm letting go tonight
(Yeah, I'm letting you go, I'm)
I'm falling from cloud 9

[Outro]

I'm wide awake, I'm wide awake
I'm wide awake, I'm wide awake
I'm wide awake

Appendix C – lyrics: “Unconditionally”

[Verse 1]

Oh no, did I get too close?
Oh, did I almost see what's really on the inside?
All your insecurities
All the dirty laundry
Never made me blink one time

[Chorus]

Unconditional, unconditionally
I will love you unconditionally
There is no fear now
Let go and just be free
I will love you unconditionally

[Verse 2]

Come just as you are to me
Don't need apologies
Know that you are worthy
I'll take your bad days with your good
Walk through the storm I would
I do it all because I love you
I love you

[Chorus]

Unconditional, unconditionally
I will love you unconditionally
There is no fear now
Let go and just be free
I will love you unconditionally

[Bridge]

So open up your heart and just let it begin
Open up your heart and just let it begin
Open up your heart and just let it begin
Open up your heart
Acceptance is the key to be
To be truly free
Will you do the same for me?

[Chorus]

Unconditional, unconditionally
I will love you unconditionally
There is no fear now

Let go and just be free
I will love you unconditionally

[Outro]
I will love you
I will love you
I will love you unconditionally

Appendix D – lyrics: “Chained to the Rhythm”

[Verse 1: Katy Perry]

Are we crazy?
Living our lives through a lens
Trapped in our white picket fence
Like ornaments
So comfortable, we're living in a bubble, bubble
So comfortable, we cannot see the trouble, trouble
Aren't you lonely
Up there in utopia
Where nothing will ever be enough?
Happily numb
So comfortable, we're living in a bubble, bubble
So comfortable, we cannot see the trouble, trouble

[Pre-Chorus: Katy Perry]

So put your rose-colored glasses on
And party on

[Chorus: Katy Perry]

Turn it up, it's your favorite song
Dance, dance, dance to the distortion
Come on, turn it up, keep it on repeat
Stumbling around like a wasted zombie
Yeah, we think we're free
Drink, this one is on me
We're all chained to the rhythm
To the rhythm
To the rhythm
Turn it up, it's your favorite song
Dance, dance, dance to the distortion
Come on, turn it up, keep it on repeat
Stumbling around like a wasted zombie
Yeah, we think we're free
Drink, this one is on me
We're all chained to the rhythm
To the rhythm
To the rhythm

[Verse 2: Katy Perry]

Are we tone deaf?
Keep sweeping it under the mat
Thought we could do better than that
I hope we can
So comfortable, we're living in a bubble, bubble
So comfortable, we cannot see the trouble, trouble

[Pre-Chorus: Katy Perry]

So put your rose-colored glasses on
And party on

[Chorus: Katy Perry]

Turn it up, it's your favorite song
Dance, dance, dance to the distortion
Come on, turn it up, keep it on repeat
Stumbling around like a wasted zombie
Yeah, we think we're free
Drink, this one is on me
We're all chained to the rhythm
To the rhythm
To the rhythm
Turn it up, it's your favorite song
Dance, dance, dance to the distortion
Come on, turn it up, keep it on repeat
Stumbling around like a wasted zombie
Yeah, we think we're free
Drink, this one is on me
We're all chained to the rhythm
To the rhythm
To the rhythm

[Bridge: Skip Marley]

It is my desire
Break down the walls to connect, inspire
Ay, up in your high place, liars
Time is ticking for the empire
The truth they feed is feeble
As so many times before
They greed over the people
They stumbling and fumbling
And we're about to riot
They woke up, they woke up the lions
(*Woo!*)

[Chorus: Katy Perry]

Turn it up, it's your favorite song
Dance, dance, dance to the distortion
Come on, turn it up, keep it on repeat
Stumbling around like a wasted zombie
Yeah, we think we're free
Drink, this one is on me
We're all chained to the rhythm
To the rhythm
To the rhythm

[Outro: Katy Perry]

Turn it up
Turn it up
It goes on, and on, and on
It goes on, and on, and on
It goes on, and on, and on
'Cause we're all chained to the rhythm

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