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## THE DYNAMICS OF LACK AND DESIRE IN OLIVIA RODRIGO'S *GUTS* ALBUM

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### Abstract

This research examines the dynamics of "lack" and "desire" in Olivia Rodrigo's *Guts* album through an expressive literary criticism approach based on Lacanian psychoanalysis. Using close reading, this study uncovers how the lyrics reflect the subject's confrontation with existential emptiness (*lack*) and the pursuit of an unattainable *objet petit a*, shaped by the symbolic Other (language, social norms). Thematic patterns such as emotional vulnerability, self-doubt, and resistance to societal expectations demonstrate how desire arises not from personal will but through the mediation of external pressures. The lyrics portray a cycle where the subject's yearning is constantly frustrated by the impossibility of fully attaining the desired object, highlighting the persistent experience of lack. This tension reveals the paradox of desire as both motivating and destabilizing, showing how identity is fragmented by conflicting demands of the self and the Other. By linking these thematic motifs to Lacanian concepts, the research concretely illustrates the psychological and social dynamics at play, offering new insights into contemporary youth identity in digital culture.

**Keywords:** *Desire; Guts album; Lacanian psychoanalysis; lack; objet petit a; Olivia Rodrigo; subjectivity*

### 1. Introduction

Music, as a form of cultural expression, possesses a unique capacity to articulate and evoke emotional truths that are often ineffable in ordinary discourse. Within this framework, song lyrics emerge as a critical site of meaning-making, where language intersects with melody to construct complex affective and social narratives. Far from being mere embellishments to musical composition, lyrics function as a potent form of discourse that mediates individual subjectivity and collective experience. Their poetic and communicative features enable them to resonate across diverse sociocultural contexts, capturing the ethos of a particular historical moment while simultaneously influencing it. As a contemporary mode of expression, song lyrics not only convey profound emotional and ideological content but also operate as instruments of cultural reflection and transformation, offering insight into the shifting contours of identity, power, and community.

This research focuses on the emotional depth and complexity of themes in Olivia

Rodrigo's *Guts* album, particularly in the context of contemporary experiences among young women. The album's lyrics explore themes such as identity exploration, self-dissatisfaction, and the search for meaning in life-issues that are highly relevant to the challenges faced by young women today. These themes are further exacerbated by social pressures to fulfill external expectations, whether from partners, society, or social media. In this context, *Guts* is an important work for understanding psychoanalytic concepts within a broader social framework. While there are other works that address similar themes, *Guts* provides a more introspective perspective, delving into the internal struggles and social dynamics that shape personal identity.

The tension between idealized expectations and reality is often exacerbated by the influence of social media, which increasingly dominates everyday life. Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic concepts of lack and desire provide an important foundation for understanding young people's emotional experiences in this context. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, lack refers to the basic human condition-a sense of emptiness that drives the search for fulfillment, which remains unattainable. The constant representation of the "perfect" life on social media exacerbates this discrepancy, exacerbates feelings of dissatisfaction, and maintains a sense of lack. This phenomenon is referred to as hyperreality by Jean Baudrillard (1994) where idealized images and imagery replace reality, creating a distorted perception of the self.

In romantic relationships, young individuals often face a chasm between idealized conceptions of love and real experiences. Lacan (1969) explains that desire arises from the attempt to fill this void, yet the desired object-*objet petit a*-remains out of reach. This tension is reflected in the lyrics of *lack*, which describe feelings of loss, confusion, and unfulfilled expectations. As such, the album captures the emotional turbulence that accompanies the quest for unattainable standards, a theme also emphasized by Illouz (2020) who states that modern love is often characterized by dissatisfaction due to unattainable romantic standards.

The attainment of success is also seen as a continuous state of lack and desire. Zygmunt Bauman (2012) argues that in a fast-changing world, relationships, including with oneself, are becoming increasingly fragile, affected by the changing demands of life. The influence of social media in shaping insecurity has been widely documented, with particular emphasis on the formation of unattainable beauty standards that exacerbate feelings of inadequacy. Wolf (2020) further argues that contemporary beauty standards serve as a means of social control, reinforcing a culture of dissatisfaction and unattainable perfection. In addition to shaping standards of beauty and success, social media also normalizes a culture of "self-curation," where individuals feel compelled to always show off their best image, which only exacerbates the sense of lack. Rodrigo's album *Guts* presents an emotional exploration of self-dissatisfaction and loss, reflecting the impact of social pressures on personal identity. The album offers an introspective narrative that highlights the complexities of youthful identity in an era dominated by digital influences.

This research aims to explore the relationship between lack, desire, and the search for *objet petit a*, as well as offer an in-depth analysis of the emotional narratives present in *Guts*. By examining the lyrical content of the album, this research seeks to reveal how the depiction of dissatisfaction and loss in Rodrigo's work relates to Lacanian concepts and offers an insightful commentary on the emotional experiences of today's youth.

According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concepts of "lack" and "desire" are fundamental to human subjectivity. The concept of "lack" emerges when an individual

enters the "symbolic order," signifying the separation from the primordial unity with the maternal Other. As Lacan (2006) points out, "Man's desire is the desire of the Other," emphasizing the mediating influence of the Other in desire (Azumurana, 2011). This loss, termed "symbolic castration", fosters an awareness of the self's imperfections, leading to an ongoing pursuit to fill the perceived void. However, the inherent structure of lack gives rise to insatiable desire, perpetuating an unending cycle of pursuit. Within the Imaginary order, the phenomenon of lack is obscured by the pretense of wholeness, which is cultivated through the mirror stage. At this stage, the subject identifies with a reflective image that appears intact, yet this identification is alienating because the image remains external. The desire that emerges at this stage manifests as a yearning to be one with the idealized image, but this unity remains unattainable. Lacan (2006) elucidates that the mirror stage engenders the ego as a misrecognition of self, wherein the subject perceives a sense of wholeness accompanied by a persistent sense of separation. The *objet petit a* begins to take form as an imaginary object that appears to restore wholeness, though it remains unattainable. Concurrently, the concept of the Other is embodied through the figure of the mother or caregiver, who becomes the primary source of satisfaction. However, the mother or caregiver also signifies something beyond the subject's control, thereby introducing a faint emergence of a lack.

In the Symbolic order, the lack becomes more apparent because the subject experiences symbolic castration, which is the realization that he cannot have a direct relationship with the Other, because the relationship is mediated by language, laws, and social norms (Lacan, 2006). According to Lacan, the subject is "split" by language because, in its attempt to articulate itself, there is always something unsaid and unrepresented. The concept of desire evolves beyond the mere longing to merge with an idealized representation, becoming instead a phenomenon influenced by language and social symbols. The *objet petit a*, or the object of little importance, plays a pivotal role in this process, representing a source of satisfaction that remains unattainable. The pursuit of these various forms of the *objet petit a*—love, status, power—is driven by the belief that these achievements will fill the perceived lack. In the Symbolic, desire is mediated by language and symbols. In the Real, however, lack appears in its purest form as something that is unrepresentable and cannot be integrated into the symbolic order. According to Lacan (1978) the Real is "what always returns to the same place," signifying that there is something that cannot be controlled or interpreted by the symbolic system. At this stage, desire faces its existential limits as the subject realizes that there is no object that can truly fill the void within him. The *objet petit a*, once merely an elusive target, becomes an insurmountable challenge due to its existence beyond the confines of language and symbolization. Encounters with the Real frequently manifest through traumatic experiences or occurrences, underscoring the futility of attaining complete fulfillment. The concept of the Other, once a mediator of desire, also falls short in addressing the subject's absence, as the very structure of the Other entraps it within itself.

This Lacanian framework is used to analyze the dynamics of lack and desire in Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* album by paying attention to the concept of *objet petit a* as a catalyst for desire, where the subject endlessly strives to attain something believed to fill an internal void, yet inevitably fails to achieve full satisfaction. Simultaneously, this study highlights the role of the Other in shaping the subject's desire through the symbolic system that structures emotional experience, particularly as it relates to hope for fulfillment, the longing for recognition from the Other, and the subject's negotiation with normative cultural codes.

These elements will be traced across the album's lyrical landscape, wherein *GUTS* articulates subjectivity suspended between loss and pursuit, vulnerability and assertion, within a symbolic order that both defines and destabilizes the self.

## 2. Literature Review

Song lyrics possesses a singular ability to externalize emotional truths that often resist articulation, making it a powerful site for exploring the complexities of human subjectivity. Within this framework, the study by Putri & Tustiawati (2022), *An Analysis of Hyperbole in the Sour Album of Olivia Rodrigo*, applies stylistic theory to identify the use of hyperbole in Rodrigo's *SOUR* album. The study reveals that hyperbole is frequently used to express dissatisfaction and a sense of lack through exaggerated statements. While these findings are relevant in highlighting emotional absence in song lyrics, the study stops short of examining how lack and desire function in relation to each other in the construction of subjectivity.

Beyond stylistic analysis, Budiman & Listyarini (2018) employ Lacanian theory in their study *Analyses of Short Stories Using Lacan's Psychoanalysis*, focusing on fictional characters whose internal lack propels them toward unachievable objects of fulfillment. Their work underscores the centrality of lack as a driving force of desire. However, the scope of their study remains confined to literary narratives, without extending the Lacanian framework to the domain of music or contemporary relational experiences—both of which are vital in the context of Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS*.

Extending Lacanian analysis into musical texts, Uci Elly Kholidah's (2023) study *The Author's Desire Manifested in Bob Dylan's Song Lyric "Knocking on Heaven's Door"* explores how Dylan's search for self-authenticity reflects a deeper lack through the Lacanian lens. While this research is relevant in demonstrating the concept of *objet petit a*, this research focuses on the artist's individual existential struggle and does not engage with broader cultural and social factors that shape desire in contemporary pop music—a gap this research seeks to address.

Across existing literature, analyses often treat lack or desire in isolation, leaving a gap in understanding how these two concepts interrelate to form a dynamic structure of subjectivity, particularly within contemporary music. This research aims to fill that gap by examining the intertwined workings of lack and desire in Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS*, offering a more comprehensive Lacanian analysis that situates emotional expressions within a broader cultural and symbolic order.

## 3. Research Method

This research used an expressive literary criticism approach, applying a Lacanian psychoanalysis-based text analysis method and systemic close reading technique to uncover the themes of lack and desire in Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* album. The theoretical framework centers on Lacanian concepts such as lack, desire, *objet petit a*, and the role of the Other. In this context, lack is understood as a fundamental condition of human subjectivity that generates desire—an endless pursuit of *objet petit a*, a fantasy object that promises fulfillment yet always remains elusive. The *GUTS* album was chosen for its rich emotional landscape and its representation of identity crises often experienced during adolescence and early adulthood, which resonate strongly with the Lacanian dynamics of lack and desire.

Data was obtained through a systematic close reading of the lyrics. This involved identifying moments where symbolic language in the songs reveals tensions with the psychic reality of the lyrical subject—particularly in instances that highlight the impossibility of achieving full emotional or existential fulfillment.

The analysis focused on key phrases, recurring motifs, and thematic patterns that signify the presence of lack and desire. Special attention was given to the function of the Other—whether as social expectations, imagined figures, or normative discourses—that shape the subject's self-perception and emotional experience. The findings demonstrate how the lyrical subject remains entangled in the pursuit of the ideal object, reflecting a persistent experience of lack and the ceaseless desire for *objet petit a*, which epitomizes Lacanian desire in its unattainability.

By integrating Lacanian theory, this methodology situates Rodrigo's artistic expression within a psychoanalytic framework, illuminating how GUTS conveys the inner conflict between the individual and the symbolic structures that shape desire. Ultimately, the study shows how the album's lyrics articulate a subjectivity defined by absence and longing, contributing to broader conversations about the dynamics of desire and lack in contemporary pop music.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

In the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concept of "lack" is theorized as an existential condition that is inherent to the subject due to its separation from the full object once perceived in the imaginary phase. This absence is then supplanted by a fantasy object believed to possess the capacity to fulfill the subject, yet perpetually elusive. In the song "All-American Bitch," examines how desire is constructed through cultural imperatives to embody an idealized feminine identity, resulting in the subject's alienation from her authentic self. The subject's self-construction is depicted as being shaped by cultural idealizations of American women, which are characterized by attributes such as strength, propriety, attractiveness, and perfection.

*"I'm a perfect all-American bitch / With perfect all-American lips / And perfect all-American hips"* Those lyrics are particularly illustrative of this phenomenon. The repeated use of the word "perfect" does not constitute an authentic form of affirmation; rather, it serves as an indicator that the subject is adopting an externally constructed role. The body image and personality mentioned do not arise from personal desire; rather, they stem from the urge to fulfill the symbolic representation of the ideal woman. In Lacan's psychoanalytic framework, these images serve as *objet petit a*, defined as an object that offers self-fulfillment but ultimately perpetuates the subject's sense of emptiness. As Copjec (1994) elucidates, contemporary culture engenders images of perfection to mask imperfections, yet paradoxically demonstrates the impossibility of their eradication. The tension between social performance and psychic reality culminates in the lyrics *"I scream inside to deal with it, like, 'Ah,'*" at which point the subject loses the ability to represent her feelings through language. This scream signifies the advent of the Real, the psychic dimension that remains incorporable into the symbols or structures of language. It serves as a testament to the fact that a lack constitutes a wound that cannot be remedied by imposed social identities.

Furthermore, the song also shows how desire in Lacanian psychoanalysis is not an autonomous drive, but is always mediated by the Other, the social structure that determines

what is worth wanting. The subject does not just want something, but wants what he thinks the other wants from him.

In the lyrics "*I got class and integrity / Just like a goddamn Kennedy, I swear*", The lyrics show that the desire to have "class and integrity" is not born from within, but is a reflection of the symbolic values associated with the Kennedy surname as a cultural icon. By invoking the name, the subject is showing that her desire has been shaped and directed by external values that have long constructed ideal status and identity in society.

In the song "Bad Idea Right", the narrator psychic dynamics illustrate how lack and desire function as unconscious mechanisms that destabilize the self. The obsession with A former romantic partner, despite the relationship's end, reveals the structural nature of the subject's lack, as no object—including a loved one—can fully fill the void. Lacan's theory suggests that this loss is inherent to human experience.

When narrator says, in the lyrics "*Now I'm gettin' in the car, wreckin' all my plans / I know I should stop, but I can't,*"

The lyrics reveal how the pursuit of an unattainable object leads to destructive consequences. The ex-lover functions as an *objet petit a*, an elusive object that cannot be possessed but is symbolically tempting. As Žižek (2006) explains, the *objet petit a* holds no inherent value, yet it becomes attractive by symbolizing the subjective void. The paradox arises when the subject recognizes the decision is harmful but cannot resist it—proving that lack cannot be overcome through conscious will. This tension between desire and awareness underscores that action is driven by unconscious impulses, not free choice.

The subject's desire to return to an ex does not stand alone, but is influenced by the Other—the social structure that establishes meanings, norms, and cultural imaginaries of love, loss, and relationships that must be "fought for."

*"And I'm right here with all my friends / But you're sending me your new address,"* In the lyrics above, is clear that the subject's desire does not only arise from within, but is conditioned by external interference, namely the ex's message which seems to be a symbolic "call" to reactivate the dead relationship. The presence of his friends in this scene emphasizes that he actually has the space to choose to get out of the pattern, but the urge to answer the Other is much stronger. The cultural fantasy that romanticizes "getting back with your ex" as something emotional and courageous makes it seem as if the subject "has" to respond to prove the intensity of her feelings. Lacan mentions that the subject never desires purely, but always desires in response to what is believed to be desired by the Other. At this point, the subject is not only trying to get back in touch with her ex, but also wants to maintain her self-image as "loyal", "brave", and "emotionally involved".

The song "Vampire" reveals how romantic fantasy functions as a defense against structural lack—and how its collapse lays bare the subject's raw psychic void. It captures how the female subject's experience in an exploitative relationship opens a psychic wound intimately tied to lack as a fundamental human condition. She comes to see that what she pursued—a seemingly intense, secret, and passionate bond—was merely an illusion, a mask for deeper emptiness. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the *objet petit a* is not a real object, but a veil that conceals the impossibility of attaining wholeness. When the subject says,

*"Six months of torture you sold as some forbidden paradise / I loved you truly / You gotta laugh at the stupidity,"*

The lyrics reveal how her desire for the relationship is shaped by fantasy. The relationship is given symbolic meaning as something exotic and special-forbidden paradise-

but the reality is emotional torment that strips away the illusion. As Fink (1995) explains, fantasy in the Lacanian framework is not just an escape, but a structure that sustains desire: it makes objects appear valuable when they actually have no substance to satisfy. When the illusion collapses, the subject experiences not only disillusionment, but also symbolic destruction-he is left with a lack that is now exposed without the protection of fantasy. This relationship does not fill the void, but rather exacerbates it, as the subject is brought into a fragmented position: she is made a tool by the person she trusted as her emotional savior. In the process, the subject's desire turns out not to be purely internal, but an effect of the Other-an external symbolic structure that produces an image of what is worth wanting.

*"Every girl I ever talked to told me you were bad, bad news / You called them crazy, God, I hate the way I called them crazy too"*

The lyrics reveal how the subject is not only manipulated by her lover, but also internalizes the views given to her: she believes in the ex's narrative and rejects the collective voice of other women who warn. Here the Other does not only take the form of society at large, but is also present in the symbolic power wielded by the ex-lover as a dominant masculine figure. Her desire for the relationship does not come from her own desire, but from the narratives that have been imposed on her-that true love requires struggle, that faithful women should turn a blind eye to "little faults," and that emotional intensity is a sign of love's validation. In other words, this relationship is a double trap: she pursues something that seems to promise happiness, but at the same time, her desires are shaped by a system that is never in her favor.

In "Lacy", Desire is articulated through an obsessive attachment to an unattainable ideal, suggesting that the subject's lack is shaped by externally mediated images of perfection. The lyrical subject is dragged into a vortex of destructive desire, centered on a female figure named Lacy-a figure that is presented so perfect that it is almost transcendental. Lack in this song does not only appear as a deficiency in the subject, but also as an impossible desire to be realized: the desire to possess, merge with, or be like Lacy. From the very first verse, the idealization of Lacy immediately contains contradictions:

*"Lacy, oh, Lacy, skin like puff pastry / Aren't you the sweetest thing on this side of Hell?"*-where Lacy's charms are worshipped like a heavenly being, yet it leads the subject to inner torture. This illustrates the peculiar relationship between the subject and the *objet petit a*: an object that appears to be the answer to existential deprivation, but at the same time, cannot be approached without causing pain.

The subject's obsession with Lacy forms an inherent yet untouchable relationship, as in the line: *"Like perfume that you wear, I linger all the time / Watching, hidden in plain sight."*

The subject is trapped in a desire that is not only unrequited, but cannot even be articulated directly. This relation emphasizes that lack is not just about losing something that once existed, but about the permanent structure of lack that makes desire never ending. Lacy is not just desired, but becomes the emotional center of gravity that holds the subject in the orbit of suffering.

However, the subject's desire for Lacy is not a desire that arises autonomously. It is constructed by the Other-the social and symbolic structures that define who is worthy of admiration, love, or possession.

When the subject states, "*Smart, sexy Lacy, I'm losin' it lately / I feel your compliments like bullets on skin,*"

In that lyrics we can see how Lacy's presence not only evokes admiration, but also a sense of unworthiness. The compliments from Lacy become symbolic aggression, not because Lacy is bad, but because the subject internalizes an inferior position within the symbolic structure that places Lacy as the ideal standard. In other words, the Other not only determines the object of desirability, but also affirms the subject's position as inadequate.

In line with this, Žižek (1992) explains that desire is always mediated by the views of others: "the desire is never simply the subject's own, but is always already the desire of the Other." In the context of Lacy, the subject's desire is the result of the internalization of external values of perfection and attractiveness, which makes Lacy a phantasmatic object-a screen on which unrealizable desires are projected.

The Song "Ballad of a Homeschooled Girl", reflects a persistent desire for social inclusion that is repeatedly thwarted, illustrating how symbolic structures generate exclusion and existential dissonance. The lyrical subject is trapped in a perpetual social discomfort, signifying a deep lack stemming from the inability to belong to a social community. It is this desire to "belong" that marks the presence of *objet petit a* in the form of social acceptance-something that seems capable of filling the existential void, but is always out of reach. The lyrics "*Blood running cold / I'm on the outside of the greatest inside joke*" illustrate the subject's alienation from a social order that seems accessible only to those who are "normal." In the Lacanian framework, the subject's desire for the *objet petit a* never really brings fulfillment; it instead serves as the driving force of the desire itself. This experience of social alienation does not stop at external relations, but extends to the subject's body and identity.

The lyrics "*And I hate all my clothes / Feels like my skin doesn't fit right over my bones*" show that the subject experiences disharmony not only socially, but also existentially. This mismatch shows that *lack* has infiltrated the symbolic level of the body-that even the skin feels like something foreign, not part of "me." The desire to be part of a social community turns into a constant effort to conform, but the effort only emphasizes the gap between reality and ideality.

Furthermore, *desire* in this song does not exist autonomously. It emerges as a response to an external symbolic structure, or the *Other*. When the subject states, "*Searchin' how to start a conversation? on a website (How to flirt?)*", we see that personal intuition has been replaced by guidelines that come from outside the self. This confirms that the *Other* is not just a passive spectator, but an active entity that determines how one should act and feel. As Fink (1995) explains, "our desires are not our own but are borrowed from the Other," and in this context, the desire for "normal" is something that is constructed, not natural.

The subject's social anxiety is not a form of individual failure, but a product of a symbolic system that repressively shapes standards of "normalcy". In lyrics like "*Each time I step outside / It's social suicide,*" the outside world appears as a space of permanent rejection-an arena where the subject's existence is always judged and rejected. At this point, *lack* becomes inevitable; it is no longer just a sense of inadequacy, but the very structure of existence itself.

In "Pretty Isn't Pretty", Desire for beauty is shown to be an effect of internalized and shifting cultural standards, which deepen the subject's sense of inadequacy rather than

resolving it. The lyrical subject experiences a *lack* that arises from her inability to meet the shifting and never concrete standards of beauty. This standard acts as *objet petit a*—the object of desire that seems to promise identity fulfillment, but always misses the mark. In this song, beauty becomes a socially constructed form of *objet petit a*, and its pursuit results in repeated suffering.

*"Bought a bunch of makeup / Tryna' cover up my face / I started to skip lunch / Stopped eatin' cake on birthdays".*

The lyrics reveal how the body becomes a battlefield in the pursuit of an idealized form imposed from the outside. The subject struggles to mold herself to external expectations—but the harder she tries, the deeper the emptiness grows. In Lacanian terms, this confirms that lack cannot be filled through symbolic transformations of the body. The body is not the source of the lack; it is the site where the lack is inscribed and made visible.

This is reflected explicitly in the subject's confession: *"You can win the battle / But you'll never win the war."* The struggle against imperfection seems winnable, but any victory is false because it does not touch the root of *lack* itself. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, desire driven by *objet petit a* has no stopping point: it is metonymic, moving from one object to another without ever reaching final satisfaction. Thus, when the subject states, *"And none of it matters and none of it ends / You just feel like shit over and over again,"* we see a despair that arises not from the failure to achieve beauty, but from the realization that beauty itself is a structural trap of desire.

Furthermore, desire in this song does not arise from the subject's free will. It is shaped by the *Other*—the social and symbolic structures that create beauty norms and force the internalization of those values.

The lyrics *"And I bought all the clothes that they told me to buy / I chased some dumb ideal my whole fucking life,"* there is a realization that her desires have been engineered by the *Other*, and that her life has been shaped by the pursuit of something she never defined herself. As Leader (2003) explains, "the ideal image of the body is never ours—it is always received from the outside, from the gaze of the *Other*"

The song "Logical", explores the entanglement of desire and manipulation, wherein the longing for love becomes a search for coherence within an unstable symbolic order. The form of *lack* experienced by the lyrical subject does not only stem from the loss of love, but from the loss of something much more fundamental: belief in reality and the stability of meaning. The relationship that was originally believed to be a space of affection becomes a maze of manipulation and illusion, making the subject question the validity of his own experience. In the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, this condition signifies the split of the subject as a *being* caught between the *Symbolic*—the structure of language and meaning that is supposed to organize reality—and the relational reality that keeps changing unexpectedly.

The lyrics *"Two plus two equals five / And I'm the love of your life"* become the most obvious symbol of the distorted logic accepted and even believed by the subject. Basic logic is messed up, but accepted as a form of truth because the subject wants to believe. The desire to trust, to understand, and to make sense of the relationship becomes the form of the *objet petit a*: not the lover himself, but the hope for certainty and meaning.

This desire does not exist in a vacuum; it is shaped by the partner who plays the role of the *Other*—a symbolic figure who has power over the structure of meaning and knowledge

in the relationship. The lyrics "*Master manipulator / God, you're so good at what you do*" describe how the lover constructs the narrative and reality believed by the subject. *The Other* here is not only the center of desire, but also the creator of the terrain where truth is obscured and illusion becomes the norm. Bruce Fink (1995) emphasizes that "*the subject's desire is not its own, but the Other's*," and this is what happens in *Logical*: the subject internalizes a narrative that is not his own, but one that is shaped and imposed by the partner.

In "Making the Bed", desire here is marked by existential emptiness, as the fulfillment of one's wishes reveals the illusory nature of the *objet petit a* and the impossibility of true satisfaction. The lyrical subject is no longer dealing with explicit relational conflict or manipulation from a lover, but is instead immersed in a more silent yet painful internal void. This is where *lack* appears in its most existential form: as the realization that even after everything desired is achieved, satisfaction is never truly present. Lacan asserts that *lack* is not simply the absence of a particular object, but the innate structure of human subjectivity—the result of the separation between the subject and the symbolic, real, and imaginary (Lacan, 1978).

The line "*I got the things I wanted, it's just not what I imagined*" is an honest acknowledgement of the illusory nature of the *objet petit a*—the small object of desire that seems to promise fulfillment, but always misses when approached. The pleasure that was once present now loses its meaning; the fulfilled desire creates a new void. Lacan states that the *objet petit a* is not a real object that can be possessed, but rather an empty spot in the structure that actually drives desire. Thus, when the object is "obtained", the subject realizes that what he is chasing is not something that can cure his *lack*.

The lyrics "*And I tell someone I love them just as a distraction / They tell me that they love me like I'm some tourist attraction*" show how affective relationships are lived not as an authentic expression of love, but as an escape from emptiness. The subject feels loved not as a *self*, but rather as an image formed by others. In the Lacanian framework, this shows how dominant *the Other* is in determining how the subject loves and is loved. The subject is not only alienated from the object of her love, but also from herself as an agent of desire.

The statement "*They're changin' my machinery, and I just let it happen*" becomes the climax of this alienation. The subject feels himself modified by outside forces without having the power to resist. In Lacanian terms, this reflects how the subject's desires have been colonized by the *Other*, making him lose autonomy over even his own body and affect. It no longer knows what it really wants, as every desire has been overlaid and determined by external expectations.

In "The Grudge", Desire manifests as a refusal to relinquish emotional pain, emphasizing the subject's continued investment in the *Other* despite the destructive nature of the attachment. The emptiness or *lack* experienced by the subject does not only come from losing the object of desire, but also from the inability to let go of the object even though it carries a wound. The subject in this song shows how *lack* does not always arise from not having something, but can also come from attachment to something painful. In Lacanian terms, this reflects that the *objet petit a* is not something pleasant or whole, but rather something lost, slippery, and full of gaps, which continues to shape *desire* (Lacan, 1978).

The line "*My undying love, now I hold it like a grudge / And I hear your voice every time that I think I'm not enough*" shows how the subject embraces pain as a way of

maintaining a relationship with its object. The love that turns into a grudge is not simply erased; it is maintained because it becomes part of the subject's desire structure. The *objet petit a* here is not only the figure of the lover, but also a representation of the recognition that was never obtained, making it an unfinished source of *lack*. Instead of breaking free, the subject chooses to stay in anger, because that is where she feels connected.

The attempt to understand the object's actions also strengthens this bond. The lyrics "*And I try to understand why you would do this all to me / You must be insecure, you must be so unhappy*" reveal how the subject's desire is not just to erase traces of the relationship, but also to find meaning in the Other's actions. This is in line with the Lacanian idea that *desire* is never truly "one's own"-it is formed within a symbolic field governed by the *Other*. Even deep pain does not prevent the subject from continuing to revolve in the Other's orbit, as her identity and desire are shaped in relation to that figure.

This tension reaches its peak in the confession "*I try to be tough, I try to be mean / But even after all this, you're still everything to me*". Despite attempts to hate or reject, the subject remains in the gravity of desire directed by the Other. This is a form of Lacanian entrapment: when the subject is unable to break out of the symbolic structure that shapes its desire, even when that structure is painful. Revenge, in this context, is not just an emotion, but also an existential strategy to maintain a relationship with the *objet petit a* that cannot be possessed but also cannot be relinquished.

The song "Teenage Dream", constructs desire as a longing for a lost ideal of youth, exposing the subject's alienation under the weight of social expectations and symbolic recognition. The concept of lack emerges as a feeling that the most important part of the subject's self has been lost, creating an existential void that cannot be recovered. According to Lacan, lack is an inherent condition in human subjectivity that cannot be overcome, which drives individuals to pursue *objet petit a*. In the context of this song, the subject feels that his youth-which represents potential and freedom-has been "consumed" by social expectations and external expectations, creating a deep sense of loss.

The lyrics "*But I fear that they already got all the best parts of me*" describe how the subject feels that the essence of herself-the purity and joy inherent in youth-has been lost, becoming only an unrepeatable memory. Here, the *objet petit a* is present as an image of the idealized "teenage dream", an image desired by others and society, which seems to promise fulfillment but cannot be fulfilled. This reflects how lack can never be overcome completely, as the desired object always misses the subject's reach and further deepens the feeling of dissatisfaction he experiences.

The subject's desire in this song is also closely intertwined with the influence of the Other, namely social expectations that shape the view of how one should develop from adolescence to adulthood. Lacan states that the subject's desires are not autonomous, but always mediated by external views and judgments, be it from society, family, or other social structures that define ideal standards. In "Teenage Dream", the subject is trapped in the role given by the Other, trying to fulfill the ever-changing social expectations.

The lyrics "*When am I gonna stop being great for my age and just start being good?*" express the tension between the identity formed by the views of others and the subject's desire to be authentically recognized. The subject feels valued only in a certain context, as an exceptional individual for his age, but is never fully recognized as an individual with broader and deeper potential.

The lyrics "*Yeah, they all say that it gets better, but what if I don't?*" show the doubts that arise from the promises given by the Other, such as the belief that life will improve over time. This fear reveals how social expectations cannot guarantee the fulfillment of the subject's desires, who feels trapped in an endless quest to achieve an ideal state that is actually external and cannot be fully met.

In the song "Get Him Back", Desire is split between conflicting impulses of revenge and longing, highlighting the ambivalence of attachment to an object that simultaneously wounds and attracts. The concept of lack emerges through the subject's feelings of being caught up in the dynamics of conflicting feelings towards her ex-lover. The subject feels the emotional emptiness that comes from being dependent on an unhealthy relationship, and is constantly caught in the cycle of wanting revenge and longing. The lyrics "*I wanna get him back / I wanna make him really jealous, wanna make him feel bad*" illustrate how the desire for revenge against an ex-lover arises in response to the hurt feelings caused by betrayal and mistreatment. The desire to make the ex-lover feel jealous and bad is a form of desire that is reflected in the subject's attempt to control the situation and regain control over the relationship that has scratched the emotional wound. In the Lacanian framework, this desire focuses not only on retaliation, but also on the need to fill the void that arises from feeling abandoned and hurt. This shows how the subject's desire, although seemingly directed towards fulfillment through retaliation, still cannot close the void that exists within him.

However, on the other hand, the lyrics "*Cause then again, I really miss him and it makes me real sad*" illustrate the emotional ambivalence experienced by the subject. The subject is not only caught up in the desire for revenge, but also feels a deep longing for her former lover, which shows how negative desires and feelings often overlap in the dynamics of a tension-filled relationship. In this case, the *objet petit a* appears as an object that binds the subject to an idealized image of love and the relationship that once existed, despite the reality of the relationship being fraught with uncertainty and pain.

This tension between the desire for revenge and deep longing is strongly influenced by a social view that affects the way the subject assesses herself in the context of the relationship. Lacan explains that the subject's desires are always mediated by external views—in this case, social norms about love, revenge, and romantic relationships (Lacan, 2006).

*"I wanna key his car / I wanna make him lunch / I wanna break his heart / But then I, I want to get him back"*

The lyrics illustrate the contradiction within the subject, who desires physical and emotional retribution, but also recognizes that the relationship, although fraught with emotional violence, still provides elements that he longs for, such as attention and closeness. In addition, the subject also seems to be trying to make things right by attempting to "fix" her ex, as in the line "*But I am my father's daughter, so maybe I could fix him.*" This suggests that this desire to get back into a broken relationship is influenced by the subject's belief that she has the ability to change the situation and right the wrongs that occurred. However, as Lacan explains, lack cannot be overcome through self-improvement or improving relationships with others. The desire to fix something broken creates tension and exacerbates the feeling of insatiability, as the *objet petit a* sought is something that cannot be fully possessed or fixed.

The song "Love is Embarrassing", illustrates how romantic desire becomes a site of shame and self-sacrifice, revealing its humiliating and ultimately unsatisfying character within symbolic relations. The concept of lack emerges clearly through the subject's feelings

of being trapped in a relationship dynamic filled with disappointment and feelings of insatiability. The lyrics (Rodrigo, 2023) "*And now it don't mean a thing / God, love's fucking embarrassing*" illustrate how love that was initially perceived as something meaningful, has now turned into a source of shame and disappointment. The desire to give everything in the relationship not only ends in dissatisfaction, but also shows how the lack felt by the subject cannot be filled, even though he has given himself completely.

The feeling of emptiness and dissatisfaction is sharpened by the lyric: "*Just watch as I crucify myself / For some weird second string / Loser who's not worth mentionin'*." Here, the subject sacrifices herself for a relationship that proves hollow. The *objet petit a* takes the form of an imagined love and recognition she yearns for—an ideal that delivers only shame and regret. She feels trapped in a bond with someone she once deemed significant, only to realize he offers neither emotional fulfillment nor genuine recognition.

Another lyric, "*I consoled you while you cried / Over your ex-girlfriend's new guy*," shows how the subject constantly puts herself in the position of serving and sacrificing herself for the sake of others. The subject not only feels valued in a secondary position, but also realizes that her personal feelings and needs are being ignored. Here, the subject's desire for love and attention is caught in a dynamic of imbalance, where he wants something that can never be fulfilled by the person who does not value him. The desire to be the first, or "the one," ultimately becomes something futile and unattainable.

## 5. Conclusion

A Lacanian analysis of the album's lyrics reveals that young women's experiences in digital culture are significantly influenced by the dynamics of "lack" and "desire", which are mediated by the Other. These desires do not emerge spontaneously; rather, they are influenced by external symbolic structures, including social norms, media, and romantic relationships. The subjects' pursuit of external validation is characterized by a desire to align with societal expectations, as evidenced by their pursuit of ideal body images, authentic love, and social acceptance. These pursuits, while seemingly promising, ultimately prove to be unsatisfactory, serving as a form of *objet petit a* that is perpetually elusive.

The findings indicate that digital culture perpetuates cycles of dissatisfaction and alienation, wherein young women continue to mold their identities in accordance with external expectations. The pursuit of social and emotional adequacy frequently culminates in identity crises, anxiety, and a sense of incompleteness. In this context, "lack" must be understood not as a personal failure, but rather as a fundamental condition of existence that is systematically manipulated by the prevailing symbolic system to ensure the continued subjugation of the subject.

Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is imperative for the purpose of critiquing cultural narratives that promote pseudo-ideal standards. The acknowledgement that these desires have been symbolically constructed has the potential to mark the beginning of an ascent from the vicious cycle of dysfunction. It is imperative that young women be empowered to cultivate a more authentic relationship with themselves. This empowerment should not be achieved through the fulfillment of desires determined by others. Rather, it should be achieved through the discovery of meaning that exists beyond the logic of lack and imitation.

While this study effectively establishes a connection between Lacanian theory and popular culture, its scope is constrained in its examination of a more limited social context. The analysis focuses on the narrator's experience but does not fully explore other social and cultural factors that shape the dynamics of desire and lack. Future research is recommended to expand this study to various social contexts, including visual media and social media, which increasingly play a role in the construction of self-representation and the formation of social values more broadly.

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