

LANA DEL REY'S VIEW OF AMERICAN GLIMMERING LIFESTYLE AND AMERICAN DREAM REFLECTED IN *BORN TO DIE: THE PARADISE EDITION* ALBUM: A GENETIC STRUCTURALISM STUDY

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Abstract

This research purposes to examine the homology shown in Lana Del Rey's album through the themes and her views reflected in the lyrics. To achieve the answers of the research objectives, the researcher employed Genetic Structuralism theory by Lucien Goldmann. The research is a qualitative research with content analysis method. The main source of the data was the album of Lana Del Rey entitled Born to Die: The Paradise Edition (2012). The data analysis was conducted in five steps: listening to the album, analyzing the lyrics, relating the lyrics to Goldmann's theory of Genetic Structuralism, arranging the data sheets, and the last, evaluating, interpreting, and making the interrelation between the description of the findings and the theory. The data trustworthiness was obtained by peer-debriefing technique. The findings are related to the theme and worldview revealed in the albums. First, there are five main themes found: (1) living in the lap of luxuries, (2) wearing a beauty queen mask, (3) habituating unhealthy and destructive style of life, (4) possessing morbid and gloomy disposition, and (5) embracing the dark side of American Dream and the melancholy of patriotism. Second, there are four established views: (1) living in the lap of luxuries family background as an early advantage, (2) habituating unhealthy and destructive style of life since teenagers, (3) possessing a chronic morbid and gloomy disposition, and (5) embracing the dark side of American Dream and the melancholy of patriotism. Lastly, the homologies are: (1) living in the lap of luxuries, (2) habituating unhealthy and destructive style of life, (3) possessing morbid and gloomy dispositions, and (4) embracing the dark side of American Dream and the melancholy of patriotism.

Keywords: *Genetic Structuralism, theme, view, homology, Lana Del Rey's Born to Die: The Paradise Edition*

INTRODUCTION

Social issues are always in one of the topmost topics to be discussed and applied by people in daily life. The use of social issues can be elaborated to entertain, reflect, and criticize the society. Many forms of entertainment can open the heart of people to be aware of the condition of a society in a pleasing way. Thus, the audiences to be able to absorb the values without being intimidated because they take them with no trouble, but then again can give impacts deeply. One of the forms of entertainment which can be an example is music.

Everyone loves music as music is inseparable from human life. Shiffriss et al. (2015: 794) say that "the decision to listen to music to regulate a bad mood can be not only habitual but also made volitionally and with full awareness." It means that they use it with consideration to enhance the mood. It can significantly deliver its idea to the listeners. Through human's vital organs, music streams down from ear to mind and penetrate people's idealism since the sense of hearing is basically always on (McClary, 16: 1989).

Music and lifestyle are attached one another because music is a part of culture in a

certain society (Longburst, 2007: 103). As a result, music frequently takes lifestyle in a specific culture as its theme. As a result, music frequently takes lifestyle in a specific culture as its theme. To make it clearer, the concept of American lifestyle is still dominant to the world remembering that many international celebrities come from this 'super power' country. Moreover, American lifestyle can spread globally in a flash with the help of any media especially when it can be well represented through music.

One of the essential elements of music is the lyrics. By the lyrics, people are able to comprehend what the song tells. They show meaningful words with particular values. Lyrics speak the emotion of its writer or singer and represents the condition of human's internal feeling, character, and even critique to the society.

In literature, lyrics are a type of poetry which can be analyzed. Nowadays, lyrics are not only the collection of words, but also have a deeper meaning to the reality. They accommodate the value of specific culture where lyrics are made (Merriam, 1964:47). By the lyric, listeners can imagine how the life of their favorite singer in reality is. For example, American singer Lana Del Rey frequently uses her past-life experiences in her music. Many examples of American glimmering lifestyle reflecting her own little American Dream are portrayed in her songs. In the album *Born to Die: The Paradise*

Edition (2012), she applies her past story for her writing inspiration.

This research aims to (1) explain the Lana Del Rey's view related to American glimmering lifestyle and American Dream as seen in the themes of the lyrics in *Born Born to Die: The Paradise Edition* album, and (2) describe the homology between the themes of the lyrics and Del Rey's views about American lifestyle in American society and her American Dream in modern era. Therefore, the Genetic Structuralism by Lucien Goldmann is applied.

Genetic Structuralism is a theory developed by Lucien Goldmann, a Romanian-French philosopher and sociologist. The emergence of this theory was due to the dissatisfaction with the Structuralism approach, which this study only focuses on the intrinsic elements without considering the extrinsic elements of a literary work. Early Goldmann makes an initial theory that his study leads to a procedure connecting issues of a social phenomenon and its objective context and later creating a line to the bigger historical event. According to Goldmann (in Milner, 1996: 37), literature is a self-expression of the author and also the expression of social class because the author is a part of it. The same as Lukacs, Goldmann's theory of Genetic Structuralism takes social class as part of his study as well (Goldmann, 1980: 13).

Goldmann's concept of Genetic Structuralism has the base theory by Lukacs

about world view, ideas, and feelings that are shared by the same group (Goldmann in Laurenson and Swingewood, 1970: 65). Furthermore, he separates world view and ideology. He explains that the essence of ideology is that it sees the world partially. In contrast, world view rather sees the world as a whole. According to Goldmann (1980: 23), a literary work and its structure will embody a world view of the author not only as individual but also a member of society.

There are two central subjects integrated to the human fact based on Goldmann's theory. They are individual subject and collective subject. The collective consciousness does not merely recline on personal thought since trans-individual subject attains much social trust. It is hard to grasp a little personal representation to gain social coherence since collective subject is the one that has the capability to bring out social fact. In the study of Marxism, collective subject/trans-individual subject specifically called as 'social class'

Goldmann denotes the term homology as a systematically parallel concept between different objects of analysis (in Milner, 2005: 56). The application of world view at this point is integrated directly to the social structure. Goldmann (1980: 29) also adds that genetic structuralism is not straightly targeted to relate the content of literary work and historical facts, yet it interrogates of relating 'collective consciousness' of social class to the structure of literary work. In short, it

means that Genetic Structuralism gives attention to the intrinsic and extrinsic analysis (Ratna, 2008: 123).

RESEACRCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative research with content analysis method. The main source of this research was the album *Born to Die: The Paradise Edition (2012)* by an American singer, Lana Del Rey. To upkeep this research focus, Lucien Goldmann's theory of Genetic Structuralism was used.

The data analysis was conducted in five steps: listening to the album, analyzing the lyrics, relating the lyrics to Goldmann's theory of Genetic Structuralism, arranging a data sheet, and the last, evaluating, interpreting, and making the interrelation between the description of the findings and the theory. The data trustworthiness was obtained by peer-debriefing technique.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Lana Del Rey's View Related to American Glimmering Lifestyle And American Dream As Seen in the Themes of The Lyrics in Born To Die: The Paradise Edition Album

1. Living in the Lap of Luxuries

The concept of first-rate style of living is very thick portrayed many in Lana Del Rey's lyrics. The concept of wealth is basically inseparable to Lana's life since the theme of the lyrics mostly talk is about

glamorous and glimmering lifestyle. The first example is in the lyrics “Off to the Races”. She writes in stanza 4 line 37-40, “*Chateau Marmont*, slipping on my **red dress**, putting on **my makeup** / Glass room, perfume, **cognac**, lilac fumes / Says **it feels like heaven to him.**” These lines tell that the character in the lyric has been absorbed into a world of luxury and she cannot get enough of it. She has things such as expensive dresses and perfumes. The place cited, Chateau Marmont, is an incredibly luxurious Californian hotel, one that costs a lot of money to stay and becomes one of Hollywood landmarks. Lana also has the tattoo “Chateau Marmont” inked on her body.

The luxurious life portrayed in the lyrics like the examples above actually in line with Lana Del Rey’s view in reality. Elizabeth Woolridge Grant or the birth name of now American singer, Lana Del Rey is raised in rich and very comfortable environment background. Her biological father is a real estate broker and the president and CEO of Web Media Properties, Rob Grant. The company is an online media base and publishing company which operates a global websites network partners with advanced technology companies. In an online article entitled “12 Celebrities Who Come From Wealthy Families”, Zimbardo (2013: par. 6), a journalist writes that “the fact that she attended a boarding school that cost over \$40,000 per year did not help public perception that she was a manufactured pop

star.” A boarding school from the precious statement is Kent school, a boarding school in Connecticut. At the age of 14 she attended the school for a certain reason. The glamorous style of the songstress keeps her addicted and lulled by now. She enthusiastically adores the idea soaking in glimmers.

2. Wearing A Beauty Queen Mask

The concept of beauty queen means that the character in the lyrics is a glamorous and beautiful girl prepared to mingle at parties. The parties must go on even she is internally battling with emptiness and despair. The lyrics of “Carmen” are the exact examples of the previous statements.

Baby's all dressed up, with nowhere to go
That's the little story of the girl you know
Relying on the kindness of strangers
Tying cherry knots
Smiling, doing party favours
Put your red dress on, put your lipstick on
Sing your song, song, now the camera's on
And you're alive again

(Lana Del Rey. Lyrics to “Carmen”. Metrolyrics, 2012, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/carmen-lyrics-lana-del-rey.html>)

Linking the lyrics with Lana’s inspiration *Lolita*, Carmen, the persona here is a prostitute. She is a little a girl does illegal doing by relying on the kindness of random men and smiling, doing party some ‘sweet’ favours. She performs and provides sexual attraction to strangers with thick pocket. She puts all her make-up on and is dressed up

beautifully to attract the guests. The camera rolling means she is ready to act and plaster a fake smile to seduce them. The job is what she has to do. Thus, she becomes alive again when the camera is on. She exists when the camera rolls to be looking good, pretty, appealing, dressed-up, ready in action forgetting her true nature in the real world that she is just an underage-naive girl.

3. Habituating an Unhealthy and Destructive Lifestyle

An unhealthy relationship, alcohol drinking, and drugs are among the most common self-destructive habits, which in turn can lead to a cycle of substance abuse and self-abuse. Unhealthy and self-destructive behavior signs can be seen through Lana Del Rey's "National Anthem."

We're on a quick, sick rampage
Wining and dining, drinking and driving
Excessive buying, overdose and dying
On our drugs, and our love, and our dreams, and our rage
 Blurring the lines between real and the fake
 Dark and lonely, I need somebody to hold me
 He will do very well
 I can tell, I can tell
keep me safe in his belltower hotel

(Lana Del Rey. Lyrics to "National Anthem". *Metrolyrics*, 2012, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/national-anthem-lyrics-lana-del-rey.html>)

The character here is trapped in a circle of loaded people having infinite amount of money. No rules and punishments can stop them from having the time their life to the

extreme point. They cherish wining, drinking, using drugs, getting high, excessive buying to the extend blurring the reality. Their constant partying conceals their true unhappiness because they live in a world without real relationships with other people. Their life is just wasted and unreal. It is about living in manipulative funs and pleasures. At some point, she is awfully aware that having money is not entirely fulfilling either. Being beyond everybody else just leads to her being completely lost from true happiness. She often finds herself feeling alone despite the fact that she has money now. Yet, she cannot escape from the glimmering lifestyle and eternally trapped in her man encirclement. The line, "**Keep me safe in his belltower hotel**" means she has an implication like 'Stockholm Syndrome' which the captive feels at ease and safe near the capture. The imaginary prison here is where the man provides her needs in the term of lifestyle yet she cannot break through because that what her life for. She just tries to enjoy as long as she can although she has to surrender her happiness.

Relating this theme and Lana Del Rey's real life, Lana Del Rey is actually a heavy drinker by nature in real life. At the age of 13-18 she began drinking every day. She suffered severely from an alcohol addiction and was sent to boarding school by her parents to get healed (Heaf 2012: par. 18). She thought that alcohol was very cool thing and stated that it was her first love of her life.

Drugs too came out to be a part of her life. Because the damage was excessive, she ended leaving the school and sent to a rehabilitation center. She was only 18 when she was joining a rehab in Brooklyn.

4. Possessing Morbid and Gloomy Dispositions

Lana Del Rey's songs are heavily infused with the dark ambience and pessimistic love story. The character in "Born to Die" tells her story about people are basically bound to die at the end. There is no hope portrayed in this song.

Come and take a walk on the wild side
 Let me kiss you hard in the pouring
 rain
 You like your girls insane
**So, choose your last words, this is
 the last time**
**'Cause you and I, we were born to
 die**
 We were born to die
 We were born to die
 We were born to die

(Lana Del Rey. Lyrics to "Born to Die". *Metrolyrics*, 2012, <http://www.metrolyrics.com/born-to-die-lyrics-lana-del-rey.html>)

The lines above prove that their bad romance is far from a hopeful love story. She is tired of all of the problems they have. Everything has an expiry date and she believes that their love also unfortunately cannot last forever. For the last time, the character wants them to be careless. She wants them to relish this time as much as we can by laughing, kissing me in the rain, getting high, and having so much fun just the two of them and finally they can die.

There is no way to describe Lana Del Rey but joyless, unhopeful, sad-girl persona matched with her melancholy songs. People are aware that her color is stained with depressing melody. She floods the senses of sadness in her futuristic romantic gloom songs. It is no doubt that there is no happy song in a normal manner can be found in her discography. As a song-writer, the lyrics show her true characters as pained persona living in her own lyrics.

In an extreme and dangerous statement, she says in an article (Tim, 2014: par.1) that "I wish I was dead already." The article is retold her interview about her concern of die in a young age. She gives an example of late Kurt Cobain and Amy Winehouse early death as glamorous death because they died in rather early age. She feels attracted to that notorious celebrity haunt. Also, she is mentally drained that she feels the need to stop doing whatever she is doing.

5. Embracing the Dark Side of American Dream and the Melancholy of Patriotism

The simplest word to explain about American Dream is by way using of the word prosperity. The equality to gain success through material things brings American in competition to collect every single penny as a ticket to the enchanting American Lifestyle.

"We were two kids just tryin' to get out
**Lived on the dark side of the
 American dream**

We would dance all night, play our
music loud
**But when we grew up, nothing was
what it seemed”**

(Lana Del Rey. Lyrics to “Without
You”. *Metrolyrics*, 2012,
[http://www.metrolyrics.com/without-
you-lyrics-lana-del-rey.html](http://www.metrolyrics.com/without-you-lyrics-lana-del-rey.html))

Those lyrics are found in the song
“Without You” included in the album *Born to
Die*. The lines explain the two, the character
and her boyfriend had been wrong all the
time. When they reach the point having
money with no problem, it is the turning point
awakens them from the dark dream. “Nothing
was what it seemed.” In the past, they had
each other and were completely happy despite
having nothing. The alluring concept of
American Dream blinds them to be a corrupt
being. It is late to be sober from the dark side
of American Dream leaving only empty
promises.

In reality, Lana Del Rey rebrands the
American Dream also connected to her
background as an artist. Once upon a time she
was an innocent blonde girl Lizzy Grant. She
is flopped and failed to catch public eye to be
a singer as Lizzy Grant. Somehow, she is re-
invented herself as Lana Del Rey with eerie
low voice and finally began to enter the music
industry. Del Rey herself is an example of the
American dream. She was a girl looking to
make it as a singer, and had to re-invent
herself in order to do so.

The songstress utilizes American
subjects as fundamental part of her brand. She

says in interview with Heaf (2012: par. 21)
that “as a person who becomes really attached
to places for their energy and their beauty, for
me New York was a match. To lose it, it
really felt like my life was over.” She is very
absorbed with this city that never sleeps and
the city of dream. With all the crowd,
attractiveness, and problems, the city is her
equal spirit.

B. The Homology

It is already mentioned that the aim of
Genetic Structuralism is to uncover the
homology between the theme of a literary
work and the author’s world view as the
representation of his/her social consciousness
during their lives. Thus, based on literary
research linked to the objects of the study,
Lana Del Rey’s views are able to reveal. After
showing the themes of the lyrics and Del
Rey’s views, the homology between the
themes of the lyrics and Del Rey’s view can
be exposed. The homology between the
themes of the lyrics and Del Rey’s view about
American Dream and American society in the
modern era are as follows:

1. Living in the Lap of Luxuries

The presentment of glamorous life in
the Lana Del Rey albums theme is tightly
correlated with the wealthy background
family of her. Parties, expensive dresses, and
high-end brands mentioned in songs are just
customs for rich people existence. She is a
rich girl by born consequently luxury is not

far from her mindset affecting her style of writing.

Her predicate as a controversial singer surely gives her rumor for her fame. The background of her family makes people speculates that her father, precisely, helps her to gain success. Also, the alcohol and the drugs issues when she was young indicate that she has a great sum of money on her own pocket to buy illegal things for an underage.

2. Habituating Unhealthy and Destructive Lifestyle

The consequence of having no issues with money leads Lana Del Rey into a destructive lifestyle. Drinking, getting high on drugs, and meeting with strangers in the lyrics are the real bad engagements she actually did. She answers in an interview concerning and talking about her past her alcohol problem.

“A lot of the time when I write about the person that I love, I feel like I'm writing about New York. And when I write about the thing that I've lost I feel like I'm writing about alcohol because that was the first love of my life. Sure, there have been people, but it's really alcohol.” (Heaf, 2012: par.17)

She says that every time she writes about romance or it seems she inspired by something, she ends up back writing about alcohol because it is the first love of her life. She cannot leave a day without getting drunk from alcohol. It is a habitual thing she accustomed since she is just a little girl. By getting high and drunk, she is free from the reality and its problems.

3. Possessing Morbid and Gloomy Disposition

Lana Del Rey's worldview about bad mental attitudes always looking down from a given situations, are portrayed through the personae in the lyrics. Her adoration to the glamorous of the idea die in an early age e.g. Kurt Cobain and Amy Winehouse in real life can be found many in the lyrics. In “Blue Jeans”, Lana mentions the name of a teenage American heartthrob in the 50s, James Dean. He was a good looking American actor who died at the age of 24. More, in “Body Electric”, she writes some infamous American icons, Elvis and Marilyn as in Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe. The three of them are significant cultural icons of America who died in rather young age so that after all times public always remembers them as eternally young. Also, the first album which brought her into success is no other than *Born to Die*. Whether it is coincidence or not, it is very clear where she roots her principal, ‘the good die young’.

4. Embracing the Dark Side of American Dream and the Melancholy of Patriotism

Lana Del Rey is an American Darling for sure. She has many articles talking her virtue about her American Dream and patriotism. For the record, she has a song called “American Dream (Damn You)” in the year 2011 which telling a story of messed up youngsters. Also, a well-known American catastrophic love story enfolded in a very

thick American Dream theme by Scott F. Fitzgerald *Great Gatsby* turned into a 2013 modern movie has an original soundtrack called "Young and Beautiful" which sung none other than the modern icon of American Dream, Lana Del Rey herself. In conclusion to the sentences before, all of above is not a simply coincidence. Looking at her music videos, it is easier to find American related such as a flapping American flag as a framework of the main object. Public has much aware that Lana Del Rey cannot be left out from the topic of American Dream and her patriotism. Lastly, speaking of Lana Del means people have to understand and remember that she has her own personal manners about the concept of her American Dream and patriotism which are different than the conventional knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

First, there are five main themes found: (1) living in the lap of luxuries, (2) wearing a beauty queen mask, (3) habituating unhealthy and destructive style of life, (4) possessing morbid and gloomy disposition, and (5) embracing the dark side of American Dream and the melancholy of patriotism. Second, there are four established views integrated to the themes: (1) living in the lap of luxuries family background as an early advantage, (2) habituating unhealthy and destructive style of life since teenagers, (3) possessing a chronic morbid and gloomy disposition, and (5) embracing the dark side

of American Dream and the melancholy of patriotism. Lastly, the homologies are: (1) living in the lap of luxuries, (2) habituating unhealthy and destructive style of life, (3) possessing morbid and gloomy dispositions, and (4) embracing the dark side of American Dream and the melancholy of patriotism.

The themes and her views are rather connected to one another since she is the song-writer of the albums. The story itself leaned on her past life journey. As stated on some interviews on how the story goes in the lyrics is her true view about the world. Money, fame, pessimism, American Dream etc. related to her view more or less affect her works. She is widely aware that even though she has a comfortable life and has it all, they are not as much defined her true happiness. The lines between her true happiness and the pleasure of desire and lust are very blurred. Yet, she is already drowned herself to such lifestyle. Glimmering lifestyle besets her into eternal bittersweet kind of her own made prison.

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