

The Literary Bildungsroman in the Multi-album

Resources:



Lyricism of Lorde

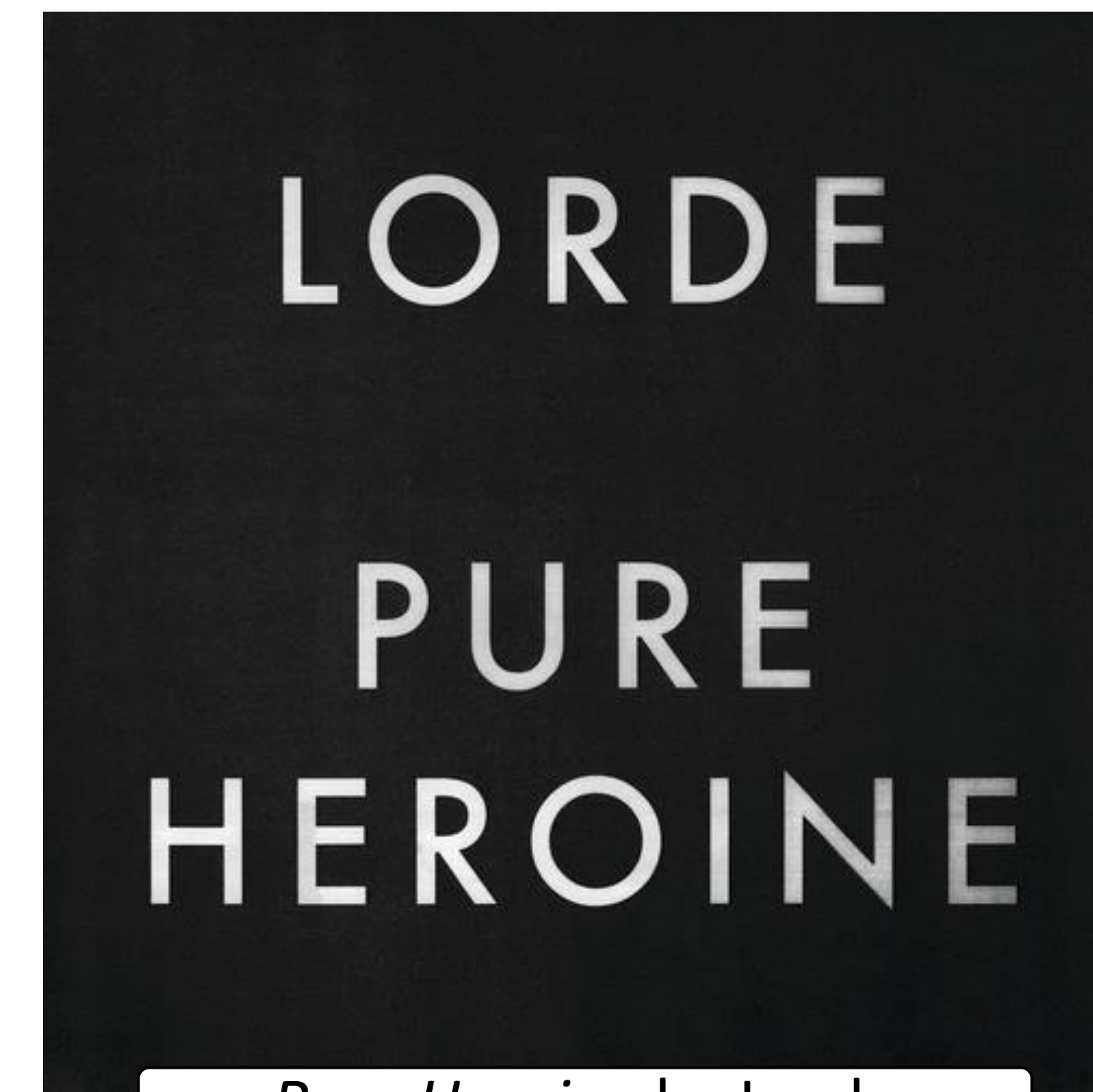
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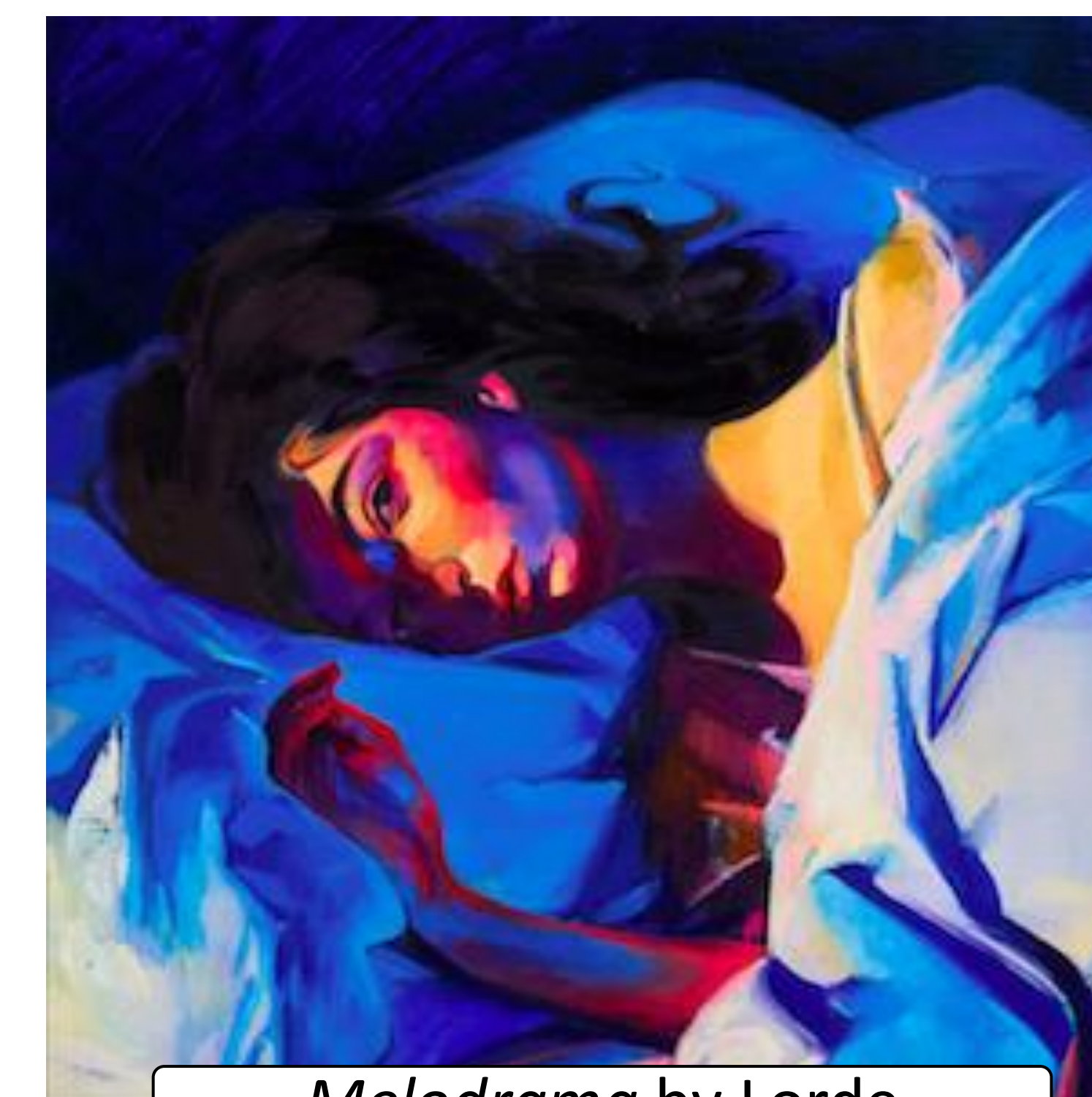
Introduction and background:

- Since the beginning of time music has been used as a form of self-expression and storytelling. My interest in this research began with my passion for music, and specifically the music of Lorde. Lorde has been my favorite artist for the last 6 years, her lyricism goes beyond the bounds of what is considered average "pop" music, and has a special element of relatability to it.
- I believe that music, even the frequently discounted "pop" music, deserves to be evaluated with a degree of literary merit. The literary tradition of "bildungsroman" is a German tradition that encapsulates the typical story of a "young man" leaving home to learn more about himself and the world around him, before returning home to reflect on what he's learned.
- Historically, there has been a large gender disparity between stories with male versus female main characters being included in this literary tradition. Through this research I hope to help expand the ideas of media that can be viewed with literary merit. These albums can be appreciated in an academic setting by pointing out the ways in which Lorde's lyricism aligns with the requirements to be categorized as a work of the bildungsroman.



Pure Heroine by Lorde

"And I've never felt more alone/feels so scary getting old"
- "Ribz"



Melodrama by Lorde

"But I hear sounds in my mind/Brand new sounds in my mind"- "Green Light"



Solar Power by Lorde

"Couldn't wait to turn fifteen/Then you blink and it's been ten years/Growing up a little at a time, then all at once" – "Secrets from a Girl"



Virgin by Lorde

Preliminary Findings:

When looking at the multi-album lyricism of Lorde I found that the structure and timeline of her work fits perfectly within the genre conventions of bildungsroman.

- Lorde's songwriting spans back to her early teen years, and continues into her late 20's which is contemporary
- Her lyrics embody the anxieties of change and world exploration that feature in all works considered to be part of the bildungsroman
- Her more recent works also embody the element of reflection on personal growth that differentiate the bildungsroman from many other genres

Future Directions:

There are a variety of directions that this research can be taken. My investigation was centered around only one lyricist, which provided a very narrow and specific lens for my research.

- To continue my research I could investigate other contemporary artists who have multi-album discography spanning their coming-of-age experience
- Expand my scope of research to look at artists like Olivia Rodrigo, Conan Gray, and Mitski who have similar lyrical styles to Lorde
- Including more contemporary artists, especially women and queer people, would help broaden the traditionally heteronormative male understanding of the bildungsroman
- This expansion of what's included in the bildungsroman can also be applied to more contemporary films and television shows that are frequently not included in discussion of the genre

Acknowledgements:

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Research Methods:

Primary Research-

- I began the research process by listening to each album in release order while reading along with the lyrics
- Listened to a host of interviews with Lorde that cover her intentions behind the lyricism of her albums
- As I went, I compiled a list of lyrics that communicated themes about the coming-of-age experience
- Once I had my list of lyrical quotes I was able to compare them with published details about Lorde's life, such as birthdays and moving countries, to provide context to the lyrics collected
- Additionally, I read a variety of articles about the bildungsroman literary tradition to understand the conventions necessary for a work to fit the genre

Secondary Research-

- Next I found and read several applicable articles researching coming-of-age storytelling through song lyrics
- I also read a handful of articles that helped account for the lack of feminine representation in the genre of bildungsroman, especially before the 20th century, and the necessity of making the label more inclusive

"If She could see me now
...It made me a woman,
being hurt like that" – "If
She Could See me Now"