



HWA CHONG INSTITUTION (HIGH SCHOOL SECTION)

HUMANITIES RESEARCH PAPER 2021

Topic: A Feminist Study of Ariana Grande's "thank u, next"

Slant: Literature

Total Word Count (excluding appendixes, footnotes & references): 5497

Student's (official) Name: Liu Kaiyu

Class: 4i4

Name of Teacher-Mentor: Ms Kalavathi d/o Ganasen

Declaration

I declare that this assignment is my own work and does not involve plagiarism or collusion. The sources of other people's work have been appropriately referenced, failing which I am willing to accept the necessary disciplinary action(s) to be taken against me.

Student's Signature : Liu Kaiyu (Signed)

Date of Submission: 16/8/2021

Chapter 1: Introduction	2
1.1 General Background	2
1.2 Rationale	4
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Thesis Statement	5
1.5 Scope of Research / Delimitation(s)	5
1.6 Significance of Research / Usefulness	6
1.7 Limitations	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
2.1 Feminism	7
2.1.1 Types of feminism	8
2.2 Ecriture féminine	9
Chapter 3: Methodology	11
Chapter 4: Discussion, Interpretations and Analysis	12
4.1 Women’s strength, self-appreciation and independence	13
4.2 Pride in expression and desire	16
4.3 Journey of self-improvement and growth	19
4.4 Truthful and heartfelt display of emotional vulnerability	22
5.0 Conclusion	23
Appendix	24
Bibliography	25

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 General Background

Ariana Grande is arguably one of the most successful and influential female pop artists in the pop scene today, with her songs being loved by millions of people all around the world. She developed a deep passion for theatre and performed from a young age. From her beginnings as a Broadway performer to an actress in Nickelodeon's 2010 show "Victorious", Ariana Grande has broken free of her acting career targeted towards a young demographic and emerged as a truly expressive and mature singer-songwriter, releasing numerous majorly successful albums. Debuting with a heavily bubblegum pop-like and overly optimistic "Put Your Hearts Up", Ariana Grande wishes to leave that persona behind and be able to truly write the music she wishes to put out. In the earlier stages of her musical career, Ariana Grande's works in her album "Yours Truly" (2013) consisted mostly of not only pop music, but also Rhythm and Blues music as well as the infusion of elements of funk and dance music. Subsequently, Ariana Grande took to exploring the genres of electropop music and various forms of trap music in her newest album "Positions". Her songs grant the listeners a pleasant hearing experience, as her songs offer wide varieties of emotion, from melancholy, yearning, all the way to exhilaration and a sense of freedom.

Her debut studio album *Yours Truly* was generally well-received by critics. According to Billboard critic Jason Lipshutz:

" *Yours Truly* carries the expectations of a young singer who has already proven herself on the pop charts," and through "pinpoint production, sleek beats and Ariana Grande's commanding vocals", she was able to build upon her fanbase instead of fading away after being a one-hit

wonder (2013). Many critics and fans alike have compared her music and singing style to be similar to that of Mariah Carey, stemming from Ariana Grande's extremely impressive vocal range, powerful singing voice and whistle register, which are all characteristics that were possessed by the massively successful songstress. However, she has also been criticised for being unoriginal, or just a carbon copy of Mariah Carey.

Despite initial criticism and scepticisms about her originality, Ariana Grande has established her own style which has received worldwide acclaim. She has received numerous commendable accolades throughout her musical career. Examples include a Grammy award in 2018 with her album "Sweetener", and even 22 Guinness Book World Records. The singles "Thank U, Next", "7 Rings", and "Break Up with Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored" made Ariana Grande the first solo artist to hold the top three spots on the Billboard Hot 100 simultaneously, and the first woman to succeed herself at the top of the UK. These all serve to highlight the considerable impact she has had on the global pop-music market. Her music, more so recently, has focused on promoting themes of empowerment, especially towards women, which can account for her music's appeal to the global demographic. Hence, I will be studying her album *thank u, next* (stylised in lower case), placing emphasis on bringing out details that relate to the theme of feminism. Inferences in her lyrics will also be analysed through a feminist literary lens.

1.2 Rationale

Evolving from a kids' show actress to a massively successful singer today, Ariana Grande's wide array of musical work which are highly adored by listeners today provides various opportunities to explore her songs' themes through a literary scale. She has always been known as a positive influence in terms of empowerment and self-discovery, and through this analysis, I hope to uncover the way in which she incorporates her ideals in her music. By lyrics that focus on self-love and pride, Ariana Grande has emerged as a prominent figure who pushes for a more gender-equal society.

1.3 Research Questions

- How does Ariana Grande evoke themes of female empowerment and self-discovery in her works?
- To what extent are her songs inspired by or reflect personal life experiences, and what sorts of allusions and references does she make in her work?
- How do the images conjured up through the course of reading her lyrics express a certain degree of her emotional vulnerability?

1.4 Thesis Statement

Ariana Grande, through her lyrics and multimodal elements of her songs and music videos, seeks to connect with the hearts of modern listeners. By presenting issues like self-discovery and trauma whilst simultaneously not denying her emotional vulnerability and scars, her music works actively in evoking themes of feminism.

1.5 Scope of Research / Delimitation(s)

This paper will be limited to explore how feminism is discussed in 5 of Ariana Grande's songs in her 2019 album *thank u, next*, these 5 songs being "thank u, next", "7 rings", "break up with your girlfriend, i'm bored", "ghostin" and "imagine" (all stylised in lower case). The lyrics and music videos of these songs will be the focus of analysis, with frequent references to Ariana Grande's personal experiences for contextual purposes. Her album *thank u, next* has been seen as a turning point in her stardom. Despite already having a significant presence in the pop scene, *thank u, next* was the album that caused another spike in her popularity, with the songs being treated like anthems of self-empowerment and growth. This makes the album special and worthy of study.

1.6 Significance of Research / Usefulness

Almost all of the songs in the album revealed a personal side of her. She has responded to critics in a Billboard interview in 2018, that she wanted to "talk to (her) fans", through her music. Having prior knowledge that Ariana Grande has gone through a lot of hardships in her ever-growing career as a singer, her lyrics are heavily enriched with her personal experiences. A deeper dive into this research can examine how her song creates such an effect.

One of her earlier albums *My Everything* has been reviewed as "generic and faceless" by Caroline Sullivan in 2014 in a *The Guardian* article. This research will help to find out what in her music has changed and what might have made her stand out so much in the pop scene today. There has been quite little academic research done on her songs, and existing

ones tend to focus on either one single song or the whole album, so this paper hopes to contribute to academia.

1.7 Limitations

This research will be limited to 5 songs within one of her albums *thank u, next*, and how these songs tie in with feminist elements. Her album *thank u, next* is arguably one of her most successful in terms of public outreach and streams on various musical platforms. Hence, not all songs that contain feminist ideals will be analysed in this research. In addition, due to the fact that Ariana Grande is an active artist who continues to put out new songs consistently, her approach and focus of her songs might have shifted or morphed to take on a new shape. Hence, only the interpretations pertaining to these 5 songs, “thank u, next”, “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored”, “7 rings”, “ghostin” and “imagine” will be taken into account in this research. These, despite being amongst the most popular, still only consist of a minor portion of her entire discography, hence taxing at the research’s ability to give a very complete and comprehensive reading of her musical expression as a whole.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this literature review, feminist literary theory will be discussed. For the sake of this research paper, one specific approach to feminist literature, *Ecriture Feminine*, will also be discussed.

2.1 Feminism

Feminism is generally understood as the advocacy for or belief that women should receive equal rights in terms of political, economic or social rights. Feminist theory will then be an extension of feminist ideals into a variety of disciplines, such as art and anthropology. The origin of the term “feminism” dates back to 1837, with “féminisme” being coined by French Philosopher François Marie Charles Fourier, one of the founders of utopian socialism. He believed that women should be given equal opportunities in areas like employment, by pushing for emphasis on proficiency instead of gender prejudice in the process of hiring. Aside from this, Fourier also stressed women’s “emotional and sexual deprivation” being the oppressed and inferior sex, and that a “denial of sexual freedom is equated with the denial of an immortal soul.” (Goldstein, 1982). Hence, feminism has its focus placed on the liberation of women and elimination of gender roles, especially of the man overpowering the woman in any circumstance solely due to their gender, such as in a relationship, marriage or in the work scene.

However, some also have differing views as to what feminism constitutes. For example, some think that “feminism is a concept often misunderstood as signifying a genealogy solely of women’s rights and social, political and economic advancements.” Instead, feminism is not “a movement wholly about and for women,” but instead of all human beings as a whole (Wright, 2018).

2.1.1 Types of feminism

Feminism is a wide umbrella term that summarises the movement, but there are subsets within the term “feminism” itself. In Rosemarie Tong’s book “Feminist Thought”,

there are 8 main types of feminism recognised and embraced by feminists presented: liberal, radical, Marxist feminists and socialist, psychoanalytic, care-focused, multicultural / global / postcolonial, eco-feminists and postmodern feminists (Tong, 2013). Of these, liberal feminism has been developing the most rapidly today and is generally considered the basis of feminist movements - to liberate and free women from their position of inferiority and subservience. According to Tong, liberal feminism is equality of opportunity, which means women and men have “equality of opportunity” and have the “same rights” (Tong, 2013). Liberal feminism conceives of freedom as personal autonomy - living a life of one’s choosing - and political autonomy (Baehr, 2004). Freedom is a core concept to liberal feminism. Women should have the power to dictate their own lives, without being overshadowed by the decisions of their masculine counterparts. Liberal feminism is a view that women have full and complete individual freedom and personal autonomy to live their lives the way they want.

2.2 Ecriture Féminine

For the purpose of this paper, instead of applying only the movement of feminism, a post-structuralist feminist literary theory, *écriture féminine*, will be used to analyse Ariana Grande’s songs.

Écriture Féminine was coined by French feminist and literary theorist Helene Cixous, and attempts to establish a more feminine style of writing that hopes to represent the voices of women. One of the major components of this theory, also called “women’s writing”, is the shift away from the “phallogentric” way of writing, meaning that language used is skewed to be more masculine, often represented by a rigid structure of logic and lack of any

disturbances or breaks in most written narratives. *Ecriture Feminine* places experiences before language, and privileges non-linear, cyclical writing that “evades the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system.” (Cixous, 1976)

This theory was heavily driven by the psychoanalytic field of study developed by Sigmund Freud which sought to discover the hidden fields of desires in the human mind. What was significant was how it appeared that men’s desires were being prized or represented over women’s. The phallus, a male organ, was often referred to by Freud in his theory, and it acted as a “phallic” symbol, which represented the power-driven authority of men. As a result, women had a lack of such power symbols. Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, believed that this phallic structure also applied to language through binary oppositions, which was part of the Structuralist theory by Ferdinand de Saussure. In short, language is comprehended through a structure consisting of pairs of words that have completely opposite meanings, such as masculine and feminine. These opposites grant words meaning.

Post-structuralist feminists like Cixous aimed to redefine this rigid symbolic structure of language. Cixous disapproved of this binary opposition structure because it only reaffirmed that men played a dominant role in today’s world - men control recessive women who are then perceived as weaker shadows of men. This structure served to legitimise and perpetuate that a certain group is favoured over the other. Freud even used the metaphor of women being a “dark continent”, unexplored and undeveloped, but Cixous approached with a separate perspective, and celebrated it as the lack of control possible over women in the Symbolic Order, which is a universal structure encompassing the entire field of human action

and existence developed by Lacan (Klages, 2012). This binary structure was emphasised by society through the patriarchal advantage men had over women, and societal language has become masculine in nature, or phallogentric. Cixous described this as “self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallogentricism” (1976), where men indulge in their narcissistic power dynamic over women. Cixous claimed that women’s position in Lacan’s Symbolic Order of language is ambiguous, and hence also freer. As a result of the patriarchal structure and power that men have had over women, women have become repressive in their writing. Signs of women being repressive include; an inability to express inner desires without restraint; experiences of negative emotion, usually guilt, when expressing emotional needs; and the generation of self-hate.

Écriture Feminine can then be expressed through breaking the structure of phallogentricism by first, expressing the needs of the body without restraint, which is seen as an “anti-logos weapon”. Women must adopt the free spirit of “laughter” in “Laugh of the Medusa”, to freely express themselves. Especially in Ariana Grande’s songs “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored” and “imagine”, her bodily desires are well-represented in her lyrics. Secondly, instead of writing in prose, more free-flowing forms of writing, like poetry, is preferred as it does not conform to the strict logic, rules and regulative structures of writing a prose. Song lyrics themselves can be seen as a more free-flowing form of writing. She highlighted the importance of women writing about their own bodies, thus discarding any pre-established prejudice against women that has been built up in the society.

Chapter 3: Methodology

By undertaking a multimodal approach of analysis, the themes and issues discussed within 5 songs, “thank u, next”, “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored”, “7 rings”, “ghostin” and “imagine”, in the album will be discussed. By multimodal, elements such as the visual elements of the music video and the aural qualities of the song itself will also be used occasionally in addition to just the lyrics of the song as they can be significant to the themes portrayed by the song. Hence, certain frames within the music video and the audio design of the whole work itself will also be included in the analysis.

Chapter 4: Discussion, Interpretations and Analysis

Prior to the release of *thank u, next* near the end of 2018, Ariana Grande has experienced a series of traumatic, rough and heartbreaking events which took a toll on her mental and physical well-being. In 2015, a large amount of support was removed from her after a huge donut-licking scandal. In her 2017 tour, a terrorist bombing during her concert led to the death of 22 audiences and parents. In 2018, she ended her two-year relationship with her ex-boyfriend Mac Miller and was engaged to Pete Davidson afterwards. However, this engagement ended in six months following the overdose and passing of Mac Miller. People on the internet pushed the blame of Mac Miller’s overdose on her. It is undeniable that she was enveloped in extreme guilt, stress, anxiety and sadness from these events. However, she proved herself to be a “beacon of resilience” (Hunt, 2016) in the pop scene, where she was able to put out a whole entire album only 6 months after her previous album, *Sweetener*. Despite being popular before “thank u, next” was released, her name has indeed been secured

after releasing the album, which was filled with self-loving, empowering and feminist anthems which focused not only on her journey of self-discovery and care.

4.1 Women's strength, self-appreciation and independence

Ariana Grande's album *thank u, next* wishes to send a message that women can be just as good by themselves, and they do not need a male counterpart in order to prove their worth. I have selected lyrics from the songs "thank u, next", "break up with your girlfriend, i'm bored" and "ghostin". Rather than frantically trying to maintain a weakening relationship, Ariana Grande reiterates the importance of not only women finding time to discover and forge closer relationships with themselves. After failing to find meaning in her relationships, she expresses through these songs that the epitome of her happiness is not from other people, but from being comfortable with herself. By using *Ecriture Feminine*, it is important for women to write about and for themselves, and Ariana Grande does exactly that in these songs.

Data 1: Song "thank u, next"

Plus, I met someone else

We're havin' better discussions

I know they say I move on too fast

But this one gon' last

'Cause her name is Ari

And I'm so good with that (so good with that)

In the lyrics above, Ariana Grande makes allusions to her past failed relationships. "I know they say I move on too fast" reveals how people possibly criticised Ariana Grande for her

numerous failures to maintain a long, healthy relationship. However, Ariana Grande wishes to explain that the “someone else” whom she met went by the name “Ari”. Her fans know her by her nickname “Ari”, and it is evident that Ariana Grande has reached a point where she is highly comfortable with herself, and that she is fine with being alone. The lyrics also include the line “but this one gon’ last.” This is representative of how self-identity cannot be undermined and in Ariana Grande’s case, her self-love is here to stay and even if she does commence a new relationship, she would not forget to care for herself. The lyrics also include “we’re havin better discussions”. The word “better” highlights that a healthy relationship with yourself is the most difficult to attain, and in some circumstances, is more desirable than a relationship with other people. At the end of this portion, she also mentions how she was very “good with that”. This highlights how self-love is the most satisfying and gratifying sort of love. Ariana Grande wishes to relinquish her past with her ex-boyfriends, and focus on herself instead, putting out a strong, positive message to all her listeners.

Data 2: Song “thank u, next”

Thought I’d end up with Sean, but he wasn’t a match

Wrote some songs about Ricky, now I listen and laugh

Even though I almost got married, and for Pete I’m so thankful

Wish I could say ‘thank you’ to Malcolm, cause he was an angel

The opening of “thank u, next” is highly reflective of Ariana Grande’s personal life. The names “Sean”, “Ricky”, “Pete” and “Malcolm” are all the names of her ex-boyfriends. Especially for the period where Ariana Grande was dating Big Sean, she was not yet established enough in the pop scene, and a large part of her identity was built around her relationship with Big Sean. However, it is a different story now and she wishes to portray

how she is an independent and impactful artist, even when she is on her own. Ariana Grande wishes to pay homage to the individuals who played a role in shaping her past, and she is unafraid to namepoint. Despite the unsuccessful nature of all her previous relationships, she does not include this portion of the lyrics to put them down, but instead to express her gratitude to them for being part of her life. This is what makes “thank u, next” not only feminist but highly respectful, touching and heart-warming at the same time.

Data 3: Song “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored”

Break up with your girlfriend

Yeah, yeah, 'cause I'm bored



Fig 1: Ariana Grande looking intently at her lookalike in “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored”

At first glance, this song appears to be an expression of Ariana Grande’s wrongful yearning and desire for a taken man. However, by looking at the music video, there is a hidden meaning behind the song which Ariana Grande wishes to convey. A considerably large portion of the music video includes the camera panning around Ariana Grande and her lookalike, who had the same exact makeup, hairstyle and outfit as her. As the point of view orbits around the pair, their faces are constantly switching with each rotation. This suggests that the lookalike is supposed to represent Ariana Grande when she was still in a relationship.

At the end of the music video, Ariana Grande is shown to be kissing her lookalike. The line “break up with your girlfriend” is targeted at the man in the video not for Ariana Grande’s desire for a man, but instead her desire for the lookalike to break free of her relationship with him. Ariana Grande wishes to liberate herself from the restraints and stresses of a relationship, and emphasises how she placed self-love before any external relationships.

4.2 Pride in expression and desire

The songs used in this section include “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored”, “imagine” and “7 rings”. Ariana Grande takes to representing the bold and egoistic side of her womanhood with numerous tracks within the album as well. Even though she is extremely thankful for the people in her life, she pushes for women to be unafraid to express themselves, whether it is in their monetary abilities or bodily desires, which aligns largely with the features of *Ecriture Feminine*. Signs of women being repressive include negative emotions when or complete avoidance of expressing desires, but the songs used clearly do not represent this repressive approach to writing. This balances out the dynamic of the album, and overall, makes it more cohesive. A lot of her lyrics are also deliberately unsound grammatically and heavily involve repetition.

Data 1: Song “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored”

You can hit it in the mornin’

Yeah yeah, like it’s yours

I know it ain’t right

But I don’t care

In this song, the setting of the music video was shot in a bar and at a house party, where party-goers were indulging in alcoholic pleasures and having a good time. The setting was representative of a sensual and desire-filled atmosphere. In the lyrics taken above, Ariana Grande is seen being the dominant figure, demanding for a relationship to be ended and how she did not “care” about the consequences. This sense of assertiveness is normally not attributed to be a very feminine trait, but Ariana Grande wishes to break free of that with this music video, where she is seen to be the center of the man’s attention.

Data 2: Song “imagine”

Click click click, and post

Drip drip dripped, in gold

Quick quick quick, let’s go

Kiss me and take off your clothes

Imagine a world like that

Ariana Grande would like to move on from Mac Miller’s passing and “imagine” was a bittersweet representation of Ariana Grande’s fantasies if Mac Miller and her were still together. Ariana Grande still expresses her lustful desires and longing for Mac Miller’s intimacy, and she wishes to enjoy simple but pleasurable times with him, and she does so non-repressively. The structure of the first three lines are incomplete sentences that are short and sharp, and involve the repetition of words like “click”. This rapid rhythm is non-grammatical and evokes a sense of urgency in her sexual desires. The word “post” was a reference to Ariana Grande and Mac Miller’s frequent Snapchat and Twitter posts about each other when they were still dating, and the word “gold” was indicative of how their time

together was ever so precious. In the chorus, she snaps back to reality - she herself knows that her fantasies were no longer possible. As such, this song acts as a counterweight to “thank u, next”. Ariana Grande admits that she has never truly forgotten about her past lover.

Data 3: Song “7 rings”

My wrist, stop watchin', my neck, is flossin'

Make big deposits, my gloss, is poppin'

You like, my hair? Gee, thanks, just bought it

I see it, I like it, I want it, I got it (Yeah)

...

Wearing a ring but ain't gon' be no Mrs.

This song involves Ariana Grande flaunting her riches and enjoying herself with her friends. In this section, Ariana Grande's thoughts jump from her “wrist” to her “neck” and then “gloss” and “hair” instead of narrating logically, and this section is hard to understand at first glance. This is actively dispelling the normally logical phallogocentric structure of writing as there is a lack of a logical progression or linear structure. The choppy rhythm of “I see it.. I got it” highlights how she gives in to materialistic temptations and she is extremely care-free in doing so. She revels in the moment and does not need a man to financially support her, and she is able to live a life of luxury and riches with her friends. She is actively rejecting the narrative that men are the financially able ones of the pair, and this song definitely shows that she is highly capable on her own, as seen from how she claims that a ring does not make her a “Mrs.”

4.3 Journey of self-improvement and growth

The songs used in this section include “thank u, next” and “7 rings”. An integral theme of the album is self-improvement and learning. Rather than indulging in a cycle of self-pity over her difficult predicaments, Ariana Grande views her experiences as lessons where she can learn from. This is a wake-up call to women around the world - failed relationships and traumatic experiences can fortify their spirits for good instead of shattering them. The impressive amount of optimism, resolution and determination displayed by Ariana Grande through her trying times have become an inspiration to countless fans worldwide, and this message can be deciphered from the two songs used.

Data 1: Song “thank u, next”

One taught me love

One taught me patience

And one taught me pain

Now, I'm so amazing

I've loved and I've lost

But that's not what I see

Cause look what I found, no need for searchin'

In this fragment of the song, it is extremely clear that Ariana Grande drives the point home that her pain-riddled past experiences should be treated like lessons. The word “taught” clearly shows that she has obtained a certain takeaway from each unsuccessful relationship. Rather than wallowing in self-pity and agony from her failure to maintain a long-lasting and healthy relationship, Ariana Grande hopes that listeners from all across the globe can be like her and engage in tireless self-improvement and growth from each failure. The word

“amazing” then implies that these failed relationships have indeed allowed Ariana Grande to become a better person in the long run. “Loved” and “lost” presents a juxtaposition, but she does not want to treat these relationships as “losses”, but as valuable learning points. She emphasises that she has “found”, or in other words, gained something from her relationships with the men in her past. Instead of letting them ruin and tear her apart, she gathers the insights and knowledge from each partner and overall, is strengthened and empowered. Her constant allusions to past events make the timeline complicated and non-linear, which aligns with the features of *Ecriture Feminine*.

Data 2: Song “thank u, next”

One day I'll walk down the aisle

Holdin' hands with my mama

I'll be thankin' my dad

Cause she grew from the drama

Ariana Grande is seen to be optimistic about her future relationship endeavours. Just because she has had negative experiences with her previous relationships does not prevent her from being hopeful about finding the one for her. “Walk down the aisle” is a phrase for getting married, but in this portion, she makes an important reference to her father. Her father left her at a young age, and Ariana Grande is alluding to not only her past, but her mother’s past as well. The diction of “grew” once again shows, that she and her mother alike, have developed and evolved into a better version of themselves after all the “drama” in their lives. This is highly motivation for generations of females to stand up against their “dramas” and grow from them. In this section, Ariana Grande jumps from envisioning her future marriage to referencing her past, making it non-linear and hence a feminine way of writing.

Data 3: Song “7 rings”

*Been through some bad sh*t, I should be a sad b*tch*

Who would've thought it'd turn me to a savage

These two lines were taken from the first verse of her song “7 rings”, and it well encapsulates how Ariana Grande powered through her sad experiences. The use of profanity is explicit, but it only makes her words more impactful and paints her as a fearless and confident female songwriter who is very much able to freely write about what is on her mind, without someone telling her what to say or what not to say, which is a key feature to *Ecriture Feminine*. Ariana Grande also brought up “who would’ve thought” in this portion of the song. This highlights a certain level of scepticism about her ability to rise up again after the series of unfortunate events. However, her mighty return with this album was the best testament to her mental strength and tenacity. Her past has made her into a “savage”, which is a slang term for a bold and fearless individual.

4.4 Truthful and heartfelt display of emotional vulnerability

Despite Ariana Grande’s resolute message for women to be strong and power through their emotional scars, it does not mean that they can be completely forgotten. Ariana Grande, through her songwriting, has played the part of being a role model of a woman who is unafraid to open up her heart completely and write about her heartbreaks. Instead of denying and downplaying the severity of these events, Ariana Grande uncontrollably revisits past traumas, but is courageous enough to share her state of mind with the entire world. This is an important message which she wishes to convey. This aligns greatly with *Ecriture Feminine* -

women should write unapologetically and non-repressively about their emotional scars and the needs that arise from them.

Data 1: Song “ghostin”

I know you hear me when I cry

I try to hold it in at night

When you're sleeping next to me

But it's your arms that I need this time (this time)

....

I know that it breaks your heart when I cry again, over him

I know that it breaks your heart when I cry again, instead of ghostin' him

The song “ghostin” is arguably one of the most personal and touching songs of the album. With trippy and feather-like backward synths and strings paired with Ariana Grande’s dreamy vocals and surreal harmonies, “ghostin” truly pulls at the heartstrings of her listeners as she expresses her innermost vulnerabilities. This song was written in the form of a letter to Ariana Grande’s ex-fiancee, Pete Davidson. Right off the bat, her style of writing is free-flowing as she appears to be speaking to Pete Davidson, and the lyrics are riddled with references to her past albums and her personal life. Ariana Grande is pouring out her sadness over Mac Miller’s death and remorse for dragging Pete Davidson into the sadness as well. She cannot deny that a piece of her heart was still with Mac Miller, and in this fragment of the song, Ariana Grande wrote “I know you hear me when I cry, I try to hold it in at night.” Mac Miller’s death has definitely taken a huge toll on Ariana Grande’s happiness, and it was aggravated by the attacks from people who pushed the blame on her. She also tries to conceal her sorrow, because it hurts Pete Davidson when he hears her weeps. When Ariana Grande

sang “but it’s your arms that I need this time,” she was referring to Mac Miller. She feels bad for yearning for another man’s embrace when she is clearly engaged. However, she is not ashamed to share her needs with the world. She is in no way trying to completely conceal her broken heart, but instead, staring it in the face and confronting them.

5.0 Conclusion

Listening to “thank u, next” was a rollercoaster of emotions. The wide range of sounds of the songs within the album has truly displayed Ariana Grande’s versatility as a singer-songwriter. From the light, crisp and happy tone of “thank u, next” to the heavy, bassy and swaggy tone of “7 rings”, this album has truly sealed her as one of the world’s biggest current pop singers. Even in her newest album “Positions”, Ariana Grande has always taken a feminist stance - the power, dominance, and strength possessed by women are truly marvellous.

By understanding the various ways Ariana Grande partakes in a feminist style of writing and by unpacking the themes within her works, it is undeniable that Ariana Grande has become a very influential and prominent figure in empowerment. By enduring through her immense pain and trauma, she has set the precedent for countless women worldwide to prove that they can be more than their grievances. Instead of throwing their past out, Ariana Grande teaches not only women, but everyone, to embrace their painful past and always search for a lesson within them.

Appendix

Songs used:

“thank u, next”, “imagine”, “break up with your girlfriend, i’m bored”, “ghostin” and “7 rings”

Bibliography

Baehr, A. R., Allen, A., Brennan University of Western Ontario, Samantha, Cornell, D., Cudd, A., Hampton, J., Lloyd, S. A., McClain, L., Nussbaum, M., Okin, S., & Smith, P. (2004). *Varieties of Feminist Liberalism (Feminist Constructions)*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Blackburn, S. (2008). *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (Oxford Quick Reference) (2nd ed.)*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780199541430.001.0001>

De Saussure, F., & Baskin, W. (2011). *Course in General Linguistics*: Translated by Wade Baskin. Edited by Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy (Meisel P. & Saussy H., Eds.). New York: Columbia University Press. doi:10.7312/saus15726

Cixous, H., Cohen, K., & Cohen, P. (1976). The Laugh of the Medusa. *Signs*, 1(4), 875-893. Retrieved April 5, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239>

Goldstein, L. (1982). Early Feminist Themes in French Utopian Socialism: The St.-Simonians and Fourier. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 43(1), 91-108. doi:10.2307/2709162

Hulu, D., Sembiring, E., & Tarigan, N. (2021). An Analysis of Figurative Language in Ariana Grande's Album "Thank U, Next". *Linguistic, English Education and Art (LEEA) Journal*, 4(2), 317-327. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31539/leea.v4i2.1954>

Hunt, E. (2018). Ariana Grande: A beacon of resilience in her worst and biggest year. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/dec/26/ariana-grande-resilience>.

Klages, M. (2012). *L'écriture féminine*. In *Key Terms in Literary Theory* (pp. 48–49). Bloomsbury.

<https://bloomsburyliterarystudies.typepad.com/continuum-literary-studie/2012/03/lecriture-feminine.html>

Lipshutz, J. (2013). Ariana Grande, 'Yours Truly': Track-By-Track Review

Retrieved March 04, 2021, from

<https://www.billboard.com/articles/review/5680149/ariana-grande-yours-truly-track-by-track-review>

Pinto, A. (2013). Introduction to Structuralism

Retrieved March 06, 2021, from

<https://anilpinto.blogspot.com/2013/11/introduction-to-structuralism.html?m=1>

Sullivan, C. (2014, August 21). Ariana Grande: My Everything review – faceless, generic bangerdom. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/aug/21/ariana-grande-my-everything-review>

Tong, R. P. (2013). *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Wright, M. (2018). Feminism. In Edwards E., Ferguson R., & Ogbar J. (Eds.), *Keywords for African American Studies* (pp. 86-89). New York: NYU Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctvwrn5v9.21