



Negotiating Self-Loss Through Denial Defence Mechanism: A Freudian Reading of Rosé's Album *Rosie* (2024)

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Abstract: *This study examines the negotiation of self-loss through the denial defence mechanism in Rosé's album Rosie (2024) using a Freudian psychoanalytic approach. Popular music is positioned as a cultural text that articulates psychological conflict and emotional vulnerability, particularly within toxic romantic relationships. Employing qualitative textual analysis and close reading, this research focuses on three selected songs namely Number One Girl, Toxic Till the End, and Stay a Little Longer to explore how denial operates as an ego defence in managing emotional pain and relational trauma. The findings reveal that denial functions through three interrelated forms: affective denial, cognitive denial, and symbolic denial. Rather than serving merely as a temporary protective mechanism, denial operates continuously to sustain emotional attachment, delay confrontation with loss, and gradually erode the subject's autonomy and identity. This process results in a negotiated form of self-loss, in which the subject remains psychologically functional while experiencing progressive fragmentation of the self. By reading the album as a coherent psychological narrative rather than isolated songs, this study contributes a novel conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of self-loss and denial in popular music, while extending psychoanalytic approaches to the analysis of contemporary female musical texts and affective trauma.*

Keywords: Album, Blackpink's Rosé, Denial Mechanism, Self-Loss, Sigmund Freud.

1. INTRODUCTION

Popular music in the context of contemporary culture can no longer be understood solely as an entertainment product, but rather as a cultural medium that represents and shapes individuals' psychological, emotional, and relational experiences. Through song lyrics, musicians articulate inner conflicts, identity struggles, and affective dynamics that are often difficult to express in everyday social spaces. Therefore, popular music can be positioned as a cultural text that records how individuals interpret emotions, interpersonal relationships, and the formation of subjectivity (Frith, 1996; DeNora, 2000).

In the context of modern romantic relationships, one prominent phenomenon is the rise in relationships characterized by emotional dependency, affective imbalance, and psychological instability. These relationships are often referred to as toxic relationships, namely relationships that are maintained despite the subject's awareness of their destructive impact on emotional well-being and self-identity. Illouz (2007, 2012) explains that modern love culture often normalizes emotional suffering as part of the romanticization of relationships, thereby blurring the line

between love and hurt. This condition has the potential to give rise to recurrent and latent relational trauma (Herman, 1992).

Persistent emotional dependence can lead to the experience of self-loss, a condition in which an individual experiences an erosion of psychological autonomy, personal boundaries, and identity integrity due to the dominance of affective relationships. Fromm (1956) views unbalanced love as a form of self-alienation, while Laing (1960) asserts that oppressive relationships can damage an individual's psychological integrity. In this situation, the love relationship no longer functions as a space for self-actualization, but rather as a source of identity disintegration. However, although self-loss is often understood as a consequence of toxic relationships, the psychological mechanisms that enable individuals to persist in such conditions remain largely un-explained.

Experiences of self-loss are widely represented in the works of female musicians who use music as a medium for reflecting on emotional wounds and negotiating identity. Women's popular music often presents narratives of vulnerability, emotional ambivalence, and conflicts between the desire to remain and the need to let go (Gill, 2007). In contemporary popular culture, women's emotional experiences are frequently celebrated as forms of affective honesty and personal strength, yet at the same time they risk obscuring the psychological suffering endured by the subject (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Such representations open up an important space for reading popular music as a psychic narrative that records the inner conflicts of female subject.

Within this landscape, Rosé, a member of the global K-pop group BLACKPINK, through her solo album *Rosie* (2024), presents an artistic expression that highlights personal and reflective emotional experiences. This album marks a shift from the collective idol image to an individual subject that openly reveals the dynamics of love relationships full of conflict, dependency, and affective wounds. *The songs Number One Girl, Toxic Till the End, and Stay a Little Longer* consistently represent lyrical subjects trapped in destructive relationships, but continue to delay separation through various forms of emotional justification.

From Freud's psychoanalytic perspective, this tendency can be understood through the concept of denial as an ego defence mechanism. Freud (1924/1957; 1936) described denial as a psychological attempt to reject or minimize anxiety-provoking realities in order to protect the ego from emotional distress. In the context of affective relationships, denial allows individuals to maintain emotional attachments by delaying acceptance of painful relational realities (Cramer,

2006). Thus, denial not only serves as a temporary defence but can also play an active role in maintaining detrimental affective relationships.

Interestingly, in the lyrics of the *Rosie* album, denial does not appear as a state of total unawareness. Instead, the lyrical subject demonstrates a partial awareness of the toxic nature of the relationship she inhabits, while simultaneously denying the emotional consequences of that awareness. This pattern aligns with modern trauma perspectives, which emphasize that trauma often operates through repetition, attachment, and resistance to relational rupture (Caruth, 1996; Herman, 1992). Under such conditions, denial not only postpones confrontation with loss but also contributes to the gradual deepening of the experience of self-loss.

Nowadays, many studies on popular music have focused on the symbolic and linguistic analysis of song lyrics, including psychological readings of personality structures within song texts using psychoanalytic approaches (Wafa, 2025). In addition, psychoanalytic studies of popular songs have examined ego defence mechanisms within specific albums, although these analyses remain limited to only a few albums or individual songs (Ridwan & Nafisah, 2024). Other studies have also demonstrated how internal conflicts and psychological dynamics emerge in song lyrics through psychoanalytically oriented symbolism (Marsha Miranda & Mufida, 2025). However, these studies have not yet approached an album as a continuous and coherent psychological narrative.

Based on these considerations, this study is important in order to analyze the representation of denial and the process of negotiating self-loss in the songs *Number One Girl*, *Toxic Till the End*, and *Stay a Little Longer* from Rosé's album *Rosie* (2024), using a Freudian psychoanalytic approach. Through this framework, the study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to literary and popular music studies by positioning the music album as a representation of a dynamic and continuous psychological process, as well as to provide a deeper empirical understanding of the representation of affective trauma and women's psychological dynamics within toxic romantic relationships in contemporary popular culture.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Freudian psychoanalysis views human emotional life as the product of ongoing inner conflicts among the id, ego, and superego. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud (1923/1961) emphasizes that the ego occupies a vulnerable position because it must mediate between the instinctual drives

of the id, the moral demands of the superego, and the pressures of external reality. This condition means that the ego does not fully control an individual's psychic life, as Freud famously stated that "the ego is not master in its own house." In the context of problematic emotional relationships, the tension between affective desires, moral demands, and painful relational realities triggers intense and persistent anxiety.

To manage this anxiety, the ego activates defence mechanisms as a form of psychological protection. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud (1926/1959) explains that defence mechanisms operate by avoiding psychic unpleasure, even if this requires the ego to modify or distort reality, as he states that "*the ego resorts to defensive measures in order to escape unpleasure.*" These mechanisms are unconscious in nature and initially adaptive, as they allow individuals to maintain emotional stability. However, when employed repeatedly and over extended periods, defence mechanisms can distance individuals from their actual emotional reality and weaken the integrative function of the ego.

One of the most fundamental defence mechanisms in Freud's framework is denial. In his essay *Negation*, Freud (1925/1957) explains that a repressed idea or impulse may enter consciousness on the condition that its emotional meaning is rejected, as he states that "*a content of a repressed idea or wish can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is negated*". This concept indicates that denial is not synonymous with total unawareness, but rather involves a form of partial awareness in which reality is cognitively recognized while its affective consequences are refused. In this way, denial allows individuals to continue functioning psychologically even while remaining within painful emotional situations.

In the context of problematic affective relationships, denial plays a crucial role in sustaining emotional attachment. Individuals may normalize suffering, minimize emotional wounds, or ignore relational imbalances that they have in fact already recognized. At this point, denial no longer functions merely as a temporary protective mechanism, but instead becomes a psychic strategy that maintains toxic relationships and postpones confrontation with loss.

In this study, denial is positioned as a defence mechanism that operates through several interrelated forms, namely affective denial, cognitive denial, and symbolic denial. This classification is not intended as a fixed category within Freudian theory, but rather as an analytical framework for identifying variations in the manifestation of denial within song lyrics as symbolic representations of the subject's psychic processes.

Affective denial refers to the refusal to acknowledge negative emotions such as pain, loss, or emotional injury, even when the situation being depicted is clearly distressing. In song lyrics, this form appears when the subject acknowledges an experience of loss while negating the accompanying feelings of grief or suffering. This denial functions to soothe the ego by eliminating recognition of the actual pain being experienced. Cognitive denial refers to the rejection of relational realities or facts. This form emerges when the lyrical subject ignores signs of imbalance, conflict, or relational damage by framing them as temporary or repairable. In this case, the ego rejects objective reality in order to preserve the illusion of emotional stability and the continuity of the affective relationship. Meanwhile, symbolic denial operates through the use of metaphor, repetition, or romanticized diction to mask inner conflict and emotional wounds. In song lyrics, such symbolization allows psychic conflict to be represented indirectly and implicitly. This strategy creates emotional distance between the subject and the reality of injury, rendering suffering poetic and acceptable, while psychologically indicating an avoidance of the underlying emotional conflict.

The continuous use of denial, whether in affective, cognitive, or symbolic forms, has a direct impact on the weakening of ego functions. Freud (1936/1966) emphasizes that defence mechanisms employed excessively can obscure the ego's ability to organize self-experience in a realistic manner. It is at this point that the process of self-loss begins to emerge. In this study, self-loss is understood not as a total collapse of identity, but rather as a gradual process in which the subject continues to function psychologically while experiencing a fragmentation of autonomy, personal boundaries, and self-integrity.

In song lyrics, the process of self-loss becomes visible through the blurring of personal identity, when the subject defines herself primarily through the affective relationship she inhabits. Expressions of extreme dependence, excessive self-sacrifice, and the absence of emotional resolution reflect a condition in which the self no longer exists as an autonomous entity, but rather as a reflection of the relationship. Fromm (1956) refers to this condition as the loss of individuality within a symbiotic relationship, while Laing (1960) views it as a form of existential alienation that disconnects individuals from the experience of their own selves.

Thus, this theoretical framework positions song lyrics as symbolic representations of inner conflict, denial mechanisms, and the psychically negotiated process of self-loss. Freudian psychoanalysis is employed to read the music album as a continuous psychological narrative,

thereby enabling an analysis of how denial is represented and how this mechanism functions in sustaining affective attachment and negotiating the lyrical subject's experience of self-loss.

3. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design employing interpretative textual analysis and uses Freudian psychoanalysis as its analytical framework. A qualitative approach is chosen because the study aims to interpret the psychological meanings represented in song lyrics, particularly those related to experiences of self-loss and the ego defence mechanism of denial. Freudian psychoanalysis is employed not only as a theoretical perspective but also as an analytical tool to examine the psychic dynamics of the lyrical subject as symbolically manifested through language, metaphor, and the narrative structure of the songs.

The object of this study is the song lyrics from Rosé's album *Rosie* (2024). The analysis focuses on the songs *Number One Girl*, *Toxic Till the End*, and *Stay a Little Longer*. These three songs were selected because they thematically represent the dynamics of toxic affective relationships and experiences of self-loss, and quantitatively have the highest number of listeners among the other tracks on the *Rosie* (2024) album, thus occupying a central position in the album's emotional narrative. Accordingly, these songs are treated as key texts that represent the continuous psychological dynamics of the album as a whole.

The subject of this study is the lyrical subject, namely the persona or narrative voice constructed within the song texts. The primary data sources consist of the lyrics of *Number One Girl*, *Toxic Till the End*, and *Stay a Little Longer* from the album *Rosie* (2024). Supporting data are drawn from Freudian psychoanalytic literature, studies on ego defence mechanisms, and previous research relevant to popular music, affective relationships, and women's psychology.

Data collection was conducted through library research and close reading of the song lyrics. The reading process was carried out repeatedly to identify diction, metaphors, narrative structures, and emotional expressions that represent the lyrical subject's inner conflicts. Relevant data were then recorded and categorized in accordance with the research focus, namely experiences of self-loss and the defence mechanism of denial.

Data analysis was conducted in a gradual and systematic manner. First, the researcher identified representations of self-loss in the song lyrics, such as the loss of psychological autonomy, emotional dependence, the blurring of personal boundaries, and self-definition that is contingent

upon affective relationships. Second, the researcher analysed the ego defence mechanism of denial by operationalizing Freudian psychoanalytic concepts into three analytical categories: affective denial, cognitive denial, and symbolic denial. These categories were used to classify and interpret how the lyrical subject denies, minimizes, or masks painful emotional realities. Third, the findings on self-loss and denial were interconnected to examine how these two processes intertwine as continuous psychological dynamics within the unified narrative of the album.

4. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

This chapter presents the results of the analysis and discussion of the psychological dynamics represented in the lyrics of three songs from Rosé's album *Rosie* (2024). The analysis focuses on how the defence mechanism of denial operates as an ego strategy in negotiating painful emotional experiences, as well as how the sustained use of this mechanism contributes to the process of self-loss experienced by the lyrical subject.

4.1 Denial Mechanism

Within the framework of Freudian psychoanalysis, denial is understood as an ego defence mechanism employed when individuals are confronted with external realities or emotional experiences that generate intense anxiety. Freud emphasizes that the ego seeks to protect itself from psychic unpleasure by avoiding or modifying the acceptance of painful realities (Freud, 1926/1959). Denial does not imply a total absence of awareness of reality, but rather a rejection of the emotional meaning or psychological implications of that reality. In the context of lyrical texts, denial can be identified through expressions that implicitly acknowledge the presence of emotional conflict while simultaneously rejecting it through affirmative language or rationalization.

4.1.1 *Affective Denial*

Affective denial refers to an ego defence mechanism that operates by rejecting or suppressing the acknowledgment of negative emotions such as pain, loss, or disappointment, even when the individual is aware of the situation that gives rise to them. Within Freud's framework (1925/1957), painful experiences may enter consciousness as long as their affective meaning is negated. Thus, the subject is not entirely "unaware," but rather knows without fully

feeling. In the analysis of the *Rosie* album lyrics, affective denial emerges as a consistent emotional pattern in which the lyrical subject continually postpones the acknowledgment of inner wounds in order to maintain affective attachment.

A. *Number One Girl*

In the song *Number One Girl*, affective denial is represented through the displacement of negative emotions into a need for external affirmation. Lyrics such as “*Tell me that I’m special, tell me I look pretty*” indicate that the subject does not directly articulate pain or insecurity, but instead conceals them through demands for recognition. This request functions as a substitute for unacknowledged negative emotions, allowing the ego to avoid confronting feelings of worthlessness or the fear of rejection.

A similar pattern appears in the expression “*Say what I’m dying to hear,*” which affectively carries high intensity yet is never named as suffering. The word “*dying*” is used metaphorically to express longing rather than pain. Affective denial operates by packaging pain as a “normal” emotional need, allowing the ego to avoid acknowledging that this need originates from an unequal relationship.

Affective denial reaches its highest intensity when the subject expresses a willingness to sacrifice herself for a single form of symbolic validation, as seen in the line “*I’d give it all up if you told me that I’d be the number one girl in your eyes.*” Here, the pain produced by relational imbalance is not acknowledged as a problem, but instead negated through the fantasy that a single affective recognition can compensate for all losses. The ego suppresses negative emotions by reducing emotional complexity to one singular goal: to be acknowledged and chosen.

Overall, *Number One Girl* demonstrates affective denial as a recurring pattern rather than a momentary response. The subject continually replaces wounds with hope, loneliness with requests, and insecurity with self-sacrifice. Negative emotions are not processed reflectively but displaced, thereby forming the initial foundation of the self-loss process, in which the subject becomes increasingly detached from her own emotional experience.

B. *Toxic Till the End*

Unlike the previous song, affective denial in *Toxic Till the End* emerges within a context of relatively mature cognitive awareness. The subject explicitly acknowledges that the relationship she is in is toxic, as evident in the line “*Call us what we are / Toxic from the start.*” However, this acknowledgment is not followed by an equivalent emotional disengagement. Affective denial operates here not by rejecting the facts, but by rejecting the emotional impact of those facts.

Reflective expressions such as “*I should've known it then that you were jealous and possessive*” indicate that the subject transforms emotional experience into retrospective evaluation. By assigning labels and creating temporal distance, the ego neutralizes pain and avoids deeper affective immersion. Emotions are reported, but not truly re-experienced or felt in their full intensity.

Affective denial is most clearly revealed in the emotional contradiction “*I said I never wanna see your face / I meant I couldn't wait to see it again.*” This statement marks a disjunction between verbal decision and emotional attachment. The subject consciously articulates a boundary, yet refuses to feel the grief and loss that such a separation would entail. In this way, the ego maintains the illusion of detachment without undergoing the painful emotional process that genuine separation requires.

Although an acknowledgment of loss appears toward the end of the song in the line “*You wasted my prettiest years,*” this recognition emerges as a controlled retrospective reflection. Affective denial does not erase emotion but postpones it. As a result, the subject remains attached longer than she should, and gradually loses the ability to align knowledge, emotion, and action within a unified sense of self. This marks an advanced phase of self-loss, the ego knows the truth but is emotionally unable to act upon it.

C. *Stay a Little Longer*

In *Stay a Little Longer*, affective denial emerges at the threshold of separation. The subject does not deny that the relationship is coming to an end, but actively postpones the experience of grief. Pleas such as “*Stay a little longer*” function as affective strategies to slow down the threatening emotional reality. Time is mobilized as a defensive tool so that the ego does not have to immediately confront the pain of abandonment.

Affective denial is also evident in the attempt to replace emotions of loss with other emotions perceived as more tolerable, as expressed in “*Make me wanna hate you, so I don’t have to miss you.*” The subject consciously seeks to avoid the affect of grief by producing substitute emotions. This reflects the ego’s resistance to the emotional vulnerability inherent in loss.

Metaphors such as “*Build us a castle, but then leave me in silence*” and fantasies of control in “*What if I tangled some rope ’round your feet*” illustrate how emotional wounds are symbolically packaged. Aestheticization and imagined control allow the ego to maintain distance from raw emotion while simultaneously delaying the acceptance that separation is inevitable.

Although acknowledgments of fragility appear in lines such as “*I’m fragile, I’m speechless,*” these emotions remain suspended in a state of crisis rather than resolution. Affective denial keeps the subject in a liminal condition aware of loss but not yet able to accept it. As a result, the self becomes increasingly bound to the presence of the other, while the ego’s capacity to stand autonomously continues to weaken.

Overall, affective denial in the *Rosie* album functions as a defence mechanism that enables the lyrical subject to sustain emotional attachment by postponing, displacing, or substituting negative emotions. This denial is not total but partial and continuous, allowing negative emotions to persist without ever being fully processed. Within the album’s narrative, affective denial becomes the foundational basis of self-loss, as the subject gradually loses access to her own authentic emotional experience and comes to depend on a relationship that ultimately undermines her psychological stability.

4.1.2 Cognitive Denial

This ego defence mechanism operates at the level of rational meaning-making in response to painful realities. Here, individuals do not deny the existence of problematic events or relationships, but rather modify the way such realities are understood and interpreted so that they remain psychologically tolerable. The ego normalizes imbalance, rationalizes suffering, or frames destructive relationships as a “natural” part of love. In the lyrics of the *Rosie* album, cognitive denial is evident in the lyrical subject’s efforts to construct relational logic that sustains emotional attachment while simultaneously obscuring its destructive implications for the self.

A. *Number One Girl*

In *Number One Girl*, cognitive denial operates through the way the lyrical subject constructs an understanding of self-worth and affective relationships. Lyrics such as “*Tell me that I’m special, tell me I look pretty*” and “*Tell me that I’m relevant*” indicate that the subject rationally accepts the assumption that self-worth must be confirmed through another person’s recognition. Emotional dependence is not understood as a symptom of an unequal relationship, but rather as a relational need that is considered logical and legitimate.

Cognitive denial becomes even more evident in the line “*I need it and I don’t know why.*” Awareness of emotional need is acknowledged, yet the lack of understanding regarding its cause is not treated as a structural problem within the relationship. The ego suspends critical reflection and chooses to accept the condition as something that “does not need to be questioned.” Consequently, the loss of emotional autonomy is not read as a threat, but normalized as a psychological fact.

Rationalization reaches its peak in the statement “*I’d give it all up if you told me that I’d be the number one girl in your eyes.*” Here, the erasure of personal boundaries and extreme self-sacrifice are not interpreted as losses of identity, but as rational strategies to obtain recognition. Cognitive denial functions by reconstructing an unequal relationship as one that is meaningful and worth fighting for. The repetition of the phrase “*the number one girl*” serves to reinforce this construction of meaning, allowing the illusion of identity stability to be continuously maintained.

Overall, *Number One Girl* illustrates cognitive denial as a defense mechanism that obscures the destructive implications of emotional dependence. The subject does not deny that she needs and yields, but denies that such conditions signify a process of self-loss. Self-loss unfolds latently through patterns of thinking that normalize emotional subordination.

B. *Toxic Till the End*

In *Toxic Till the End*, cognitive denial operates in a paradoxical manner. The lyrical subject demonstrates clear rational awareness of the relationship’s toxicity, as evident in the line “*Call us what we are / Toxic from the start.*” However, this awareness does not lead to relational rupture. Instead, the ego modifies the meaning of this toxicity by

framing it as an inherent and unavoidable condition. Cognitive denial does not erase the fact, but neutralizes its rational consequences.

This is reinforced through retrospective reflections such as “*I should’ve known it then that you were jealous and possessive.*” The awareness here appears as personal regret rather than a structural evaluation of the relationship. By shifting the focus toward self-mis-judgment, the ego avoids the conclusion that the relationship was fundamentally unworthy of being maintained from the outset.

A deeper cognitive distortion is evident in the line “*Honestly impressive / You had me participating.*” Emotional manipulation is reconstructed as a form of participation and even assigned an ambivalent value. This rationalization allows the subject to preserve the illusion of agency and control, despite being factually positioned at a disadvantage.

The explicit contradiction in “*I said I never wanna see your face / I meant I couldn’t wait to see it again*” demonstrates how cognitive denial normalizes inconsistency. The discrepancy between declaration and impulse is not read as serious psychological dissonance, but rather as an acceptable relational dynamic. The repetition of the phrase “*toxic till the end*” then frames the experience deterministically, as if there were no rational alternative other than endurance.

Thus, *Toxic Till the End* represents cognitive denial as a mechanism that sustains destructive relationships through normalization, rationalization, and narratives of fate. Self-loss occurs as the subject continually adjusts her way of thinking to align with a damaging relationship, rather than reshaping the relationship in accordance with her own psychological well-being.

C. *Stay a Little Longer*

In *Stay a Little Longer*, cognitive denial emerges in the context of an almost certain separation. The lyric “*Stay a little longer*” does not deny the fact that separation will occur, but rather interprets it as something that remains negotiable. The ego denies the finality of reality by constructing a logic of postponement, as if additional time could alter the outcome.

Cognitive denial is also evident in the attempt to construct alternative narratives that render loss more psychologically tolerable, as seen in “*Make me wanna hate you, so I*

don't have to miss you.” Loss is not accepted as an inevitable emotional experience, but is instead treated as something that can be cognitively engineered through emotional substitution or the search for blame.

Metaphors of idealization and fantasies of control, such as “*Build us a castle*” and “*What if I tangled some rope 'round your feet,*” illustrate how the ego creates alternative mental realities in order to deny actual limitations. Denial here does not operate by rejecting the fact of departure, but by refusing its rational meaning: that the subject has no control over the other’s decision.

Overall, *Stay a Little Longer* portrays cognitive denial as a continuous effort to postpone acceptance of reality through illusory logic, fantasy, and internal argumentation. Separation is understood as something still open to negotiation rather than as a fact that must be accepted. As a result, the subject remains trapped in an affective relationship that has objectively ended, while the ego’s capacity to accept loss and construct an autonomous identity becomes increasingly weakened.

Across the *Rosie* album, cognitive denial functions as a defense mechanism that enables the lyrical subject to maintain emotional attachment by modifying the way she thinks about relationships, the self, and loss. The facts of toxicity and separation are not erased, but reinterpreted in ways that remain tolerable to the ego. Within the album’s narrative, cognitive denial deepens the process of self-loss by blurring the rational boundaries between love and self-erasure, gradually depriving the subject of the ability to evaluate relationships realistically and to protect her own psychological integrity.

4.1.3 Symbolic Denial

Symbolic denial is an ego defence mechanism that operates through the use of metaphorical language, repetition, and emotional symbols to obscure inner conflicts that cannot be confronted directly. In this form, the ego does not explicitly deny reality or emotion, but rather redirects them into aesthetic and narrative symbolic constructions. Freud (1900/1953) emphasized that unconscious conflicts often emerge in symbolic form when they cannot be expressed directly. In the *Rosie* album, symbolic denial functions to maintain the illusion of emotional stability by wrapping relational wounds in poetic language, allowing suffering to be “narrated” without being fully experienced.

A. *Number One Girl*

In *Number One Girl*, symbolic denial operates through the symbolic construction of the self and the relationship as an emotionally safe, idealized space. Lyrics such as “*Tell me that I’m special*” and “*Tell me I’m a little angel*” show how the ego creates an idealized symbolic image of the self to mask insecurity and fear of rejection. The identity as an “angel” or “sweetheart” functions as a metaphor for emotional safety, replacing acknowledgment of the actual relational uncertainty.

Intense repetition in the phrase “*Say what I’m dying to hear*” signals affective conflict disguised through symbolic hyperbole. The word “*dying*” is not meant literally, but serves as a symbol of urgent emotional need. By framing suffering as poetic longing, the ego avoids confronting loneliness and anxiety directly.

Symbolic denial reaches its peak in the phrase “*the number one girl in your eyes.*” This position is not merely a relational status, but a symbol of totalized idealized acceptance. By reducing the complexity of the relationship to a single central symbol, the ego simplifies emotional conflict and maintains the illusion that symbolic recognition alone is sufficient to guarantee self-integrity. The repetition of this symbol functions to soothe anxiety without addressing the root of the conflict.

Overall, *Number One Girl* illustrates symbolic denial as a repeated linguistic ritual. The subject does not deny fear or insecurity, but masks them through symbols of idealized selfhood. Inner conflict is not eliminated but distilled into aesthetically pleasing language that is psychologically tolerable, initiating the process of self-loss by replacing authentic emotional experience with the symbol of acceptance.

B. *Toxic Till the End*

In *Toxic Till the End*, symbolic denial emerges through narrative contradictions and metaphors of manipulation that allow the subject to express wounds without fully confronting them. The line “*I said I never wanna see your face / I meant I couldn’t wait to see it again*” reveals inner conflict expressed symbolically through verbal opposition. This contradiction is not resolved but left in juxtaposition as a form of psychic compromise.

Symbolic denial becomes even more evident in the metaphor “*Playing with the pieces in my chest.*” The chess game serves as a symbol of emotional manipulation,

while “*pieces in my chest*” represents a fragmented self. This metaphor allows the subject to acknowledge emotional wounds on a symbolic level without fully internalizing the suffering as an affective experience that demands relational separation.

The repetition of the phrase “*toxic till the end*” frames the relational experience within a deterministic symbolic narrative. By portraying toxicity as a relational fate, the ego denies alternative possibilities and postpones the psychological responsibility of disengaging. Symbolic denial functions by normalizing suffering through narrative language that sounds final and inevitable.

Although acknowledgment of loss appears in the line “*You wasted my prettiest years,*” the harm is represented through the symbol of time rather than full emotional immersion. By framing trauma as “*lost years,*” the ego maintains distance from deeper anger and grief. Symbolic denial in this song enables the subject to express wounds while continuing to sustain emotional attachment, allowing self-loss to persist in the form of identity fragmentation.

C. *Stay a Little Longer*

In *Stay a Little Longer*, symbolic denial operates through symbols of postponement, space, and control fantasies. The lyric “*Stay a little longer*” is not intended as a relational solution, but functions as a symbol of denial toward the finality of separation. Time is mobilized as a symbolic medium to delay emotional acknowledgment of the inevitable loss.

Symbolization becomes more pronounced in the line “*Make me wanna hate you, so I don't have to miss you.*” Hatred is presented as a substitute symbol for grief, allowing the ego to avoid the more vulnerable affect of loss. Symbolic denial works by replacing unbearable emotions with alternatives that feel more manageable.

Physical space in “*these four walls*” and the metaphor “*build us a castle*” represent the ego's effort to maintain the illusion of connection. The castle functions as a symbol of an idealized future that is continuously upheld despite the collapse of relational reality. Control fantasies in “*tangled some rope 'round your feet*” illustrate an active form of symbolic denial, in which the ego refuses helplessness by imagining control over the other.

Repetition of pleas and acknowledgments of fragility, such as “*I’m fragile*,” does not lead to acceptance of loss, but keeps the subject in a liminal state. Vulnerability becomes a symbol of petition rather than a point of reflection. Symbolic denial sustains attachment to the relationship through language that postpones emotional resolution.

Overall, symbolic denial in the *Rosie* album functions as a defense mechanism that conceals inner conflict through poetic language, metaphor, and symbolic repetition. Painful emotional reality is not directly denied, but wrapped in narrative constructions that are aesthetically tolerable to the ego. Within the album’s narrative, symbolic denial deepens the process of self-loss by replacing authentic emotional experience with symbols of acceptance, postponement, and idealization, gradually separating the subject from her own psychological reality.

4.2 Negotiating Self- loss Process

The negotiation of self-loss through denial in *Number One Girl*, *Toxic Till the End*, and *Stay a Little Longer* can be understood as a continuous psychological process in which the ego strives to maintain the continuity of emotional identity in the face of relational loss. Unlike total rejection of reality, denial in these three songs operates as a strategy of negotiation: postponing, modifying, and symbolizing loss so that the ego can continue to function.

The first stage is marked by awareness of the threat to the self. The lyrical subjects in all three songs demonstrate an initial recognition that their relationships pose risks to autonomy, emotional stability, and the integrity of the self. In *Number One Girl*, this threat emerges through excessive emotional dependence on a partner’s validation, which has the potential to erode psychological independence. In *Toxic Till the End*, the awareness appears through acknowledgment of a manipulative and possessive relationship, where aspects of the self such as emotional freedom and affective control have already fragmented. Meanwhile, *Stay a Little Longer* presents a more explicit threat in the form of impending separation, which destabilizes relational identity structures and the subject’s sense of security. At this stage, self-loss is not fully recognized but begins to be felt as a looming possibility.

The second stage involves the activation of denial as an ego defence mechanism. Denial functions to postpone full acknowledgment of self-loss by obscuring or negotiating the painful reality. Findings from the discussion of denial representation show that this mechanism

operates in interconnected forms: affective, cognitive, and symbolic. In *Number One Girl*, denial works through idealization and rationalization of the need for recognition, so that emotional dependence is not interpreted as self-loss but as an acceptable form of love. In *Toxic Till the End*, denial emerges through verbal and symbolic contradictions that allow the subject to remain attached despite awareness of relational toxicity. In *Stay a Little Longer*, denial manifests as temporal postponement and control fantasies, which resist the finality of loss without explicitly denying the separation. At this stage, denial allows the ego to mitigate the anxiety generated by the tension between affective desire and the reality principle.

The third stage is the symbolic integration of the experience of loss. Here, the ego does not confront self-loss directly but processes it through symbols, metaphors, and linguistic constructions identified in the analysis of symbolic denial. Lyric contradictions, repeated pleas, and spatial and temporal metaphors serve as media to reconcile the experience of loss with meanings that remain psychologically tolerable. In this way, self-loss is not eliminated but “reframed” so as not to completely destroy the sense of self. This symbolic integration illustrates how language and lyrical aesthetics function as a psychic space for negotiation between acknowledgment and denial.

The final stage is the adaptive yet non-resolutive negotiation of self-loss. Denial allows the lyrical subject to maintain ego functioning and continuity of identity in threatening relational contexts, but it does not fully resolve the underlying psychological conflict. In *Number One Girl*, this negotiation occurs through idealizing fantasies that sustain the illusion of self-worth; in *Toxic Till the End*, through symbolic normalization of the toxic relationship; and in *Stay a Little Longer*, through postponement and symbols of attachment that maintain the illusion of relational continuity. Denial in this context is ambivalent: it is adaptive because it protects the ego from sudden collapse, yet it also potentially prolongs self-loss by delaying confrontation with the emotional reality.

Thus, the three songs form a coherent psychic narrative of negotiating self-loss through denial. Denial does not function as a passive refusal of reality but as an active mechanism operating on affective, cognitive, and symbolic levels to maintain the continuity of emotional identity. This process demonstrates that self-loss in affective relationships does not occur suddenly; rather, it unfolds through a series of internal negotiations that allow the ego to endure, albeit in a fragile and only partially restored state.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that Rosé's *Rosie* album (2024) represents the process of self-loss as a psychic experience negotiated through the ego defence mechanism of denial. Analysis of the three selected songs namely *Number One Girl*, *Toxic Till the End*, and *Stay a Little Longer* shows that denial operates on multiple layers, encompassing affective, cognitive, and symbolic denial, which function simultaneously in response to threats to emotional and relational identity.

Affective denial appears in the suppression of negative emotions and the displacement of pain into a need for affirmation or attachment. Cognitive denial manifests through rationalization and normalization of an imbalanced relationship, making emotional dependence appear as a legitimate form of love. Meanwhile, symbolic denial operates through metaphors, repetition, and aesthetic language that disguise internal conflict and delay the acceptance of loss. These three forms of denial do not operate in isolation but form a continuous psychic narrative throughout the album.

The findings of this study emphasize that self-loss in the song lyrics is not represented as an immediate or explicit destruction of the self, but as a latent process that is actively negotiated. Denial functions ambivalently: on one hand, it preserves ego functioning and psychological stability, but on the other hand, it prolongs affective attachment and obscures the boundaries of personal autonomy. Thus, the *Rosie* album demonstrates that popular music can serve as an expressive medium for complex psychic conflicts, particularly in the context of unbalanced affective relationships.

Future research is recommended to expand the study through comparative approaches across genres, cultures, or time periods, in order to examine variations in the representation of ego defence mechanisms and self-loss in popular music. Integrating perspectives from relational psychology, attachment theory, or gender studies could further enrich understanding of power dynamics, affect, and identity in intimate relationships.

Practically, this study is expected to serve as a reference in literature and popular culture studies for critically re-reading narratives of love, sacrifice, and emotional dependence. Understanding denial as a mechanism for negotiating self-loss can open a space for reflection for listeners and readers on the representation of affective relationships that are aesthetically romantic but psychologically problematic.

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