

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Kendrick Lamar's second album entitled *Good kid M.A.A.D city* is an album that was created in the form of a narrative of Kendrick's childhood when he lived and grew up in the city of Compton, California, which is a city prone to crime and gang activity. Meanwhile Kendrick Lamar's third album, entitled *To pimp a butterfly*, is more universal and objective in raising racial issues faced by African-Americans, but still involves Kendrick's own experiences in it. And even his third album is directly influenced by various jazz instruments which are music belonging to African or black people.

This study intended to give the reader who specifically tries to perceive the albums in a more philosophical way that also indulges in fighting anti-black racism as an African-American individual through hip-hop music.

The writer became interested in deciphering the hidden voice of freedom in the albums. Kendrick Lamar's *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City* album reflects the experiences and challenges faced by black individuals living in underprivileged areas. He focuses on issues such as police brutality, drug dependency, and gang-related violence, highlighting how these problems are often reinforced by institutional racism and a lack of opportunities. Furthermore, the album also celebrates the perseverance and inventiveness of black culture, exhibiting the varied and multifaceted nature of the African-American lifestyle. Lamar's

lyrics delve into the potency of music, art, and storytelling as effective means of resistance and self-actualization. *To Pimp a Butterfly* is a deeply personal and politically charged album that reflects on the ongoing struggles for freedom and justice faced by black communities in America. Through his music, Kendrick Lamar amplifies the voices of those who have been historically marginalized and silenced, urging listeners to engage with the pressing social and political issues of our time. Throughout the album, Lamar explores the complex history and contemporary realities of black life in America, addressing issues such as police brutality, systemic racism, and the struggle for social and political equality. He also delves into the complexities of personal identity, reflecting on his own experiences growing up in Compton, California, and the role that his upbringing has played in shaping his worldview. The writer in particular is interested in figuring out the song lyrics in each of the albums. The writer feels like Kendrick Lamar's albums are predominant in its role for black people and their movement of freedom against racial discrimination.

In this study of the albums, the writer would like to describe the voice of freedom in the song lyrics of the two albums. In particular, the writer would like to describe the connotation and denotation of the meaning in the lyrics.

1.2 Research Problems

To give an insight into the specific parts that this study wanted to analyze, there are several research problems as follows :

1. How the voice of freedom is spoken out throughout the lyrics in the albums?
2. How the denotative meaning and connotative meaning are embedded to the song lyrics?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study will aim to give a detailed analysis of how Kendrick Lamar speaks about the voice of freedom throughout his albums. Additionally, this study will analyse the albums through the denotative and connotative meanings from the song lyrics.

1.4 Previous Studies

In Lawrie's (2016) prior examination of Kendrick Lamar, an "inter-relational" approach was employed, shedding light on previously unexplored aspects of Lamar's poetry in his third studio album, "To Pimp a Butterfly." The author aimed to develop a methodology that emphasizes the connection between the personal and the cultural elements within the poem. Lamar's authenticity emerges from his relationship with both his community and the broader context, despite its potential imperfections. This study offers a fresh perspective that can be applied not only to the rap genre but also to a wider context (Lawrie; 2016).

Another analysis of Kendrick Lamar's works, conducted by Dover, Alison G., and Tony Pozdol, explores how one of the authors employed Lamar's autobiographical hip-hop album, "Good Kid M.A.A.D City," as a means to

encourage in-depth examinations of intricate social, racial, and political issues while complying with established mandates (Dover, Alison G., and Tony Pozdol; 2016).

In an article authored by Haile III, which centers on Kendrick Lamar's second album, the study adopts autoethnography as its primary approach. The research highlights Lamar's contribution of a fresh perspective to the examination of hip-hop, not solely as a commercial enterprise or a conduit for disseminating "black news," but as an alternative method for collecting data and gaining insights into the experiences and existence of black individuals. This article conducts an analysis of Kendrick Lamar's second album to illustrate the fundamental importance of autoethnography, both as a tool for comprehending and articulating reality, as well as a vital component of engaging with Africana philosophy (Haile III; 2018).

Mair (2016) studies Kendrick Lamar and his role in impacting the nature of the hip-hop music genre and also African American community. Exploring this topic required learning about the challenges that African Americans confront, their causes and effects, and how Hip Hop has the power to both heal and harm this community through its messages about leadership, women's treatment, materialism, and masculinity. (Mair; 2019)

In Love's (2016) analysis, the exploration centers on how Black individuals within Hip Hop culture can symbolize resistance through inner qualities like quietness, composure, or the development of existential

awareness. The study draws inspiration from the works of Kevin Quashie and Kendrick Lamar. Given that many young people of color often find themselves in challenging circumstances despite their excellence, the article delves into the question: "What does it signify for a generation of youth growing up amidst the noisy backdrop of Hip Hop, racism, state violence, and domestic terrorism to realize that resistance can also manifest through moments of stillness?" (Love; 2016).

Apol (2016) summarizes that Kendrick Lamar's place in the annals of music history is well-deserved, owing to his multifaceted talents as a performer, his creation of concept albums that intricately narrate his life story, his profound impact on culture, and his remarkable ability to push the boundaries of his genre. Kendrick Lamar is continually pushing the envelope within the realm of hip-hop, both culturally and musically. On a cultural level, he has become a pivotal figure, actively engaging with and being embraced by political and social movements. Musically, his influence is palpable, with aspiring rappers striving to surpass his groundbreaking albums like *good kid, m.A.A.d City*, and viewing *To Pimp a Butterfly* as a benchmark for defying genre conventions. Moreover, his infusion of neo-jazz elements into his work has elevated artists like Kamasi Washington to newfound heights in the music industry.

Promise That You Will Sing About Me: The Power and Poetry of Kendrick Lamar by Miles Marshall Lewis (2021) is a book that delves into the life,

career, and impact of the renowned rapper and artist, Kendrick Lamar. The book provides a comprehensive exploration of Kendrick Lamar's music, lyrics, and the social and cultural significance of his work. Overall, the book offers a deep and insightful analysis of Kendrick Lamar's music and its cultural significance, making it a valuable resource for fans, scholars, and anyone interested in the intersection of hip-hop, art, and social commentary.

Rocha (2017) states through his article entitled *Kendrick Lamar and Hip-Hop as a Medium for Social Chang* that Kendrick Lamar's music serves as a powerful platform for promoting self-transformation and hope, rooted in a deep affirmation of black identity, history, and culture. Through his own personal journey of self-improvement, Lamar inspires listeners to reflect on their own capacity for change and their impact on themselves and society. His message extends beyond personal growth; he believes that collective efforts to overcome challenges can lead to transformative change in cultural dynamics, particularly for people of color in the United States. In essence, Lamar's ultimate claim is that self-empowerment can catalyze broader systemic change.

In an essay titled *Kendrick Lamar, street poet of mental health*, Sule and Inkster (2015), conclude that Kendrick Lamar's compelling storytelling delves into the intricate journey of his life, marked by challenges and societal pressures, depicting the experiences of growing up in an inner city. His character's remarkable ability to overcome adversities, both mental and

physical, and rise above the environmental obstacles that threaten his innocence has served as a profound source of inspiration for a generation and will continue to do so. Sule and Inkster also highly recommend exploring the rest of Kendrick's albums and connecting with Kendrick's message of resilience against the odds, a message that transcends geographical boundaries and the realm of hip-hop.

Pacheco examines exploitation, identity constraints, and pseudo-progressivism within the American entertainment industry, particularly in relation to Kendrick Lamar's experiences and their impact on rap music. It contends that economic empowerment in the industry doesn't lead to liberation but rather perpetuates subjugation while appearing as a path to financial mobility. The essay also explores W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of double-consciousness in the context of hidden systemic racism and ideological bias, even when explicit racism is absent. Kendrick Lamar's tracks, like "The Blacker the Berry" and "i," are scrutinized as manifestations of fresh types of institutional oppression. Furthermore, the essay critiques how black artists are portrayed, noting that their achievements often overshadow their transformative messages, serving as a facade of progress. Ultimately, the essay challenges the idea of a post-racial America and stresses the need to confront enduring racist and oppressive ideologies and systems.

The mentioned previous studies above are all focused on only one project or other Kendrick Lamar works, my study will be focusing more on the

second and third of Kendrick's studio albums. The main focus of this study will be relating the album including all the songs, focusing more on the lyrics in its denotative and connotative meaning of the albums with the topic of voice of freedom for black African American.

1.5 Scope of the Study

There are limitations to the scope of this study as it will help to give the results of the study a more specific and detailed answer. The scope of the study will be limited to the following :

1. Examining and limiting the object of the study to Kendrick Lamar's second and third studio albums;
2. Analyzing the voice of freedom in the lyrics, denotation and connotation.

1.6 Organization of the Writing

There are several chapters in this study as the following:

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the Background of The Study, Study Problems, the Scope of The Study, the Aims of The Study, Previous Studies, and Research Methods.

CHAPTER II: THEORY AND METHOD

This chapter will explain theories used throughout the study to reach conclusions. The theory is Black Existentialism.

CHAPTER III: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis using the theories mentioned earlier is discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The summary of the discussion result in chapter iv is presented here.