

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the study

Literary works themselves exist in various forms, one of which is a song lyric. A song lyric is one form of many literary works. The song lyrics can represent many things, such as life problems, hatred, love, and many other things. The lyrics of a song, like a poem, can be analyzed both intrinsically and extrinsically, literally and figuratively. Song lyrics are the same as poetry which can be analyzed through several aspects which can be analyzed through the figurative side or the other side, such as the author's involvement, experiences and life stories of the author.

The analysis of the song lyric is the same as that of a poem. Therefore, the theory used is the same as when the poem is analyzed. The song lyric is one form of literary work which is quite popular and interesting to analyze. One of the popular songs which is interesting and popular to analyze for the writer is one of Nirvana's songs entitled "Serve the Servants" from *In Utero* album. "Serve the Servants" is one of Nirvana songs from the album *In Utero*, which was released in 1993. Nirvana is a grunge band from Seattle, America. Kurt Cobain is a singer, songwriter and guitarist from the band Nirvana was born in Aberdeen, on February 20, 1967, and died in Seattle, on April 5, 1994. This song provides an overview of how Kurt Cobain's life begins with the relationship between him and his father and his love life. "Serve the Servants" was written in 1992, when he was

25 years old. In the lyrics of the song "Serve the Servants", Kurt Cobain as the lyricist spills or tells about how he hopes to get a father figure that he did not get because of the divorce of his parents when he was young. This is written in the song lyrics by Kurt Cobain as a form of representation in his biography because there is a correlation between the song lyrics and Kurt Cobain's biography. To further analyze the lyrics of the "Serve the Servants" song, the writer uses a theory derived from one of the theories of literature, namely literature and biography. "Serve the Servants" song comes as a song of duality. The song is ear-catching on the one side, but it is also heartbreaking on the other side. The song could attract the attention of a listener who listens to it in the first place. It sounds like a heavy guitar-driven song and it stays in the ears of the listener for quite a bit of time. It might sound peculiar but the listener would love to hear the song even again and again. Nonetheless, the song bears a nuance of sadness, disappointment, and anger. It is not only about how Kurt Cobain screams through the sounds, but it is also about what he screams for. The listener might be wondering what the song would be about.

As a person who has listened to the song multiple times, the writer who also takes the position of a listener, found it agreeable. The writer felt attracted to the song and then moved by the song as the writer listened to it. The writer could enjoy and became curious about the song. Yet, the writer felt like there was something beneath the song's playing. The feeling of the writer got from playing the song, made her want to know Kurt Cobain's feelings which were written in the song lyrics. The writer also wants to understand the meaning of each lyric that

is written by Kurt Cobain through figurative language which explains directly and indirectly. As long as the writer listened to the song, the writer found any interesting figurative language to analyze.

In this research, the writer intends to figure out what is the written song lyrics supposed to mean. Also, the writer intends to figure out what the hidden message in the song lyrics is supposed to express. The writer will try to find out the untold story of this song which was written by Kurt Cobain and how the meaning of the song is interpreted by the listener and Nirvana's fans. Also, the writer wants to explain how Kurt Cobain as the lyricist tried to indicate the message of the song in person figuratively. These hidden messages written by Kurt Cobain will be interpreted by the writer in this study. In particular, this research is intended to interpret the song lyrics literally and in addition, this research is intended to interpret the song lyrics figuratively. So, the relation between the literal and the figurative meaning of the song lyric will become the approach to the song lyric. In this term, it is the biographical approach of Kurt Cobain the lyricist to describe through the description of the literal and figurative interpretation.

## **1.2. Research Problems**

Based on the background of the study above, the writer found three research problems. The problems are as follows:

1. How is the literal and figurative interpretation of the "Serve the Servants" song lyrics?
2. How are the "Serve the Servants" song lyrics composed as Kurt Cobain's expression?

3. What is the relation between Kurt Cobain's biography and the song lyrics?

### **1.3. Objective of the study**

Based on the research problems explained above, the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To interpret the interpretation of the "Serve the Servants" song literally and figuratively.
2. To explain how the "Serve the Servants" lyric was composed Kurt Cobain's expression.
3. To explain the relation between the biography of Kurt Cobain and the song lyrics.

### **1.4. Previous study**

For this research, the writer discovered other researchers who made their analysis on a biographical approach to Kurt Cobain's life.

The first research is an undergraduate thesis entitled "Kurt Cobain's Depression Portrayed in "Even in His Youth", "Sliver", "Serve the Servants" and "Something in The Way": A Biographical Approach," which was submitted by Nadi Sunarhendro from English Letter Study Soegijapranata Catholic University in 2014. In his analysis, Nadi explains how depressing Kurt Cobain's life is in the song lyrics.

The second research is research from Siska Candra Mahera's undergraduate thesis from the Department of English Education of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta in 2008. The title is "Beliefs and Values in Kurt Cobain's Lyrics of Nirvana's Songs: A Sociological Approach." In this analysis,

the writer analyzes the song lyrics based on a sociological perspective by identifying the relationship between the lyrics and the social background.

The third research is a journal article written by Duane R. Fish, published in July 2008, entitled “Serving the Servants: An Analysis of the Music of Kurt Cobain”. This journal explains how Kurt Cobain wrote his song lyrics to speak his mind.

The fourth research is an undergraduate thesis entitled “Imagery Found in “In Bloom”, “Lounge Act,” and “Drain You” Song Lyrics of Kurt Cobain,” which was submitted by Yudi Susrianto Utomo from the English Department Semarang State University in 2006. The analysis written by Yudi focuses on the imagery and the dominant imagery in the song lyrics.

In the fifth research, there is a journal article written by Tegar Pambudhi, Wiyaka, and Ajeng Setyorini, published in 2021, entitled *Figurative Language Used in Song Lyrics of Nevermind by Nirvana Band and Its Feasibility as A Source for Teaching English in Senior High School.*” This journal describes the figurative language and contextual meaning of the song lyrics of *Nevermind*.

For the sixth research, there is a journal written by Jessica L. Wood, which was published in September 2011. The journal has the title "Pained Expression: metaphors of Sickness and Signs of 'Authenticity' in Kurt Cobain's Journals". In this journal, it is said that the term "sick body" which is often used by Kurt Cobain is his idea which functions as a metaphor.

The seventh research is an undergraduate thesis entitled “A Case Study of Kurt Cobain,” which was submitted by Candice Belinda Pieterse from Nelson

Mandela Metropolitan University in 2009. In her analysis, Belinda focuses on her analysis about exploring and describing Kurt Cobain's personality according to the five-factor models of personality.

The eighth research is an undergraduate thesis from Lingga Kusuma from the Faculty of Letters Soegijapranata Catholic University in 2006. The title of the research is "Personal Denial in "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Social Rejection in "Stay Away" Lyric of Kurt Donald Cobain: A Study of Psychological and Biographical Approach." In his analysis, Lingga explains how the song lyric written by Kurt Cobain shows psychological issues.

In the ninth research, there is a dissertation written by Sukant Mukherjee, published in 2016, entitled "A Psychoanalytical Study of The Nature and Appearance of Character by Analysing 6 Songs Each of Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain and Janis Joplin (Members of The Famous Club 27)" from Christ University. This analysis focuses on how the characters of the songs were written by the members of the famous Club 27 can show the appearance of their character.

The tenth research, entitled "Kurt Cobain's Psychological Development Portrayed in Charles R. Cross's Heavier than Heaven," is an undergraduate thesis who was submitted by Muhammad Isham Nugroho from English Literature Brawijaya University in 2017. In his analysis, Isham explains how Kurt Cobain's psychological state was.

From the previous studies above, there might also be irrelevance. So, this study is expected to amplify the studies of Kurt Cobain's biography. The third previous study above is the closest relevant but different from this research.

### **1.5. Scope of the study**

The writer would like to write an analysis which focuses on the "Serve the Servants" song lyrics. The writer interprets the "Serve the Servants" song lyrics literally and figuratively to find out the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the song and then composes Kurt Cobain's expression through the song lyrics, and also explains how the *Heavier than Heaven* Kurt's Cobain Biography book and the song lyric are linking and also giving the proof how Kurt Cobain expressing his feeling through the "Serve the Servants" song lyric.

### **1.6. Organization of the Writing**

The organization of this research are as follows:

#### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter contains six sub-chapters comprising the background of the study, research problems, objectives of the study, previous study, scope of the study, and organization of the writing.

#### **CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND METHOD**

In this chapter, the writer uses theory from biography and literature in the theory of literature by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren. And also use the theory of figurative language in literary work by Perrine to analyze the song lyrics.

### **CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION OF SONG LYRIC**

This chapter discusses about the interpretation of "Serve the Servants" song lyrics through the intrinsic and extrinsic elements. And also explains how Kurt Cobain's expressions are expressed in the "Serve the Servants" song lyrics.

### **CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION**

This chapter contains the conclusion and the summary of the result based on analysis of the study.