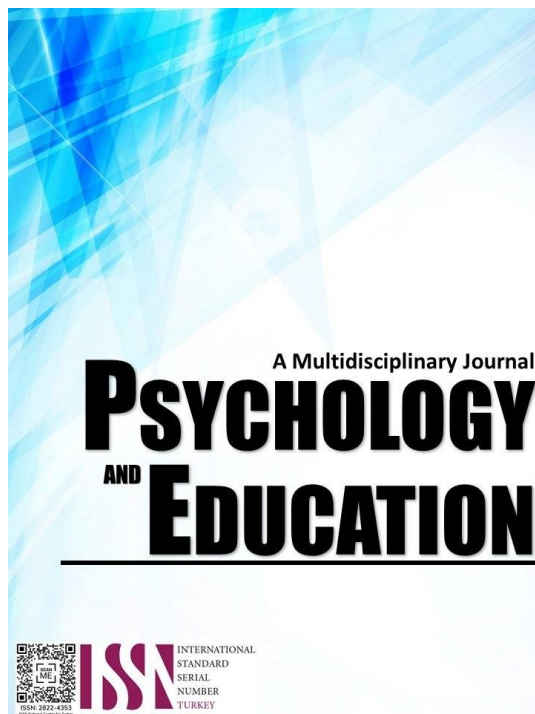


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A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Song "Alapaap" by Eraserheads

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Abstract

This study combines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with the three sovereignties of literature framework to analyze the song "Alapaap" by Eraserheads. The study aims to uncover the layers of meaning within the song's lyrics and explore its broader cultural context. The CDA framework allows for a critical examination of the song's language and its reflection of social power dynamics and ideologies. The three sovereignties of literature framework, which includes the author-oriented, text-oriented, and reader-oriented approaches, is used to interpret the song's themes of personal choice, societal inequalities, and addiction to drugs. The study suggests that the song promotes a mindset of openness and embracing freedom, while also acknowledging the temporary pleasure that drugs may provide. However, further investigation is needed to fully understand the song's importance and influence, including conducting interviews with the songwriter and analyzing Filipino music and culture during the time the song was released.

Keywords: *discourse analysis, Alapaap, OPM*

Introduction

The Eraserheads' 1994 song "Alapaap" (translated to "Cloud" in English) transcends its catchy melody and signature sound to occupy a unique space in Filipino rock history. Praised for its embodiment of the band's lyrical prowess (Herring, n.d.), "Alapaap" ignited a national conversation upon release due to its controversial lyrics. Senator Tito Sotto accused the song of promoting illegal drugs, prompting a public defense by the band who claimed it represented freedom (Rodriguez, 2021). This ambiguity, further fueled by frontman Ely Buendia's later statements acknowledging drug allusions (Romulo, 2017), solidified "Alapaap" as a song open to multiple interpretations.

This study delves into this very ambiguity through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of "Alapaap." By examining the song's lyrics and the public discourse surrounding it, this research aims to uncover the underlying messages and ideologies embedded within the text.

This analysis holds particular significance due to the Eraserheads' influence on Filipino music. Their role in promoting Original Pilipino Music (OPM) (Cuevas, 2023) positions "Alapaap" as a potential cultural touchstone. Understanding the messages conveyed in such a popular song can offer valuable insights into Filipino youth culture and the societal anxieties of the time period.

Furthermore, "Alapaap" stands as a testament to the Eraserheads' enduring legacy. Released in 1994 on their album *Circus*, the song cemented the band's place in the hearts of Filipino music lovers (Herring, n.d.). "Alapaap" continues to resonate with listeners due to its ability to evoke powerful emotions, as evidenced by covers from various well-known artists (Cuevas, 2023).

The controversy surrounding "Alapaap" reflects broader societal concerns and the complexities of artistic expression. This study employs a critical discourse analysis to explore the song's lyrical content, historical context, and the various interpretations that have emerged. By examining "Alapaap" through this lens, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of its impact on Filipino culture and the enduring legacy of the Eraserheads.

ALAPAAP Lyrics

by Eraserheads

May isang umaga, na tayo'y magsasama
Haya at halina sa alapaap
O, anong sarap, haa...

Hanggang sa dulo ng mundo
Hanggang maubos ang ubo
Hanggang gumulong ang luha
Hanggang mahulog ang tala

Masdan mo ang aking mata
'Di mo ba nakikita
Ako ngayo'y lumilipad at nasa langit na
Gusto mo bang sumama?

Hindi mo na kailangan ang magtago't mahiya
Hindi mo na kailangan humanap ng iba

Kalimutan lang muna
Ang lahat ng problema
Huminga ka ng malalim at tayo'y lalarga na
Handa na bang gumala

Pap-pa-rap... pap-pa-rap-pa.
Pa pa pa pa (papapapa...)
La-la-la... oooh hoo hoo...

Ang daming bawal sa mundo
(Ang daming bawal sa mundo)
Sinasakal nila tayo
(Sinasakal nila tayo)
Buksan ang puso at isipan
(Buksan ang puso at isipan)
Paliparin ang kamalayan
(Paliparin)

Methodology

Research Design

The design of this study combines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with a consideration of the three sovereignties of literature: author-oriented, text-oriented, and reader-oriented. This integrated approach allows for a thorough examination of the song "Alapaap" by Eraserheads, uncovering the layers of meaning embedded within its lyrics and the broader cultural context.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Framework

The core methodology of this study is rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology within a text.

This framework is particularly suitable for analyzing "Alapaap" due to its potential underlying messages related to societal issues. CDA allows for a critical examination of how the song's language reflects and shapes social power dynamics and ideologies (Fairclough, 2013).

Three Sovereignties of Literature Framework

In this critical discourse analysis, the three basic approaches in interpreting a literary text were used. These are the author-oriented approach, text-oriented approach and reader-oriented approach.

Author-oriented Approach

Based from the three sovereignties of literature, this study considers the author's background and context to provide a more comprehensive analysis. By examining Ely Buendia's life, experiences, and the sociopolitical climate during the song's creation, insights into the motivations and influences behind "Alapaap" can be gained. This approach helps to contextualize the song within the broader narrative of the author's body of work and the era it was written in.

Text-oriented Approach

The text-oriented approach emphasizes analyzing the song itself, independent of external factors. This involves a close examination of the song's lyrics, structure, and use of language. By focusing on the internal elements of the text, this approach aims to uncover the inherent meanings and artistic techniques employed by the Eraserheads in "Alapaap."

Reader-oriented Approach

The study also acknowledges the role of the listener in interpreting the song. While this is not the primary focus, recognizing that audiences bring their own experiences and perspectives to the song adds depth to the analysis. Understanding how different listeners perceive and resonate with "Alapaap" can provide insights into its impact and significance within Filipino culture.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The study outlines specific steps for collecting and analyzing data to ensure a comprehensive examination of "Alapaap."

Text Selection

"Alapaap" was selected for this study due to its significant social context, societal meaning, and potential for diverse interpretations. The song's controversial nature and lasting impact on Filipino music and culture make it an ideal subject for analysis.

Transcription

The transcription process involves carefully listening to "Alapaap" multiple times to capture the nuances in tone, rhythm, and delivery. This detailed transcription ensures that all aspects of the song's performance are considered in the analysis.

Close Reading

A thorough close reading of the lyrics is conducted to identify key ideas, patterns, and symbols. This step involves dissecting the song's language and structure to uncover deeper meanings and thematic elements.

Textual Analysis

Applying CDA principles, the study examines the song's linguistic features, sociocultural context, and its connections to other texts or discourses. This analysis focuses on how the song's language reflects and constructs social realities and power relations.

Interpretation

The final step involves interpreting the themes and messages conveyed by "Alapaap." This includes considering how the song evokes emotions and resonates with different audiences, as well as its broader cultural and societal implications.

By combining CDA with the three sovereignties of literature; of author-oriented, text-oriented, and reader-oriented approaches, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of "Alapaap." Through this methodology, the research seeks to uncover the deeper meanings and impact of the song within Filipino culture, contributing to a greater understanding of the Eraserheads' enduring legacy.

Results and Discussion

This section provides an analysis and discussion of three distinct approaches: the author-oriented approach, the text-oriented approach, and the reader-oriented approach.

Author-oriented approach

The table presents the author-oriented analysis. This analysis is also enriched with themes bridge the gap between Buendia's background and the song's impact. Examining themes related to dreams, freedom, or societal pressures can connect his experiences to the song's potential interpretations.

Table 1. *Author-oriented Analysis on the Song "Alapaap"*

Themes	Sub-Themes	Analysis
Ely Buendia's Background and Artistic Career	Musician, Writer, and Director	Ely Buendia gained fame as the guitarist, songwriter, and lead vocalist of the popular Filipino rock band Eraserheads.
	Academic Background	Buendia was a Film major at the College of Mass Communications, starting his first year of college in 1987. His background in film likely influenced his narrative and visual approach to songwriting.
The Controversy Surrounding "Alapaap"	Implied Drug Use	"Alapaap" became controversial due to its implied meaning of drug use, leading to significant public and political scrutiny.
	Band's Defense	The Eraserheads, particularly Ely Buendia, defended the song by stating that it was about Buendia's childhood dream of flying, not about drugs. This explanation prevented the song from being banned by the Senate.
Sociopolitical Context	Social Oppression	The song was released during a time of social oppression in the Philippines, marked by strict political systems and limitations on freedom of expression.
	Cultural Significance	The themes of "Alapaap" resonated with many Filipinos who felt constrained by the political and social climate, adding a layer of significance to the song's message of freedom and escape.

The discussion generated by the author-oriented analysis of "Alapaap" by Ely Buendia provides valuable insights into the song's creation and interpretation. The analysis highlights Buendia's background in film studies and how it may have influenced his songwriting style, allowing him to create vivid narratives within his songs.

It also explores the controversy surrounding the song's perceived references to drug use and the socio-political context of the time, suggesting that "Alapaap" could be seen as a form of resistance or commentary on societal constraints. The analysis acknowledges the limitations of the information provided and suggests further exploration, such as interviews with Buendia and a broader examination of Filipino music and culture in the early 90s. Overall, the author-oriented analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the song's significance and impact.

Text-oriented approach

The table presents the analysis focused on textual information. This table shows an in-depth analysis of the themes, associated lyrics, and interpretations discovered in the song "Alapaap" by Rivermaya.

Table 2. *Text-oriented Analysis on the song “Alapaap”*

Lyrics	Analysis
Masdan mo ang aking mata 'Di mo ba nakikita Ako ngayo'y lumilipad at nasa langit na Gusto mo bang sumama?	The song writer expounded the message of the song by introducing significance of free will and social acquaint between values and culture in a lyrical way.
Hindi mo na kailangan ang magtago't mahiya Hindi mo na kailangan humanap ng iba Kalimutan lang muna Ang lahat ng problema Huminga ka ng malalim at tayo'y lalarga na Handa na bang gumala	The last 2 phrases of the song assertively induce the social freedom lacking in the times of the Filipino oppressors namely; Spurious political system undermining injustice processes, and less appealed cases and crimes in classification of social inequalities
Ang daming bawal sa mundo (Ang daming bawal sa mundo) Sinaskal nila tayo (Sinaskal nila tayo) Buksan ang puso at isipan (Buksan ang puso at isipan) Paliparin ang kamalayan (Paliparin)	
Hindi mo na kailangan ang magtago't mahiya Hindi mo na kailangan humanap ng iba Kalimutan lang muna Ang lahat ng problema Huminga ka ng malalim at tayo'y lalarga na Handa na bang gumala	The composer is asserting the readers to get out of their shells and step-up in their reality
Ang daming bawal sa mundo (Ang daming bawal sa mundo) Sinaskal nila tayo (Sinaskal nila tayo) Buksan ang puso at isipan (Buksan ang puso at isipan) Paliparin ang kamalayan (Paliparin)	The song writer urges the people to open their visions in accordance to their exigency as a Filipino
Other Interpretation: Masdan mo ang aking mata 'Di mo ba nakikita Ako ngayo'y lumilipad at nasa langit na Gusto mo bang sumama?	In the third stanza, the artist describes the sensational experience influenced by the drugs. He is encouraging a peer to join him on his liberations.
Hindi mo na kailangan ang magtago't mahiya Hindi mo na kailangan humanap ng iba Kalimutan lang muna Ang lahat ng problema Huminga ka ng malalim at tayo'y lalarga na Handa na bang gumala	In the fourth stanza, the artist tells us that doing drugs can make you forget your problems in life and that is enough even for a short while.
Ang daming bawal sa mundo (Ang daming bawal sa mundo) Sinaskal nila tayo (Sinaskal nila tayo) Buksan ang puso at isipan (Buksan ang puso at isipan) Paliparin ang kamalayan (Paliparin)	The artist shows sign of defiance because using drugs is illegal and he continues using it anyway.
“Masdan mo ang aking mata 'di mo ba nakikita ako ngayo'y lumilipad at nasa langit na” The artist finished the song with a repeating phrase “Gusto mo bang sumama?”	can be conveyed as it's literal meaning or it's other meaning that the effect of the drugs are already kicking in. which means that the artist encourages us to come with him into “alapaap” that is equivalent to being high on drugs.

This is a song that explores themes of free will, social inequality, and the use of drugs. The songwriter uses lyrical language to convey the message of the song and urges listeners to open their minds and step up in their reality. The song also discusses the experience of being influenced by drugs and suggests that they can provide temporary escape from life's problems, despite being illegal. The artist shows defiance by continuing to use drugs despite their legal status. Overall, the song encourages listeners to join the artist in embracing a "high" or liberated state.

Reader-oriented approach

This table shows the reader-oriented analysis of the song. It presents the agreed and disagreed perception of the reader towards the song.

Table 3. *Reader-oriented Analysis of the song "Alapaap"*

<i>Agreement</i>	<i>Disagreement</i>
The reader will agree with the terms sensually justified by the text. In this case, the reader sticks with the fact of fulfilling satisfaction or enjoyment over venturing the unexperienced activity proposed by the text. The reader is tempted or comes with interest upon the invitation expecting he may produce a brilliant experience, therefore promoting confidence.	The reader refuses the proposal, or another stops from accepting it when he/she had experienced an unpleasant and debilitating effect from the proposed activity by the text. The latter reader's experience is a thought being raised by the first reader before he decides taking on the text's invitation. The readers in this case do not trust the statement of the text which is implicit. They assume that the text implies an inadvisable, dangerous activity that may put them at risk.

The reader is invited by the text to join in an adventure that the reader has not yet experienced. The text expresses an invitation to the reader by establishing the experience the reader will have once he/she accepts: uplifting sensual experience that will be an avenue for escape.

Interpretation of the text depends on the age range of the reader (viewpoints the reader comprehends). Additionally, the messages perceived by the reader is shaped by cultural or social influence which sets contextual boundaries for the reader's interpretation of the text.

Conclusions

Therefore, "Alapaap" by Ely Buendia explores the concepts of personal choice, societal inequalities, and addiction to drugs. The song promotes a mindset of openness and embracing freedom, while also acknowledging the temporary pleasure that drugs may provide. The song may be seen as a means of opposing or commenting on society limitations, and the study offers useful perspectives on the song's origin and understanding. Nevertheless, further investigation is needed to fully grasp the song's importance and influence, which entails conducting interviews with Buendia and doing a more extensive analysis of Filipino music and culture during the early 1990s.

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