

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1 Background of the Study

The twentieth century is closely related to postmodernism. According to the famous historian, Arnold Toynbee, in the 1940s, postmodernism is: “A term that indicates, among other things, a basic worldview that reject absolutes – all absolutes, of any kind whatsoever. This is its simplest expression (Godawa 1999).

The main characteristic of postmodernism is pluralism, which is shown by the various ways in self-expression and ideology. As well as in others, postmodernism spirit also influences literature. There are many literary genres today. We can even include lyric as one of them for lyric of a song itself is a poem. As what had been stated in the Dictionary of Literary Terms: lyric is a short, subjective poem with a songlike outburst of the author’s innermost thoughts and feelings (Shaw 227).

Composing a lyric used to be concerned with beauty and aesthetics. Because of this, there was a time when lyric poems being consigned to a lowly status in the scale of the literary genres, particularly in amatory and elegiac poems. But, lyrics become more varied along with the progress of the postmodernism. At present, contemporary lyrics talk about different things. Mostly still about love, life, and employ poetic sentences while some others are full of anger, sarcasm, and criticism. This progression, nonetheless, was started in 1704, as confirmed in The Mirror and

the Lamp: By 1704 John Dennis grouped together 'Epick, Tragick, and the greater Lyrick poetry' as the highest literary genres, to be distinguished from the lesser Poetry of comedy, satire, 'the little Ode', elegy, and pastoral (Abrams 85-86).

Marshall Mathers III (Eminem), thus, is a distinct character from any other contemporary lyricists. He is outstanding as he often employs sarcasm and hatred about his own life in almost every lyric he writes. Some critics even said that cynical is not enough to define his lyrics because he shows callousness in them. These matters are sometimes only discussed in passing but they are also often to be the main theme. In one work he uses them as accessories but in others he employs them as important parts that need further discussion.

On the contrary, it is quite surprising to know people's response toward his lyrics. Many critics think that his works are R-rated, means vulgar and not supposed to be heard by children under 18 years old. Conversely, most people thinks that the content of his lyrics is very touching. It is about the life-struggling faced by lower-middle class society in the United States, especially by the black community. Of course, it provokes some questions, since the lyricist is not black. Still, he had to deal with drugs, divorced parents, and poverty which ruined his life. Using his own terms, he spits the stories of his life without even sugar coated them all. As against the critics, people still listen to him.

The writer believes that this puzzling phenomenon demands an explanation, as it is not only the matter of a lyricist who is the master of mixing the elements to

put up a good lyric. The writer is certain that the poet has further intention other than that. He has his own reason by employing his life in his lyrics, and it needs to be made clear. Because, by understanding this matter, one will keep oneself objective during the appreciation process and also get a better understanding on the lyricist's works. What it is actually behind the employment of his experiences in his lyrics.

Nevertheless, the writer considers that studying all of the lyrics in the album The Slim Shady LP to find the answer is not efficient. It would be a very difficult work to do, since the album contains twenty lyrics and their scope is very large. Therefore, the writer focuses only on three lyrics as the representation of the whole. Those are "Brain Damage", "Rock Bottom", and "Just Don't Give A Fuck". Of all his lyrics in the album, these three are the ones that mostly talk about his life and his feeling toward it.

Other than that, these three lyrics have been chosen under the thought of their common theme. "Brain Damage", "Rock Bottom", and "Just Don't Give A Fuck" are telling about a frustrated young man who is haunted by his hardscrabble past. After learning the poet's historical background, we will find out that the young man described in the three songs is actually the lyricist himself. We will see later that he had been living in a black lower class society in Detroit, Michigan, since he was a child. He had to deal with alcohol, drugs, divorced parent, poverty, racism, a girlfriend and a daughter to be taken care of. He had grown up with poor black people so that he acts and talks the way they do. He then expressed the heart-wrenching

stories of his life by rapping, one thing that he knew he had always been able to do. His unpleasant experience made him created the pseudonym 'Slim Shady', as taken for his album title. It is how he calls himself today. On the article entitled "Eminem Blows Up":

Slim Shady is Marshall Mathers' way of taking revenge on the world, and he is also a defense mechanism. On the one hand, a lot of Slim Shady's cartoon fantasies are offensive; on the other, they're better than Mathers' re-creating the kind of abuse the world heaped upon him growing up. (eminemworld.com 1999)

The interesting phenomenon strikingly tempts the writer to analyze the lyrics in The Slim Shady LP, especially the ones mentioned. Also, she would analyze the meaning, which is in the mind of the speaker when he is edging his message in the lyrics. The message itself lays on the lyrics.

I.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the background of the study above, the writer is eager to analyze the problems as follows:

- a. How are the imagery and the tone put together to emphasize the theme?
- b. For whom are the lyrics presented to and why?
- c. How does the lyricist's personal life influence him in writing lyrics?

I.3 Objective of the Study

The main spotlight of the analysis here are:

- a. To find the answer of how the imagery and the tone of the lyrics are put together to lay emphasis on the theme.
- b. To find out how the lyricist's own experience influences his lyrics.
- c. To get a right understanding on whom the lyrics are presented to and the reason behind.

I.4 Significance of the Study

The writer hopes that the result of this analysis will help the readers to get the knowledge in understanding the relationship between the life of an author and his works in a particular perspective gotten from Mathers' lyrics. It will encourage the readers to be fair enough in appreciating the poet's lyrics and try to look for what is behind them instead of taking them literally. In some way, it is difficult to give an objective judgement about literary work without knowing the significance between the author and the works.

I.5 Scope and Limitation

Under his pseudonym, Slim Shady, Marshal Mathers has released three albums; they are The Slim Shady LP, The Marshall Mathers LP, and the latest is The Eminem Show. Most of his lyrics are condemned to be offensive, homophobic and

misogynist. The Marshall Mathers LP has won him five Grammy Awards and made him the most phenomenal white rapper ever. The writer, however, limits this analysis only in the early work, The Slim Shady LP, particularly on "Brain Damage", "Rock Bottom", and "I Just Don't Give A Fuck". Eminently on I Just Don't Give A Fuck, there are two different versions accessible. One is the album version, and the other is the video clip version. For this analysis, the writer chooses the video version to be studied, as taken from the source eminemworld.com

In this study, the analysis will concentrate partly on the theme and mainly knowing the influence of the poet's biography in composing the lyrics. Then again, we cannot find the theme without studying the elements of the lyric, especially here are the imagery, figurative language and tone used, and also through the speaker(s) of the lyrics for they have the most significant parts in building the theme. The elements of the lyric and the theme implied are supposedly linked. The life of the lyricist is also included to get closer to the work of art for so many relations occur between the background of the lyricist and the works for principal concern with the articulateness of the lyricist through his works.

I.6 Theoretical Background

The study of this writing is concentrating on the analysis of the theme that is implied on the lyrics. However, the major idea will be achieved here is not simply to find the theme, but it is more to give direction about how far the life of the author

influences his works. Consequently, the expressive theory is used here since the lyrics become the expression of the poet toward something lodging in his feelings. The expressive theory applied here is the German expressive theory. To classify the theory from the England expressive theory, the German expressive theory is closely related to music – the media used in reciting lyrics.

Still, it is not possible that the real thought inside the literary work as a work of art purely observed from the extrinsic aspect without sticking the surface and the shape of the art itself. Thus, the intrinsic elements of the lyrics will be used side by side with the extrinsic ones to tell some elements of the verses to manage in finding the theme of the lyrics, especially in the approach of structural-semiotics. It is appropriate, then, to support the analysis by using biographical approach to get closer to the works of the author by studying his life, in addition, that so many things took place in the lyrics have connection to the events in the author's life.

I.7 Method of the Study

To analyze the problems, the writer needs to do several researches to find information which is important for the analysis. The information is collected eclectically from the album The Slim Shady LP itself, various books, articles, dictionaries, the internet, and any kind of materials related to the subject matter of this writing. Paraphrasing the lyrics is also used to give more understanding in the process of analyzing the theme of the lyrics.

In Critical Approaches to Literature, David Daiches views the using of eclectic method in literary criticism:

The academic critic, in particular, with his various kinds of scholarly information – biographical, historical, textual – is often tempted to combine information, explanation, elucidation, and praise in his remarks on a given work or a given writer. This eclectic method, as it may be called, is not necessarily muddle-headed: we already noted some effective examples of criticism which combines elements from different methods, and many more could be cited, ... (281)

The writer agrees that similar procedures may result from different approaches. In other words, similar approaches may be realized in different sets of procedures. Therefore, to adapt the various information concerning literary works and the author, she needs to select the materials best fitted in the thesis. As stated on “Principled Decisions and Practices”, the main essence of eclectic methodology is that: “It does seem reasonable to combine the most suitable elements of different available methods, instead of applying a specific one” (developingteachers.com 1996).

I.8 Definition of Key Terms

- a. Defense mechanism : Unconscious dynamics that protect the ego by denying and distorting reality (Corsini 727).

- b. Ego : The essential “self” or seat of identity (Harré175).
- c. Shady : Having a disreputable nature of character (Webster 2084).

I.9 Organization of the Paper

This writing is divided into five chapters. Chapter I is the introductory chapter. Here the writer gives details on the background, statement of the problems, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, theoretical background, method of the study, definition of the key terms, and also organization of the paper.

Chapter II is explaining about the theoretical approaches and related studies. It is telling the theories, approaches, and methods used during the analysis.

Chapter III is the biographical sketch of the lyricist and his works. It is necessary to include the lyricist’s life related to his works in this analysis, since it uses biographical approach.

Chapter IV is the analysis. And, Chapter V is the conclusion. Here, the writer should draw the conclusion of all the problems in the analysis. Additionally, the writer adds several pages of works cited and the lyrics used in the analysis.

CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL APPROACHES
AND RELATED STUDIES