

## CHAPTER III

### THE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE LYRICIST AND HIS WORKS

There is always something more to say about the relation between an author and his works. This fact could not of course be adjusted by any theoretical technique; in stead, it depends on the framework used in the analysis. In this study, since the writer utilizes biographical approach, it become not less important to include the lyricist's biographical background and his works, so that we can get a right understanding about his life. The biographical background and the works below is summarized from [eminemworld.com](http://eminemworld.com), M.L. Elrick's The Hometown: Eminem Driven on the Hard Streets on [freepress.com](http://freepress.com), and also other sources mentioned.

#### III.1 The Background of the Lyricist (1974-1999)

Eminem (M and M), reducing his name, Marshall Mathers, to an initial, has had his whole life changed. Being condemned for his demented lyrics, today people also know him as an outstanding lyricist, musician, and rapper. His fortune, however, came after the creating of his dark alter ego – Slim Shady. It is this created consciousness which turned his works to a very different from his debut, Infinite. His angry lyrics, though, have made him much criticized.

Marshall Bruce Mathers III was born on October 17, 1974 in St. Joseph, in northwest Missouri. Shortly after, his parents moved to North Dakota, where his father had a band named Daddy Warbucks. It was, then again, not for long. By the

time he reached two, his mother, Deborah Mathers-Briggs, left his father and brought her son back to St. Joseph. He had never heard from his father since then. His great aunt, Edna Swartz, cared for him for the next several years. In 1978, he moved with his mother to Michigan, then spending most of the next twenty years in several homes in Warren and Detroit.

According to his mother, he attended between fifteen and twenty schools before dropping out in the ninth grade from Warren's Lincoln High School. His classmate, Eric Reiter, remembered him as a student who did not stand out much, except for his impressive performance rapping in a school talent.

Court documents records that Mathers and his mother were on welfare for at least two times. They often lived with his great grandmother in south Warren, a blue-collar melting pot where youth violence and gang activity had been daily things happened. His mother said, they were one of three white households on the block. There, he experienced hard times. At the age of nine, he suffered the first beating in a four-month reign of terror at Roseville's Dort Elementary School by a schoolmate named De Angelo Bailey.

His interest in rap, however, was started a year after, when his uncle - Ronnie Polkingharn – gave him a copy of Reckless, by Ice T. It was the first rap song he had ever listened to. Shortly after, he became obsessed to a rap group named NWA – Niggers with Attitude. One of its members – Dr. Dre – is now also known as his producer. Later than, he began to write his first lyric in 1988.

His hard time had not ended. At the tender age of sixteen, members of a neighborhood gang shot him. Two years after, to add another traumatic experiences, Ronnie Polkingharn committed a suicide with a shotgun. He could not bring this subject into a discussion until the next five years.

Yet, he did make a name on the 1993 Detroit rap scene as the only white rapper joined at the new talent nights. It was the very next year when his mother accused him of assault and batter on his twentieth birthday. At the time, it seems to be his only major brush with the law.

By 1996, his mother alleged in a lawsuit filed against St. Clair Shores school officials for abusing her youngest son – Nathan. Still, she claimed that she raised Mathers in a drug-and alcohol-free home, which is opposed from what Mathers always said in his lyrics.

He, afterward, released Infinite when he was twenty-one, following the forming of his rap group – Dirty Dozen (D12) - along with five other rappers. Nevertheless, Infinite was far from success. It was only sold fewer than 1,000 copies, which made him working as a \$ 5.50-an-hour-cook in Gilbert's Lodge, a family restaurant in St. Clair Shores. In the same year, on Christmas Day, his daughter, Hailie Jade, was born.

In 1997, he appeared again with the name Slim Shady. Starting to record eight songs in The Slim Shady LP – the work which won him his deal with Interscope Records – he was fired from his cooking job at the same time. It was the worst time, he exclaimed. He and his girlfriend, Kim Scott, had been living in bungled

neighborhoods. It was an everyday event to see a stray bullet flew through the kitchen window and stopping in the wall while Kim was doing dishes, as she admitted. There was a time when a burglar came inside their home and took everything inside but the couches and bed.

Still, at the same year, Mathers performed at the Rap Olympics in Los Angeles. It hurt him that he only made it to the second position. Yet, Dr. Dre heard his demo tape and signed him to Aftermath Record Label. Soon, he came up again with the name Slim Shady and released his famous The Slim Shady LP in 1999.

Among the critics, instead of condemning him for his demented lyrics, M.L. Elrick suggests that his music provides a hall-of-mirrors reflection of his life. He told a distorted vision of an under privileged but driven homeboy who worked his way from rags to riches. Over this, coworkers at Gilbert's Lodge remembered him as a friendly and funny cook. His former neighbors on Dresden in Detroit, Tinken in Warren, Robeson in St. Clair Shores, and at trailer parks in Warren and Casco said they never saw his Slim Shady side. Instead, they remember him as a polite young man who like to rhyme, was fond of his younger brother and devoted to his daughter.

The only criminal record was made on June 4, 1999 when he was arrested in Warren for allegedly using an unloaded gun to strike a man whom his wife kissed.

### **III.2 The Lyricist and His Works (1974-1999)**

This is a public service announcement brought to you in part by Slim Shady. The views and events expressed here are totally fucked, and are

not necessarily the views of anyone. However the events and suggestions that appear on this album are not to be taken lightly. Children should not partake in the listening of this album with laces in their shoes. Slim Shady is not responsible for your actions. Upon purchasing this album you have agreed to try this at home. Anything else?

Yeah, don't do drugs (Mathers "Public Service Announcement" n.pag)

"The Public Service Announcement" above is the notion of the ideas in The Slim Shady LP. As the opening skit, it introduces Slim Shady as the major character in the whole lyrics. Only by reading this skit, we are to predict the subject matters of the lyrics featured in this works of Marshall Mathers III under his alter ego, Slim Shady.

To speak of his works, Mathers had released two independent works previously. The debut, Infinite (1995), is including twelve lyrics, which mostly talk about anti-Gulf war songs. Critics at the moment accused him of imitating previously famous rappers, such as Naz and AZ. The lyricist himself admitted that Infinite was not a masterpiece. It was an attempt in searching of his own style, a growing stage. He, however, was completely hurt by the response he received upon the releasing of Infinite. He was annoyed by people's reaction asking that he was supposed to go into rock and roll instead of rap. This question, though, is because of a superficial reason, the fact that he is white.

The result of this was happened when he met Slim Shady. He, then, started to use this character in his lyrics, which became angrier ever since the disappointing feed back from his debut. His turning point came at the releasing of his next independent project – The Slim Shady EP – a collection of ten lyrics which he claimed to be a project he made for himself.

The Slim Shady EP is turned to be radically different from Infinite. The later work is bound to be stories about local music industry personalities as well as devious rants about life in general. It was when he started to be accepted by the hip-hop society.

As with the lyricist himself, he looks to this album as a presentation of himself. He emphasized that he made an album for himself and it was to his own satisfaction, then he succeeded. If he did not, he realized his producers were going to give it up. The Slim Shady EP, nevertheless, he wrote the things that he wanted to hear. He started to recognize his own style here.

After the two independent works, his first set on Aftermath/ Interscope Records, The Slim Shady LP was come out n 1999. Produced by the biggest hip-hop producer, Dr. Dre, the work is featuring fourteen lyrics and six skits. The official site – [eminem.com](http://eminem.com) - even claims them to be the most memorable and demented lyrics ever recorded.

This album, which was opened by the skit entitled “Public Service Announcement” and ended by “Still Don’t Give A Fuck”, includes at least three lyrics from the EP. There is a loose sense in which Mathers’ work in thi particular

album can be distinguished from the previous Infinite. Unlike Infinite, this time he emphasizes on his own experiences. He believes that there are many people can be related to everything happened in his lyrics – whether they are white or black, it does not matter. Most people have been through some rough days. The difference only lays on the degree of it, whether it is drastic or not. To use the his own terms, most people gets to the point of *I Don't Give A Fuck* – referring to “I Just Don't Give A Fuck”.

In “Brain Damage”, the lyricist retells a true story happened to him when he was in fourth grade. A sixth grade student named De Angelo Bailey, so he clarified, used to beat him. One day, during a recess one winter, he taunted a friend of Bailey's only to get Bailey came running from across the yard and hit him very hard. He was sent home right after. His ear started bleeding, and he was in and out of consciousness for five days. The doctors even examined cerebral hemorrhage. It was then, Slim Shady became his knight to take revenge to his enemies, and one of them is, of course, D'Angelo Bailey, for such a traumatic experience.

Another remarkable lyric is written down in “Rock Bottom”. It was written during what so called the worst time of his life, as he admitted. It portrays his own life at the moment, as a poor young man who had just gotten fired from his cooking work at Gilbert's Lodge, while he had to get present for his daughter's birthday. All he had, as he remembered, was only forty dollars in his pocket. The events, then, inspired him to write “Rock Bottom”.

By the extent of his R-rated lyrics, it intrigues curiosity of how his daughter thinks of his lyrics. The lyricist himself then, explained the answer. He stated that

Hailie Jade was too young to understand more than the beats of his music. When she got old enough, as he added, he would surely explain it to her. He admitted that his high temperament helped him into his career. His thoughts were often to be very evil when he wrote lyrics. To make things cleared, he took an example when his relationship with Kim was having a bad time. All he would do was to sit down and write the most misogynistic rhyme. Of course, it was not how he felt in general. Instead, it was more on how he felt at the moment. When Slim Shady took his part, he might write something evil, as written in his lyrics in The Slim Shady LP.

Something to be noted here is:

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 cartoonish fantasies are offensive; on the other, they are better than Mathers re-creating the kind of abuse the world heaped upon him growing. (emineworld.com 1999)

By means of his works, the lyricist was able to satisfy his thoughts. The lyrics reveal how successful he was at preserving his identity while supplying entertainment to people. He fills his world with humor and several different character voices, which makes his lyrics unique.



**CHAPTER IV**  
**ANALYSIS**