

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

In Semiosis of Poetry, Michael Riffaterre mentions about the rule of the semiosis of the poem, which lies in its *reductio ad absurdum*: by saying something literature can say something else. In other words, it may also mean that literature, by saying something, say nothing (17). Now the writer shall interpret the lyrics, which is demonstrated in the first sub chapter of the analysis, as the first step to find the answer lies on. Thus, she shall attempt to take a step forward solving the problems by finding out the continuous semiosis-producing in the lyrics to find the significance toward the lyricist's life. To start with, it is important for the writer to make us aware that the lyrics – as contemporary work – have several differences from the basic form of lyrics in general.

After finding out the importance of the imagery and tone to emphasize the theme of the lyrics, we are to see the reason why the lyricist wrote them and to whom they are presented. To continue with, the writer then leads us to the essence of the analysis, which is related to how far the lyricist's personal life influence him in writing his lyrics. It is also including the circumstances around him in the writing of the lyrics.

VI.1 The Interpretation of the Lyrics

VI.1.1 "Brain Damage"

Unlike the narrative and dramatic forms, most lyric does not include such elements as characters and plot... The majority of lyrics consist of thoughts and feelings uttered in the first person, and the one readily available character to whom these sentiments may be referred is the poet himself (Abrams 85).

To distinguish between "Brain Damage" from any other lyrics, here the lyricist uses several characters, they are: Slim Shady (Marshall Mathers), De Angelo Bailey, mother, doctor, nurse, and teacher. Without neglecting it as a lyric, simply in point of structure, the poem belongs to a sub-genre of narrative poetry for it has a sequence of events. Here, then, is where the rule is laid down to establish the equivalence of present and past between the major character, Slim Shady, and other characters.

The title of the lyric – brain damage – refers to a condition in which one's brain is paralyzed. This idea is then transformed to the first lines, linked by the characters of a doctor and a nurse who were attempting to save one's life. There is close relation between the signs here. The mentioning of the imagery of medical tools "scalpel" and "sponge" and the repetition of the word "here" and even lines: "He's convulsing/ We're gonna have to shock him/ Oh my God" suggesting that the setting of the event is in hospital, in spite of the mood. The doctor and nurse were anxious when the patient did not show any signs of getting better, so they would try to shock

him. To show the condition of the patient, the lyricist uses synecdoche in: “A neck with bolts”, which implies the deeper meaning that indeed, he was in a very bad condition. The next command for the nurse to check his pulse indicated that he was dying (lines 1-12).

The lyricist, then, introduces another character: “A kid who refused to respect adults”. The “kid”, to use the poet’s own term, was a corny looking thin white boy with a freckled nose.

In the next lines, started after line fifteen, the point of view is exchanged into the first person, which characterizes the basic form of lyrics as defined by Abrams. The narrator confessed that he was nauseated of being intimidated by whom he called as “brawny bullies”. Having enough of the intimidation, he set a plan to take revenge.

“I decided to strike back and flatten every tire on the bike rack”: he uses “tire” to point at the intimidator and “bike rack” to the community. To trace back from what he stated previously, the narrator mentioned that the boy was white. This was actually unnecessary, because the lyric is set in the USA, which major community is white. However, the mentioning of it might be used to refer to something else. In a white community, one can be considered to be different if he or she is not white. On the contrary, it might also happen to a white person who lives in a non-white community. In this case, we are in some doubt as in what community the white boy lived in. Thus, the lyricist’s using the cliché “brawny bullies” makes the message clearer. The word “brawny” can be interpreted to a race, or community, which is more muscular than

Caucasian. Therefore, the writer interprets the "bike rack" as Afro-American community.

It is only by reminding ourselves of the tormenting memories of the black experience in America that helps us to understand the manner of treatment gotten by a white person who lives as a minority in a black society. As affirmed by Horton and Edwards in The Background of American Literature, up to now, the black American still feels some alteration in his indistinct bond with the culture of which he is a part. After hundred years of discrimination and physical assault, somehow it is hard to just forgive and forget the difference between the races. Nowadays, there are still ghettos of the inner cities deserted by their white populations, and even in integrated schools, there are still the exacerbating "color-line" tensions that periodically flare out in pitched battles between blacks and whites in the "integrated" schools (580).

So far we are told that the story of this poor white boy was happened in a type of school mentioned above, which most student was black. Here, we may assume that this community lived in a ghetto. This is why this white boy, as a minority, had been treated differently.

To make the matter becomes more transparent, the poet changes the point of view of the speaker. However, this displacement cannot escape the fact that the two characters being told were the same. It was the narrator, who was telling the story first, and then, the boy took it over. Even if the context clearly indicates the changing of the style, it does not reveal the semantic shift.

As the speaking major character being transformed into “I”, the “I” notes an event of meeting a schoolmate, which causes traumatic consequences upon him. The writer excerpts the traumatic consequences after such an encounter with the bully, by analyzing the language of indirect in the “I’s” narration, so long as he remains unnamed. There, “I” explains that the event was happened when he was still in Junior High School, following the moments when he was intervened with expressions of fear.

The horror was started when the bully threatened “I”:

My first day in junior high, this kid said,

“It’s you and I, three o’clock sharp this afternoon you die”

I looked at my watch it was one twenty

“I already gave you my lunch money what more do you want from me?!?”

He said, “Don’t try to run away from me, you’ll just make it worse...”

(19-23)

“I” panicked. The next attempt “I” did to escape from the imagery of horror he would face at three afternoon was to pretend he had a stomachache. The latter characterization appears, which is the teacher, is a cliché. From the conversation between “I” and teacher then, we can list at least two significant matters. First, is that the teacher mentioned “I’s” name by calling him Mr. Mathers. Thus, now we know that the “I” here is the lyricist, Marshall Mathers himself. The second significant thing is suggested by the teacher’s turning down of Mathers’ expectation. His

intention by pretending to have stomach ache, and later “a bum knee”, was actually to catch the teacher’s attention so that he would be given an after school detention. And yet, instead of fulfilling Mathers’ expectation, the teacher gave him some extra homework to do. It was not because he intended to sentence Mathers for pretending, but because he knew that Mathers had to meet the bully who might mistreat him. And, the teacher would let him to be mistreated. The both cases shown, done by the bully and the teacher, are the starting points for the poet to establish the causes and participants in responsibility for his trauma.

In the chorus, Mathers escaped for a moment from the dread. He now emphasized on the effect of his hideous experience. As we are trying to interpret, the poem seems to be a work of backwardness. Apart from this general opinion, the more important backwardness is the transfer of trauma, which affected the poet’s life later: Brain damage, ever since the day I was born/ Drugs is what they used to say I was on/ They say I never knew which way I was goin (35-37). “Brain Damage”, the mentioning of the title to start with, is a metonym for insanity, or rather as a substitute sign for peculiarity, which describes people’s opinion toward Mathers. Though, the cancellation in: “But everywhere I go they keep playing my song” indicates his fame among the people, in spite of the fact that they think he was crazy.

There are, to be sure, some connections between reality and tale in the lyric. This matter, however, tends to be obscure. The scenes provide different parts in the lyric. Here, the writer has noted that the bridge between the preliminary scenes and the following lies on the repetition of ‘brain damage’. It suggests the significance, as

the tale is told, that the person who was having brain damage was Mathers himself. Mathers himself admitted that this particular lyric was inspired by his actual experiences. He explained in an interview with the Rolling Stone magazine, as posted on eminemworld.com:

“D’Angelo Bailey – no one called him D’Angelo – came running from across the yard and hit me so hard into this snowbank that I blacked out.” Em was sent home, his ear started bleeding, and he was taken to the hospital. “He had cerebral hemorrhage and was in and out of consciousness for five days,” his mother reports.” The doctors had given up on him, but I wouldn’t give up on my son.” (qtd. in “Eminem Blows Up” n. pag)

Here, we can see that by mentioning a patient in the hospital at the opening of this lyric, the lyricist refers to his own condition after the beating happened.

The writer sees that either racial or physical assault might be the biggest issue here, as the fact that during early eighties, Mathers lived with his mother and a younger brother, Nathan. They were one of three white households on the block, as his mother clarified: “I’m colorblind – it wasn’t an issue,” Em’s mom says. “But the younger people in the area gave us trouble. Marshall got jumped a lot...” (eminemworld.com 1999). It suggests that Mathers often had to deal with discrimination and physical assaults in the past. The beating in the lyric is only a depiction of them.

The later scene, then, is exposed in descriptive system. This familiar hypogram stereotypes the image of a bully in schools. The encounter with Bailey was the moment when Mathers intervened with expressions of fear. The common consequence of fear, especially for a child in Mathers' age at that time, was clearly described. Being younger, smaller, and weaker than his intimidator, the only thing he could do when words could not help anymore, was only submission. Contrasted with these expressions, later Mathers even capable in making some plan of taking revenge. Somehow it is normal. Whenever a person is facing dead end, he might do anything to escape. That is what Mathers did in the lyric. Feeling fed up and no one would help him getting out of trouble, Mathers set his own plan. It is clearly seen that he was feeling alone in this world. The fact that the principal helped Bailey to beat him suggested this. As the result, he went to the janitor's storage booth to get the things needed to do his intention. Logically, this nonsense is the result of the poet's diabolical imagination. There is no way that a principal would help a student to physically harm another student. The writer discerns it as a sign of showing his loneliness. Since he was a child, Mathers was a loner that he felt like he had no one to lean on. He intends to show that the world was against him. Here, once again, he turned back to his childhood memory when he said to Bailey: "This is for everytime you took my orange juice, stole my seat in the lunchroom and drank my chocolate milk" (58). It seems that his intention, as a child, was as simple as that. However, the cancellation in:

"I'm getting you back bully! Now once and for good"

I cocked the broomstick back and swung hard as I could
 and beat him over the head with it til I broke the wood
 Knocked him down, stood on his chest with one foot.. (60-63)

shows that he was more than a kid who took revenge for the bullying he experienced. It is likely to be an adult vengeance for a childhood painful memory.

However, the fictional scene had only happened in Slim Shady's world. In reality, he never did hit Bailey back. In this case, he kept his grudge for all the time, until he had the chance to take revenge. As for De Angelo Bailey, he remembered Mathers as a small boy with a big mouth. Though, he had never retaliated (freepress.com 2000). Of course, it is impossible for Mathers to beat Bailey in person; nowadays they turned to be adults. Though, Bailey did not seem to consider this as racial, as he boasted:

"There was a bunch of us that was used to mess with him. You know, bully-type things. We was having fun...we flipped him right on his head at recess. When we didn't see him moving, we took off running. We lied and said he slipped on the ice. He was a wild kid, but back then we thought it was stupid. (qtd. in "Eminem Blows Up" n. pag.)

For Mathers himself, he could never forget the beating since it caused him more aftereffects than it did to Bailey:

Attacked at recess, cornered in a restroom and floored by an icy snowball, the rapper now known as Eminem was left with headaches, post-concussion syndrome, intermittent loss of vision and hearing,

nightmares, nausea and a tendency for antisocial behavior... (freepress.com 2000)

So as his imagination played, he created a set of angry vengeance in the lyric. His action of standing on Bailey's chest is a sign of his victory, not of Bailey in reality, but more of his turbulence past. Here, the writer would rather see this matter as the lyricist's reprisal to defeat his weary past. The scene when he stroke Bailey, shows that Slim Shady is his defense mechanism.

In the next scene, it is told that Mathers came home after his victory, pretending like there was nothing happened, when all of sudden his head started to bleed. Refers to the previous idea that most people always considered him as a drug user, his mother shouted about him covering her carpet with his blood, instead of worrying him. Even when he said his regret for unintentionally ruining her carpet, his mother hit him over his head with the remote control until it caused him a hole on his head and his whole brain fell out of his skull. The effect of this hitting act is that the writer feels the poet realized that he was in a failure of what he believed to be a vengeance. He started rationalizing, even after he got rid of Bailey, his enemy, he would face another obstacle. He described this obstacle in the character of his own mother, who hit him merely because he spilled his blood on her carpet. A characterization of a mother, as we have always been suggested, is a wise caring woman who always takes care of her children. But, the lyricist turns the image down by describing his mother as a coldhearted woman. He seems to say that he could not even lean on his own mother when he was facing problems. Yet, another distorted

tale was told. A normal mother, no matter how angry she can be with his child, cannot lose control to cause him a hole on his head with his brain fell out over. Still, she did it in the lyric, although, afterward, she regretted it when she said: "Oh my God, I'm sorry son!"

It seems to be a satisfaction to Mathers that he saw his mother worried about him. We must however add that Mathers had always squabbled with his mother:

"My mother did a lot of dope and shit – a lot of pills – so she had mood swings," Em says. "She'd go to bed cool, then wake up like, 'Motherfuckers, get out!'" Em's mom denies all of the above. "I've never done drugs," she says. "Marshall was raised in a drug and alcohol-free environment". (qtd. in "Eminem Blows Up" n. pag.)

It is completely behind the scenes to know which one of them was telling the truth. Though, unlike her mother, Mathers had never denied that he had been drug user and alcohol for some time.

Still, the lyricist described his mother as average mother who would not want anything bad happened to her children. Therefore, the mother's reaction was normal by the time she realized what had happened to her son. She took for granted his injure, at first, but then she got worried when she saw his son's brain fell out of his opened head, caused by her beating. It is another polar opposition showed by the poet. We can see, here, the opposition between the changing of the mother's dispositions. To this type of hypogram, as Riffaterre noted in Semiotics of Poetry, the

polarity just described involve a negative marking (44). The lyricist's satisfaction to see his mother's regret is seen as another vengeance of his past life.

His mother's hitting when he first got home was a cancellation of his previous victory after beating up his school enemy. Yet, it was also a means to achieve his next vengeance. And in the end, he finally got them all completed. Here we can say that the words used in the lyric stand for something other than themselves. After rationalizing the interpretant as the symbol of the lyricist's intention, we find out that the term is meant to refer to what his mother's beating, in which she caused his brain fell out of his head. Here, the lyricist's fantasy is released.

All at once, the chorus seems to make sense. Indeed, his mother first sentence was to ask him whether he was on drugs, instead of worrying about his condition. It suggests that from the beginning, people had always connected him to drugs. They did not think that he would have a good life in the future. From what had been considered as a "white trash", he came back with wealth and fame. He proved them all that they were wrong. He could make it. And, who else could do such a magic, if the person did not have "brain damage"?

The repetition in the end of the lyric emphasizes the lyricist's thought that, in fact, he could do it all because he had "brain damage". The writer interprets "brain damage" here as the lyricist's weakness. To build up his character, this weakness is a weapon to strike back. He could change himself from a weak person to be strong and overcome his problems. He made revenge to his past, particularly to whom he thinks had been the main cause of his problems, such as stated in here: De Angelo Bailey

and Debbie Mathers-Briggs. He determined to make life better for him and the people he loved. At least, he mentioned a name here, which is his baby daughter, Hailie Jade.

All we can say, then, is that the lyric's final passage symbolizes the unimaginable effects of his "brain damage" on his future life. The selection of it as the key to that symbol is determined by the reversal of the symbol used to describe life before the changing happened. This is why, to emphasize the shift, the lyricist exposes nonsense or contradictions in the description. Though, the main idea has never been far from his own experiences.

IV.1.2 "Rock Bottom"

This lyric is easy to interpret since the lyricist employs everyday language in it. From the beginning, we already know to whom this lyric is presented to: "This song is dedicated to all the happy people/ All the happy people who have real nice lives/ And who have no idea what's it like to be broke as fuck" (2-4). From the cynicism showed in this opening, it already suggests the fact that the lyricist does not take side on "the have". He stereotypes them as ignorant people who have never felt any difficulties in life. Thus, the writer conceives that the narrator of this lyric must be one of those people belongs to the lower class society.

The narrator, representing the unhappy people as it has been said, is telling a first person story of a hopeless man: "I feel like I'm walking a tight rope/ Without a circus net" (5-6). It signifies "I's" condition at that time. It is usual for acrobatics to walk on a tight rope. Still, in circus, they use a net to make sure that it is safe for

them. The difference from "I", his "circus" was life itself and he did not have any net to protect himself from falling. Linked to the previous idea that the narrator is a portraiture of a member of lower class society, we have already given some hints of what kind of difficult situation "I's" facing: "But I work a sweat for this worthless check/ Bout to burst this tech,/ at somebody to reverse this debt" (10-12).

As we study this lyric in detail, we can sense the pessimism inside. Started from his own life background, he intends to recite the common things faced by the lower class society, particularly in the strife for life. Of course, money would not be a problem for the rich men. On the other hand, "I" divulged that money could be a matter of life and death for some, especially when he could not even afford his daily life, such as to buy diapers for his daughter. The revealing of his personal experience in "I's" story makes it reasonable for the poet to be pessimistic along the lyric.

Here, he remains using clichés and descriptive systems of hypograms. This makes the form simpler to understand since the words used are associated to one another and the meaning is very close to the dictionary definition of their nucleus words. It is unnecessary to analyze the lyric in detail, because the relationships between the particles are very strong that any metonym can serve as metaphor for the ensemble, and at any point in the lyric where the system is made implicit, we can fill in gaps in an orderly way and reconstitute the whole representation from that metonym in conformity with the grammar of the pertinent stereotypes (Riffaterre 39-40).

“Rock Bottom” is actually telling the shift of a characterization of a person, from a discouraged person to be a wicked one:

My life is full of empty promises
And broken dreams
I’m hoping things will look up
But there ain’t no job openings
I feel discouraged hungry and malnourished
Living in this house with no furnace, unfurnished (34-39)

As we have found out previously, there is only a major character in here, which is the narrator. The writer beholds that this time, he uses the common characterization of lyric. As Abrams said, it consists of thoughts and feelings uttered in the first person, whom may be referred to the poet himself (Abrams 85).

Representing the life of lower class society, the lyricist blames money as the main root of all his problems:

And I’m sick of working dead end jobs with lame pay
And I’m tired of being hired and fired the same day
But fuck it, if you know the rules to the game play
Cause when we die we know were all going the same way
It’s cool to be player, but it sucks to be the fan
When all you need is bucks to be the man
Plus a luxury sedan (40-46)

So far, the lyric seems to specify the issues of poverty. The first is, of course, an attempt to escape. The easiest way one might find is in drugs and alcohol:

They threw me in the mix
With all these gloomy lunatics
Walk around depressed
And smoke a pound of ses a day (48-51)

And then, after realizing that it cannot bring any solution to his problems, one might reach some point where he would do anything to get what he wanted. This is what the lyricist tried to make clear in the lyric, particularly in the chorus:

That's rock bottom
When this life makes you mad enough to kill
That's rock bottom
When you want something bad enough you'll steal
That's rock bottom
When you feel you have had it up to here
When you mad enough to scream but you sad enough to tear

This lyric was, actually, written when the lyricist had just gotten fired from his work, as explained:

It didn't help that days before Christmas, which is Hailie's birthday, Eminem got fired from his cooking job at Gilbert's Lodge. "That was the worst time ever, dog," he says. "It was like five days before Christmas, which is Hailie's birthday. I had, like, forty dollars to get

her something. I wrote “Rock Bottom” after that”. (eminemworld.com 1999)

This then inspired him. As a matter of fact, there is nothing special in this lyric. It is mostly portraying the life of the lower class people. The lyricist is being honest. The only thing that we need to pay attention to is that the lyricist had lived through the exactly same difficult times once. At that time, he found that it was very difficult to get a job that he got “hired and fired the same day” (41).

Still, the bad character Slim Shady takes his major part in this lyric. At certain point, poverty increases the crime level in an area. He describes this in the next part of the lyric:

‘ But it’s the evil that made me this backstabbing, deceitful, and shady
 I want the money, the women, the fortune, and the fame
 That means I’ll end up burning in hell scorching in flames
 That means I’m stealing your checkbook and forging your name (56-60)

Reflecting the American naturalism spirit, this work declines religiosity. It is first mentioned on line 18: “I pray that god answers, maybe I’ll ask nicer”. Little scientific proof is ever needed here to see the cynical tone in this line. God here is brought up out of the lyricist’s faith. Instead, it signifies despair. The lyricist questions God’s existence when a mankind is in need for His help.

We can also view another pessimist sentiment on:

I want the money, the women, the fortune, and the fame

That means I'll end up burning in hell scorching in flames

That means I'm stealing your checkbook and forging your name

Lifetime bliss for eternal torture and pain (57-60)

It implies the lyricist's naturalist perceptive. From what he wrote, it is unquestionably clear that he is familiar with the religious belief, similarly: people will die and be sent to heaven or hell, depends on what they have been doing when they are alive. He knows that greediness would lead him to underworld. Yet, he is not religious enough to believe: "Cause when we die we know were all going the same way" (43). Therefore, he explores his desire to have "the money, the women, the fortune, and the fame", even when he had to "steal people's checkbook and forging their name".

From this part, Slim Shady takes his biggest role in this lyric. He means to show people of how poverty could turn a person to be evil. And, this fact might happen to the community he lived in, where most people are from lower class society: "I got problems now everybody on my blocks got 'em" (62). Though, he, once again, distorts the actualities and muddle them up with Slim Shady's malicious imagination.

IV.1.3 "Just Don't Give A Fuck"

In this angry lyric, the lyricist is helped by his rap group, Dirty Dozen, as what so called "frogg" – guest rappers. The function is to escort the reader to Verse One, when the major character is being introduced to a character by the name of Slim Shady.

We can see since Verse One, this lyric is a set of the combination between semes and presupposition networks, and the descriptive system of hypograms. At first, Slim Shady presents himself in several similes. The first one is to have a “brain dead” like Jim Brady. He refers to James S. Brady, the Assistant to the President and White House Press Secretary in the Reagan Administration, who was accidentally shot in 1981 when a person named John Hinckley attempted to assassinate the President. This shooting President Bill Clinton regulated “The Brady Bill” in order to control private gun possession in the USA (law.umkc.edu 2002). The writer, as she tries to explore into the deeper into the relationship between the codes, sees this phenomenon as intertextual. This might be what the lyricist tried to convey to the reader. Brady was a completely helpless victim of the shooting. But, in fact, he could cause a huge changing in the US law by the establishing of the Brady Bill. In this way, the writer sees a similarity in Slim Shady compares to Brady. He was always considered as nothing, as we can see in “Brain Damage”. On the contrary, he could change his whole he could change his whole life from poverty to fame.

Another simile can be seen in the next lines, when the lyricist conceived himself as a machine gun – M80. As a matter of fact, it is a cancellation of the previous polarization, when he described himself as a hopeless person. A machine gun indicates power, strength, or maybe authority. As an M80, he meant to say that he tried to warn people not to quarrel with him. To underscore this point, he even stated that “you” were nothing more than Li'l Kim. So far, “you” remains to be

unclear. We do not know of whom this might refer to. However, by using this comparison, the lyricist did not intentionally want to “diss” the female singer – Li’l Kim. He only emphasized on the word “little”, which is substantial to suggest the effect of the comparison between “strong” and “weak”. The following simile, he then defines himself as someone who curses worse than a head coach of an American Football team on the National Football League, named San Diego Chargers – Marty Scottenheimer (nfl.com 2002). Slim Shady is somewhat the worst character that anyone could ever think of. He is insane, powerful, ill-mannered, evil, but on the other hand, also prominent.

In the next lines, then, he revealed his official name – Marshall Mathers. But, his characterization is still the same as Slim Shady. He admits that he is an alcoholic, and he has a tendency to commit crime. Here, he mentions “you”, the person(s) to whom the lyric is presented. Due to the fact that he often employs his own experiences, the writer assumes that “you” refers to his opponents, his critics, or generally influential figures in music who always looked down on him. He warns them:

Better hide your wallet cause I’m comin up quick to strip your cash
Bought a ticket to your concert just to come and whip your ass
Bitch, I’m comin out swingin, so fast it’ll make your eyes spin
You getting knocked the fuck out like Mike Tyson (19-22)

This is not, of course, a caution that he would really kill the people who are against him. Instead, the writer sees this as a show off that his works can be better than theirs. They are better being careful, because he would get them “knocked out like Mike Tyson”.

As in Verse One, this part uses several similes to compare Shady’s evil to factual happenings that more known for people. He also identifies many names, other than Li’l Kim and Marty Scottenheimer; such as: the former overweight boxing champion of the WBA, Mike Tyson; a Detroit Tiger player, Shawn Holman; and a man named Ron Goldman. Those are, of course, not without meaning. This lyric, being more complex than the two others, is also characterized by nonsense. As we can see, the original meaning of the words, phrases, or sentences are vague. Therefore, the reader should have basic knowledge about the textual hypograms, or he would not be able to interpret the lyricist’s message. Though, we must draw a distinction between the hypograms used here, because some have already been actualized in the text, while some others are potentially descriptive systems.

The writer’s example here is in Ron Goldman. The lyricist, as the writer had been observed, referred to a murder victim in the 90’s. Ron Goldman was murdered along with Nicole Brown Simpson, and it was Simpson’s former husband who was accused for the killing. The man, OJ Simpson, who was a famous baseball player, finally could escape a conviction at his trial (cnn.com 1999). The case was a huge issue in the US that people would remember it. Consequently, when the lyricist

mentions: “I’ll slit your motherfuckin throat worse than Ron Goldman”, it means he wanted to describe of how he could kill “you”. Although, it is only his emphasis in “beating” his enemies.

The tone of this lyric is even angrier. One thing that signifies this mostly is the chorus. As we know, poetry is also formed by its rhythm and rhyme. Regardless of whether there is any formal meter or rhyming pattern, it is clearly seen, especially in the chorus that they are one of the most elusive yet essential characteristics of this work. It emphasizes the tone:

So when you see me on your block with two glocks

Screamin _Fuck the World_ like Tupac

I just don’t give a fuck!!

Talkin that shit behind my back, dirty mackin

Tellin your boys that I’m on crack

I just don’t give a fuck!!

But see me on the street and duck

Cause you gon’ get stuck, stoned, and snuffed

Cause I just don’t give a fuck!! (25-33)

The lyricist uses language as his artistic device to produce a conceived image. In the chorus above, musicality is usually achieved by means of the phonetic effects of some phonemes, and they evoke associations that are similar to certain natural

sounds. For instance, the accumulation of the /k/ sound creates an image of toughness or anger.

Although the lyric seems to explore anger, it is so constructed as to make it impossible to read it referentially, if the reader did not understand the hypograms. The story, plot, and representations can only be called absurd. However, it progresses without violating narrative structures, that in fact it follows rules no different from those of a “normal” realistic narrative. What makes even the absurd thus acceptable is the fact that the text is a series of events unfolding out of a given whose “truth” is tolerable for the simple reason that it is grammatical. The words used, for some readers might be categorized as ungrammatical. However, we must see those codes of the lyric as symbolic. They definitely represent something those are not the desert to which the description is still referring. Everything points to a hidden meaning. As the writer sees in the lyric, the poet used Black language to emphasize his ambiguous identity. Thus, they should be seen as literariness instead of ungrammaticalities.

This lyric is, again, the lyricist’s reprisal against the critics. Back in the old days, when he was still the plain Marshall Mathers, he remained silent for every treatment he received from them. Perhaps, it was because he understood his position as “nobody”. Now, as he grows over the top, he realizes he has more authority to control:

I’m nicer than Pete, but I’m on a search to crush a Milkbone

I’m everlasting, I melt Vanilla Ice like silicone

I’m ill enough to diss you for no reason

I'm colder than snow season when it's twenty below freezin

Flavor with no seasonin, thisis the sneak preview

I'll diss your magazine and still won't get a weak review (34-39)

A feature common to the lyric is the nonsense that not to be taken literally. In any case, though the lyricist expresses his actual anger, it means something other than to “melt vanilla Ice like silicone”, for example. While the writer believes Vanilla Ice was best known as a successful white rapper in the eighties, the lyricist imposes his view that his fame nowadays is in a greater extent.

To use the concept of Slim Shady's characterization here, he is a means of establishing identity. He was born from the lyricist's need to express what he had been held back. It is then, explicable why he entirely presents himself as the evil Slim Shady. Having enough of his turbulence life, he wishes to change his identity: “Slim Shady, Eminem was the old initial (Bye-bye)” (43). Still, if we hoped to see a “clean” Eminem, we are to see our expectations failed in the cancellation:

Extortion, snortin, supportin abortion

Pathological liar, blowin shit out of proportion

The looniest, zaniest, spontaneous, sporadic

Impulsive thinker, compulsive drinker, addict

Half animal, half man (43-48)

True, there is nothing pleasant to hear in the lyric. However, it is stated explicitly in the content – in spite of his sick lyric – that Slim Shady is only a “pathological liar” who is “blowin shit out of proportion”. Due to the fact, the lyricist

himself admits, "A lot of my rhymes are just to get chuckles out of people. Anybody with half a brain is going to be able to tell when I'm joking and when I'm serious" (eminemworld1.hypermart.net 2000).

Not having enough evidence of when exactly the lyric was written, it is interesting to speculate if it was after the publishing of the lyricist's first album Infinite. At the time, he was criticized for being not qualified. Perhaps, then he came back with anger with The Slim Shady LP, particularly in this lyric, and proved them that they were wrong. This is, in fact, another vengeance of the lyricist. Though, in spite of his profanity, there is nothing dangerous in this Slim Shady. The writer sees this matter as the lyricist's relief.

IV.2 Lyrics as the Reflection of the Poet's Feelings and Thoughts

Tracing back to the three lyrics chosen, they are a sequence of narrative retelling of the lyricist's life, started by Slim Shady. "Brain Damage" is telling about his painful memory and the reason why he grows up to be the way he is. Then, "Rock Bottom" is uttering a sad story of his adolescence. Still not have enough of the offensive lyrics, the poet presents "Just Don't Give A Fuck". It is about the developed stage in his life, a stage when he reaches his boiling point and feels like he would do just about anything to get his problems solved.

The one thing the writer has to recommend, though, is the similarity of the lyrics. They superfluously mention the lyricist's past experiences. However, the writer sees this phenomenon only as the lyricist's means to get his messages spread

out. Thus, calling this work as a reflection of the lyricist's personal life would be too vague. It is more about the poet's feelings and thoughts.

However, after knowing the means used by the lyricist in writing his lyrics, which is his own sorrow, we may hold in our mind as certain worldviews – value systems. However, the language chosen by the lyricist leads us to the right direction to grasp the messages he wants to convey. As the dominant New Critical states: language had been thought of as a reflection of either the writer's mind or the world as seen by the writer. In a sense the writer's language was hardly separable from his or her personality; it expressed the author's very being (Selden 121). Therefore, we can see in the language, anger within the tone which is made clear with imagery of severity and dramatic actions. The repetitions, assonances, and alliterations symbolize the lyricist's heightened emotional tension.

The Slim Shady LP, as explored previously, is a work full of pessimism that Sr. Mary Rose McGeady condemned it as an example of the cultural forces that was giving young people a sense of hopelessness (sspxafrica.com 2001). Yet, we cannot judge a work to be bad simply because of the pessimistic content. Similarly, this pessimistic attitude has been attributed to naturalism in American literary thought for so long. Back to the past, after the Civil War, the American economic pattern changed from one of individual enterprise into finance capitalism. As this process was allowed to go on unrestricted, the common people had been the victims of sweatshops, starvation wages and unfair competition. And, to make matters worse, in the Eighties and Nineties severe business recessions brought about increased

insecurity, suffering, and even violence among the working people (Horton 262). So much for that, the events on “Rock Bottom” are nothing new. Still, this argument needs to develop better, as the lyricist himself commented that his lyrics are “sick” and there is nothing nice about them (“Eminem Speaks His Mind” n.pag). Thus, it is interesting to find out the lyricist’s intention in writing them, as we believe that he must hold certain value systems.

In order to begin an answer to this question, we must take a broader view about lyric as poetry in general. Specifically, Riffaterre mentions two important aspects in poetry; they are the form and the content. While the form is to be functioned as a means of conveying sense, the content is perceived as a pre-transformation stage. The reader then explicitly discerns this content as ordinary-language version of the text. The result of this attitude is that some reader might mistakenly fantasize a norm in seeking hidden meanings of a poem. Still, we should remember that a poem is already a stylistic structure hot with intensified connotations and overloaded discourse (164).

To set the pattern, it is then important for us to be careful in seeing what is really there and what is not. For the writer, though, it is somehow not enough to see The Slim Shady LP merely as a means to retell the lyricist’s turbulence life to his audience. It is true, though; that sometimes he employs verses for pointless reminiscing and for the irrevocable past creates an image of resentful, willful blacking out of painful memories, which is shown clearly in “Rock Bottom”. But then again, the basic of this argument can be read along the interpretation of the lyrics

that, however, several imagery are found to be fictitious. Halfway between the stories of his life, the lyricist slips some events resulted from his imagination, along with imaginary characters. The value systems that the writer encounters are met at random, created within memory and imagination, and distorted by the indistinctness of the switching of the characters. Yet, the shift between the two remains to be unclear except when we look back to the lyricist's background. Twist on the line lies on small details, such as mentioned on "Just Don't Give A fuck", when he said goodbye to his official initial, M and M. Thus, the writer would rather call this work as the reflection of the lyricist's feelings and thoughts.

To some extent, the major character here – Slim Shady – has already implied the demarcation between the real – not real features of the work. To the lyricist, Slim Shady is an actor who does what the lyricist tells him to do, and says what the lyricist tells him to say. In this particular work, Slim Shady acts as another Marshall Mathers who reacts differently than the real Marshall Mathers. Though, it is obvious to see the offense in each of Slim Shady's words, which are hard to accept by most people.

Yet, we have to see it as a part of the lyricist's creative thinking in spite of the profanity. J.G. Sulzer mentions: "When the poet is in a state of enthusiasm, his 'thoughts and feelings irresistibly stream out in speech,' and he turns all his attention to that which goes on his soul; forgets the outer circumstances which surrounds him..." (qtd. in The Mirror and the Lamp 89).

The writer believes that this stage was also happened to the lyricist during the writing of his lyrics. Therefore, it was his works that he concentrated on, and not how people would act in response. In an interview with Rolling Stone Magazine, he admits: “My thoughts are so fucking evil when I’m writing shit...It’s not how I feel in general, it’s how I feel at that moment” (qtd. in “Eminem Blows Up” n. pag). It seems that the lyricist uses Slim Shady as his “verbal vengeance” toward his life (qtd. in The hometown n. pag). Using his offensive words, the lyricist creates Slim Shady as his demonic hero to say the things he could not say. Undoubtedly, Slim Shady is a part of Marshall Mathers – his dark side, to be sure. In The Slim Shady LP, he prefers calling himself by the name of this alter ego, although at times he still mentions his official name. Of course, it is not without intentional.

Even if it is not our main task here, the writer sees it as the problematic root in searching out the lyricist’s real intention in writing lyrics. The vertigo may occur here since there is no decent message we could get from Slim Shady’s words. Conversely, there is always some connection between the poet and his works. Thus, we should first recognize the lyricist in order to recognize Slim Shady.

As to people’s finding to consider The Slim Shady LP as a work of pessimism, the poet admits that the starting point of it is from his personal experience. Then again, Julie Burchill, in “The People’s Pessimism”, explains that pessimism is caused by depression, which is the result of job insecurity, divorce, and drug and alcohol abuse (Burchill n.pag). To strengthen his confession, the lyricist reveals: “I took a lot of them, I took a bunch of pain killers – Tylenol. I took 13, 16 of

'em and fuckin' threw 'em up. I thought I was going die, I thought I was going die for real" (emineworld1.hypermart.net 2000). About further information on the cause of his depression, we can see it back to the interpretation of "Rock Bottom".

So, there is the case. The confession, however, has not made the problems easier for us. If proof is needed of the importance of this issue throughout the debates around the lyricist's intention, one can only rely on the lyricist's commentary.

It may be true that despair and pessimism are the foundation of the work. But, they are not to be taken literally, as the lyricist says: "Anybody with a sense of humor is going to put on my album and laugh from the beginning to end (emineworld1.hypermart.net 2000).

Nevertheless, it opens a space in which some people hold certain prejudice against the value in this work. Most accuses him trivial for writing violence lyrics. For the writer, though, it is more to be unique rather than trivial. On this matter, the lyricist comments: "Saving Private Ryan was probably the illest, sickest movie I've ever watched, and I didn't see anybody criticizing that one for violence" (emineworld1.hypermart.net 2000). Here, the writer sees, the lyricist is trying to imply his point of view on this subject. In opposition, he continues: "A lot of my rhymes are just to get chuckles out of people. Anybody with half a brain is going to be able to tell when I'm joking and I'm serious" (emineworld1.hypermart.net 2000). In a sense, he admits the using of "pseudo-statements" in his lyrics (Daiches 141).

If the lyricist himself has admitted that there is nothing nice in the work, then why should we bother to pay attention to his lyrics? As a matter of fact, it is what has been called as the lyricist's world views – “the reflection of either the writer's mind or the world as seen by the writer”. Giles Foden writes on the Guardian: “The mistake his critics make is to see the songs as direct statements by the singer rather than discrete aesthetic objects” (guardian.co.uk 2001). It is of course not necessarily conceivable when the poet wrote about him killing another musician in “Just Don't Give A Fuck”, for example. “The critics,” as Foden continues, “should consider that this might be an artist toying with the place where celebrity and palatability meet, by passing deliberately inflammatory statements and by parodying less thoughtful rappers”.

As for Slim Shady, the writer perceives him as the portrayal of the lyricist's dark side. Being drug and alcohol abused and ended up in job insecurity and depression, the writer does not think that the lyricist would want people to do as Slim Shady did. By ironically narrating the violence that one might do – in Slim Shady's actions – the lyricist intends to warn people: “Don't do drugs, don't have unprotected sex, don't be violent. Leave that to me” (emineworld1.hypermart.net 2000).

Still, most parents is aware on how much the lyricist can influence their children. To what degree, in fact, can artists be held responsible for their works? According to Foden, this is a question poets have asked themselves for centuries, especially when dealing with tragic materials (guardian.do.uk 2001). So for the lyricist, his works are not for younger children to hear. It has an advisory sign on the

cover, which means one should be at least eighteen to listen to them. It cannot totally keep children away from listening to his lyrics, of course, as he admits (eminemworld.com 1999).

The lyricist may not possibly be in charge for each of the children. After all, it is impossible for any artist to escape from demerits: "But men of culture and poetry, it will be said are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to a harmonious perfection..." (qtd. in Critical Approach to Literature 386). The lyricist is, too, aware that his demerit lays on the violence he created for children to hear. Considering that he himself has a daughter that is still too young, he comments that he lets her to listen to the beat only, and he shall explain them when she is old enough to understand. None of his lyrics to be taken literally (eminemworld.com 1999): "I don't blame you, I wouldn't let Hailie to listen to me neither" (Mathers "My Dad's Gone Crazy" n.pag).

Ultimately, the writer hopes that the question has been answered in the process of this further analysis. Still, we are not likely to hope these matters would stop here, as the lyricist is still going on with his thoughts and experiences. The later addenda might change this writing and it can always be debated. However, so far for The Slim Shady LP, it is a work of fascination and hatred. There is much to say about both.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION