A study of language and ideology in Rap Music

Augustus Jordan III
Clark Atlanta University

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Abstract

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A Study of Language and Ideology in Rap Music

Advisor: Dr. O. Osinubi
Dissertation Dated June 5, 1998

This study examined the language of Hip-Hop songs and ideology of the artists as reflected through their songs.

The study was based on the theory that Hip-Hop or rap songs are legitimate artforms because of their use of poetic elements such as figuration, figures of sound, symbolism, and ambiguity.

The study recorded and interpreted the lyrics of a few current rap songs for the purpose of investigating their poetical and ideological elements.

The researcher found signification battles by some rap artists as the best examples of songs which express the richness and complexity of Hip-Hop music.

The researcher found that both Hip-Hop music lyrics and standard poetry have many similarities, but also have a few different features which enhance their uniqueness.

The conclusions drawn from the findings suggest that the main reason many critics do not consider Hip-Hop or rap
music an artform, is that they either compare the music to something extremely different, or they simply do not take the time to listen to its songs. Rap Music is an artform that expresses poetic elements and utilizes electronic devices, thus making it a Postmodernist popular artform. Through the research, the researcher showed that rap music lyrics also have intense meaning, just like poetry.
A STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND IDEOLOGY IN RAP MUSIC

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
AFRICAN AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

BY AUGUSTUS JORDAN III

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Often when a critic considers an artform for his analysis, he becomes biased in his views because of his dislike for a popular culture of an ethnic people. This prejudiced stance against a particular work is very prevalent in the critique of Hip-Hop or Rap Music. A perfect example of this can be seen in an article, "A Different Story If It Were 'Exec Killer'" (1992), written for Tribune Media Services by critic Mike Royko. In the article, Royko expressed the following opinion about a song called "Cop Killer" by Rap artist Ice-T:

On the other hand, why not try a boycott? If I were a cop, I would. In fact, I could support the boycott strictly as a music lover, the rap song is that bad.

I have to admit that I consider all rap to be just about the most brain-dead pop music that we've ever had. The same dull thump-thump beat, the same mumble-mouth lyrics. It almost makes the classic 'How Much Is That Doggy in the Window?' seem profound.

And this particular song has to be about as bad as anything ever put on a record or disc. Naturally, Time-Warner and some socially aware critics are defending the song on the grounds that it is a social statement, expressing the
despair and frustration of society's abused underclass.

Nah. It's not a social statement. It's crap. Of course that doesn't mean it should be banned. If we banned all crap, our TV sets would be blank about ninety percent of the time, most movie houses would close, and our radios would go dead.¹

True enough Royko's dislike for the Rap Music genre is certainly an opinion that he is entitled to, but my main disagreement with his argument is the point that Ice-T's "Cop Killer" song cannot be classified as Rap. The selection actually should be categorized in the music genre known as Heavy Metal, a type of rock usually listened to by young Caucasian youths. My view of Royko speaking through a narrow-minded perspective can be further explained in terms of what critics say when in actuality they do not really understand a work -- music or literary criticism.

The rush to judgement does no good to anyone. Ralph Wiley (1993) in his book, What Should Black People Do Now? has also rightly identified Ice T's song for what it is -- "a heavy metal monstrosity." Ralph Wiley's following comments are very instructive:

The sitting President, George Bush, quickly followed by having his staff excoriate Ice-T for a song off a new album, a heavy-metal monstrosity called "Cop Killer." I began to wish for him to excoriate me. It would help product sales-- a point Sister(Souljah) had not been loath to make

when being interviewed on BET.

No politician has a say when Arnold Schwarzenegger kills a dozen cops at a time in a movie like "The Terminator", or when Richard Gere plays a cop who kills his own partner in "Internal Affairs", or when Axl Rose of Guns N' Roses or Ozzy Osbourne or some other White artist calls for chaos and anarchy. Why not? They're artists first. They're Americans first. And if survival means my total destruction, so be it. They aren't seriously questioned, let alone by politicians. I 'am Black first' I 'am African first'. Where do you think Sister Souljah learned her stuff in America, from Americans. And she doesn't have to imagine it. The nightmare is far too near, all too real. And we're all bound up in it together. There is no waking up or getting away. Why do you think they call it rap?

Following Ralph Wiley's argument above, it seems clear to me that Ice-T's Cop-Killer is a heavy-metal rock song that just happened to be performed by a rapper. For Royko to classify it as a rap song in a critique about other forms of controversial rap is defeating its purpose. Instead of him critiquing a "rap" song which he originally had set out to do, he is critiquing a rap song through the review of a heavy-metal song. According to Henry Louis Gates Jr., in The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism, in order for anyone to successfully critique any work of art, he must first compare it with another work which is similar.² By this method of


³ Luther Campbell and John Miller, As Nasty As They Wanna Be: The Uncensored Story of Luther
criticism, it is impossible to judge two totally different genres of music using the same measurement of evaluation. I believe racism against black culture comes into play here. Royko hated this particular form of music strictly because he thought it was rap since it was performed by an African-American rap artist.

Furthermore, he goes on to say that he even hates all rap music and describes it as "crap." This is a lack of understanding on the part of Royko. He is not only denying one particular song which could fall under the category of a music form in which a majority of its composers are usually white, but also denying every other song that exists within the realms of another music form which is usually considered as a black genre.

Ralph Wiley also accuses former President Bush of the same thing in the President's attack of the same music genre. An interesting consequence of these attacks on the "Cop Killer" song is that rather than hurt the artist, the attacks helped his album to succeed beyond the artist's imagination. The controversy brought the artist into the limelight. Wiley also mentions the fact that other white artists who also write material that is violent, visual or audial, are simply left alone.

_Campbell and The 2 Live Crew_ (Kingston: Kinston Publisher's Limited, 1992), 159.
Although critics such as Royko, do not view Hip-Hop music as an artform, the court case, Skywalker Records Inc. v. Navarro, DC Sfla, No. 90-6220-CIV-JAG, 6/6/90 demonstrated his argument to be a false. In the case, Sheriff Navarro of Broward County Florida had to try and prove that the lyrics of the rap group, The 2-Live Crew’s album, “As Nasty As They Wanna Be” had contained obscene lyrics according to what is called the Miller test. This analysis which was brought forth from the Miller v. California trial of 1973 identifies three details which need to be proven in order for a piece of work to be legally considered obscene. They are: 1. the average person applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest; 2. measured by contemporary community standards the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, a sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law; and 3. the work taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

Because of the testimonies of three character witnesses in the case, who included the literary critic, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the group’s pieces were considered to possess some literary value, hence their work passed the

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4 Ibid., 163-164.
test and was in essence considered an artform. The court came to the conclusion that although the music's lyrics had risque language, most of the work was comedic parodies of stereotypes which were established by Western society about the sexual promiscuity of men of African descent. Gates explained that their mockery of these stereotypes was a sort of defense mechanism, which classified their album as a work which was using hyperbole. Since hyperbole is a literary device, the album had passed the test.

The research problem that I intend to investigate in this thesis relates to the literary study of Hip-Hop music. Is Hip-Hop music an artform? What literary or poetic features validate it as an artform? What significant messages or ideological constructs come across from the music? Of course the Skywalker v. Navarro court case tries to address some of these questions, however, my present study differs in that the relevant research for the case was done in reaction to a lawsuit. In addition my research will analyze the lyrics of several artists in the original Hip-Hop genre of rap, not the Miami Bass style. I chose to select the original Hip-Hop genre of rap music as opposed to Miami Bass because the former contains far more complex

\[\text{ibid.}\]
lyrics. Miami Bass has more of an emphasis on simple rhymes with less complex rhythms.

The methodology of my research is another area which differs from the Skywalker v. Navarro case. I will be taking the works of two sets of rap artists in which they play the dozens, or testify against one another and analyze them. The artists that I will be using are L.L. Cool J, Kool Moe Dee, The Notorious B-I-G, and Tupac Shakur. I chose L.L. Cool J and Kool Moe Dee's signification battles on wax as examples of the usual way in which rap artists handle a lyrical battle in their recordings. Not only were both Moe Dee and Cool J very competitive lyricists, but what sets them apart from the other two artists (The Notorious B-I-G and Tupac Shakur) is the fact that they came to grips with their differences through a lyrical competition as opposed to actual physical violence.

In the case of The Notorious B-I-G and Tupac Shakur, both ended up taking their dozen-playing a bit too seriously. By the end of their long drawn-out battle, both men were receiving death threats as well as confrontations from each other. Although both men had died at the pinnacle of their careers (1996 & 1997), nobody really knows if their deaths have anything to do with their

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6 Ibid., 157.
signification rivalry. I chose these two artists because lately there has been much controversy about both men even after their deaths. In addition, numerous works of theirs that were released after they passed away have strange relevance to their deaths as well.

I will explore the artistry of selected artists by transcribing their selected works in which they are "playing the dozens" against one another, and then show whether or not their works possess the elements of poetry as characterized by Geoffrey N. Leech, a foremost British linguist, in his book, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969). I assume that recorded signification lyrics will work better than just describing different types of songs because, in Hip-Hop when artists testify with one another, the intensity of the competition seems to increase the use of poetic strategies, such as metaphor and figuration, symbolism, figures of sound, etc.

The study will consist of seven chapters. The first chapter will be an introductory chapter. The second will give the history of Hip-Hop culture and rap music. The third chapter will compare rap music to poetry. The fourth chapter will discuss the poetics of rap music and its significant features, using Leech (1969)'s characterization of poetic artistry. The fifth chapter focuses on discourse
and ideology in rap music, and uses L.L. Cool J and Kool Moe Dee's lyrical battles for analysis. The sixth chapter discusses confrontations as a result of lyrical battles in Hip-Hop using Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G as examples. The conclusion will then present remarks that are validated by the data represented.
CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF HIP-HOP MUSIC

When critics or historians discuss Hip-Hop Music, an African-American popular artform, many issues about its origin are generally befuddled by controversy. A careful exploration of the origin of the popular artform however, brings to mind a group in New Jersey called the Sugarhill Gang, who were responsible for the first commercially successful rap song known as "Rappers Delight." Although this party song was the first tune to have been often repeated on the lips of many Americans of all races and colors, Hip-Hop Music had its establishment in the roots of unsung artists who created the activity merely as recreation.

One of the individuals who can be given credit for establishing Hip-Hop Music was Afrika Bambaattaa. Afrika Bambaattaa is probably best known among the African-American community for his hit songs, "Planet Rock" or
"Looking for the Perfect Beat." However his most impressive accomplishment seems to be the establishment of an organization called the Zulu Nation. Not only was the Zulu Nation the first organization to promote the spread of Hip-Hop culture, it also helped to decrease much of the violence and rivalry of city gangs in New York in the early 1970's.

In the beginning Bambaattaa was running with The Black Spades, a New York City street gang. But after he had acquired a love for an uptempo music called Hip-Hop, his priorities as well as his beliefs changed. Bambaattaa explained this new outlook on life in an article about the history of the Hip-Hop culture:

I’ll give credit to my mother. When I was growing up in the 60’s, I used to hear a lot of Motown sounds, James Brown sounds, the Stax sounds, Isaac Hayes and all of them. As well as Edith Piaf, Barbara Streisand, the Beatles, the Who, Led Zeppelin. From there I started knowing about a lot of different music and that’s when I first heard African music from Miriam Makeeba. I was listening to this sister talk about things about South Africa which I didn’t really understand at the time. One movie that grabbed my attention was a movie called “Zulu.” At the time when you were seeing black people on TV, you would see us in degrading roles. So to see this movie with Black people fighting for their land was a big inspiration for me. Then here comes this guy that I used to not like at first, I thought he was weird and crazy, which was Sly
Stone. But once I heard “Sing a Simple Song,” “People,” and “Stand”, I switched totally to this sound of funk. Then I seen(sic) the whole Motown start changing. The Temptations started getting psychedelic. I was a gang member by that time. From ‘69 to about ’75 I was in the Black Spades but, like a lot of these other young great Black musicians, I was a visionary. I said to myself, ‘When I get older, I=ma have me a Zulu Nation.’ I just waited for the right time.1

Bambaattaa’s inspiration from his mother as well as his passion for music led him down a more positive, constructive path. After watching a Michael Caine film which featured a Zulu tribe outnumbering a group of British soldiers, he adopted their name. The Zulu Nation then metamorphosed into a worldwide organization that promotes peace through unification of the differences in various cultures. The following are some of the principles of the Zulu Nation which helped Bambaattaa, its founder, to promote his vision of peace for the neighborhood’s youths:

We believe in the Holy Bible and the Glorious Qu’ran and in the scriptures of all the Prophets of God. We believe that through white supremacy, many of the history books which are used to teach around the world in schools, colleges and other places of learning have been distorted, are full of lies and foster hate when teaching about other races in the human family. We believe that all history books that contain falsehoods should be destroyed and that there should be history books

based on true facts of what every race has contributed to the civilization of human beings. Teach true history, not falsehoods. Only then can all races and nationalities respect, like or maybe love each other for what our people did for the human race as a whole.


Thanks to this new movement of peace which sought to increase the presence of creativity among the South Bronx ghetto community and most of its youth, Bambaattaa was successful in transforming these inner-city trouble makers into citizens who had begun to have genuine concern for their community. In the past where once they would battle over territorial rites with knives and fists, they were now doing so with ‘uprocks’ and ‘backspins.’ These new gymnastic dance moves were the common practices of the ex-gang members who were now known as B-boys or breakboys. This term was used to identify anyone who was about to take the initiative at a party and start a dance battle. Bambaattaa’s role in these battles was to engineer a change of perspective for young black males. These youths who
once were violently fighting among one another over who had the most "juice," were now dancing and coming up with some of the most advanced acrobatic and rhythmic techniques that the inner-city had ever seen.

Although Afrika Bambaattaa and his Zulu Nation had set a foundation for the main ideologies in Hip-Hop, another pioneer of the cultural artform was Kool Herc, who had conducted sound system explorations even prior to Bambaattaa's efforts. Herc's discoveries set the musical backdrop for most of the b-boys' expression. Most experts on Hip-Hop music believe that the artform started in the South Bronx. However, according to Kool Herc, one of the first sound system deejays from the South Bronx, Hip-Hop music had started in Jamaica, his birthplace. Clive Campbell, as he was known before he began spinning records in places such as The Bronx Rivers projects, can still remember the scenery in his birthplace of Kingston, Jamaica, where he witnessed the origin of the "Heartbeat" of Hip-Hop. Frank Owens, a writer for Vibe Magazine explains Campbell's description of one of these Jamaican sound sets:

\[2\] Ibid., 49.
Campbell remembers the backyard dances, illuminated by a string of lights, dark and scary to a youth not yet in his teens. The pungent odor of grass hung in the air, bottles of Red Stripe were strewn everywhere, a goat’s head lying in a boiling pot. The local rudies lined up at the edge of the dance, stylish figures in slim-fit, James Bond style suits. An occasional flash of metal sliced through the murk as a ratchet knife searched out its target. But most heavy of all was the bass heavy attack of the sound system when it kicked in, a roar so loud it shook rib cages and windows alike.\textsuperscript{3}

Vivid descriptions such as these not only convey what had been taking place in the trench towns of his birthplace, but also refers to the practice of sound-blast rivalry, also known as a block party in the park, in which a disc jockey unveils his system in the hope of receiving a challenge for some unlucky soul to try to outwit his pumping sounds. This should come as no surprise because for many years prior to the turntable era of Hip-Hop music, the first M.C.’s (Masters of Ceremonies) in the Western World were originally d.j.’s in the various island nations off the coast of Florida. With inspiration from tapes from the United States as well as strong antennae and receivers, the deejays would mostly play rhythm and blues just like their neighbors in the United States. During this period, the mixers only had two tracks, but large speakers were in

\textsuperscript{3} Frank Owen, "Back In The Days; Most of what you know about the old school is wrong," \textit{Vibe}
abundance at these gatherings and of course music was the main ingredient with which these people chose to congregate. By the 1960’s, deejays had begun to string in voiceovers over their music to report about activities in their neighborhood. As this became a common practice, many of these d.j. ‘s would come up with catch phrases which became their signature tunes. As this became an unofficial competition, some d.j.’s began uttering this scripted material by memory. One such oral technique by a duo of d.j.’s had led to a very important discovery. The duo, Ewart Beckford alias “U-Roy” and Osbourne Ruddock known to his listeners as “King Tubby,” while recording a group of songs for an artist named Duke Reid, claimed to discover the following:

It was becoming standard practice in this era of primitive two track recording—with the vocals on one track and the rest of the band on the other—to reserve the B-side of a record to test sound levels during recording. The instrumental B-side became known as the version, and in experimenting with it Tubby stumbled onto something new. By manipulating the tracks in the studio, he discovered the possibility of making new versions of a song in which the vocals phased in and out and over an instrumental track that could be dropped out altogether or brought forward. The new technique was called dubbing, a recording term for copying or making doubles of a tape, and appropriately the purely instrumental version became

known as the dub...U-Roy emerged as the deejay of note on his unique combination of scat, chat, rap, singing spawned past a whole new genre—the Dancehall style within Reggae Music.¹

Tubby and U-Roy began to chant songs such as the one called “You Don’t Care” by the Techniques, in which they began to add voice effects and re-echo them as long sounds in order to produce a different impression each time. This accidental discovery of theirs was important to Hip-Hop in two ways. First, these efforts as well as the efforts of other artists had laid down the foundation of early rapping over pre-recorded beats. The improvisational speeches which the d.j.’s had produced over their recordings became not only advanced poetic forms in time, but they were the very nucleus which influenced Kool Herc to bring his sound system to the Bronx. Second, the dub version became a very popular aspect of American Hip-Hop because these versions in which the vocals were fading in and out became a vehicle in which American d.j.’s, or rappers as they were later called, would lay down original lyrics over a beat taken from another song.

It would be correct to say that officially Kool Herc was the first d.j. to blast his sound system in New York City, but even though he deserves this credit, there are numerous deejays in the history of Hip-Hop culture who have unfortunately remained anonymous. One such d.j. was a gentleman known as D.J. Hollywood who would spin occasionally at a South Bronx spot called Club 371. Many claim that he was such a good disc jockey that not only would he move the crowd with his on-time blends from song to song, but he would also lead them in some of the most popularized call-and-response chants which are still verbalized in Hip-Hop music to this very day. One of these chants contained the very phrase “Hip-Hop” and according to writer Nelson George(1992), this is how the culture received its name. Other D.J.’s from around the Tri-City area included Coke-La Rock, D.J. Flowers, Frankie D., Master D., and a mixer known as D.J. Peter Jones. What was so amazing about their popularity was that they were getting “props” (the Hip-Hop jargon for exposure) from not only word of mouth, but from recordings of their live shows called mix tapes.

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Around the early 1970's, that was the general way in which a d.j. would receive his exposure. Someone who happened to have taped their live show at a particular venue around the Tri-city area would record it and sell it in different neighborhoods for $5 a copy. Not only would the deejays themselves record their personal show, but in addition other individuals were recording them as well. Although this recording of one another may appear to be a form of counterfeit, it was considered an act of respect when someone recorded someone else and sold the tape in another neighborhood at the time. Not only would the d.j.'s name grow in popularity on the ears of ghetto youth through this mouth-to-mouth exposure, but this early form of public relations led to the artists making money much later on.

In 1979, a hit song by The Sugarhill Gang was recorded on the Sugarhill Records label owned by a woman named Sylvia Robinson. Since this was the first rap song to be recorded on vinyl, the general American public thought this was the first rap song. This assumption is actually erroneous. Prior to this, not only were D.j.'s such as Hollywood and Lovebug Starski chanting at their live jams
in the park, but one of the first rappers to actually recite various lines of rap was a member of a group known today as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Born as Joseph Saddler in the South Bronx, Flash was like many other d.j.'s who had gained their notoriety through rocking parties. At one of these events, he came to the conclusion that his performance began to get monotonous with him just blending and scratching records constantly.

Although he was so much of a crowd pleaser that his fellow d.j. friend, D.J. Flowers, had given him the title "Grandmaster", he felt that he needed something more. Between his beat brakes, his good friend known as Cowboy would host the party and make little comments here and there between songs in order to keep the audience satisfied. These cryptic expressions became short poems. One perfect example is the following chant:

Throw Your Hands in the air!
and wave them like you just don’t care!
And if you're ready for Grandmaster Flash, somebody say, Oh Yeah!!!

Of course after this rhythmic, and catchy phrasing, the response from the crowd would usually be an agreeable and vibrant, "Oh Yeah!" If this was not the case, then the
Master of Ceremonies would have to resort to more dramatic verbal methods such as asking the people in the place who “have on clean underwear” to scream as long as their mother was “not on welfare.”

As Cowboy’s creativity progressed, his lyrical expressions extended as well. Although he cannot claim the title of being the first M.C. to record a Hip-Hop record, he certainly can take the credit for being one of the earliest (The Soul group Fatback Band recorded a song prior to the Sugarhill Gang called, “King Tim II; Personality Jock,” but it did not gain as much widespread popularity as “Rapper’s Delight.”) Flash, Cowboy, and three of their friends, who were also MC’s who had honed their skills as neighborhood pioneers, were now signed to the Enjoy record label as Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. Although Flash had been approached about recording his craft prior to the success of the Sugarhill Gang record, he stated in an interview that he had no idea of how people would react to it. Although “Rapper’s Delight” had gone triple platinum after a few months on the charts, several Hip-Hop purists had little respect for them because they felt that

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the Sugarhill Gang had stolen their style from the Cold Crush Brothers, a well-known neighborhood group.

In a Hip-Hop reunion organized by Nelson George in Source Magazine in 1993, both Afrika Bambaattaa and D.J. Kool Herc explained why they had very little respect for the Sugarhill Gang and also how they knew that the Sugarhill Gang had stolen a style which was established in the streets by Grandmaster Can of the Cold Crush Brothers.

The interview between Nelson George and the two founding fathers of Hip-Hop culture reads as follows:

[Herc:] And when I heard (Big Bank) Hank (of the Sugarhill Gang), I was like, what? I knew Hank, I really didn’t appreciate that Hank knew me personally, had been to my house, was from my neighborhood, and never once said, ‘Herc, I’m doing something’ Never, until this day.

[Bam:] Cause he never gave credit to Grandmaster Cassanova Fly, who is called Grandmaster Can these days from the Cold Crush Brothers, for the rhymes.

[Source Magazine:] Now did he literally write them, and Hank took them?"

[Herc replying:] Can used to come to the Sparkle where Hank was a doorman. He used to get on the mic and Hank heard him. That’s when Hank saw the scene growing. I went to New Jersey—my girlfriend knew him—and he was working in a pizza shop down there. I just said, ‘When Sylvia (of Sugarhill Records) hear the real deal, she gonna know.’ And I was so happy to be in the Fever when she seen the truth. And it was hell with
them after that. To see Melle Mel and them on stage.⁷

As stated in the previous quotation, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five had been signed to Sugarhill Records. Although the Sugarhill Gang were thought to have at first, Abeat them to the punch," Flash and his crew received recognition not only through the tri-boroughs as one of the founding groups of Hip-Hop music, but the Sugarhill Gang’s recording career became short-lived. Even today, not only can Flash or one of the members of his crew be seen on television representing the South Bronx through cutting, scratching, and Mc’ing but their titles (whether together or as separate solo groups) have become household words in the Hip-Hop culture.

Another particular aspect of the Hip-Hop culture which has an origin similar to that of deejaying around the same time is graffiti. Graffiti started out as a very dangerous activity which entailed an individual sneaking into train yards and decorating subway cars with various insignias which held some form of relevance to the author (as well as

his neighborhood). Although generic graffiti had been sprayed upon various structures for years in many cities, the new process of expression in the Tri-City area was more complex and often referred to as "tagging." The youngsters responsible for these masterpieces were known to one another as "writers," and just like the other elements of Hip-Hop music, graffiti writing was not only done as a means of creative expression, but as a redefinition of one's self and one's environment. Some of these designs were common tags with basic word structure, however there were many works which had complex designs as well as a visual expression through the use of three-dimensional techniques.

The dangers encountered while throwing up "tags" were seemingly infinite. Anything could possibly happen to a graffiti writer, from getting chased by watchdogs, to getting hit by a train. Also he could, in extreme cases, get electrocuted as a result of tripping and falling on the subway rail tracks. Graffiti was illegal, and anyone caught in the act of applying it to city property was treated as a felon. These various dangers involved with tagging not only made writers more inventive, but they also
appealed to the machismo of young inner-city kids. Eventually many businesses saw the potential that this popular artform had for gaining positive reactions from the general public and would sometimes allow young writers to display their art upon their store walls.

Since graffiti was illegal in most areas of New York City, the names of the most gifted of the graffiti artists are known mostly by both fellow writers and Hip-Hop enthusiasts. One graffiti artist in particular that took the artform and other aspects of the Hip-Hop culture to another level was Fab Five Freddy. Fab Five started out as a writer under the tutelage of another popular culture artist, Jean Michael Basquiat. Freddy began his interest in graffiti by tagging up trains with his insignia throughout Brooklyn and other parts of the city. After meeting Basquiat, Freddy soon improved on his style and was introduced to the art gallery scene of lower Manhattan. Although Fab Five Freddy was widely known for his artwork on the passing subways, Basquiat, a young African-American, introduced him to a group of his white friends who were doing gallery shows in Manhattan. Freddy started focusing more on tagging downtown because around his neighborhood,
many Blacks were not involved in graffiti. Basquiat also introduced him to other kids from various ethnic backgrounds who were also writers: Keith Haring, Futura 2000, and Dry Craft Zephyr. Although Fab Five Freddy was mainly a graffiti artist, he was also very much inspired by deejaying, Mc’ing, and Hip-Hop music. As one of the only young African-Americans from Brooklyn who was into graffiti, Fab Five Freddy took the responsibility of expanding on graffiti by showing the relationship that it had to Hip-Hop Music:

Although my paintings were influenced by the way the music felt, I wanted to introduce the works as a part of a complete culture because, I felt, they would have a bigger influence on people that way. I didn’t want to be viewed as a folk artist or somebody who was a primitive artist, you know what I’m sayin’? It’s a very rarefied, ultrawhite scene but what I basically wanted to do was set up like a cultural battering ram to show these people, well there’s not just this painting, there’s a music and a dance which makes it a complete culture, a style of dressing too.8

Fab Five was one of the few African-Americans who helped to bridge the cultural gap between Black inner-city artists and artists of other nationalities through his relationship with Glen O’Brien, who in 1980 was the editor of Interview magazine. O’Brien was very impressed by Fred’s art, and

his knowledge of the d.j. and other aspects of Hip-Hop which he had acquired while watching shows in Brooklyn parks. Fab Five also started doing studio camera on a cable access talkshow, which skyrocketed him into other genres of expression such as film making.

Through his association with his new friends as well as his interest in communications, Freddy was doing shows and coming into contact with punk rock groups. These groups were no ordinary run-of-the-mill 80's new wave groups; he met big-name artists such as The Talking Heads, the B-52's, and the Sex Pistols. He also met a group called Blondie, who requested him to demonstrate some of his tagging techniques in their video, "Rapture." Through his bonding with these artists of other races, Fab Five learned that the passion that one has for one's art has no cultural boundaries. Due to its illegal nature graffiti was purely limited to commercial galleries. However, there were those youths who still expressed the need to reclaim what was theirs through the technique of tagging with spray paint, chalks, and other tools used in their murals. Since Fred knew that graffiti needed a boost in the way that the art was presented to the public, in 1980 he organized one
of the first major Hip-Hop art shows downtown at the Mudd Theatre in 1980. In addition to displays of art from a majority of his peers, he invited Afrika Bambaattaa to deejay the event, making that his premiere performance downtown.

Although Fab Five Freddy had done a few Hip-Hop records, he did not consider himself an MC, but he used his knowledge of the Uptown B-Boy scene as a catapult for other avenues of the Hip-Hop culture. Because of his background in mass media with the help of Chris Stein and Charlie Ahearn, and more of his white friends from downtown, he directed the first movie about Hip-Hop called "Wild Style."

The motion picture was named after a tagging style developed by a local writer known as Legend, and it followed a young graffiti artist through one of his "everyday experiences." Even though there are various other films about Hip-Hop currently released, purists view this particular motion picture as the most accurate interpretation because of the true to life characters in it. This aspect of its production made it more authentic, like a "spontaneous documentary." Due to the success of "Wild Style," Fab Five Freddy was asked to direct music
videos by various groups such as Boogie Down Productions, Gangstarr, and a young woman known to the rap community as Queen Latifah (whom he later brought to the attention of Tommy Boy Record Company).

The main reason that people confuse the term Hip-Hop with its more familiar element of rap music, is probably because many of its other aspects are not as widely practiced as they were in the 1970's. Although deejaying is still alive and thriving in current American tradition, the park jams such as those thrown by the pioneers have been limited because of the amount of violence brought forth from jealousy of a few bystanders who failed to participate in the events' festivities. Atlantan Charles English describes the demise of the park jam in his boyhood hang-out area of Reese Park in New York City in his following remark:

They had a park jam and instead of people hanging out, all these gang dudes came out there. They started messing with the ladies and started throwing their weight around with the groups and it started fights. At this time there wasn't really a thing, you know like guns and all that stuff you know it wasn't really that type of thing going on. But then the gangs started bringing it in and they started shooting. And so they closed it down; that was the last of those jams. I think it was in like the Summer of '75.'

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9 Charles English, interview by author, 5 May, 1998, Atlanta, tape recording, English's home, Atlanta.
It seems obvious that in the early skirmishes of Hip-Hop rivalry guns were actually used, and which suggests a likeness to the brawls of the present; however, most of the gunshots were fired into the air, and known casualties involved only a few cuts and bruises. Later in the study, the way in which gunplay has now changed the whole connotation of “brawls” in the popular artform of Hip-Hop will be further explored, but for now it is important to indicate that the intensity of the physical dangers surrounding Hip-Hop increased so much that many artists have started taking Hip-Hop’s competition a lot too seriously. The confrontation between Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B-I-G, which I shall examine in Chapter 6, is a salient example.

Breakdancing, another element of Hip-Hop, is still maintained by a few choreographic aficionados, but it has for the most part gone underground due to its heavy commercialization through pseudo-accurate motion picture depictions of the culture like the movies “Breakin’” and “Rappin’.” Even though breakdancing is an element of Hip-Hop culture which is equally important as its two sister
components, mc'ing and deejaying, it is not as widely practiced because of over-commercialization by the media.

Mc'ing or rapping could very well be the one aspect of Hip-Hop culture which has overshadowed the other three. From its early foundations in Africa and the Caribbean in the form of toasting and playing the dozens to its new metamorphosis in the rap music of African-American culture, rapping has since taken on other various forms. While the Northern U.S. rappers interpret the style similar to their Big Apple pioneers in the Bronx, other regions were doing their own versions. For example, Migration of Zulu Nation members to the Western, Central, and Southern United States produced West Coast G-Funk and Bass Music respectively. Although each particular genre can usually be played in heavy rotation in each area, this does not necessarily confine one type of sound to a particular place. For example, G-Funk, or what the media calls "Gangster Rap," can be as easily found in Kansas City, Missouri as in Los Angeles, California. In addition, there are even hardcore Hip-Hop groups which create rap in its original form in Los Angeles. The reason for this is that Hip-Hop Music or Rap

is a musical expression through which young people voice their complaints about the ills of their society.

It is for this reason that I refer to this popular culture artform as the product of a counterculture, because each of its elements was formed by young Blacks and Latinos in rebellion against the poverty and oppression in which they were living. Their families never had enough money to provide instrument lessons for them, so in response to this the youth made two turntables, a microphone, and even human percussion methods their instruments. They felt as if they were useless “nobodys” who didn’t own the very project housing in which they resided. In response to such stimuli, they painted their ghettos with complex visual markings similar to the condensed narratives characteristic of pictoral writing systems around the world, such as, the Egyptian hieroglyphics in which pictoral writing is also used. And finally to tell the story of their hardships as well as to dissipate their hardships, inner city youth “rocked the microphones” at jams and now rock on digital recordings.
CHAPTER THREE

A RELEVANT REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The word "rap" was made popular in the late sixties and the early seventies by young men and women making fun of one another with exaggerated phrases as a defense mechanism and a rite of passage. One of these young people who came to be quite talented at this pastime was the Black Activist known as H. Rap Brown. In fact, he became so talented at the art that peers in his community had made it a part of his title. This oral art was known in different regions of America as several different manifestations—signifying, playing the dozens, chewing, joning, or its title brought to the art by Brown, rap. In an article discussing the Skywalker Records Inc. v. Navarro trial in Florida, Dr. Henry Louis Gates gives his interpretation of the art of signifying:

This is the street tradition called 'signifying' or 'playing the dozens,' which has generally been risque', and where the best signifier or 'rapper' is the one who invents the most extravagant images, the biggest lies, as the
culture says. (H. Rap Brown earned his nickname in just this way.)

Although Dr. Henry Louis Gates correctly credits H. Rap Brown for his proficiency in "rapping" in the quotation above; he has a minor error in his definition of the practice. This mistake deals with his distinguishing between "playing the dozens" and "signifying." According to H. Rap Brown himself, the art of "playing the dozens" differs from signifying in that it has a more personally offensive effect on its victims. Brown suggests that:

Signifying is more humane. Instead of coming down on somebody's mother, you come down on them. But, before you can signify you got to be able to rap.

In many cultures, especially the African, the mother figure is held with great esteem because she is considered the backbone of the family. So when one is speaking disrespectfully about an individual's mother, needless to say that the speaker should be prepared to engage in some form of verbal competition, possibly even a fight to the death. Below is an example that Brown had provided in his book for playing the dozens:


I f----- your mama
Till she went blind
Her breath smells bad
But she sure can grind.

I f----- your mama
For a solid hour.
Baby came out
Screaming, Black Power.

Elephant and the Baboon
Learning to screw.
Baby came out looking like Spiro Agnew.\(^4\)

According to Brown, "rapping" or "The dozens" were only used as drastic measures with the intent to embarrass another person. Signifying also differed in that it dealt more with braggadocious statements about an individual and his abilities rather than putdowns. Below is an excerpt of an example of signifying:

Man you just don’t know who I am.
I’m the sweet peeter jeeter the womb beater
The baby maker the cradle shaker
The deerslayer the buckbinder the woman finder
Known from the Gold Coast of Maine
Rap is the name and love is my game.\(^5\)

In his *The Signifying Monkey*, a theoretical analysis of African-American literature, Dr. Henry Louis Gates provides a theory of ideologies, which explain such oral practices as toasting and playing the dozens. In Yoruba


\(^5\) Ibid., 27.
mythology, there is a character named Esu-Elegbara who was said to be the literary interpreter and the messenger of the Gods. It was written that he was the one who carried the oral and literary practices with the slaves throughout their travels to the New World. Gates wrote that this Yoruba trickster’s parallel Greek equivalent was Hermes (Mercury in the Roman). The name Hermes is Greek for protecting from ailment. Just like his Greek counterpart, Esu-Elegbara was a protector, and in this role he enabled African people to protect their rich oral and literary traditions. Esu the trickster aided them through having them redefine the new European culture in whichever way they saw fit. For example, in the following excerpt from *Signifying Monkey*, African captives during the Middle Passage meditated with prayers such as this to reaffirm to themselves who their true God(s) were:

I will write Arabic and say Muslim prayers. When the festival comes, I’ll worship my deity (Esu)\(^6\)

Although the African people were forced to worship the Gods of their slavemaster, they actually were sending the prayers to the various other Gods in their culture to whom they actually kept their allegiance. While the Europeans

actually had thought these men and women were praising their God of Catholicism or Protestantism, they in reality were sending these Psalms of praise to their Gods whom they trusted.

In addition to these cultural, literary and oral practices preserved in the United States, literary and oral practices were also maintained in other parts of the African Diaspora across the globe, wherever African people had dwelled. These African cultural retention could very well explain Esu-Elegbara’s relationship to a monkey. Gates stated that in Cuban mythology, for example, the literary interpreter was a monkey called jigue, who was also synonymous with Esu. According to Gates, a monkey is also symbolic of Esu in African-American culture. In this case he manifests himself as “The Signifying Monkey.” This fable which was passed through many generations in African-American culture contained various tales about a monkey outsmarting a lion. Although the monkey knew that he was a lot smaller than the “King of the Jungle,” he found various ways to outsmart the beast. In the following case, he tricked the Lion into fighting a huge elephant:

(Stanza 1)

Said the signifyin’ monkey to the lion one day:

7 Ibid., 20.
"Hey dere's a great big elephant down th' way
Goin' 'roun talkin', I'm sorry to say,
About yo' momma in a scandalous way!

By the time the reader gets to stanza number five, he can see the outcome of the Lion's confrontation with the elephant.

(Stanza 5)
He found the elephant where the tall grass grows
And said, "I come to punch you in your long nose."
The elephant looked at the lion in surprise
And said, "Boy, you better go pick on somebody your size.

Stanza 6)
But the lion wouldn't listen; he made a pass.
The elephant slapped him down in the grass.
The lion roared and sprung from the ground.
And that's when the elephant really went to town.8

Just as the original Africans who were taken from their lands used Esu to entrench the foundation of their cultural practices, African-Americans used the Signifying Monkey as a symbolism which represented a rebellion to the system.

According to Samuel A. Floyd Jr., after Black Americans' participation in World War I, white Americans did not provide African-Americans with the freedoms which they felt they deserved. A result of this (among other issues) was

African-Americans developing an intensified level of mistrust as well as cynicism for white society. In the fable of "The Signifying Monkey," the Lion is a representation of white Society; he is big and powerful, but easily outsmarted. The Signifying Monkey is of course symbolic of Black people. Although he is small, he is also extremely intelligent and can easily outsmart even the ferocious lion. At first glance the idea of the monkey representing African-Americans for me seemed pejorative, however when I learned that the figure also existed with a positive role in Yoruba mythology, I retracted those notions. I suspect the lion in the fable also retracted his notions after the monkey outsmarted him.

Another extremely obvious characteristic of similarity between Hip-Hop music and African-American poetry is their use of African-American dialect in their lyrics. Since both forms were created by African descendants, they definitely utilize the redefinition of vocabulary terms that are prominent throughout the culture. For example, in H. Rap Brown's example of signification I wrote earlier, he continues to display what is called authorship throughout the piece. Authorship is here defined as passages in a literary work which remind the reader who the subject of
the poem is. Brown does this quite well in this portion of the same piece:

> The women's pet the men's fret and the punks' pin-up boy. 
> They call me Rap the d---er the a-- kicker 
> The cherry picker the city slicker the ti--- licker...

The mention of Brown of his alias "Rap," is present to let his signification victim understand whom exactly he has chosen to signify with. Of course this particular poet can signify because his peers have given him the name "rap" for that in which he was extremely proficient. His use of terms that cannot be placed in the category of "American Standard English" like "Pin-up boy," "city slicker," "women's pet," etc. are perfect examples of relexicalized items in African-American dialect. Of course they all use words from American Standard English, but through redefinition their connotation is totally different from their original meaning. For example, within the phrase "the punks' pin-Up boy," the term punk, according to American Standard English means a young tough hoodlum. However its connotative meaning in African-American dialect is "a homosexual." The context clue for this is the term,

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"pin-up boy," which means a male model in a poster. Usually pin-ups are used by prisoners in prison to show them what they are missing sexually on the outside.

H. Rap Brown claims in the excerpt that he is so desirable that even gay men would want to have pictures of him on their wall. Although this type of characteristic would probably embarrass a majority of men, the statement conveys the notion that Brown is extremely assured of his manhood to the extent that he can make such a claim. It is also a far-fetched statement which produces a type of oxymoron. (This I will discuss later in Chapter 4). In addition the other titles he gives himself like, "women's pet" cancel out any mirepresentation of his reference to homosexuality. An example in rap music which displays this very same technique using African-American dialect, is the lyricist The Notorious B-I-G's re-mix version of the hit song, "One More Chance." Below the gifted rapper wrote in the first verse:

First things first, I, Poppa freaks all the honeys
Dummies-Playboy bunnies those wantin' money
Those the ones I like 'cause they don't get nathan'
But penetration, unless it smells like sanitation-
Garbage, I turn like doorknobs
Heart-throb, never, black and ugly as ever-
However, I stay Coogi-ed down to the socks
Rings and watch filled with rocks.

According to XXL magazine, the translation of the stanza into American Standard English above is as follows:

As a general rule, I perform deviant sexual acts with women of all kinds, including but not limited to those with limited intellect, nude magazine models, and whores. I particularly enjoy sexual encounters with the latter group as they are generally disappointed in the fact that they only receive penile intercourse and nothing more, unless of course, they douche on a consistent basis. Although I am extremely unattractive, I am able to engage in these types of sexual acts with some regularity. Perhaps my sexuality is somehow related to my fancy clothes and expensive jewelry.

In the same manner as H. Rap Brown's piece, B-I-G states authorship in the phrase "I Poppa." He referred to himself as such because of his large physical size. Every other description and phrase that follows is simply signification -- bragging about his success with women sexually. This factor is definitely present in Brown's poem and Biggie's rap.

In David Toop's analysis of Rap Music in The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip-Hop, he successfully chronicles the history of the culture from its early

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12 Ibid., 170.
African oral foundations up to the year 1984. However, according to Tricia Rose, the author of *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, David Toop fails to mention the main difference between Hip-Hop Music and Poetry, and Hip-Hop’s classification as a Postmodernist artform:

Toop, although he does have a solid grasp of the more prominent African-American oral influences in rap, draws a false dichotomy between rap’s African-American roots and the high-tech equipment to which it is equally welded. Rap then, is not simply a linear extension of other orally-based African-American traditions with beat boxes and cool European electronics added on. Rap is a complex fusion of orality and postmodern technology. This mixture of orality and technology is essential to understanding the logic of rap music; a logic that, although not purely oral, maintains many characteristics of orally based expression and at the same time incorporates and destabilizes many characteristics of the literate and highly technological society in which its practitioners live.\(^\text{13}\)

In essence, Hip-Hop lyrics are poetry layered over music tracks which were produced by modern musical computers. These computers or beat and sample machines are used in Rap to record the break beats that were, in the old school, blended by the pioneer d.j.’s. Within these tracks, also various sounds are produced as a backdrop to aurally convey to the listener the overall meaning of the song.

Poetry does not always have these types of added conveniences. However, one aspect that poetry has to enhance its meaning that Rap Music does not have is the structure of the writing on the page. Although many artists include sing-a-long lyrics within their LP covers, it is oftentimes difficult for one to understand what a rap musician is saying. With poetry, all that is being spoken by the poet is right there on paper. If the poet should happen to be performing live, chances are the audience should be able to understand everything expressed through the piece as long as they use adequate voice projection. For example, poets during The Black Arts Movement of the late 1960’s were experimenting with redefinition through not only African-American dialect, but through breaking form and grammar rules. Gwendolyn Brooks’s poem “We Real Cool,” uses this technique:

We real cool. We
Left school. We
Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We
Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We
Jazz June. We
Die Soon.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{14}\) Gwendolyn Brooks *Blacks* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1994), 331.
The poem breaks grammar rules by having the word "we" constantly placed at the end of each line's sentence except the last one. This is probably to suggest that the speaker of the poem ends up pitifully dying alone after following his peers as they skipped school and committed other infractions. Another grammar rule broken is the absence of the copula, such as "We real cool." The absence of the verb "are" suggests that "we" are constantly cool, so cool in fact that grammar rules cannot force Brooks to use the correct form of the verb "be." Also the pronoun "we" said each time in the poem is put at the end of the sentences to produce enjambment. Although rap music also may have enjambment, it cannot be shown in the poem unless it has been written down.

Hip-Hop and poetry share a lot of common characteristics, however, some educators tend to feel that Hip-Hop expresses more of the negative than the positive. One of these individuals is Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu. In his text *Hip-Hop vs. Maat*, he explains the way in which Hip-Hop introduces an attitude for young people to model themselves after what he called the "New Jack Ideology."\(^{15}\) He wrote that it entailed individuals to focus more on material

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aspects as opposed to the spiritual. He also stated that it suggested the Clarence Thomas theory of, "I got mine so you'd better get yours." Although I tend to agree with Kunjufu on some of this ideology, I disagree with his comment that Hip-Hop has no spiritual foundation. True enough, many of the new generation are starting to base their goals in life upon materialism, however, this cannot include the entire generation, because there are exceptions to every rule. Furthermore, Hip-Hop culture does not fully lack spiritualism because Afrika Bambaattaa and his supporters founded the Hip-Hop culture on extremely spiritual principles. These spiritual principles not only upheld positive values, but respect the religious values of different denominations within reason. Below is an excerpt from a list of their beliefs, which is an example of this spiritual foundation:

We believe in one God, who is called by many names-Allah, Jehovah, Yahweh, Eloahim, Jah, God, The Most High, The Creator, The Supreme One. We believe as Amazulu, we will not fight or kill other human beings over which proper name to call God. We believe God will come to be seen to the human eye and will straighten out the problems that human beings brought upon this planet so-called Earth.16

Although Hip-Hop does not directly pattern itself according to the Admonitions of Maat, which Kunjufu supports, it does
however possess a code of values which was conceptualized from the "Admonitions." These negative confessions in The Admonitions, one hundred and forty-seven in all, were developed in Egypt around approximately 2527 B.C. preceding the lifetime of Moses. Since the Admonitions closely resemble the Ten Commandments of Christianity, many historians believe that The Ten Commandments were based on the Admonitions of Maat. For example, the first Admonition of Maat entails, "I have done violence to no man." while the sixth commandment of the Ten Commandments is "Thou Shalt Not Kill." Hence, Hip-Hop culture does contain a foundation of spiritual values which derived from the "Admonitions of Maat" because the culture encompasses Christianity, Islam and several other belief systems which share similarities with Maat.

In addition, I have a problem with the way that Kunjufu loosely uses the term "New Jack." Its true meaning is someone who is new to some situation. Most of the time in Rap Music it used to describe an individual who just started rapping. Kunjufu interprets the term to mean someone who lacks good values and has little regard for anything except the material. I think that Kunjufu is incorrect in his perspective, because not all young people

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fit into this description, and this type of generalization gives Hip-Hop culture a bad name. Kunjufu points out those individuals in Hip-Hop whom he admires and feels are doing positive things, but at the same time he appears to misconstrue the whole point of the music and its lyrics. Rap Music is so harsh because it was meant to reflect the realities in the poet’s environment. Although it is not always positive, at least the artform sparks up some conversation about the harsh realities in American society.

In the early 1920’s during the Harlem Renaissance, Blacks were trying to define themselves socially through artistic expression. As soon as the Great Depression ended this period of rebirth, Blacks began to continue to realize that it was their personal responsibility to define themselves in spite of the ill economy, lack of proper treatment by the government, and lack of self-knowledge. By the late 1960’s, The Black Arts Movement continued this redefinition through poets such as Gwendolyn Brooks, Leroi Jones, and Sonia Sanchez. They accomplished this rediscovery through setting up their own publishing companies, writer’s workshops, and writing styles. Although various people claim that Hip-Hop Music or Rap is vulgar and has no importance in self-empowerment, they fail
to realize that the vulgarity is simply an extension of the very same redefinition. The only difference as Tricia Rose stated in Black Noise (1994) is that in addition to the redefinition of dialect and speech techniques, rappers also enhanced this process through their use of technology. It is not the Rap Music itself which is negative on its own, it is probably a change in the times. The current 1990’s generation is going through many difficult problems, but so did the children of the 1960’s and 1920’s. Writer Kevin Powell gives his perspective on why the problems of the so-called Generation-X are different from those which preceded them in his following remarks:

The cynicism and anger that you hear in rap is a response to failed promises of the Civil Rights Movement. Yes, we can vote. But there is usually no one to vote for. Yes, we have streets named after Martin Luther King, Jr. in d--- near every Black community. But look at how communities have deteriorated, thanks to the flight of middle class and the invasion of the crack and guns. For those of us who feel abandoned, hip-hop is empowering. 18

Clearly, Hip-Hop Music lyrics have profanity, but then so did the poetry of H. Rap Brown, Gwendolyn Brooks, and various others. Just as my interviewee Charles English said, different generations are going to always dislike one

or another music or artform which precedes them.\textsuperscript{19} However by taking the time to listen to another form of music, one can learn to better appreciate both the similarities and the differences in both generation and culture. When critics deny Hip-Hop as an artform, they are also denying a postmodernist extension of early African-American poetic forms not to mention the signifying practices of Esu-Eleggbara or the 'monkey.'

\textsuperscript{19} Charles English, interview by author, 5 May, 1998, Atlanta, tape recording, English’s home, Atlanta.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE POETICS OF RAP MUSIC

Although, both rap and poetry share characteristics such as figuration, symbolism, figures of sound, and ambiguity, some of these similarities are sometimes overlooked by the listener of the rap music unless the listener has a lyric sheet in front of him. Rap music, one of the four components of Hip-Hop culture contains lyrics, which cannot be described as anything else but poetic.

Mirroring this view, as I discussed in the last chapter, Tricia Rose, the author of Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America (1994), argues that Hip-Hop music itself has fused the elements of poetry with the technological aspects of the late 70's to the present. Just as technology is ever changing, so is rap music. As a matter of fact, it is now getting to the point that fine line between spoken poetry and Rap music is disappearing. Not only are the modern-day griots using music as well as special effects behind their words,
rappers are now starting to return their respect to their pioneers, the poets. Although there have always been disbelievers in the media who felt that rap music would never survive, such as critic Mike Royko quoted in my introduction, the artform has now thrived well for almost 20 years. This long life is due to both redefinition and change. Just as the Africans brought many of their languages and customs with them, these same practices are being redefined through Rap Music.

One specific example of a rap song which contained lyrics comparable to that of poetry is, "Me and My Girlfriend" by the late rapper Tupac Shakur. Through its use of literary devices such as metaphor and figuration, symbolism, figures of sound, ambiguity and interdeterminancy of meaning, this particular song is one piece of evidence that supports the view that Hip-Hop music; lyrics are closer to poetry than many people imagine.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1983), figuration is defined as a literal expression in which the words are distorted in order to create vivid or dramatic effects.¹ Figuration distorts words through the use of

expressions such as metaphors and similes. Similes are defined as figures of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, using words such as "like" or "as" often in a phrase introduced by like or as.\(^2\) Metaphors are defined as figures of speech in which a term that ordinarily designates an object or idea is used to designate a similar object or idea in order to suggest comparison or analogy. Geoffrey N. Leech expounds on the characteristics of both types of comparisons in his book, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. He indicates that a simile is an overt comparison whereas a metaphor is more covert.\(^3\) In other words a simile is open and observable with its comparison while the metaphor is less easily revealed. The factor, which helps to interpret the comparison expressed by a metaphor, is the very thing which it is compared to. Leech characterizes metaphors through what he called the "Metaphoric Rule." It is simply a formula that says that F (Figurative meaning) = 'Like l' (or the literal meaning) or perhaps 'it is as if L'. The noun usually being compared is known as the tenor.

\(^2\) Ibid., 637.

The image or the analogical terms in which the tenor is represented is known as the vehicle.

The title of the rap song "Me and My Girlfriend" is an extremely misleading one. To be sure, Tupac describes his love using vivid similes and metaphors, but his words chosen to describe this love of his are anything but the usual descriptions that may be used in a poem or an ode to one's ladyfriend:

My girlfriend blacker than the darkest night.  
When niggas act bitch made,  
she got the heart to fight.  
Nigga my girlfriend  
Though we separated at times,  
I know deep down in my heart you will always be mine.4

In applying Leech's metaphoric rule to the stanza above, the phrase "My girlfriend blacker than the darkest night" is an example of a simile. Although the comparison does not contain the words "like" or "as" it may still be categorized as such because its tenor is being compared to something else. The tenor in the comparison of course is his girlfriend. The vehicle is the "darkest night." In order to give the reader a visual picture of his girlfriend's black beauty, Tupac compares her to the "darkest night." For the expression to be classified as a

4 See Appendix
metaphor, the rapper would have had to write,

"My girlfriend is the darkest night." Although this simile is very expressive of Tupac’s description of his girlfriend, it is rather strange that to mention in the same song such negative and unflattering qualities like “bitch-made niggas.” Probably because she is beside him at all times as described in the poem and she has the "heart to fight" and will always be his even when they’re separated.

Shakur describes this love of his in expressions so intense that the way in which he never really expresses this woman’s gentle feminine side is almost ironic. Almost every piece of his metaphor and figuration uses terms which refer to violence. It is clear that she’s definitely violent, but in the excerpt below, Tupac expresses the way in which he learned to accept these pugnacious ways of hers since he learned how to channel them into what he thought to be positive:

I was too immature to understand your ways. Inexperienced back in the days Caused so many arguments and strays. Now I realize how to treat cha. The secret to keep ya. Bein’ faithful cuz now cheating’s lethal. We closer than the hands of time. Deeper than the drive of mankind. I trust you dearly, I shoot blind.
In time I clock figures.

Droppin' niggas as we rise.
We all souljas in God's eyes.

Tupac's description of cheating as "lethal" is a metaphor which provides evidence of the love which he possesses for his girlfriend, stemming from a fear that he has for what she would physically do to him if she ever were to catch him being unfaithful to her. The paradox in this stanza is the way in which directly after the phrase in which he states how lethal cheating can be, he compares their closeness to the hands of time. He goes further to use the simile "deeper than the drive of mankind" to express their close relationship. The two of them together according to the rapper ironically drops "niggas" as they "rise." The morality of the relationship to him is very much valid since his "girlfriend" possesses all the traits of a "soulja." This phonetic redefinition of the word "soldier" is an example of neologism, or a representation of a new meaning from a previously established word. Not only is Tupac's "girlfriend" a soldier in the literal sense but also in its connotative sense.

5 See Appendix
Figures of sound are another method which Tupac uses in this excerpt to express the urgency with which he learned to adapt to the lifestyle of this female warrior whom he chose as his girlfriend. The rhyming pattern of the excerpt is (aaabbbccdd). According to Leech, each corresponding letter equals a line of rhyming. For example “ways,” “days,” and “strays” all fall under the rhyming letter variable “a” because they are the first rhyming words in the stanza. Rhymes in poetry are determined by similarities in a combination of consonant and vowel sounds. Rhyming within poetry produces tempo changes through the use of cohesion or parallelism. The manner in which the pattern of variables decreases in the pattern (aaabbbccdd), expresses swiftness. For example although in line 9 the word “blind” rhymes with the two other words “mankind” and “time,” the next line only has two rhyming words – “figures” and “niggas.” This decrease in rhymes shortens the pace at which Tupac says the line, thus producing quickness in delivery. As Leech explained, AParallelism is the aspect of poetic language which most obviously relates
This usage of rhyme is a characteristic found in most rap music. However, all final words do not necessarily have to rhyme exactly in order to produce parallelism. When words rhyme almost but not exactly they are classified as “eye rhymes.” However if the rhymes are exact, a “true rhyme” has been produced. “Ways” and “days” are examples of true rhymes, while “figures” and “niggas” are examples of eye rhymes. This is true because although “figures” and “niggas” share the same syllable count of two, their difference in assonance qualifies them as “eye rhymes.”

Even in parts of the song which Tupac describes his and the woman’s lovemaking, there are properties of violence which explore the soldiering theme further:

Sleepin’ with you loaded by my bedside, crazy.
Jealous when you hang with the fellas.
I wait patiently alone.
anticipating for the moment you come home.
I’m waitin’ by the phone.
This is true love, I can feel it.
I’ve had a lot of women in my bed
But you the realest
If you need me, call.

I’ll be there.
Through it all. 7

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7 See Appendix
Apparently Tupac is in love with this woman if he chooses to sleep with her "loaded" with alcohol by his bedside in a drunken state of anger. Not only does this girlfriend have a love affair with fighting but she is even an "around the way girl" who hangs with the local "homies" while Tupac waits for her, home alone by the phone. Even most R&B ballad singers who do the most intense begging usually do not put themselves in that type of position when they're in love with a woman who ignores them. So why should a rapper like Tupac, known as a "Gangsta Rapper" to the media, love any woman in such a way? It is probably because she's "the realest" as he admits in his dedication. "Realest" is a coined word which expresses a superlative quality about his woman.

The song "Me and My Girlfriend" contains much symbolism. According to Geoffrey N. Leech, symbolism is an optional extension of a meaning from literal to figurative. For example, a few common symbols are: 'lamp'='learning', 'star'='constancy', 'flame'='passion', etc. One figurative comparison in the song which contains symbolism is Tupac saying that his girlfriend is, "Seventeen like Brandy you just want to be down." The word "like" preceding the
vehicle "Brandy" makes the expression a simile. However not everyone will not make the connection between this "Brandy" and Brandy Norwood who stars as Moesha on Tuesday night on a UPN Network situation comedy. The rapper uses Brandy in this description as a symbol because most R&B and televison fans admire her wholesome image. In this era where nudity seems to be more popular than the wholesome "girl next door" type image, Brandy Norwood still gives this moral image a sex appeal. Tupac stating that she "wants to be down" not only reflects his girlfriend's support for him in the struggle, but the expression is an allusion to the Platinum-selling hit which puts Brandy Norwood on the map.

Another line in "Me and My Girlfriend" which suggests symbolism is the expression, "Bought you some shells when you turned 22." In this line, the word "shells" suggests romanticism. The word brings to mind a picture of the beach and two lovers walking side-by-side while getting to know each other better. Although the song uses symbolism such as this the chorus that is repeated after each verse never fails to remind the reader of the true strength of Tupac's girlfriend:

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Lost in the worldwind 96.
Bonnie and Clyde
Me and My girlfriend doin’ 85 when we ride,
Trapped in this world of sin.
Born as a ghetto child.
Raised in this whirlwind.9

The symbol above is the whirlwind that Tupac describes as the year 1996. This is ironic because this year was not only the year that he was murdered, but it’s also the year in which his recorded lyrical battle with rapper, The Notorious B-I-G, was the most intense. Whirlwind is representing that year through suggestions of confusion, similar to the destruction usually caused by natural disasters. When he mentions “whirlwind” the second time in the stanza, the word symbolizes the trials and tribulations which he faced throughout his life living in the ghetto and after he became a rap superstar. “Bonnie and Clyde” is an allusion to an old movie about a male and a female who loved one another as they committed crimes together as a force to be reckoned with. Tupac uses them as a symbol to describe the closeness that he has to his girlfriend – partners in the struggle of living.

One important difference between Hip-Hop or Rap Music lyrics and poetry is the presence of Figures of Sound. Of course on a rap recording, these figures are more overt

9 See Appendix
since actual audial sound provides context clues to the underlying meaning of the song. As previously mentioned in Chapter II, poems use visual images as a means of getting their points across. Another device that poets use to explore Figures of Sound in poems is onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia uses words which represent the actual sound that they denote. For example, words like "slurp," "zap," or "pow" convey phonetic meaning through the sounds inherent in the words themselves. The onomatopoeia which Tupac uses in "Me and My Girlfriend" is one characteristic that makes it clear that its theme has more than one meaning. The first evidence of this is the lead-in paragraph to the song, which represents his girlfriend speaking. Here is what she has to say:

S----, you motha f------ right
I'm the bitch that's keepin' it live
and keepin' it hot
when you punk ass niggas don't

Nigga, west side. What!!
Bring it on.10

Whether we view this stanza on paper, or hear it on an audial recording, we can tell that this "escape from banality" is supposed to be the voice of Tupac's girlfriend speaking. Even before we get to read or hear the

10 See Appendix
figuration in the rest of the song, we can still tell that this dialogue suggests that the female interlocutor is extremely violent. The context of the word "what" can be considered onomatopeia because it is a word that imitates the sound of what an aggressor would say in the inner city as he welcomes an unsuspecting victim or a challenger to a violent confrontation. Some however, may disagree with this interpretation because the context of "what" represents the sound of a word and not a literal representation of a non-spoken aural sound. Although this excerpt does contain clues which present the idea of violence, the next interlude in the song does the same thing with actual examples of onomatopoeia:

What!!
I'm bustin on you punk a-- niggas.
Run nigga, run. I'm on your a-- nigga.
Run, nigga, duck and hide.
I'm bustin' on all you bitches.
Run, nigga, yeah.
West side, uh, uh, uh.
Die, nigga, die.11

The word "uh" is a literal representation of the human sound that one's voice makes when exerting extreme power or force, usually in the attempt at causing pain to another.

Even though the word Bustin' is used in this stanza as a

11 See Appendix
verb, Tupac uses definite onomatopoeia in the line: "Bust! Watch me bail out and bust 'em." On other radio versions of "Me and My Girlfriend" which were not as explicit, these excerpts were taken out. Without the sound bites someone would easily think that the "girlfriend" that Tupac talks about is a human being. It is actually the ambiguity of the words that suggests this interpretation.

According to Geoffrey N. Leech (1969), the guideline for better understanding metaphors is the notion of transference of meaning. The general formula is written out as: 'The figurative sense F may replace the literal sense L if F is related to L in such-and-such a way.' In Tupac's "Me and My Girlfriend" there are examples of figures of sound which confuse the idea of a "girlfriend" by virtue of other related sounds in the poem. In addition, the poem also relies on metaphor and ambiguity to ascribe extra contextual meaning to the notion of a girlfriend. A good example of meaning transference through sound and words can be seen in the following stanza from the same song:

Our first date.
Can't wait to see you naked.
Touch you in every secret place.
I can hardly wait to bust freely.
Got you red hot.
You so happy to see me.
Made the frontpage, primetime live on TV.
Nigga, my girlfriend
may be .45 but she still live.
One shot makin' niggas heartbeat stop.\textsuperscript{12}

Relying on Tupac's constant references to violence and gunfire, it can be seen that his "girlfriend" that he's speaking of is a gun. The rules of transference used in the literal sense may cause the reader to accept that this love that Tupac is speaking of is a woman, until the line, "Made the frontpage live on TV." This statement makes no sense when interpreted from the literal sense because Tupac does not really expound on his girlfriend being on television throughout the rest of the poem. The girlfriend has to be a gun because news stories which appear on the front page usually have to do with homicide or other criminal activity -- in this case a murder by gunfire.

Also, the numeric value of "45" expressed as ".45" is important in interpreting the song. In the literal sense the number may mean the age of 45. Since his "girlfriend" is not middle-aged, the number ".45" is, in the figurative sense, a forty-five magnum, a gun used frequently for homicides. Tupac's references to injuries may be thought of as hyperboles or overstatements which also suggest the type of exaggerated effects that "the girlfriend" has on

\textsuperscript{12} See Appendix
men whom she attracts. He has translated the powerful qualities of a gun into a girlfriend thus creating ambiguity.

Another example which reveals the song's ambiguity comes from the stanza in which Tupac describes the first time that he met his girlfriend:

I know deep inside you'll always be mine. 
Picked you up when you was nine.

Started out my life of crime with you. 
Bought you some shells when you turned 22.13

Using the rules of transference, the expression "Picked you up when you was nine" sounds as if the speaker of the poem had committed a statutory rape. Even if this were true who would be foolish enough to admit this in an artistic medium? That would be like the offender committing a crime and providing the authorities with the evidence to arrest him. In essence the word "nine" must be another reference to a type of gun, a 9mm pistol. The reference to the number 22 also fits into this same category of wordplay. Instead of the progression from the number "9" to the number "22" being a progression from childhood to adulthood as expressed in a literal sense, a figurative

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13 See Appendix
interpretation which suggests a change in models of guns to fit the "crime" seems more appropriate.

The following stanza provides further expression of semantic interdeterminancy because of its exaggerated comparison; its ambiguity is far more obvious than other comparisons in the song:

When I tell you to be quiet, you move a crowd.
Bustin' rounds, activatin' arye[sic].
That's why I love you.
So no control, down to roll.
Unleash. After I hit, you break apart.
Then back to one piece.\textsuperscript{14}

At first glance, the literal interpretation of "girlfriend" in the song "breaking apart" suggests superhuman attributes. However, when the expression is reevaluated and thought of as intercourse between a male and a female, it appears more meaningful. The "girlfriend" "coming back to one piece" both suggests orgasm as well as physical and spiritual bonding between her and her male counterpart. However the closeness in the stanza to her action of "moving a crowd" causes the reader to wonder about the relevance of that with sexual intercourse. In addition the word "activate" suggests the presence of a device as opposed to a living thing or human.

\textsuperscript{14} See Appendix
According to Geoffrey N. Leech there are four notional classes of metaphors, which are concretive, animistic, humanizing, and synaesthetic. A concretive metaphor attributes concreteness or physical existence to an abstraction: 'the pain of separation', 'the light of learning', 'a vicious circle', 'room for negotiation', etc. The animistic metaphor attributes animate characteristics to the inanimate: 'an angry sky', 'graves yawned', 'killing half-an-hour', 'the shoulder of the hill', etc. Humanizing metaphor attributes characteristics of humanity to what is not human: 'This friendly river', 'laughing valleys', 'his appearance and manner speak eloquently for him'. The synaesthetic metaphor, which transfers meaning from one domain of sensory perception to another: 'warm colour,' 'dull sound,' 'loud perfume,'\(^\text{15}\) When the device of personification is used in poetry, categories a, b, and c overlap one another because humanity entails animacy, and animacy entails concreteness.\(^\text{16}\) Since Tupac's "Me and My Girlfriend" possesses ambiguous expressions which personify his gun to the likeness of a young woman, it


\(^{16}\) Ibid.
can be suggested that he uses concretive, animistic, and humanizing metaphors in his songs.

The rap song "Me and My Girlfriend" is an example of personification because Tupac expresses his love for a gun and its humanlike characteristics as if it were a woman. He successfully expresses this viewpoint by using metaphors and figuration, symbolism and figures of sound, and ambiguity or interdeterminancy of meaning. Tupac has clearly deployed in his songs poetic styles which demonstrate similarities between conventional poetic art and Hip-Hop music.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY IN RAP MUSIC

Just as literary works, oral and written, may carry the ideology of their creators, Hip-Hop music as an oral art form sometimes expresses the ideological perceptions and values of its artist. However, because of the notable emphasis on the drum in Hip-Hop music just like in other African-American music genre, many fans of the music tend to concentrate mostly on the beat of rap songs rather than the music itself. However in rap lyrical battles the focus of attention is usually different. In a lyrical rap battle listeners usually focus their attention on what competing rappers are saying to and about one another.

Of course the lyrics of the rappers’ lyrics rely more on a more complex and expressive usage of word choice by both poets. Where once battles in Hip-Hop music were conducted in parks like New York’s Central or Reese Parks, the battles were now being conducted between rappers on their records. Although the original battles were also recorded by neighborhood onlookers on mix-tape, they now
are being recorded through rappers lyrically "jousting" back-and-forth in call-and-response on digital recordings. Currently lyrical battles are held live at venues and over the radio, but very rarely because of FCC regulations. According to a rap theorist named Jamal C. Wright, Hip-Hop music consists of ten properties, which mold the ideologies of all its artists even today.¹ The first and probably most important property of rap music is confrontation. In Hip-Hop this entails one artist challenging another artist to a lyrical contest by signifying that he has a problem or "beef" with him. The manner in which each rapper handles his lyrical skill in doing away with his opponent, determines the winner. Judging by the way each M.C handles his lyrical skill in doing away with his opponent lyrically, determines both the winner and loser. H. Rap Brown's pastime of "playing the dozens" and "signifying" possess many of the same rules as rapping. Brown explains this lyrical strategy:

In many ways, though, the Dozens is a mean game because what you try to do is totally destroy somebody else with words. It's the whole competition thing again, fighting each other. There'd sometimes be 40 or 50 dudes standing around and the winner was determined by the way they responded to what was said. If you fell

¹ Jamal C. Wright, The History of Rap [article on line]; available from http://jcwright@mailbox.syr.edu.html; Internet; accessed 5 May 1998.
over each other laughing, then you knew you’d scored. It was a bad scene for the dude that was getting humiliated. I seldom was. That’s why they call me Rap, ‘cause I could rap.

Similar to H. Rap Brown’s pastime of “playing dozens” in the playground, the winner in a lyrical battle receives more positive recognition than the loser. In the music business this “recognition” equates increased record sales in addition to praise in the inner-city. However, the loser simply has to usually strive harder to reaffirm his image as a lyrical competitor. Writer Kevin Henson explains in an article from XXL magazine how the art of lyrical battle competitions were an important asset to Hip-Hop Music:

> Competition is the necessary element of lyrical hip-hop. From the times of the Funky Four+1 vs. Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five to the epic battles of Busy Bee Vs. Kool Moe Dee, battling has provided the lifeblood of the culture. Soon putting out a dis record became the standard way of entering the scene-challenging those at the top and anyone whose skills and styles were wack.²

Although lyrical confrontation is one form of confrontation in Hip-Hop, another category of confrontation as pointed out by Jamal C. Wright is to confront stereotypes. For example, the rap group known as Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh

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Prince criticized the stereotypical image of the rap artist as someone from the ghetto. While many rappers at the time were rapping about such topics as police brutality, Fresh Prince chose lighter topics such as teenage and adult relationships in their big hit, “Parent’s Just Don’t Understand.” Although they were outwardly different from other groups, even members of the “hardcore” rap audience surprisingly accepted them because their style was original. Wright’s proposed property of “competition” could very well represent a product of confrontation, because after some form of confrontation between opponents the competition begins. Also his next two proposed properties of Hip-Hop, “courage” and “emotion” coincide because they both have to do with the feelings of human beings. Certainly the successful following of a rapper may be the result of that rapper showing courage. A rapper not having courage could mean the difference between a rapper selling and not selling records. Although some other factors may also be responsible. Just as H.Rap Brown had described the importance of courage in “playing the dozens,” in his opinion, it was somewhat of a rite of

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4 Ibid.
passage which could mean the difference of a young man being looked at by others as a force to be reckoned with, or an embarrassment to his neighborhood. The emotion aspect could very well coincide with the courage because the expression of other emotions such as guilt, anger, and even sorrow bring more of an understanding to a rap artist’s work as well as sympathy. To bare one’s soul through the sharing of depressing experiences also takes a lot of courage.

Resistance is, as I mentioned in Chapter I, another important aspect of rap music. Wright explains:

The American Capitalist structure has always been a hostile environment to its lowest socioeconomic class. Blacks aren’t supposed to question authority, or express themselves in any way that may be interpreted as threatening to the power structure. Rap by its nature, is resistant to this environment. Although resistance in rap music is shown through the content of the artist’s lyrics going “against the grain,” this resistance in Hip-Hop culture period has always been prevalent, just as Graffiti artists risking their lives to go against the law and decorate their tagged names upon the surface of New York City’s subway cars.

The three properties of rap which could fall under the term "showmanship" include what Wright calls interaction, charisma, and collaboration. The interaction aspect of the show for rappers was the aspect of the call and response of the old park jams and shows in which rappers would include the audience with what they were doing. Not only did the rap crews in the old school era have shows, these rap shows had dramatic skits. For example, the pioneer crew known as the Cold Crush Brothers had a skit in which they all dressed up like Gangsters with fake water guns. They made the crowd a part of what they were doing by spraying water on the audience and even holding the microphone out to them, to make them feel like part of the show.

Charisma, as described by Jamal C. Wright, requires that rappers are not only concerned with what they did, but how it was done. Although he states that in rap he pays a great deal of attention to a song’s subject matter, he still felt that it plays second fiddle to how something in rap is done. Charisma in rap, he says, plays an important part most of the time.

Collaboration, or artists from different crews working together, was the property which provided for many hits

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6 Wright, "The History of Rap," 3.
because rap fans enjoyed seeing different M.C.'s together working on one song. Wright indicates that in the 1980's, it was a time when one could hardly ever hear of a crew without the mention of the M.C.'s d.j. name being first. For example, Eric B. and Rakim, or D.J Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince. This was also M.C.'s showing respect for the importance of the d.j. Without the sound provider a rap musician is simply a poet rapping without music. As I mentioned in chapter I, the technology of blending voice with sound which accompanies rap is a significant factor that distinguishes Hip-Hop and poetry. Currently, however, poetry has begun to benefit from technology, and rap and poetry have become intertwined.

The property of rap known as difficulty is simply the trademark of a rapper's lyrical style which he uses as his trademark. For example, one of Tupac Shakur's trademarks which expressed the property of difficulty was his use of ambiguity in his works like "Me and My Girlfriend" (See Chapter III.) He uses this method so effectively that it is extremely hard for the reader to distinguish whether he's rapping about a girl or a gun.

7 Ibid., 4.
Finally, Wright's last property and one of the most controversial in Rap Music is motivation. Motivation is the power to influence people to do something. Although this can mean positive or negative actions, Wright states that oftentimes rap is associated with the latter:

Rap moves people like rock used to. This is one reason why it is attacked from all sides. If rap music were as shallow as Pop or R&B, it wouldn't make the floor of Congress. Rap is probably the only force that has a chance of getting 8 million or so unregistered Black male voters in this country to the polling booth. The positive side to the motivation factor is just that. But as I mentioned before, there is a negative side: Some people will derive motivation to do things that aren't so politically correct. And they may chose to derive that from rap music.⁸

There is always a positive and a negative side to anything in life. However, critics such as Mike Royko (from my introduction) want to go as far as saying that every single aspect of rap Music is negative. Because he did not take the time to analyze the lyrics and the music carefully, he prematurely dismisses the positive aspect of the music.

According to Alexander Rosenberg (1995) in his book, Philosophy of Science, he states that the means by which Capitalism alienates a particular group is the superstructure. In response to this stimuli, the group

⁸ Ibid., 3.
creates values, ideals, laws, social norms, and institutions. The responses of the alienated group constitute its ideology, or a "form of consciousness" that legitimizes and supports certain social institutions. Hip-Hop culture may be one of the responses by young minorities to various conditions forced upon them by the capitalist superstructure. In turn, each Hip-Hop artist expresses a distinct ideology. Usually in lyrical signification battles, two artists not only go against social norms that were put into place by the superstructure, but also one another's ideologies. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will explain the lyrical battle between L.L. Cool J. and Kool Moe Dee and indicate how their rivalry can be considered a "healthy" lyrical rap battle because the two artists expressively attacked one another's ideological constructs without physically coming to blows.

During the year 1984, there was a young rapper who had made a cameo appearance in the rap film Krush Groove. This rapper is known today as L.L. Cool J from St. Albans, Queens, New York. L.L. was an acronym for Ladies Love (Cool James). James Todd Smith, which was of course his

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given name, earned his popularity making demonstration
tapes of his lyrical skills with the d.j. equipment which
was brought for him by his grandfather. Cool J’s
grandfather promised him that he would buy the equipment as
long as the youth promised to stay out of trouble. From
that point on James kept that promise and continued to hone
his lyrical skills until he was discovered by Rick Rubin
and Adam Horovitz at Def Jam Records. Cool J’s style had a
lyrical foundation of poetic metaphors backed by breakbeats
from old R&B, Rock N’ Roll, and Rap records.

As L.L. Cool J’s popularity grew, so did controversy.
By 1984, an old school rapper named Kool Moe Dee had sought
to battle Cool J for his lyrical crown which started with
his challenge entitled “How Ya Like Me Now.” Although Moe
Dee was one of many rap pioneers responsible for bringing
rap to Harlem as a member of the Treacherous Three, by the
late 80’s many fans of rap’s new generation had seemed to
forget him. Below is a stanza which was a prelude to this
confrontation L.L. Cool J:

Just like a home run
Slammin’ like a slam dunk
Riding the wave that James Brown gave funk
It happened to James like it happened to me
How you think I feel to see another MC
Gettin’ paid, usin’ my rap style
And I’m playin’ the background meanwhile
I ain’t with that
You can forget that
You took my style
I’m takin’ it back
I’m comin’ back like “Return of the Jedi”
Sucker MC’s in the place that said I
Could only rock rhymes
Only rock crowds
But never rock records
How Ya Like Me Now

From this stanza alone, it would be difficult to decipher that L.L. Cool J is the “M.C.” that Kool Moe Dee is referring to. However, on the cover of the LP which featured the song, Moe Dee is pictured standing by a Jeep which has a red Kangol hat crushed beneath its wheels. This same Kangol was the type of hat that L.L. Cool J normally wears until the later years when he replaced the Kangol with various other hats.

Another expression from the stanza which suggests that the rapper Kool Moe Dee is talking about is L.L. Cool J are his references to the old and new schools. The “old school” represents the individuals who pioneered rap such as Kool Moe Dee and Grandmaster Flash. Kool Moe Dee praises these early rappers through comparing them to the likes of “The Godfather of Soul” James Brown. During the late 1980’s many rappers had gotten into the habit of

10 See Appendix
rapping over beats taken from James Browns’ songs. These songs were probably chosen to rap over because of their complex, uptempo beat. James Brown is viewed as a musical genius by most musicians because he was an innovator as far as beats and melodies were concerned, when ironically he can’t even read music. Although most rappers had sampled James Brown’s music out of respect for his artistry, some musicians viewed these amateurs as duplicators. Kool Moe Dee comparing himself to James Brown “riding the wave”, is expressing that in the same way, “new jack” rappers who knew little about the roots of Hip-Hop music were stealing his style. Kool Moe Dee explains the obstacles of being a pioneer rapper striving to make a comeback:

In the old days if you had lyrics, you were successful. Nowadays very few people are putting time into their lyrical content. What’s selling is catchy hooks, things that people are going to sing along with.11

Judging by the way that Kool Moe Dee attacked L.L. Cool J through his signification challenge, he may have seen him as one of the rappers who was not properly concentrating on his lyrical content.

11 Michael Small, Break It Down; The Inside Story from the New Leaders of Rap. (New York: Carol
Other verses in the song also bring further mention of L.L. Cool J through symbolism. The following is another proof of Kool Moe Dee's challenge to L.L. Cool J:

Rap is an art
And I'm a Picasso
But of course
Why else would you try so
Hard to paint a picture, and try to get ya
Self in my shoes, but they won't fit ya
I'm bigger and better, forget about deffer
Every time I rocked I left a stain in your brain
that will remain

"I'm Bigger and Better Forget About Deffer" contains comparative expression which Kool Moe Dee had addressed to L.L. Cool J in ridicule of his lack of education and incorrect grammatical skills. While Kool Moe Dee possessed his Bachelors of Arts Degree in Communications from the State University of New York, L.L. Cool J hadn't finished high school. Kool Moe Dee took the title of L.L. Cool J's album which was out at the time, "Bigger and Deffer" and reworded it in Standard English as "Bigger and Better" in description of himself. Kool Moe Dee's rewording of L.L. Cool J's original expression was correcting the latter's improper use of the word "Deffer," as well as treating him with disdain.

12 See Appendix
In 1988 as a retaliation to Kool Moe Dee’s invitation to a lyrical battle L.L. Cool J. recorded “Jack The Ripper.” Jack was probably short for his given name James, while “Ripper” was used as a nickname to allude to what L.L. Cool J. did to other rappers lyrically. The nickname with its connotation of the infamous London serial murderer was probably intended to instill fear in his opponent:

Back for the Payback, I must say that I heard your new jam, I don’t play that It ain’t loud enough punk, it ain’t hittin’ This year you tried, next year you’re quittin’ Last year you thought I was dyin’ out But again and again and again, without a doubt It’s the Gangsta Boogie, Earthquake Sound Pump it up and play it, so they hear it all around I do it rough tough, I don’t bluff And this is an example of funky stuff When you wanna make hits, you make ‘em like this If they ain’t like this, they don’t hit, they miss. It’s a strong record, a record for the strong For those who appreciate real rap songs Listen how, I won’t allow, myself to go off track Stay back, I’ve got the power I’m Jack The Ripper!!

L.L. Cool J’s statement, “I heard your new jam, I don’t play that,” expresses a double meaning as to how he disagrees with Kool Moe Dee’s choice to disrespect him in the lyrics of the song, “How Ya Like Me Now?” On one hand “I don’t play that” is a statement from L.L. Cool J
expressing that he will not tolerate any disrespect from Kool Moe Dee. The other meaning of the ambiguous expression could also mean that L.L. Cool J refuses to physically play "jams" (recordings) which are similar to the song that Kool Moe Dee had written about him. In the following line L.L. Cool J explains what Kool Moe Dee’s track lacks through rapping, “It ain’t loud enough punk it ain’t hittin’.” In other words, L.L. Cool J probably thinks that Kool Moe Dee’s lyrical approach is not as street-oriented and as hardcore as his because it lacks both intense ghetto jargon as well as deep tonal bass musically. “I do it rough tough,” is L.L. Cool J’s solution for Kool Moe Dee’s inadequate style sharing with the veteran rapper the manner at which he approaches a lyrical challenge. “If they ain’t like this they don’t hit they miss,” is L.L. Cool J’s interpretation of what a "hit" really is. He again ambiguously describes a successful rap song through ambiguity. The connotation of "hit" means an actual successful record and a physical hit which must hit a target. The target in L.L. Cool J’s opinion is the approval of the hardcore audience as opposed to the popular or mainstream rap fan. L.L. Cool J stating that he's,

13 See Appendix
"Back for the Payback" is an expression which alludes to James Brown's hit "The Big Payback." The classic which talks about how an old friend had committed betrayal against the speaker of the lyrics was a figure that L.L. Cool J had used as a carrier for this lyrical retaliation against Kool Moe Dee. Aurally L.L. Cool J even had his producer to program the beat of another James Brown song behind his lyrics as a backdrop admitting that he's back for the "Payback." The allusion to Kool Moe Dee's song title mentioned in the excerpt below provides further reference to the ideological disagreement between the two artists:

How Ya Like Me Now? I'm Gettin' Busier

I'm Double Platinum! Watching you get dizzier!
Check out the way I, say my, display my, play my
J on the back, behind the Cool without the A-Y

Not only did L.L. Cool J make a reference to Moe Dee's song by name, but he even corrected the spelling of his own name, L.L. Cool J. The expression "J on the back, behind the Cool without the A-Y" which occurs in the song above was probably a mockery of the way that Kool Moe Dee was always trying to correct L.L. Cool J's grammar. Since both

14 See Appendix
rappers have the word “cool” in their names, they were probably figuratively fighting over the possession of the title. Furthermore L.L. Cool J metaphorically described himself as a success in his career while comparing the challenger Kool Moe Dee to an upstart who is “getting dizzier” from the competition. It truly seemed as if figuratively, Kool Moe Dee had bitten off more than he could chew by battling with L.L. Cool J.

As the battle got more and more intense, not only did the lyrical styles of both rappers get more interesting, but their record sales improved incredibly. Also the lyrical metaphoric comparisons and taunts became more obvious than hidden. One perfect example exists in a stanza from Kool Moe Dee’s reply to L.L.’s “Jack The Ripper” called “Let’s Go.”:

Well put the microphone down
Let’s square off
You need a hand?
You got hands for trying to be me
L.L. stands for: lower, level, lack luster, last, least, lip, lever, lousy, lame, late, lethargic, lazy, lemon, little, logic, lucky, leach, liver, lip, laborious louse on a loser’s list. Live in limbo, lyrical lapse, lowlife with a loud rap...

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16 See Appendix
Kool Moe Dee had taken his intellectual wit which he had previously flaunted in "How Ya Like Me Now" a step further in the song above through the use of a poetic element known as chiming. According to Geoffrey N. Leech, chiming is the connecting of two words by similarity of sound so that you are made to think of possible connections. Kool Moe Dee's frequent use of the words of negative connotation that begin with the letter "l" was probably his way of discrediting L.L. Cool J as a successful rap artist. The phonetic sound that "l" produces through the use of chiming also suggests a "slowness" that complements L.L. Cool J's grammatical weaknesses. It also again flaunts Kool Moe Dee's self-proclaimed success at writing lyrics as a pioneer from the "old school." Not only did Kool Moe Dee mention L.L.'s name in his song, he also used the chiming to reinterpret the title L.L. which L.L. Cool J. had given himself in the first place. Rather than interpret L.L. as "Ladies Love" Kool Moe Dee redefines L.L. Cool J.'s self-given title in a negative sense by associating the title with other "L" sounds such as "lower," "last," "lethargic," "lazy," and "lowlife." Although the song also contains other "L" sounds such as "luster," "logic," and "lucky"

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which are not necessarily negative, but through sound association the words are intended to have negative connotations. They suggest more of what L.L. Cool J lacks than what he actually possesses.

Although the battle between Kool Moe Dee and L.L. Cool J. seemed to get extremely personal through its signification over records, during the lyrical battle period, however, both rappers had met several times in public without physically confronting one another. In fact, it was very common for one or the other to appear outside of the stage at the other's concert and act as if he was going to provoke a lyrical battle. This excitement appealed to both the rap properties of interaction as well as competition. It also is a great example of fulfilling the property of collaboration. By a rapper who had a rivalry with another rapper appearing at his show to even act as if he wanted to battle his opponent made the audience feel as if they were in the middle of an actual lyrical battle from the parks of New York City in the old school era (the mid to late 70's).

After L.L. Cool J released his album "Walking With The Panther" he seemed to lose popularity.\(^{18}\) This was probably

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
because pro-black rappers such as Public Enemy and The Jungle Brothers were becoming more popular. It got to the point that a rapper bragging about himself had become irrelevant and monotonous, especially when there were no existing record labels who were owned by African-Americans. Although Kool Moe Dee was also boasting in his lyrical signification, he was expressing in his music other themes as well. In an interview, he admitted that various topics of discussion in his music were some of the factors which had helped him to stay popular while L.L.'s popularity was dwindling:

You need all types to create a balance. Those rappers (rappers who speak strictly on violence) come from an angle of an emotion. I'm trying to come from an angle of a solution. I don't want to just say, "Hey cops are killing and we want to kill cops." I'd just rather say, "Sometimes cops are killing because they're nervous. Maybe they come from Iowa, and all they've ever seen of black youth is somebody that's killing in gangs. They see you in that gang outfit and they're on pins and needles."  

Kool Moe Dee and L.L. Cool J had come from similar backgrounds of poverty, but they each had taken different routes to escape it. Although both rappers used Hip-Hop as a means of escaping the ghetto, Kool Moe Dee had taken a

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19 Michael Small, Break It Down; The Inside Story from the New Leaders of Rap (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1992), 133.
hiatus from his old crew "The Treacherous Three" in order to pursue his education, whereas, L.L. Cool J immediately signed with Def Jam Records in 1985 at the tender age of seventeen. Both of these rappers may be said to have had a successful career, but their popularity eventually faded because rap enthusiasts began to demand for more profound themes in Hip-Hop music.

Probably the main reason that the lyrical battle between L.L. Cool J and Kool Moe Dee can be considered a healthy battle was because both men appeared to have a great amount of respect for one another in spite of their differences. On a Hip-Hop documentary on MTV, "Ultrasound, The History of Hip-Hop," Kool Moe Dee explained that his motivation for battling L.L. Cool J was his respect for him as an artist. He also said that he had just finished receiving his B.A. Degree in Communications from State University of New York when friends of his taunted him about how L.L. Cool J. was better. To challenge himself as well as prove his friends wrong, he started the battle by writing "How Ya Like Me Now."

Although L.L. Cool J. and Moe Dee’s battle had died down, on his so-called comeback album called "Mama Said
Knock You Out” in late 1990, L.L. Cool J. sang “To Da Break of Dawn” as a response to Kool Moe Dee’s “Let’s Go.” Probably what had saved L.L. Cool J’s career as well as his standing in the rap battle was his new humble image. In the video for his title cut from the album, his grandmother, whom he was still living with at the time, had asked him to take out the garbage. In the following quotation L.L. explains this respect that he has and has always had for authority, but had hardly ever expressed in his lyrics until the “Mama Said Knock You Out” album: “I have a lot of respect for the adults in my family. And if they ask me to take the garbage out, I take it out”. The “Mama” in the title of his album he stated in the interview, was representative of his grandmother who was the backbone of his family, especially during the times in which his mother was unable to take care of him as a child.

Not only did the “To Da Break of Dawn” challenge Kool Moe Dee but also his other rap opponents like Ice-T and M.C. Hammer. Below is an excerpt of the challenge which was directed at Kool Moe Dee:

Homeboy, hold on my rhymes are so strong
Nothing Could go wrong, so why do you prolong?

20 Ibid., 27.
And got the nerve to have those Star Trek shades on.
Huh, you can’t handle the whole weight,
Your skin needs lotion, your breath needs Colgate
Wise-up you little burned-up French Fry, I’m that Type of Guy.²¹

The taunt, “Homeboy, hold on my rhymes are so strong,” is made by L.L. Cool J. to imply that he is a better artist than Kool Moe Dee. “Nothing could go wrong so why do you prolong,” is a statement made by L.L. Cool J. to Kool Moe Dee telling him to face up to his superiority in lyrical expression. L.L. Cool J. figuratively likens the battle with Kool Moe Dee to a physical battle through explaining how Kool Moe Dee cannot “handle the whole weight,” because L’s lyrical skill is more affluent. The specifics which indicate that these lyrics are for Moe Dee are the reference to his “Star Trek” shades that he always wears when he rhymes. The comments, “Your skin needs lotion, your breath needs Colgate/Wise up you little burnt-up French Fry.” are ideological constructs interpreted by L.L. Cool J to mean that just because he is lighter-complexioned than Kool Moe Dee, then he is lyrically superior. This is a warped ideology which was probably included by L.L. Cool J. as humor. The reference to Colgate attacks Kool Moe Dee’s

²¹ See Appendix
dental hygiene and the reference to lotion allude to Kool Moe Dee being "ashy" or having dead skin. L.L. Cool J. went from attacking Kool Moe Dee on his lack of lyrical skill then abruptly shifted to the strategy of simple complex name-calling. Since L.L. Cool J had more of a humble image upon the releasing of "Mama Said Knock You Out," he still didn’t hesitate to retaliate lyrically with his old opponent Kool Moe Dee. This lyrical signification caught Kool Moe Dee by surprise, but it didn’t slow down his comeback rhyme entitled "Deathblow." Moe Dee explains his reaction when he heard "To Da Break of Dawn.":

In both of our minds, It's over. Who cares now? A few albums back, neither one of us said anything about the other. Then once L.L. lost his popularity --in 1990, he was having a real hard time--he said things about me in "To Da Break of Dawn." I'm like, "He's doing it again? I'm not even going to answer. I'm going to let it die." But then I heard about that song all over, so I answered with "Death Blow". This time it's over we're through, supposedly he's saying right now that he's not going to do anything else. But when the studio time comes, no one wants to yield."^{22}

Although Kool Moe Dee did release "Deathblow," which had exceptional taunts for L.L. Cool J., he seemed to have lost the battle. I say this because after the battle L.L. Cool

^{22} Small, *Break It Down*, 133.
J went on to record several other albums which sold no less than the status of Gold from 1990 to the present. Kool Moe Dee stopped recording after the success with at least two more albums and began acting in movies like "Strapped" and "Gang Related."

Although Kool Moe Dee had the last word in the lyrical rivalry and was defeated, his final words of parting from "Deathblow" conveyed his utmost respect for L.L. Cool J:

Anybody out there that don’t know what time it is remember. I never said the brother couldn’t make a good record. But when it comes to a battle, we gotta go head-to-head on the lyric tip. And when it comes to lyrics, you can’t hang.\(^{23}\)

Just as Kool Moe Dee had earned respect as a prominent M.C. by winning a battle in the 1970’s with a rapper known as Busy Bee, L.L. Cool J now unofficially possesses the ‘medal of honor’ for his triumph in the lyrical title.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\) See Appendix

CHAPTER 6

CONFRONTATIONAL DISCOURSE IN HIP-HOP MUSIC

Unlike the lyrical battle between L.L. Cool J and Kool Moe Dee which simply presents the artists' views of life, the lyrical rivalry between The Notorious B-I-G and Tupac Shakur is more combative. Not only were there a lot of harsh statements made lyrically in their confrontations, but also the replies between the two men were quite virulent. While one individual chose to verbally attack the other, the other simply ignored the attack for a while until he was really offended and he had to defend himself. The attacks became very personal and became a means of exploring the events that happened in their lives.

According to Ronin Ro, author of Have Gun Will Travel, Tupac Shakur and Biggie first met on the set of John Singleton’s movie, "Poetic Justice" in July of 1993. He says that from even their first meeting both of them got along very well. Biggie played for Tupac a collection of some of his songs that he was going to record at Uptown MCA as soon as he finished his album. A favorite of Tupac’s was Big’s “Party and Bull----.” Not only did he admire
interview that Agnant schooled him to most of the latest fashion styles. While Tupac was still wearing blue jeans and sweatshirts, Agnant had taken him under his wing and introduced the rapper to such luxuries as platinum jewelry and silk shirts. One night while socializing at a popular New York club called Nell’s, a friend of Agnant’s introduced him to a young lady named Ayanna Jackson. After dancing with her in the corner of the club while she allegedly fondled him, Tupac took the young woman to his hotel room and had intercourse with her. Four days later, Jackson returned while Tupac’s entourage including Tupac, Agnant, Tupac’s manager Charles Fuller, and a friend of Agnant’s were in the suite. After a physical confrontation which is disputed by both parties present, Jackson charged Tupac with sexual assault.

A year later in New York Tupac was in town to attend his hearing in which he was accused of molesting Ayanna Jackson as well as possessing a number of concealed weapons in the hotel room. His manager Charles Fuller had been only charged with a weapon’s offense while Jacques Agnant also was charged with sexual abuse and sodomy. Strangely Agnant was released from police custody since that was his only charge. Writer Connie Bruck explains the claim and
the oddity surrounding it as shown through her investigation:

Indictments were handed down on sexual abuse, sodomy, and also weapons charges (two guns were found in the hotel room), and Agnant’s lawyer, Paul Brenner, who had represented the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association for many years, moved that his client’s case be severed from his two codefendants’, on the ground that only Tupac and Man Man had been charged with the weapons offenses, and that therefore the indictment was improperly joined. The prosecutor did not oppose the motion—something that Tupac’s lawyers say is highly unusual—and the judge granted it. It was apparently after Agnant’s case was severed that Tupac became convinced that Agnant was a government informer and had set him up.3

On the night after the first portion of the courtroom proceedings, a man named Booker asked Tupac to perform on a mixtape with Little Shawn, an Uptown Recording artist. Although Tupac first rejected Booker’s request, he changed his mind after Booker offered him $7,000, because he realized that the money could get him out of the debt that the trouble, which he was involved in for the past months, had already got him into. After Tupac called Booker back for directions to New York’s Quad Recording studio, Booker stated that he didn’t have the money. Hearing this, Tupac decided not to participate in the recording; but within minutes, Booker called back and promised to get the money from then-Uptown CEO Andre Harrell, and to this Tupac
conceeded. As soon as Tupac, and his rapper friends, Randy "Stretch" Walker, and Zayd walked up to the building, they claimed that Biggie's rhyming partner, Little Caesar, yelled at them from upstairs. Upon entering the building, Tupac stated that two men in army fatigues welcomed them in but to him they appeared very suspicious-looking. The following is the description of what Tupac saw as he walked towards the elevator as told by writer Ronin Ro:

He figured they must be Biggie's security guards. But then I said, "Wait a minute. Even Biggie's homeboys love me. Why don't they look up?" He pressed the elevator button, turned and saw the men holding identical 9mm handguns.

"Don't nobody move," one yelled. "Everybody on the floor. You know what time it is. Run your s---."  

According to Tupac in a Vibe Magazine interview, he was again surprised by these men's actions because they proceeded to rob him of $40,000 worth of jewelry. Tupac explains this perspective:

From what I know of the criminal element, if n---- come to rob you, they always hit the big n---- first. They didn't touch Stretch, they came straight to me.

As the robbers tried to force Tupac to the ground, he claimed that his body froze. When he refused to remove his

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5 Ibid.
jewelry for the bandits, and fought with them for the guns, he got shot five times but didn’t realize it until much later when he got upstairs. Upon entering the studio, he claimed there were about 40 people who all looked surprised to see him. This group of people included B-I-G, Booker, Andre Harrell, and Producer Sean Combs. That was another surprise for Tupac because he had just paged them and told them he was coming to Quad, and wondered to himself why they would appear so surprised to see him. After the police took Tupac to the hospital, he checked himself out early and left for a friend’s apartment claiming that an unknown caller had continued to send him death threats. Returning to the trial bandaged and in a wheelchair, Tupac was acquitted of the sodomy counts and the weapon charges but, in an apparent compromise verdict, convicted of two counts of sexual abuse--specifically touching Ayanna Jackson’s buttocks. Bail was set at three million dollars, and Tupac turned himself in and was incarcerated. On February 7, 1995, he was sentenced to a term of one and a half years in prison.6

The events which took place in the Agnant/ Shakur case had led to the breakdown of the comraderie once shared by Biggie and Tupac, and also to their subsequent battle. In

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addition, a misunderstanding about one of B-I-G’s songs also had served as a catalyst. Notorious B-I-G’s b-side from the singles “Big Poppa” and “Warning” featured an eerie track entitled, “Who Shot Ya?”

Who shot ya?
Separate the weak from the obsolete
Hard to creep them Brooklyn streets
It’s on n---- f--- all that bickering beef
I can hear sweat trickling down your cheek
Your heartbeat sounds like Sasquatch feet
Thundering, shaking the concrete
Finish it, stop, when I foil the plot
Neighbors call the cops said they heard mad shots
Saw me in the drop, three in the corner
Slaughter, electrical tape around your daughter
Old school new school need to learn though
I burn baby burn like Disco Inferno
Burn slow like ya-yo
Peel more skins than Idaho potato
Niggaz know the lyrics takin’ place
F----- with B.I.G it ain’t safe.7

Tupac probably felt that “Who Shot Ya” was talking about his shooting because of the figurative expression, “I can hear sweat trickling down your cheek/Your heartbeat sounds like Sasquatch feet.” Also Tupac, a New York native who was living in California at the time of the incident, had possibly viewed the phrase, “Hard to Creep them Brooklyn streets,” as a territorial threat by B-I-G about hanging out in New York, which he did frequently with Jaques Agnant prior to his shooting. However, other statements in the

7 See Appendix
song such as "it's on n---- f--- all that bickering beef," may be examples of Tupac suspecting B-I-G in the shooting as a misunderstanding. I say this because "Beef" means "a rivalry" in Hip-Hop terminology, and as far as B-I-G was concerned he and Tupac were still friends. In a Vibe Magazine interview in which B-I-G discussed the premise behind "Who Shot Ya", he stated that originally it was material from one of his labelmates albums that ended up not getting released until it was a b-side single:

I wrote that m----- f------ song way before Tupac got shot. It was supposed to be the intro to that s--- Keith Murray was doing on Mary J. Blige's joint. But Puff said it was too hard.\[8\]

However, in Vibe Magazine interview, Tupac states that what concerned him was the simple lack of respect behind Bad Boy Records releasing that song around the same time of his shooting. Tupac explains: "You should be like, 'I'm not putting it out, 'cause he might think its about him.'"\[9\]

In a Vibe Magazine interview from jail, Tupac both renounced his "Thug-Life" lifestyle and gave his perception of what happened on the night he was robbed. Of course even before he'd probably heard the song, "I Shot Ya!" he had suspicions about B-I-G working in cahoots with both

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\[9\] Ibid.
Stretch and Jacques Agnant because of how peculiar he said they were acting the night of his shooting. However, Charles Fuller, Tupac’s manager, disagreed with him for blaming Sean Combs and B-I-G since both rappers had visited him in the hospital after the shooting. While Tupac was in jail, The Notorious B-I-G was the rap artist who had now become famous for putting New York, especially the Brooklyn borough back on the map. Although there were many artists that represented Brooklyn in the Old and New schools, it had been a while and the West Coast groups which rapped mostly about gangbanging were getting a broader audience. Possibly this was due to the amount of controversy in the West Coast at the time. Events such as the Rodney King incident and the L.A. riots had given these L.A. groups a chance to tell their side of the lyrical story. B-I-G became so successful that he even produced a group with his good friend Lance “Un” Rivera on a label which they shared called Undeas Entertainment. This group was known as Junior Maffia and one of their hit singles called “Get Money” not only gave them a hit but also gave Tupac ammunition for their lyrical battle. Below is an excerpt from B-I-G’s verse in which he discussed the problems he

was having with his wife, Faith Evans whom he both married and divorced after having only known her for a few months:

Guess you could say you the one I trusted
who would ever think that you would spread like mustard
s--- got hot, you sent feds to my spot
took me to court and tried to take all I got
another intricate plot
the b---- said I raped her
Damn, why she wanna stick me for my paper.\(^\text{11}\)

“Spread like mustard” is a simile that B-I-G used in order to express his suspicions of Faith’s infidelity towards him. “Spread” is a coined term which means for someone to give up sex, usually female. I say female because the word “spread” may imply the “spreading of the legs,” a position usually assumed by the female in intercourse. This expression “spread like mustard” also suggests an overindulgence through it’s use of a pun and a play on words. B-I-G suggesting that Faith would “spread like mustard” not only suggests a comparison of how she’s having sex, but also how often. Obviously B-I-G did not trust his new bride because through the simile he is suggesting that Faith was having sex as often as mustard was being spread. This expression is also a play on words because mustard being referred to as a “spread” represents a noun as well as a verb. Although the incident expressed in the excerpt

\(^{11}\) See Appendix
about his ladyfriend giving him up to the police (feds), there is no evidence of this event actually taking place between B-I-G and Faith. It was probably included in the song as symbolism which expressed how B-I-G had felt betrayed by Faith for personal reasons. For an individual's wife to "stick him for his papers" is probably one of the worst things that she could do to him. Although it's not a fact that this song is referring to Faith Evans, his ex-wife, it appears to be because in the video his new girlfriend has on a blonde wig and looks just like her. B-I-G raps about his marital problems while asking the judge what to do about his failed relationship in the imaginary divorce court.

In October of 1995, Death Row Records CEO Suge Knight posted a $1.4 million bond to release Tupac out of jail and immediately signed him to his recording label. Fans were extremely surprised by this because in his Vibe interview in which he accused Bad Boy records of attempted murder he also claimed Thug-Life was dead. His sister Sekyiwa who admitted not to have seen him much during this period of his life explained that Tupac hated jail so much that he was just happy to be out, even if it was with an ex-drug dealer like Suge Knight. He said that he's rather die than
to be locked up.\textsuperscript{12} Also ironically Tupac’s former friend Randy “Stretch” Walker was murdered execution-style in Queens, New York exactly a year to the day that Tupac was shot in New York, November 30, 1995. Although the reason for that mysterious murder was never discovered, some say that they believed Suge sent men to New York on a manhunt to get payback for attempting to murder Tupac.\textsuperscript{13} Other writers say that Stretch’s murderers were the very same individuals who he had help set up Tupac in the shooting of 1994 but there is no hard evidence of this.\textsuperscript{14}  

While B-I-G began touring a lot more with his new group, Junior Maffia, he was away from New York, and his wife Faith, many a time. As she was also an artist on Bad Boy Records, Faith also was travelling quite frequently. Their work as well as Faith’s suspecting B-I-G of cheating on her with Junior Maffia member, Little Kim, were two factors that had put a strain on their marriage. After Faith saw Tupac at many parties in L.A., she began to hang around Tupac in spite of the fact he didn’t trust Biggie.

\textsuperscript{12} Sekyiwa Shakur, to students at Clark Atlanta University English Department’s 29th Annual Writer’s Workshop Conference Entitled: \textit{Sibling Rivalry: Rap vs. Poetry Controversy}, 3 May 1998, Clark Atlanta University Multipurpose Room, Atlanta, Ga.

\textsuperscript{13} Ro, \textit{Have Gun}, 257.

Faith explained the innocence of her hanging with Pac in a magazine article:

I saw him at a couple of parties and we was chillin’, havin’ drinks, him and my friends. And I knew Biggie always said he had mad love for Tupac.  

After seeing Faith quite often, Tupac asked for Faith to sing vocals over some of his new beats. Although Bad Boy and Death Row were at odds against one another, Faith decided to go through the proper channels to see if they could record the song together. Upon returning home Faith’s friends began to tell her that they heard her voice on a track by Tupac called “Wonda Why They Call You Bitch.” Surprised by this, because she didn’t hear of the clearance being finalized by her company, Bad Boy made inquiries to her about it. When she found out that it was actually a vocalist from Death Row Records with a similar voice as Faith by the name of Jewell, she felt ashamed.

Faith had unknowingly given Tupac ammunition to throw at her husband in the lyrical battle. Around the same time, after Tupac was asked about his relationship to Faith Evans by reporters, he simply stated, “I never kiss and tell.”

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15 Ro, Have Gun, 255.

Tupac’s way of getting B-I-G to start having doubts about trusting Faith were through Death Row records leaking rumors about whose vocal was on the song. Although the lyrics do not exactly allude to their relationship, it’s still hard for Faith to explain that to Biggie. Below is an excerpt from the piece:

See it’s your thang and you can shake it how ya wanna. Give it up free or make money on the corner But don’t be bad and play the game get mad and change. Then you wonda why these m----- f------ call you names.\textsuperscript{17}

The expression “It’s your Thang and You can Shake It Like You Wanna,” is an allusion to an old Isley Brother’s song called “Shake Your Thing” which contains the same lyrics. In Tupac’s connotation it is a question for a young woman who is very promiscuous. He’s expressing that the reason men refer to her derogatorically as a “bitch,” is because she refuses to tone down her bad habit of overindulging in sex. Tupac’s antidote for the young lady to avoid this derogatory title is to, “get mad and change” as opposed to being, “bad and playing the game.” Although the song didn’t directly refer to Faith by name, the whole rumor
started by Death Row Records about her doing a track with Tupac created further tension between Tupac and B-I-G.

After this lyrical attack by Tupac, there was a physical confrontation on March 29, 1996 backstage at the Soul Train Music Awards. The repercussions had not only come from the whole Faith incident, but other Bad Boy/Death Row clashes that really had little to do with the Biggie-Tupac rivalry. Although harsh words were exchanged, nobody was hurt but a gun did go off, but B-I-G claimed it didn’t belong to him or Tupac. Since this was the first time the two rappers had met face-to-face since the Quad studio shooting, many expected an immediate fight, but judging from Biggie’s comments to a reporter, he wasn’t really looking for trouble with his old friend. Ronin Ro wrote:

He couldn’t knock Death Row for how they handled their business. That’s what they were, thugs and goons. But the change in Tupac shocked him. His old friend seemed to be reliving his role in the movie “Juice”. “Whatever he’s doing right now,” Biggie felt, “that’s the role he’s playing. He played that s--- to a T.”

See Appendix


Ibid.
Enraged at the way B-I-G denied having to do anything with his shooting Shakur released the macabre rap piece called "Hit 'Em Up" in which he not only attacked B-I-G and Junior Maffia but other East Coast artists as well:

So I F----- your B----
You fat m----- f----- (Take Money)
West Side
Bad Boy Killers (Take Money)
You know who the realist is
N----- we bring it to (Take Money)\textsuperscript{20}

There is definitely no question as to who this song was directed to because Tupac mentioned names like "Bad Boy" which could easily refer to Biggie and his group. While B-I-G's group had a hit single called "Get Money," Tupac mocked this in "Hit 'Em Up" by yelling "Take Money" in the song's introduction. He even used the beat and hook from the song to show his disrespect for B-I-G and his crew.

Although both B-I-G and Tupac were both friends less than two years before the confrontations had occurred, Tupac began to now take every characteristic that Biggie had glamorized and used it against him. Tupac explains this signification strategy:

But Biggie's not a player. He's never been. He's never had b------ until he got some f------ money. That's a trick, that's not a player. He's not a Poppa. So my point was to prove him

\textsuperscript{20} See Appendix
wrong. I took everything that he glamorized and I personified it.\textsuperscript{21}

This could probably explain Tupac yelling on the song about having intercourse with B-I-G’s ex-wife Faith Evans, because not only did it disrespect B-I-G, but it also denounced his claim of being a “player.” Although B-I-G was very mad at these taunts, he couldn’t understand that if they were true, why would Tupac have such a lack of regard for the reputation of a woman that he just had intercourse with.\textsuperscript{22} The term “West Side” was Tupac showing authorship of what part of the country he was from. “Hit ’Em Up” was one of the last solo releases from Tupac prior to his shooting on September 7, 1996, which later led to him dying on September 13, 1996. In addition to disrespecting B-I-G in this song, Tupac even told rapper Prodege of the Queens group Mobb Deep that he wished that he would have died from his Sickle Cell Anemia. In later cuts that were released on bootleg after his death, he even goes as far as to wish bad occurrences on his rivals’ kids’. When asked by journalist Rob Marriot why he had such harsh words from his opponents in his lyrics he stated the following:

\textsuperscript{21} Rob Marriot. \textit{Thug Immortal}, (Soundscape, 1997), compact disc.

(Marriot asking question) You was like “I hope their kids don’t grow up”... boom... boom
(Tupac answering) Honestly, I didn’t write none of that s-- down. I didn’t write nothing, I just been blowing up in the studio to keep me from really killing these n---- and that’s what came out. I don’t have no mercy in war. They didn’t have no mercy. They kids? They tried to shoot my f------ balls off. What about my kids?23

Although B-I-G didn’t have as many lyrical comebacks for Tupac as he had for him, there were a few that had come out prior to Tupac’s assassination. In a song with his fellow Brooklynite rapper known as Jay-Z, B-I-G rapped in one verse:

Me and Gutta had 2 spots,  
the 2 for 5 dollar the hits the blue tops  
gotta go Coolio man it’s gettin’ hot,  
If Faith has twins she’ll probably have 2 Pacs  
(Get it 2 Pacs.)24

This animosity from Biggie obviously had reached its climax from his distrust of Tupac after the latter claimed he had sex with Biggie’s wife, Faith.

Although the media pumped up the East Coast/West Coast rivalry in the slaying of both men, there are still limited answers as to who murdered them. Since B-I-G was in the hospital during Tupac’s second shooting with injuries from an automobile accident, his involvement with the shooting

23 Ibid.

24 See Appendix
is impossible. In a song called "Against All Odds" from Tupac’s Makavelli album which was released in 1997, Tupac made references to specific individuals whom he felt were involved with the first murder attempt on his life. One verse reads:

I heard he was light-skinned stocky with a Haitian accent

Jewelry, fast cars and known for flashing (what’s his name)
Listen while I take you back and lace this rap
A real live tale, about a snitch named Haitian Jack
Knew he was working for the feds, same crime
different trail
N----- picture what he said, and did I mention
Promised a payback, Jimmy Henchmen, in due time
I knew you b---- n----- was listening, The World is Mine
Set me Up, wet me up, n----- stuck me up
Heard the guns bust, but you never shut me up
Touch one of mine on everything I own
I’ll destroy everything you touch, play the game n-----
All out warfare, an eye for an eye
Last words to a b---- n-----, why you lie? 25

The "light-skinned stocky with a Haitian accent" who Tupac refers to as a “snitch named Haitian Jack” is a reference to Jacques Agnant from Ayanna Jackson’s trial. Not only did Tupac believe that he was one of the gunmen in the shooting at the Quad studio, but he also believes that he was acquitted from the Ayanna Jackson trial because he was

25 See Appendix
a government informant. According to a journalist named J.D. Bastin, his mention of “Jimmy Henchmen” is probably a reference to a company called Henchman Mangement Entetainment Co. Bastin stated that although he didn’t have strong evidence, the company may have had also had something to do with Tupac’s shooting.\textsuperscript{26} The next excerpt from the same song is probably talking about the late Randy “Stretch” Walker:

Puffy gettin’ robbed like a b----, to hide the fact that
He did some s--- he shouldn’t have did
So we ride em for that
And that n---- that was down for me
Restin’ dead, switch sides
Guess his new friends want him dead
Probably murdered for that s--- I said\textsuperscript{27}

The murdered individual referred to in the excerpt above has to be Randy Walker because he was killed right after Tupac blamed B-I-G and Puff of knowing something about his shooting. Also “switch side” insinuates that it had to be someone who was once his friend that had died before him. This also suggests that the individual could not have been Biggie, but Randy Walker.


\textsuperscript{27} See Appendix
Although B-I-G claims that he had no prior knowledge of Tupac getting set-up, some of his song lyrics tend to mock Shakur for constantly taunting him. One such song is his interlude from his “Ready To Die” album called Playa Hater. The following is an excerpt which may have had some allusion to Shakur’s first shooting:

Playahh, open the door
Lay on the floor, you’ve been robbed
Wake up (wake you’re a-- up), take off your jewels
You f----- fools, you’ve been robbed (This is a robbery n----)

Although the lyrical rivalry between The Notorious B-I-G and Tupac Shakur had become extremely combative, it appears that much of their animosity was orchestrated by the rivalry between two major black-owned record companies, Death Row and Bad Boy, which incidentally profitted from their lyrical confrontation. Clearly, the lyrical battle between the Notorious B-I-G and Tupac Shakur illustrates how rap artists carry their ideological disagreement into their art.
28 See Appendix
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

Rap music is a popular artform that not only has cultural roots entrenched in the history of the early Jamaican sound systems, but in the practices of African griots or storytellers first. These griots would report on events, myths, and legends which may be based on events in their environment or their imagination.

Some elements of African-America tradition which derived from the African griots included the poetry from the Harlem Renaissance, Black Arts Movement, and most recently the Hip-Hop culture. Although some critics may not readily see rap music as an artform, such as Mike Royko, author of "Exec Killer," many rap songs can be broken down stanza-by-stanza and analyzed for their poetic elements. It will be recalled that the Harlem Renaissance poetry experimented with various forms in order to determine what concept of poetry was considered acceptable "Black poetry." The Black Arts Movement started a literary rebellion by African-Americans after they finally realized
a lack of acceptance by white society. This rebellion brought forth great experimentation with poetic dialect, trends, and forms.

By the late 1970's Hip-Hop culture began as a movement which had sought to decrease gang violence in the inner city communities of New York. As this counter-culture expanded, it included the four elements of breakdancing, deejaying, graffiti, and rapping. Some experts even say that other elements exist as well such as human percussion (beatboxing), fashion, and economics. Rapping is Hip-Hop's expression of poetics, and as demonstrated in the study's analysis, rap music, like poetry, relies on ambiguity, symbolism, figures of sound, metaphor, and figuration for its aesthetic beauty. However, rap music differs from poetry through its utilization of the postmodern technology of computerized musical instruments and other electronically operated devices.

Prior to signification in rap music lyrics, the practice was done in the inner city by African-American rhetoricians such as H. Rap Brown and Rudy "Dolemite" Ray Moore. The signification rivalry between L.L. Cool J. and Kool Moe Dee on one hand, and between B-I-G and Tupac Shakur on the other hand was based on the signification practices of the early rhetoricians. While one rivalry
between L.L. Cool J and Kool Moe Dee was handled quite professionally even though it got very intense, the lyrical contest between The Notorious B-I-G and Tupac Shakur got really outrageous because of the extreme combativeness of their attacks.

Since the deaths of B-I-G and Shakur, several movements have been established to make rap artists more responsible for the material they rap about in their lyrics. One such movement was The Minister Louis Farrakhan’s peace strategy which invited rappers to a meeting at a forum in Chicago. Each artist who attended spoke in workshops, and they pledged more responsibility in the writing of their lyrics.¹

Another trend which occurred since the deaths of B-I-G and Tupac has been rap artists simply avoiding writing on topics which involve politics, sex, and violence. Instead of expressing the negative aspects of their environment, they have chosen to express themselves in "happy party rhymes."² Although the party was the foundation from which rap music was founded, what is probably needed for the artform is the expression of unlimited ideas and

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viewpoints. Any one idea, which is expressed exclusively, may limit an artist's creativity.

Hip-Hop or rap artists can be seen as popular culture poets. They are expressing aspects of their environment as well as their ideologies. These particular ideologies were brought forth in the form of Hip-Hop through a revolt by minorities and their rejection of the Capitalist superstructure. Although some tragedies have occurred within the confines of the inner cities in which the music originates, the negativity can only accurately be blamed on a change of times. After all, rap music is an expression of what previously existed in the inner-city environment of its artist's -- the latter-day griots. Since these griots reside in the inner city, the messages can appropriately be given the title "inner-city poetry." If critics and fans would take the time to analyze the lyrics and the poetic devices in rap music, as opposed to only rhythm, the artistic qualities of rap music would be more obvious.

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How Ya Like Me Now
by Kool Moe Dee

How ya like me now
I throw my tape on

And I watch ya

Three second later
I got ya, shakin’ your head
Dancin’ instead of sittin’
The rhymes kick
The beats hittin’ you
Just like a home run
Slammin’ like a slam dunk

Riding the wave that James Brown gave funk
It happened to James like it happened to me
How you think I feel to see another MC
Gettin’ paid, usin’ my rap style
And I’m playin’ the background meanwhile
I ain’t with that
You can forget that
You took my style
I’m takin’ it back
(How Ya Like Me Now continued)

I'm comin' back like "Return of the Jedi"
Sucker MC's in the place that said I
Could only rock rhymes
Only rock crowds
But never rock records

How ya like me now

Now brothers are riding me
Like a pony
I'm no phony
I'm the only real micaroni
Playin' the mic like it's supposed to be played
New Jacks, you all should've stayed out of the business
What is this, amateur night at the Apollo?
Get off this stage, I'm in a rage
I'm like a lion that's trapped in a cage
I'm the real King, rap is a jungle
I never understood, how could one go
(How Ya Like Me Now continued)

To a party, watch me, stand around and jock me
Become a rapper, then try and rock me
Scheming like a demon, you’re screamin’ and dreamin’
I'm from the old school, I used to see men
Die for less, but I’m not living that way
I’ll let my mic do the talkin’
And let the music play

How ya like me now

Rap is an art
And I’m a Picasso
But of course
Why else would you try so
Hard to paint a picture, and try to get ya
Self in my shoes, but they won’t fit ya
I’m bigger and better, forget about deffer
Every time I rocked the mic, I left a
Stain in your brain that will remain
Stuck in the back of your brain until you see me
(How Ya Like Me Now continued)

Again, respect, I come correct

The rhymes I select are nothing short of perfect

Vernacular’s pure and I can insure

Life or death with my breath, my voice is a cure

I heal life from the words I spread

I’ll make a sick man rock on his death bed

Sucker MC’s I’ll make your girl say “ow”

She’s jokin’

How ya like me now

How ya like me now

It irked my nerve

When I heard

A sucker rapper that I know I’ll serve

Run around townsayin’ that he’s the best

Is that a test?

I’m not impressed

Get real, you’re nothin’ but a toy

Don’t you know I’ll serve that boy

Just like a waiter
(How Ya Like Me Now continued)

Hit 'em with a plate of
These fresh rhymes and
Make sure that he
Pays the bill, and leave him standin' still
When he's had enough, hit him with a refill
And for dessert it won't be ice cream
I'm just gonna splatter and shatter his pipe dream
Make him feel wrath, beat him and laugh
Then when I'm finish them, I'm gonna ask him
Who's the best, and if he don't say Moe Dee
I'll take my whip and make him call himself Toby
Put him on punishment just like a child, then ask
How ya like me now
Whip him good, then I'll make him sweat
Talkin' 'bout battles and you never had a battle yet
But if we ever did
How could you beat me
You're so petrified
Even scared to meet me
(How Ya Like Me Now continued)

My word’s the law
That’s why you don’t beef
You’re nothin’ but a punk, track star, and a thief
So I’m puttin’ you on punishment just like a child
Never touch another mic

How ya like me now

I could continue
There’s more on the menu
But I relax ‘cos I’m so far in you
You had enough
I know you’re overstuffed
If I keep going
You’ll be throwin’ up
Old rhymes I used to say
Back in the Day
When you used to come
To my parties and pay
Nobody’s ever gonna rock me
(How Ya Like Me Now continued)

This I vow
So all I wanna say is

How ya like me now
How ya like me now

Jack The Ripper

by L.L. Cool J (James Todd Smith)

Milky, and I’m back
My ace in the hole is this brand new track
I’m a slow it up, and speed it up, and now you’re gonna beat it up
I did it, but the devil didn’t make me
I did it for the suckas who tried to shake and bake me
Provin’ a point, that I’m a serious joint,
You can roll me up and puff me, then I’ll anoint
Your head with oil, lots of oil
Make you run like water watch you boil
’Cause I made him play it, made him say it
Made him okay it, made himm obey it
Jack The Ripper (continued)

Prince of the growl is on the prowl

How you like me now punk, you're livin' foul

Here is what my game is, here is what my aim is

A washed-up rapper needs a wash-up, My name is

Jack The Ripper

Back for the payback, I must say that

I heard your new jam, I don't play that

It ain't loud enough punk, it ain't hittin'

This year you tried, next year you're quittin'

Last year you thought I was dyin' out

But again and again and again without a doubt

It's the Gangsta Boogie, earthquake sound

Pump it up and play it, so they hear it all around

I do it rough tough, I don't bluff

And this is an example of funky stuff

When you wanna make hits, you make 'em like this

If they ain't like this, they don't hit they miss

It's a strong record, a record for the strong
Jack The Ripper (continued)

For those who appreciate real rap songs
Listen how, I won’t allow, my self to go off track
Stay back, I’ve got the power

Jack The Ripper

Jack the Ripper’s a man not a myth
A.K.A James Todd Smith
Hard! Like penitentiary steel
Breakin’ necks while I flex my sex appeal
Home girls in the house, come on!!
Home girls in the house, give it up!!
You’ve got to, wanna get hotta
Movin’ and Groovin’ and always improvin’, a lot of
People don’t know how nice I am
He was sleepin’, so now I gotta slice my man
Like ham in a pan, wrap ‘em in Saran
Kidnap ‘em, slap ‘em up inside of a van
While you’re doing your dance, I want to make moves
No one out there thought you could do
Jack The Ripper (continued)

You know the name of the game and what I’m here to do

Party people let me see if you can dance to

Jack The Ripper

How do you like me now? I’m gettin’ busier!!

I’m double platinum! Watching you get dizzier!!

Check out the way I, say my, display my, play my

J on the back, behind the cool without the a-y

I love to ride the groove, because the groove is smooth

It makes me move, and I’ll improve

As it goes on, it flows on

When you see me, don’t ask me if the show’s on

How’d that sound, don’t come around, playin’ me close clown

Pullin’ my jock to be down

You need to stay down, way down, because you’re low down

Do that dance, the prince of rap is gonna throw down

Aimin’ to please, while I’m keepin’ emcees,

I’m a keep on hittin’ you with rough lp’s
Jack The Ripper (continued)

Day after day
You’re smacked in the face by the bass of Cool J
I’m a beast on the microphone, a nightstalker
A killin’ machine, a savage street talker
Jason with an ax, when I put it on wax
To eradicate the suckers who thought I had relaxed
The Prince of Hip-Hop straight from Queens
Kickin’ it mean, keepin’ it clean
And you’ve never seen anybody, rock a party
All you funky beat a-a-holics this beats bacardi
I go to the show and terrorize emcees, don’t you know
Movin’ my hand like I’m playin’ the piano
Don’t touch the dial, don’t change the channel
Don’t let me hear you say I ain’t debonair
I’m better than any emcee out there
As a matter of fact suckas can’t compare
When I’m rockin’ the mic people stop and stare at...
To Da Break of Dawn by

L.L. Cool J.

What is a panther? An animal that kills
I’m like a shark with blood coming out the gills
You could never in your wildest dreams
Get a piece of this gangsta lean straight from Queens
Strong as liquor that can be seen in a limousine
Now you’re getting done without Vaseline
Wouldn’t bite because your rhymes are puppy chow
Made another million so competitors bow
Homeboy, hold on your rhymes are so strong
Nothing could go wrong, so why do you prolong?
Songs that ain’t strong, brother you’re dead wrong
And got the nerve to have those Star Trek shades on
Huh, you can’t handle the whole weight
Your skin needs lotion, teeth need colgate
Wise-up you little burned-up French fry
I’m that type of guy
And I slammed you know, just like a sumo
Put him in pampers, leave my drawers in his hamper
When I’m through you need a brand new identity
To Da Break of Dawn (continued)

I was scooping girls before you lost your virginity
Your jam is just a dream that emcees scheme
Gettin’ crushed by an L.L. fiend
Something like shaft
Put him in a cast
Buck you little blood clot boy you must not know
The rep I keep, the emcees I beat sweep
Break cheap and freak with a sheet you need technique
Get ‘rid of that yuck-mouth smile, ‘cause brother you ain’t
got no style. Keep-on...

To Da Break of Dawn

Emaculate styles I use to abuse
Emcees so light the fuse, and spread the news
You lose to the damager, microphone manager
Cold crush and bruise and bandage ya amateur
That amateur’s swinging a hammer froma bodybag
So run get your canmera
To Da Break of Dawn (continued)

Got flick of the stiff that tried to get swift, but I’m the wrong brother to dance with

‘Cause I don’t need no partner to swing

Keep your eyes on the Cool J. ring

Shooting the gift but you just don’t shoot it right

You couldn’t bust a grape in a food fight

Wouldn’t throw a rock in a ghost town, so don’t try to play post clown

You know that LL’s back in town and all the wanna be sheriff’s is getting shot down

Pow!! give me that microphone

I’m a show you the real meaning of the danger zone

Stop dancing, get to walking, shut your old mouth when young folks is talking!!

Huh, you little snake in the grass

You swing a hammer, but you couldn’t break a glass

Give me a lighter “woof” now you’re cut loose from that jheri curl juice
To Da Break of Dawn (continued)

Cool J. is back on the map, and when I see ya I’m a give you a slap

That’s right a little clip for that clap

‘Cause my old gym teacher ain’t supposed to rap

Keep on...

To Da Break of Dawn

How dare you stand beside me

I’m Cool, I freeze I-C-E

On your trial and I’m a cut that ponytail

You’re disobedient with the wrong ingredients.

But I’m a drink you down over the rocks

While the freak on your album cover jocks

You’re ‘gonna hear a real ill paragraph soon

I took the cover right home to the bathroom

In the immortal words of L.L. “hard as hell”

Your broad wears it well

She’s the only reason that your record sold a few copies

But your rhymes are sloppy
To Da Break of Dawn (continued)

Like Oscar and you’re bound to get dropped and stopped.

I ain’t Murray the Cop

Nor am I Felix, but I got a bag of tricks

Mr. Pusherman give me a fix

So I can show you I’m immune to Romper Room tunes

You little Hip-Hop raccoon

I’m not Scarface, but I want more beef

Before you rapped you were a downtown car thief.

...working in a parking lot, a brother with a perm deserves
to get burned

So tell me how you like your cold cream

On a cone, in a bowl, or in a wet dream

With your t.v. channel on fuzz

Uncle L., watch how much damage he does

Here’s five dollars for a taxi cab, take your rhyme around

the corner to the rap rehab keep on....
Voice: What do you think about Jack The Ripper?
Answer (reverbed): Laughs.
You want me to get him?
Well I got ‘im
My mouth is an uzi
And I shot ‘im
With a hundred of rhymes rhythm designed to make you rewind
This time I draw the line.
He’s mine just chill
Don’t nobody touch him ‘cause I’m a get ill
The boys phony as a three dollar bill.
And this time I shoot to kill.
Just like a sucker you took the bait.
Now you’re like a dead fish on my dish too late.
So party people kick your feet up
I’m about to heat up
You’re hungry for a battle and now it’s time to eat up
Let's Go (continued)

Boy I'm gonna chew you

'Cause I knew you

Was talking that junk punk

Now I'm a do you

the way that it should be done

Call you my son

Make you say, "Daddy I don't want none!"

I had enough of you acting tough

You bluff, puff, grabbing your stuff you cream puff.

Bluff, talking 'bout a battle, but you don't 'wanna do it.

You got yourself into it; you blew it!

You ego-maniac

I'm da brainiac

You came back with a stone-cold pain attack

Your rhymes are weak wack,

how can you speak that

You need to sneak back
to the drawing board Jack...

The Ripper, down with my zipper.

You get paid to be a Moe Dee tipster.
Let's Go (continued)

Trying to knock the way I rock, get off my jock

I'm a knock you out the box

Let's Go!

Put up or shut up!

Get up, yeah what up?

Huh, get the microphone and get cut up.

Talkin' bout how your records went double platinum

With those lyrics? Huh, I laughed at them.

So you got paid, took the money you made, bet it on yourself.

Are you afraid?

Money talks, B-S walks, when I stalk like a hawk a victory is what I chalk.

So put your money where your mouth is.

You don't know about this, battling's for real men and I doubt if you can even handle get a run for the money.

You're just a sucker and it's funny how...
Let's Go (continued)

'ya never ever had a job or juice in New York and now you
gon on tour and try to talk that talk.

Try to act like you’re a big man, but you’re a big fan.

Striding and hiding while you’re riding my big man.

You ain’t got a chance in the world.

Your records are smoking but you sound like a girl.

(L.L. Sample played) “How You like Me Now...I’m gettin’
busier, I’m double platinum....”

Hold up now is he a man or a girl?

What in the world???

You sound like Shirl the Pearl.

And you wanna battle on the microphone?

Leave that crack alone!!

Let’s Go!

Better than me?

Picture that with a Kodak.

I don’t take no shorts and you know that.

I roll hard run the rap yard.
Let's Go (continued)

Put up your guard.
I don't get even; I get odd Todd.
Always up on 'ya, and I even tried to warn 'ya.
You slept. You took a bad step, ruin your rep
and rap
You should've kept yoour mouth shut.
You know what?
You gotta say you're sorry (Ha! Ha!)
So what. You called me a punk now you want to see what's
soft?
Well put the microphone down, and let's square off.
You need a hand? You got hands for trying to be me.
L.L. stands for: lower, level, lack, luster, last, least,
lip, lever, lousy, lame, late, lethargic, lazy, lemon,
little logic. lucky, leach, liver, lip, laborious louse on
a lover's list. Live in limbo, lyrical lapse, low-life with
a loud rap boy...
You can't win
Huh, I don't bend.
Look what you done got yourself in.
Let's Go (continued)

Just using your name it took those L's
Hung 'em on your head and rocked your bells!!
Now here we go blow-for-blow
Let's throw, rhyme for rhyme yours and mine and yo battle.
When it's time to rhyme I know how to make it flow so let's go...
...to the ring and swing rapper's swing, words and verses
see who deserves to be king.
Serve a blow to that ego, as if you didn't know.

Let's Go!

How can you say you're the best?
Get put to the test
in front of a million impressed.
Try to withdraw because you saw the juice I got's not like before.
Huh, I'm formidable
Unforgettable
You're submittable
Let's Go (continued)

You look pityful
Yeah you're headstrong
but you're dead wrong
Want to survive?
Stick with the love songs.

Take off your shirt, flex and flirt
and leave the real hard rhymes to the hard rhyme expert
if you doubt boy you'll get hurt.

Feel like dirt and have to revert
..to coming onstage butt-naked
to make up for what you can't do on record.

Open your eyes, twice the size and realize
I'm on the rese and you're on the demise.

Ostracized by my reprise

Step in my face and watch how that head flies.
I mean business and I'm serious I ain't sellin' out.

And now here he is...

..frontin' and fakin' and talkin' 'bout makin' the money
for money.

Now don't you know they can't use your support.
Let's Go (continued)

'Cause you got caught, signed, sealed, delivered, sold, and bought.

A puppet on a string with no heart.

A fool and his money will always part.

You used to be a rapper. Turned into a businessman.

Loafing on the job and shooting fans.

I'm too potent, powerful, spiritual, and physical.

Mental, emotional, and lyrical.

You want to beat me, it's gonna take a miracle

You got locked on my jock like a pitbull.
Deathblow

by Kool Moe Dee

Intro: (samples) To da Break of Dawn (repeat)
(Record Scratches)
Times up Punk!
Yeah...Yeah
It’s time to settle the score.
To the Break of Dawn, another dumb move.
This time it’s over boy.
This time it’s me and you head-to-head.
Let’s go
Here we go, beatdown round two
Heads up punk ‘cause it all comes down to..
me and you face-to-face head-to-head mic-to-mic I like the weak s--- you said.
To Da Break of Dawn, beats nitro lyrics, weak say goodnight yo. Star Trek shades? Man cut the jokes
Let’s get serious and go for broke.
You still got a lock on my jock like a pit bull victim.
Before you pull it off you’re soft Mr. Pityful.
Deathblow (continued)

Here’s some mouthwash G.

Your breath smells like my jockstrap C-A-U- me

You’re riding me D-D Junior Moe Dee.

Stop biting, chewing, swallowing, who in the hell told you that you could do what you was doing?

Raise up son I need jock relief.

Here’s a toothpick now get your jock out my teeth.

You swallowed it? (Yeah)

Finished. (Burp)

Now let a real man go to work.

‘Cause I’m a whip you like your daddy

Beat you like a baby

‘Sic ya like a dog dropping lyrics with rabies

Cut you like a knife ‘cause you’re nothing but hype

Your slice and dice and ice twice for life.

I’m a treat you like a hooker,

Change your clothes

Put ya in the street with your jingling ho’s

Keep talking about me and I’ll keep pimping

Just give me that money and take this a-- whippin’
Deathblow (continued)

How could one man be so dumb
You try to come-off but don’t know how to come.
Young and you’re quick with your tongue, high strung, come and get done!!
I’ll do you with a Deathblow!!

chorus: Kill him, Kill him.

My lyrical beatdown will leave you in a coma
’Cause you can’t hang without a high school diploma.
Your brain will fatigue
You’re out of your league
You’re running out of gas and your tank is on “E”
Somebody buy him a heart ‘cause he’s petro
Take your a-- whipping like a man, brother let’s go!
No apologies, tears of violence
Get your black suits ‘cause I ain’t smilin’
I’m shooting the gift of gab, brother you’re ripped in half
Soon as the mic is passed; you won’t live to laugh.
If there’s laughter, I’ll give you the last one,
Deathblow (continued)

You’re locked on the lyrics and you caught a bad one.
So who’s got no style
Look at your profile. You can’t dress and your so foul.
Still wearing played-out gold chains and things
You changed your look now change your game plan
Trying to dress but you’re still wearing name brand.
Brother you look crazy weak, and it gets worst when we hear you speak.
So you ain’t get a chance in hell, You’ll be known as the late LL.
The man who lost one, more to often.
Come with a soft one and went to his coffin.
A closed casket; they won’t show
When I finish your Mama won’t know ya
‘Cause I’m a rip you limb-from-limb
Your tombstone will read," He had no win."
The R-I-P rest in peace ripped ‘em
D-I-D did indeed ‘em
I h-i-t hit man
(voice) so what did youb hit him with?
Deathblow (continued)

I hit him with a Detahblow

chorus

"Mama Said Knock You out!"

Come do it. You can’t win and that b---- knew it.

I’m a send you home in a body bag with the mic in your

throat and a jock for your gag.

You’re out of here! Finished over all in.

And Marley Marl can’t save you from fallin’

‘Cause soon as you came back, what did you do?

“To Da Break of Dawn” another dumb move.

You can’t go hard, you’re just so-so Todd.

I’m that Type of Guy! Oh, my God. It gets no rougher, comes

no weaker.

Marley hooked the beat so now you need a...

writer to bring you back from the hell because I’m

a...(scratches) “Rock The Bells!”

Lo wlife loser, life-like lunar, laphadazical listless

lunatic, live, lifeless, living, likeness, lusting,
**Deathblow (continued)**

longing, lyrics like this. little leave large larsonist, liar, labeling, to let the liable. lull lateral, learning, lay. languid, latent, lurking, languish, language, local, logo, light, laboring, limited loco.

Now L.L. is the laughingstock 'cause I hit that a-- to the last drop. Stop I watched you fall like Hitler fell. And now you're down to a broken "L".

Your records ain't hot and your shows don't sell
Yo tell me how you fell "L", "Hard as Hell!!"
You came back and you thought you had me
But think about it
Who's your daddy?

chorus

(Message at the end)

Get him out of here!
Yeah, so for all of those Hip-Hop fans out there that really know what time it is, anybody that wants to see us get this thing going on head-to-head
Deathblow (continued)

Kool Moe Dee vs. L.L. put a little pressure on ‘im cause the boy ain’t got no heart. ‘Cause he knows what time it is. And anybody out there that don’t know what time it is, remember, I never said the brother couldn’t make a good record. But when it comes to a battle, we gotta go head-to-head on the lyric tip. And when it comes to lyrics, you can’t hang.

One More Chance By the Notorious B-I-G (The Remix)

First things first, I, Poppa freaks all the honeys
Dummies-Playboy bunnies those wantin’ money
Those the ones I like ‘cause they don’t get nathan’
But penetration, unless it smells like sanitation-
Garbage, I turn like doorknobs
Heart-throb, never, black and ugly as ever-
However, I stay Coogi-ed down to the socks
Rings and watch filled with rocks..
And my jam knocks in the mitsubishi
Girls pee pee when they see me, Nava-hoes creep me in they tee-pee
One More Chance remix (continued)

As I lay down laws like Allen Carpet
Stop-It-If you think you’re gonna make a profit.
Don’t see my ones, don’t see my guns -- get it
Now tell your friends Poppa hit it then split it
in two as I flow with the Junior M.A.F.I.A.
I don’t know what the hell’s stoppin’ ‘ya
Once ‘ya grin, I’m in. Game begin
First I talk about how dress in this
And diamond necklaces -- stretch Lexuses
The sex is so immaculate, from the back I get deeper and
deeper -- help you reach the
Climax that your man can’t make
Call and tell him you’ll be home real late Let’s sing the
break.

chorus: One More Chance, Biggie Give Me One More Chance. (I
got the good love girl, you didn’t know?)

She’s sick of that song on how it’s so long
Thought he worked his until I handled my biz
One More Chance remix (continued)

There I is -- major pain like Damon Wayans
Low down dirty even like his brother Keenan
Schemin' -- don't bring your girl 'round me
True player for real ask Puff Daddy
You ringin' bells with bags from Chanel, baby
Benz traded in your Hyundai Excel, fully equipped, CD changer with a cell. She beeped me meet me at twelve.
Where you at? Flippin' jobs playin' car notes?
While I'm swimmin' in ya women like the breast stroke
Right stroke, left stroke what's the best stroke
Death stroke -- Tongue all down her throat
Nuthin' left to do but send her home to you
I'm through, can you sing the song for me boo?

chorus

So, what's it gonna be? Him or me?
We can cruise the world with pearls
Gator boots for girls
The envy of all women, crushed linen
Cartier wrist-wear with diamonds in 'em
The finest women I love with a passion
Ya man's a wimp, I give that a-- a good thrashin'
High fashion -- flyin' into all states
Sexin' me while your man masturbates
Isn't this great? Your flight leaves at eight
Her flight lands at nine, my game just rewinds
Lyrically I'm supposed to represent
I'm not only a client, I'm the player president.

chorus

Me and My Girlfriend by Tupac Shakur AKA Makavelli
S--- you motha f----- right.
I'm the b---- that's keepin' it live
and keepin' it hot
when you punk a--- n----- don't
N----, west side. What!!
Bring it on.

Look for me. Lost in the worldwind 96.
Bonnie and Clyde
Me and My girlfriend doin' 85 when we ride,
Trapped in this world of sin.
Me and My Girlfriend (continued)

Born as a ghetto child.

Raised in this whirlwind.

Our childhood recall the tears.

Heart laced with venom.

Snokin' shern, drinking malt liquor.

Father forgive her.

Me and My Girlfriend

must of fell in love with the struggle.

Hands on the steering wheel.

Bust! Watch me bail out and bust 'em.

Fuck 'em all. Watch 'em fall Screamin'.

Automayic gunfire exorcisin' all demons.

My posse off on the side.

My complication high,

ready to die

We bail out to take the jail back.

Niggas united.

Our first date.

Can't wait to see you naked.

Touch you in every secret place.
Me and My Girlfriend (continued)

I can hardly wait to bust freely.

Got you red hot.

You so happy to see me.

made the front page, primetime live on TV.

Nigga my girlfriend

may be .45 but she still live.

One shot makin niggas heartbeats stop.

(interlude)

What!!

I’m bustin’ on you punk a-- n----.

Run, n----, run. I’m on your ass n----.

Run n----, duck and hide.

I’m bustin’ on all you bitches.

Run, n----, yeah.

West side, uh, uh, uh.

Die, nigga, die.

My girlfriend blacker than the darkest night.

When n---- act bitch made,
Me and My Girlfriend (continued)

she got the heart to fight.

N---- my girlfriend.

Though we seperated at times, I know deep inside baby girl you’ll always be mine.

Picked you up when you was nine.

Started out my life of crime ‘wit you.

Bought you some shells when you turned 22.

It’s true.

Nothing compares to the satisfaction that I feel when we out mashin.

Me and My Girlfriend.

chorus:

All I need in this life of sin,

Is me and my girlfriend.

Down to ride to the bloody end.

Just me and my girlfriend.

I was too immature to understand your ways.

Inexperienced back in the days.

’Caused so many arguments and strays.
Me and My Girlfriend (continued)

Now I realize how to treat cha.
The secret to keep ya.
Bein faithful cuz now cheating’s lethal.
We closer than the hands of time.
Deeper than the drive of mankind. I trust you dearly,
I shoot blind.
In time I clock figures.
Droppin’ niggas as we rise.
We all souljas in God’s eyes.
Now it’s time for war.
Never leave me waitin.
I’m paranoid.
Sleepin’ with you loaded by my bedside, crazy.
Jealous when you hang ‘wit the fellas.
I wait patiently alone
anticipated for the moment you come home.
I’m waitin’ by the phone.
This is true love I can feel it.
I’ve had a lot of women in my bed
But you the realest.
Me and My Girlfriend (continued)

If you need me, call.

I’ll be there.

through it all.

You’re the reason I could stand tall.

Me and My Girlfriend.

chorus repeats

I love finger f----- you.

All of a sudden I’m hearin’ thunder

when you bust a nut.

N----- be duckin’

Or takin’ numbers.

Love to watch you at a block party

beggin’ for drama.

While unleashin on the old times.

That’s on my mama.

I would trade my life for yours.

Behind closed door,

the only girl that I adore.
Me and My Girlfriend (continued)

Everything I’m askin’ for.

Talikn’ to me,

beggin’ me to just take you around.

17 like Brandy you just want to be down.

Talkin’ loud.

When I tell you be quiet, you move a crowd.

Busin’ rounds, activatin’ arye.

That’s why I love you.

So no control, down to roll.

Unleash. After I hit, you break apart.

Then back to one piece.

Much love to my one and only girlfriend.

The world is ours.

Just hold me down.

Baby, witness the power.

Never leave a n---- alone.

I love you, black or chrome.

Turn this house into a happy home.

Me and my girlfriend.
Me and My Girlfriend (continued)

chorus repeats

Lost in the worldwind 96. Bonnie and Clyde.
Me and My girlfriend doin 85 when we ride, drive in this world of sin.
Born as a ghetto child.
Raised in this worldwind.
Look for me.
Repeats.

Who Shot Ya?

By The Notorious B-I-G

Intro: Puff Daddy
As we proceed to give you what you need
9 to 5 m----- f------
get live m----- f------ ___
(repeat 2 times)
BIG: Now turn the mics up, yea that beat is knockin’
to that microphone
Turn that s--- the f--- up
Who Shot Ya? (continued)

Uh, what?

Turn it up louder

Yeah, uh.

As we proceed to give you what you need

J.M. m----- f------

J.M. m----- f------

9 to 5 m------ f------

Who shot ya?

Separate the weak from the obsolete

Hard to creep them Brooklyn streets

It’s on n----- f--- all that bickering beef

I can hear sweat trickling down your cheek

Your heartbeat sounds like Sasquatch feet

Thundering, shaking the concrete

Finish it, stop, when I foil the plot

Neighbors call the cops said they heard mad shots

Saw me in the drop, three in the corner

Slaughter, electrical tape around your daughter

Old school new school need to learn though

I burn baby burn like Disco Inferno
Who Shot Ya? (continued)

Burn slow like ya-yo
Peel more skins than Idaho potato
Niggaz know the lyrics takin’ place
F----- with B.I.G it ain’t safe.
I make your skin chafe, rashes on the masses
Bumops and bruises, blunts and Landcruisers
Big Poppa smash fools, bash fools
N----- mad because I know that Cash Rules
Everything Around Me, two glock nines
Any m----- f----- whispering about mines
And I’m Crooklyn’s finest
You rewind this, Bad Boy’s behind this
Interlude:
As we proceed to give you what you need
9 to 5 m----- f-----
get live m----- f-----

As we proceed to give you what you need
East Coast m----- f-----
**Who Shot Ya? (continued)**

Bad Boy m----- f-------

Get high m----- f-------

Get high m----- f-------

Smoke Blunts m----- f-------

Get high m----- f-------

Ready to Die m----- f-------

9 to 5 m----- f-------

I seen the light excite all the freaks

Stack mad chips, spread love with my peeps

N----- wanna creep, got ta watch my back

Think the Cognac and indo sack make me slack?

I switches all that, c--- sucker G’s up

One false move, get swiss cheeses up

Clip to tec, respect I demand it

Slip up and break the, 11th Commandment

Thou shalt not f--- with raw C-Poppa

Feel a thousand deaths I drop ya

I feel for you, like Chaka Khan I’m the don
Who Shot Ya? (continued)

P---- when I want Rolex on the arm
You’ll die slow but calm
Recognize my face, so there won’t be no mistake
So you know where to tell Jake, lame n----
Brave n----, turned front page n----
Puff Daddy flips daily
I smoke on the blunts he sips on the Bailey’s
on the rocks, tote glocks at Christenings
And my c---, in the fire position and...

chorus (interlude)

C’mere c’mere (it ain’t gotta be like that Big)
open your f------ mouth, open your...didn’t I tell you
don’t f--- with me? (*muffled c’mon man) Huh!
Didn’t I tell you not to f--- with me?
(as we proceed) (c’mon man) Look at you now
(to give you what you need) Huh? (c’mon man)
(9 to 5 m----- f------) Can’t talk with a gun in your mouth
huh?
Who Shot Ya? (continued)

(get live m----- f------) B---- A-- N----, what?
(get live m----- f------) (muffled sounds, six gun shots.)
(as we proceed..) Who shot ya?

Outro

chorus (interlude)

Get Money by Junior M.A.F.I.A

(Biggie)
You wanna sip Moe on my living room floor
Play Nintendo with Ceas and Nino
Pick up my phone say Poppa not home
sex all night mad damn in the morn
Spend my vee, smoke all my weed
tatoo on t-t saying B-I-G
Now check it picture life as my wife jus think
Full length minks, fat x and o linx
bracelets to match conversation was all that
showed you the safe combination and all that
Guess you could say you the one I trusted
Get Money (continued)

who would ever think that you would spread like mustard
s--- got hot, you sent feds to my spot
took me to court and tried to take all I got
another intricate plot
the b---- said I raped her
Damn, why she wanna stick me for my paper?
My mo-skee-no, mother Versace hottie
come to find out, you was f------' everybody
you knew about me 'wit the fake I.D.
cases in Virginia, body in D.C.
why always me that's what I get for trickin'
came out on bail..commence to a-- kickin'
Kick-in the door wavin' the 4-4
all you heard was Poppa don't hit me no more
disrespect my click, my s---'s imperial
F--- around and made a milkbox material
you feel me..suckin' d------runnin' your lips
cuz of you I'm on some real f--- a b---- s---

chorus: Get Money (repeat 4)
Get Money (continued)

('Lil Kim)

N----- betta grab a seat
grab on ya d--- as this b---- gets deep
Deeper than a p---- of a b---- six feet
stiff little d---- feel sweet in this little petite
Young B---- from the streets guaranteed to stay down
used to bring work outta town on Greyhound
Now I’m on Billboard now, n----- pressed to hit it
play me like a chicken, thinkin’ I’m pressed to get it
Rather do the killin’ than the stick-up jooks
rather count a million while you eat my p---- push me
to the limit get my feelings in
get me open while I’m c----- down your throat and
you wanna be my main squeeze n---- don’t cha
you wanna lick between my knees n----
dontcha wanna see me wit big and three down the ave.
blow up spots on b----- because I’m there
break up affairs lick shots in the air
you get vex and start swingin’ everywhere
Get Money (continued)

me shiftee? Now you wanna pistol whip me
pull out your 9, while I cock on mine
and what n---- I ain’t got time for this
so what n----, I’m not tryin’ to hear that s---
Now you wanna buy me diamonds and Armani suits
Age of Adini and Chanel Nine Boots
Things to make up for all the games and the lies
Hallmark Cards sayin I apologize
Is you wit me, how could you ever deceive me
but paybacks a b---- m------ f------, believe me
Naw I ain’t gay this ain’t no lesbo flow
jus a ‘lil somethin’ to let you m------ f------ know...
chorus

Brooklyn’s Finest by B-I-G and Jay-Z
(Biggie’s verses only)
from Jay Z’s Reasonable Doubt album

(verse 2)
Take that witcha
Brooklyn’s Finest (continued)

hit cha, split cha

f--- fist fights and lame scuffles, pillow case ta ya
facemake the shell muffle, shoot cha daughter in the calf
muscle, f--- a tussle
nickel-plated, sprinkle coke on the floor make ya drug
related, most hated can’t fade it.

(verse 4)

Who shot ya?

My ties like Sinatra, the Ruvians tried ‘ta do me in, I
ain’t paid them yet, tryna push 700’s they ain’t made them
yet.

Rolex and bracelets (frostbit) rings too n----- by the way
call me igloo, stick who? (m----- f-----)

(verse 6)

My Bed-Stuy flow’s malicious...delicious

F--- three wishes, made my road to the riches,
from 62 Jim Star my mom dishes
gram choppin’ police van dockin’, E’s at my door knockin’
Brooklyn’s Finest (continued)

(verse 8)
Keep ya hands high, f--- this ???steeper?? here comes the grim reaper Frank White, need the keys to ya inn-keeper (that’s right) chill homey, the b---- and shonies told me ya holdin’ more drugs than the pharmacy you ain’t harmin’ me so pardon me, passed the safe, before I blazed the place and hit 6 shots in the case

(verse 10)
Me and Gutta had 2 spots, the 2 for 5 dollar the hits the blue tops gotta go Coolio man it’s gettin’ hot, If Faith has twins she’ll probably have 2 Pacs (Get it 2 Pacs.)

(verse 12)
(Sippin’ on) Cristal forever, play the crib when it’s mink weather, the Mafia keep cannons in Buchanans
Brooklyn’s Finest (continued)

usually Quaderal Cinco, the shells sink slow

tossin’ ya, mad slugs through ya Nautica, I’m warnin’ ya

*Play Hater*

_by The Notorious B-I-G_

Good evening

And for my last hit

I’d like to take you to the classic

A-hem, B-I-G style of course

Uhhh

(singing)

Playah, turn your head round

Lay on the ground, you’ve been robbed

Wake up, open the door

Lay on the floor, you’ve been robbed

Uhh

You know we need this money

And you, yes baby, you, should just roll with me

Let’s get off together
Play Hater (continued)

On this robbin’ spree, we’ll make money

Uhh

Playa turn your head round

Take off that crown, you’ve been robbed

Wake up, open that door

Don’t cry no more, you’ve been robbed

(dialogue: Puffy)

You see, there are two kinds of people in the world today.

We have the players, and we have, the player haters

Please don’t hate me because I’m beautiful baby

Hear what they talk about me

But my crew so deep, you can’t do a damned thing, to me.

Player, open the door

Lay on the floor, you’ve been robbed

Wake up (Wake your a-- up), take off your jewels

You f---- fools, you’ve been robbed (this is a robbery n-- --)

Player Hater (repeat 8 times)

Uh thank you very much *applause*
Play Hater (continued)

Thank You, Thank You. You are far too kind, (etc.)

Wonder Why They Call You B----

by Tupac Shakur

chorus:

You wonder why they call you B---- (6 times)

Look here Miss Thang

hate to salt in your game

but you’s a money hungry woman

and you need to change

In the locker room all the homeys do is laugh

High Fives 'cause another n----'s played your a--

It was said you were sleezy even easy sleeping around for

what you need

See it’s your thang and you can shake it like you wanna.

Give it up free or make your money on the corner.

But don’t be mad andc play the game, get mad and change

Then you wonda why m----- f----- call you names
Wonder Why They Call You B---- (continued)

Still lookin’ for a way out and that’s okay
I can see you wanna stray, there’s a way out
Keep your mind on your money, enroll in school
And as the years pass by you can show them fools
But you ain’t hear me ‘cuz you’re stuck
you’re headin’ for the bathroom ‘bout to get tossed up.
Still lookin’ for a rich man you dug a ditch, got your legs
up tryin’ to get rich.
I love you like a sista but you need to switch and that’s
why I call you b----

chorus

You leave your kids with your Mama cuz you’re heading for
the club in a skin tight mini skirt lookin’ for some love.
Got them legs wide open while you’re sittin’ at the bar
Talkin’ to some n--- ‘bout his car.
I guess he said he had a Lexus, what’s next?
You headin’ to his car for some sex
I pass by can’t hold back my tears inside
Wonder Why They Call You B---- (continued)

cuz, Lord knows for years I tried.
And all the other people on my block hate your guts
Then you wonda why they stare and call you a slut.
It’s like your mind don’t understand, you don’t have to
kill your dreams plottin’ schemes on a man
Keep your head up, legs closed, eyes open
either a n---- wear a rubber or he die smokin’
I’m hearin’ rumors so you need to switch and n-----
wouldn’t have to call you b----, betcha.

chorus

I guess times gettin’ hard even harder for you
Cuz’ hey now, you got a baby on the way now
More money from the country and thanks to welfare you’re
about to get your hair done.
Got a dinner date. Can’t be late trick or treat, sweet thang, got anotha trick to meet.
The way he did it, it was smooth plottin’ gamin’ you
So baby, peep the rules.
Wonder Why They Call You B---- (continued)

I shoulda seen it in the first case, the worst case
I shoulda never called you back in the first place.
I remember back in high school baby you was fast.
Straight sex and barely move your a--
But now things change cuz you don’t look the same
let the ghetto get the best of you
baby, that’s a shame
Caught H-I-V and now you ‘bout to be deceased and finally
be in peace.
So where your n----- at now?
‘Cuz everybody left, they stepped and left you on your own
See I loved you like a sister, but you died too quick
And that’s why I called you b----, betcha.
chorus
Outro (dialogue)
Dear Ms. Delores Tucker
keep stressin’ me
f----- with a m----- f------ mind
I figured, you wanted to know
you know
Wonder Why They Call You B---- (continued)

why we call them hos b------

and maybe this might help you understand

it ain't personal

strictly business baby

strictly business

So I wonder

chorus

Against All Odds

by Tupac Shakur

Chorus:

I'm hopin' you m----- f------ know

This be the realist s--- I ever wrote

Against All Odds, up in the studio gettin' blowed

To the truest s--- I ever spoke

21 gun salute, dressed in fatigue, black jeans and boots

Disappeared in the crap, all you seen was the troops
Against All Odds (continued)

This little n---- named Nas thinks he live like me

Talkin’ bout how he left the hospital took five liek me

You living fantasies, n---- I reject your deposit

We shhok Dre punk a-- now he out of the closet

Mobb Deep wonder why n---- blowed them out

Next time grown folks talk, n---- close your mouths

Peep me, I take this s---- deeply

I see too many real playas fall to let these b---- n---- beat me

Puffy, let’s be honest you a punk

or you gonna see me with gloves

Remember that s---- you said in Vibe about being a Thug

You can tell the people down with you whatever you want

But, you and I know what’s going on

Payback I knew you n---- from way back

Witness me strapped with macs knew I wouldn’t play that

All you old rappers trying to advance

It’s all over now, take it like a man

N---- looking like, Larry Holmes flabby and s----

Trying to playa hate on my s----, you eat a fat d---
Against All Odds (continued)

Let it be known this is how you made me
Love it how I got you n---- going crazy, against all odds

chorus (2 times)

I heard he was light-skinned stocky with a Haitian accent
Jewelry, fast cars and known for flashing (what’s his name)
Listen while I take you back and lace this rap
A real live tale, about a snitch named Haitian Jack
Knew he was working for the feds, same crime different trail
N----- picture what he said, and did I mention
Promised a payback, Jimmy Henchmen, in due time
I knew you b---- n----- was listening, The World is Mine
Set me Up, wet me up, n----- stuck me up
Heard the guns bust, but you never shut me up
Touch one of mine on everything I own
I’ll destroy everything you touch, play the game n----
All out warfare, an eye for an eye
Last words to a b---- n-----, why you lie?
Against All Odds (continued)

Now you gotta watch your back n----, watch your front
Here we come gunshots to deck, now you stuck
F--- the rap game n---- this M.O.B
So believe me, we enemies, I go Against All Odds

chorus (2 times)

Puffy gettin' robbed like a b----, to hide the fact that
He did some s--- he shouldn't have did
So we ride em for that
And that n---- that was down for me
Restin' dead, switch sides
Guess his new friends want him dead
Probably murdered for that s--- I said
I bring the real, be a legend or even the dead
Lord listen to me
God don't like ugly It Was Written
Hey Nas your whole damn style is bitten
You heard my melody, read about my life in the papers
All my run-in with authorities, felonious capers
Against All Odds (continued)

Now you want to live my life, so what’s the deal

N----- that don’t ride right

You’ve seen too many movies

Load ‘em up against the wall, close his eyes

Since you lie, you die, goodbye

Let the real life n----- hear the truth from me

What would you do if you was me (n----- Against All Odds)

chorus (2 times)

Against All Odds

Hit ‘Em Up

by Tupac Shakur and The Outlawz

(Tupac dialogue) So I F----- your b----- I leave you

You fat m----- f----- (Take Money)

West Side, Bad Boy Killers (Take Money)

You know who the realest is

N----- we bring it to (Take Money)

Ha Ha that’s alright!
Hit 'Em Up (continued)

First off f--- your b----
And the click you claim
West Side when we ride
Come equipped with game
You claim to be a player but I f---- your wife
We bust on Bad Boys
N----- F--- for Life
Plus Puffy tryin' to see me weak
Hearts I rip
Biggie Smalls and Junior Mafia some mark ass b------
We keep on coming, while we running for yah jewels
Steady gunning, keep on busting at them fools
You know the rules
Little Caesar go ask your homie how I’ll leave yah
Cut your young a--- up in pieces, now be deceased
Little Kim, don’t f--- with real a-- G’s, quick to snatch
your ugly a-- off the streets so f--- peace.
I’ll let them n----- know it’s on for life
Don’t let the west side ride the night. (Ha! Ha!)
Hit 'Em Up (continued)

Bad Boys murdered on wax and kill, f--- with me and get your caps peeled. You know see.

chorus:
Grab your glocks when you see Tupac
Call the cops when you see Tupac, uhh.
Who shot me, but you punks didn’t finish now, you 'boot to feel the wrath of a menace, N---- I hit 'em up!
Tupac (dialogue)
You m----- f------ know what time it is
I don’t know why I’m even on this track
Y’all n----- ain’t even on my level
I’m going to let my little homies ride on yah.

(1st Outlaw)
B----made a-- Bad Boy b------
(ahhh yo, yo hold the f--- up)
Get out the way yo
Get out the way yo
Biggie Smalls just dropped, little move pass the mac.
Hit 'Em Up (continued)

And let me hit 'em in his back.
Frank White needs to get spanked right
For setting up traps
Little accident murderers, and I ain't never heard of yah.
Spank the shank, your whole style I gank
Guard your rank, 'cause I'm a slam your ass in a pang.
Puffy weaker than a f----- block
I'm runnin' through the n----
And I'm smoking Junior Mafia in front of yah n----
With the ready power tucked in my Guess
Under my Eddie Bauer your clout pretty sour.
I push packages every hour, I Hit 'em Up!!!

chorus

(Tupac)

Peep how we do it, keep it real.
It's penitentiary steel this ain't no freestyle battle; all you n----- get killed.
With your mouths open, tryin' to come up off of me.
Hit 'Em Up (continued)

You and the clouds hoping, smokin' dope it's like a Sherman
N---- think they learned to fly, but you deserve to die
talking about Getting Money, but it's funny to me.
All you n----- living bummy while you f----- with me?
I'm a self-made millionaire thug-livin' out of prison,
pistols in th air (Air, Ha! Ha!)
Biggie remember when I used to let you sleep on the couch
and beg the bitch to let you sleep in the house.
Now it's all about Versace, you copied my style, five shots
couldn't have dropped me I took it and smiled.
Now I'm back to set the record straight with my A-K, I'm
still the thug that you loved to hate m----- f----- I'll
hit 'em up!!

(2nd Outlaw)
I'm from NW New Jers, where plenty of murders occur.
No points to come, we bring drama to you herbs
Now check the scenario Little Ceas', I'll bring you fake
G's to yah knees copin' pleas like these(???)

Hit 'Em Up (continued)
Little Kim is yah coked up or doped up, get your little Junior Whopper click smoked up.
What the f---? Is you stupid? I take money crash and smash through Brooklyn.
With my click looting, shooting, and polluting your block with fifteen shots cocked your glock to your knot Outlaw Mafia click moving up another notch And your (Pop Star Pops?) and get dropped and mopped And all your fake a-- east coast props brainstormed and locked.
You’s a B-writer, Pac-style taker, I’ll tell you to your face you ain’t nothing but a faker
So fill the Alize’ with a chaser, ‘bout to get murdered for the paper, E.D.I Mean post the scene of the caper Like a loc, with Little Ceas’ in a choke(Uhh) Toting smoke, we ain’t no m----- f------ joke Thug Life, n----- better be known
Be approaching in the wide open gun-smoking, no need for hoping.

*Hit ‘Em Up (continued)*
It's a battle lost, I got 'em crossed as soon as the funk is boping off, N---- I Hit 'Em Up!!

Tupac (dialogue)
Now tell me who won. I see them; they run. Ha! Ha! They don't wanna see us. Whole Junior Mafia click dressing up to be us. How the f--- they gonna be the Mob? When we always out on a job. We millionaires. Killing ain't fair. But somebody gotta do it. Oh yeah, Mobb Deep, uh, you wanna f--- with us? You little a-- m----- f-------. Don't one of you n---- got sickle cell or something? You f----- with me n----? You f--- around and catch a seizure or a heart attack. You better back the f--- up, before you get smacked the f--- up. This is how we do it on our side. Any of you n----- from New York that want to bring it, Bring it. But we ain't singing. We bringing drama. F--- you and your f------ mama. We gonna kill all you m---- f------. Now when I came out, I told you it was just about Biggie. Then everybody had to open their mouth with a m--- f------ opinion. Well, this is how we goin' to do this:
Hit 'Em Up (continued)

F--- Mobb Deep, F--- Biggie, F--- Bad Boy as a staff, record label, and as a m----- f----- crew. And if you want to be down with Bad Boy, then f--- you too. Chino XL, f--- you too. All you m----- f------, f--- you too. (Take Money, Take Money) All of you m----- f------, f--- you, die slow m----- f------. My fo' fo' make sure yo' kids don't grow. You m----- f------ can't be us or see us. We m----- f------' Thug Life riders. West Side 'til we die. Out here in California, n----. We warned ya'. We'll bomb on you m----- f------. We do our job. You think you the mob, n----, we the m----- f------ mob. Ain't nothin' but killers and real n----. All you m----- f------ feel us. Our s--- goes triple and quadruple. You n----- laugh 'cause our staff got guns under they m----- f----- belts. You know how it is and we drop records they felt. You n----- can't feel it. We the realest. F--- 'em. We Bad Boy Killers.
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