



TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

« Literatura y otras artes: Hip Hop, Eminem and his multiple identities »

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Summaries and key words

Summary

Besides the evil self Eminem shows in many of his songs, there is a personal side in him which may remain practically unknown. Therefore, in this work we propose an analysis of these different selves, preceded by a description of the 4 elements which conform this urban culture, what we consider the key events in hip-hop history and a tour over the main countries and its MCs to detail their relevance.

Key words

Hip-hop, rap, Eminem, identity, race.

Resumen

Además del lado perverso que muestra Eminem en muchas de sus canciones, también existe un lado personal en él que queda prácticamente desconocido. Por ello, nosotros en este trabajo proponemos un análisis de estos distintos “yo”, precedido por la descripción de los cuatro elementos que componen esta tribu urbana, los que consideramos los eventos clave en la historia del hip-hop y un panorama de los principales países y sus MCs para detallar su importancia.

Palabras clave

Hip-hop, rap, Eminem, identidad, raza.

INTRODUCTION

There are a few reasons that encouraged me to pick Eminem and the urban culture hip-hop embraces as the topic of this final work.

It all began when I talked to my future tutor one semester before the first paragraph of this was even written. I had chosen to focus on literature, but above all in “other arts”, as one of his proposals said. We immediately went to the world of music, discarding all the other possible arts, probably because music is something I listen to everyday and I like. He told me he was keen on Opera, that he would be glad to help me if I chose that option, but it is not a type of music I feel comfortable with. On the other hand, I said rap is the music I like the most, and he said we could work on that if I finally decided to do it, and we got on with it. I must confess I did not expect that answer, because I thought there was not material to work with and I did not know how to manage it initially.

Unfortunately, I lacked time enough to work properly on it, because I had a few subjects to carry forward and what is more important, another final work for the French degree at the same time. So the first reason was already there: I love rap music since I was a kid, so I was delighted to work on something of what I have knowledge and enjoy working with.

I thought it would be something original, because I did not hope to find articles or books with exhaustive analysis about rap and Eminem. In fact there were a few, more than what I thought we would be able to find. However, not many of them deal exclusively with the multiple identities of Eminem, the core of this work. Then I thought this kind of project would be something nobody of my class had imagined to talk about, and I went straight to fill that gap.

In addition, while I was working on it, I found out that there was too much information about hip-hop out there, and discovered some events within the story of it that I was ignorant of. I also got to know Marshall Mathers (Eminem) better than at the beginning, and the articles I have worked with have made me see things in a different way. I must admit that the fact that my tutor knew next to nothing about this topic motivated me a bit more, because in my work for the French degree I chose a famous author from French literature, and my other tutor could guide me more. It exemplifies another of the reasons that made me choose this topic: not many people in our society know how hip-hop began, or they do not like this kind of music, as it was the case of my tutor. I thought it would be a great idea to show rap is not a group of young people who behave in a bad way against the system and insult all the time. There is another side

of rap which is dedicated to show the most personal side of rappers, more calm and with messages hidden in their lyrics put there to make people think. However, the majority of the people tend to think rap cannot have a nice side, and that its songs can instil even more than commercial songs we are all forced to listen to on the radio every single day.

The following lines shape a work centred on hip-hop, but more precisely on rap music and the multiple identities of the rapper considered as the best of all times: Eminem. The first part of this work is key to distinguish rap from hip-hop; many people tend to think they are synonyms, but in fact they are not. Once we see the elements which hip-hop incorporates we are able to notice the huge difference. Later on we find the historical context, which helps to understand the evolution of hip-hop throughout the years. Right afterwards comes the part of the work which connects history with present of rap, which includes the most famous rappers of all times in some countries and brings to light recent rappers who give this project a contemporary touch. Finally, the rapper this work is focused on: some key details of Eminem's life and the three different sides he shows depending on the situation, the critical analysis.

In order to do it, we have worked along with some web pages to highlight the most important phases of hip-hop, and for the critical analysis of the personalities shown by Marshall Mathers, we have taken some ideas from the articles mentioned at the end of this document. These different parts have required some skills from us: discern the most important events in history from the rest, clarity at distinguishing the 4 elements of hip-hop for a better comprehension of all of them and make a real approach to rap and its present.

1. HIP HOP

1.1. *The 4 elements*

Nowadays, the most of the people who are not really inside the world of this artistic movement tend to think that these two terms (hip-hop and rap) are synonyms, that they are the same. However, despite of the fact that this way of thinking is too spread all over the world, it is not true. In order to clarify this debate and answer all the possible questions which may arise, it is almost indispensable to know the different skills which shape the urban culture that hip-hop represents:

- Breakdance. It is a kind of street dance which b-boys perform at the same time they listen to the music, trying to make each move following the rhythm of it. It is usual that the whole body is on the air while just the head or the hands are touching the ground, as the only support. We find four main moves within this technique; ‘top rock’, ‘footwork’, ‘power moves’ and ‘freeze moves’, being the last one the movement when one of the performers stays motionless, keeping the pose in order to get the applause of the spectators.
- Graffiti. In our society we are used to see this nice art of bedecking the walls of the cities as something dirty. It is due to the way graffiti is employed today, as loads of paint gathered at the same point just with the idea of staining the doors of the shops or the walls of a school. Nevertheless, when the spray is on the hands of expert painters which know what they are doing and who want to improve the conditions of the surface they are spraying on, the ending result is a lovely drawing which is immediately admired by people who pass by and cannot avoid gazing at it.
- The ‘DJ’/’deejay’ (also known as ‘disc jockey’). The person in charge of the music, of the scratch. This music is usually composed by him or her by making use of different beats taken from different fragments of existent songs or more even more commonly, new sounds and mixes that have come to the mind of the DJ while composing. This background music is going to go along the voice of the MC.

- The 'MC'/'emcee' (also known as the 'Master of Ceremonies'). Here is where the main element of rap comes into place. The rap is a mix of lyrics which are sung by the MC, but mostly spoken instead of the usual singers which pay more attention to the rhythm than to what is said within those lyrics. He or her tries to transmit a message to the person listening to the song, and wants to be remembered thanks to that message instead of the musical notes he or she is able to reach with the voice.

It is after this explanation of what hip-hop is when we would be able to talk about it using the appropriate term, without mistaking both of them, rap and hip-hop. Now it remains clear that hip-hop englobes many more things than just rapping, which is one of the many aspects it includes, and that besides they are never synonyms. These '4 elements' which give shape to hip-hop will be present in the lives of its performers, and rappers will make reference to them in many of their songs, talking about what is necessary to be considered a real rapper.

In addition, battles between performers of any of these four skills will be the core of this art, the hip-hop. It is thanks to them that they learn from the movements of other b-boys or the messages transmitted in songs by other rappers and improve step by step. It is also a way to show who is better, and find a winner after the whole battle. In rap, the skill this work is focused in, the name they have chosen for these singing fights is "cockfight". Therefore, when they all have rapped, the winner is considered the cock boss.

As a continuation of what I have already told about the distinction of the different skills which shape the culture of hip-hop, now I will show the evolution of it throughout history, something which will be quite helpful in order to get a better understanding of rap, the element we care the most in this work.

1.2. Historical background

The term “hip-hop” was first used by Afrika Bambaataa in order to talk about a certain culture, despite of the fact that it has been used for many different things at the beginning. In other cases, this two short words were spoken by some rappers and DJs when they were in front of the microphone. It was something quite useful to get into the rhythm of hip-hop, marking the beats of the background music, in order to sing co-ordinated to it. At the same time, the term “hip-hop” is also related to the army of the United States; it is known that Keith ‘Cowboy’ Wiggins, an ancient rapper, used it to make fun of his friend when he enrolled the army. As you can see, this term shows multiple uses, but all of them make sense after regarding the story which accompanies them.

All over the years, hip-hop has gone through three different stages. Even before this art came to have a name people could be identified with, they loved this way of living because they were sure they were different to the rest of the people and that they liked it.

The first pronounced stage was called “pre-Old School”. It began right at the end of the 1940s, and it is considered to finish around 1972-1973, when “Eminem”, the rapper this work will analyse more closely, was born. People who began to build this urban culture were some sort of rebels, who faced the system because they did not agree with its ideals. Something quite characteristic of people belonging to this culture is that they wear clothes two or three sizes bigger than clothes which would fit them properly; today people have the choice to buy this type of clothes directly, but in those years hip-hop lovers did not have a chance to choose: they were so poor that they had to wear the clothes of a member of their families who was older than them. That is the reason why they wore loose clothes, and not because they preferred to be more comfortable with bigger trousers or t-shirts which reached their knees.

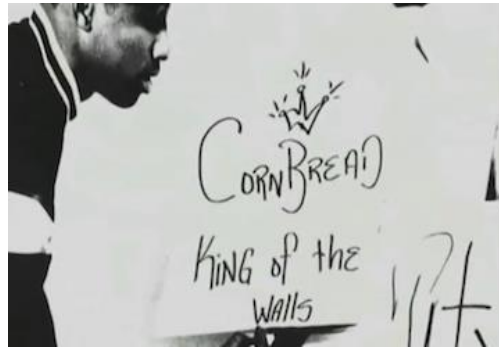
Before the 1950s began, the art of graffiti came to know the object which would shake the painting world up, the straight responsible of the decoration of the walls of the decade: the spray can. Bonnie Seymour gave her husband the idea to make the modern spray can, but precisely the rights of women were not something which was taken into account in those years. That is the reason why Edward is remembered as the inventor of the aluminium spray can, the first colour of the graffiti. However, the cans which are used to paint graffiti we see nowadays are quite different to those cans of the 1900s: at the beginning, they were quite heavy to be

carried from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and we had to wait a few years of development of this little toy in order to witness the appearance of the spray can we use today. The bad reputation of these cans comes from the visual disruption it causes in fronts of buildings, but also because of the gas it needs to work, which is the responsible of the ongoing destruction of the earth's ozone layer.

The neighbourhood of Bronx is quite famous because of the enormous amount of fights between people living there which most of times end with the death of some of them. It is the area which focuses the attention of hip-hop lovers and the rest of the American world in the following ten years, around the 1960s. Progressively, it begins to take the shape it has in the present, immersed within a period of decadence which began right afterwards the building of the dual carriageway which crosses it. Unemployed black people, the race which is considered the real pioneers of the hip-hop culture, began to organize parties in which big speakers and good music were the main attraction. These parties received the name of "block parties".



1967 is the year in which Cornbread becomes the first writer of graffiti, printing his tags over the walls of the different neighbourhoods. Politics, society and the war of Vietnam were some of the topics the writers wanted to make people think about when they wrote some messages on the walls. They wanted to inspire them not to stay motionless and encourage society to fight against the system.



Finally, one year later, the few white people who were still living in the Bronx definitely decided to leave the neighbourhood once an enormous block was built. The place remained then full of gangs of Afro-American and Puerto Rican people, a mixture more similar to what it is today.

1969 was another great year for hip-hop, and this is due to the birth of breakdance. The moves of the performers of this particular dance were inspired in the song “Get on the Good Foot” by James Brown. The rhythm of this song was very fast and marked, and as a consequence, the moves of Brown were quite quick, moving his legs following the beats of the music. Next year turned into an important one for the DJs, with “The Last Poets” as a great example of funk music together with Brown and his song “The Big Payback”.



It was two years before the beginning of the “Old School” phase when graffiti recovers a certain importance, as the New York underground gets loaded in paint with the tags of the different graffiti artists, making easier the appearance of the “logo”. Step by steps girls started to show some interest on it and sprayed paint all over the trains, but nothing similar to the big

amount of graffiti “Lee 163” achieved to tag in a short period of time. The first crew came to light (“Writers Corner 188”) and a disc jockey called “DJ Hollywood” spread his hits over Manhattan, with the acceptance of the people going out at nights to certain pubs as the clear evidence that hip-hop style was attracting more followers.



In 1973 starts a period which will last six long years (the above mentioned “Old School”) and will bring one of the most successful developments for hip-hop, graffiti the most. Such was the case that quality began to be seen as a property more important than quantity, and graffiti artists uphold this by taking care of their works as they had never done before. Probably the most important for this work is the fact that “DJ Kool Herc”, a Jamaican man, invents rap music, making use of the parts of the songs in which there were no lyrics and creating the concept of the “breakbeat”. People used to go to the parties of this famous DJ in order to listen to good music, but some of them also danced while the music was being played. This is the point in history when breakdance gives a name to these people dancing hip-hop, and the DJ decides to call them “B-boy” and “B-girl”. However, other of the four elements which shape hip-hop, MCs, were not real singers yet; their only function was to introduce DJs as Kool Herc, who received the applauses and the noises of the audience. A few months later the term “hip-hop” was established, with the several possible meanings I have mentioned at the beginning of this point, and the first magazines which talked just about this urban culture were being sold.



Principles which had been set so far in USA's history took a 180-degree spin right afterwards the war of Vietnam. The incredible amount of soldiers who died shocked society and people started to think in a different way, with freedom as flagship. At the same time, one of the techniques which are more used by DJs, "scratching", was improved and reached a level quite similar to nowadays. It consists in stopping the discs with one or more fingers, and moving it up or down, playing with the characteristic sound it makes, adding new sounds to the world of hip-hop. It is something which we see as something quite common but in fact it was discovered by chance. On the other hand, we attend to the first time for hip-hop to listen to two songs at the same time, something which did not sound weird, but something new and nice. These were the most famous technique of those times, which together with some others as "remixing" or "looping" contributed to elaborate a better background music for the moment when MCs sang on stage. The figure of MCs was seen as fashionable and step by step more "Masters of Ceremonies" came into the universe of hip-hop.

Nevertheless, not everything was going to be good for hip-hop; Graffiti was the best example of it: its golden age was brought to an end because quantity became again more important than quality, saying goodbye to the important change in its philosophy just two years before. The situation for graffiti artists was so tricky that new laws against them allowed to take these people to jail. Definitely, competitiveness between them was not very well expressed, and their image turned against them. "In" and "Cap" were the two people who betrayed the essence of graffiti the most.



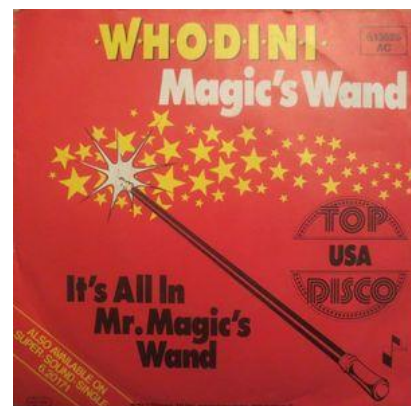


1976 remains in hip-hop history as the year in which TV decided to talk about it and show the result of graffiti on trains. This way hip-hop became more popular, and despite of the fact that a part of the population still saw graffiti as something dirty and annoying, hip-hop performers achieved some part of the country looked at them as artists, something real followers of graffiti yearned for. Shortly after this happened, some famous crews saw the light; “Rock Steady”, composed of breakdance performers in the Bronx, who even got some moves quite similar to those of Michael Jackson; “Crash Crew”, an MC crew from Harlem, a place inhabited by lots of Afro-American people. Finally, the last year of what is considered “Old School” age for not so many people as the next period, the fame of DJs came to an end while MCs were becoming more and more popular every day. The first icon for MCs all over the world is called “Melle Mel”, next to the group “The Furious Five”. Right in the same year this happened, the first recording contract was then signed by a rapper called “Kurtis”, a fact which indicated even with more clarity the way the MCs were winning back lost ground years before. For their part, graffiti artists could not believe how their figure got an even worse perception from population: the authorities continued setting some new rules up in order to go against them without having legal problems. It was so strong this negative feeling against graffiti and its performers that crack, a quite dangerous drug, was related to them, at the same time as deaths and the bad atmosphere it provoked. In addition, the discovery of this heavy drug affected not only the world of graffiti, but the entire hip-hop community.

We arrive now at the beginning of the second part of the second stage of the three different existing ones I mentioned at the start of this point: the “Old School” period, but this time for the majorities, which is considered the real one in contrast to the “Old School” for minorities years before. It will last from 1979 to 1984, some years in which hip-hop got to spread much more than so far thanks to, between some other elements, the recordings which took rap out from ghettos to big cities. In fact, it is right in 1979 when “King Tim III” records the first rap single in history. New York and the neighbourhood of Bronx are worldwide set as the places in which hip-hop (and therefore rap) are born thanks to the Afro-American influence,

but radio and TV are well used by hip-hop members as Tim to successfully reach minds and hearts from other places, and make the amount of followers of this urban tribe increase. The bases of hip-hop are then established all over the world, but it still took a while to see a rap similar to the music we have today, because the pieces of this age were closer to funk and other related styles than to modern rap.

Not too much time later, the single “The Breaks” by Kurtis Blow achieves the first gold record within hip-hop community, as “speed-rapping” was born from the hand of “Treacherous Three”, two more evidences of the undeniable success of hip-hop and rap globally. When 1981 comes, video adverts help to expand a good perception of hip-hop in order to try to put harmful influences to one side for the moment. The group known as “Magic’s Wand” or the collaboration of the above mentioned famous Kurtis Blow together with the company “Sprite” are two clear examples of this process of spread.



“Wildstyle” will take the most of video becoming the first film in Hollywood to talk about this style, hip-hop culture. If the war of Vietnam (1955-1975) was one of the first and strongest stimulus which encouraged hip-hop performers to write lyrics with a more philosophical content, 1982 was put in place as the year when this became something constant. From that moment on, the messages which rap songs contained were brought to the foreground, and the establishment of a new kind of rap, based on a way of complaint, saw the light. It is quite curious that “The Message”, a single by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, represents a perfect example of a song with those characteristics, as if the name had been chosen on purpose to stress the importance of what is said, of the message. Suburbs (Bronx among others) were the place where the most of the poor people belonging to the hip-hop world were born, and few songs are dedicated to them, as the beginning of a life full of dangers and risks

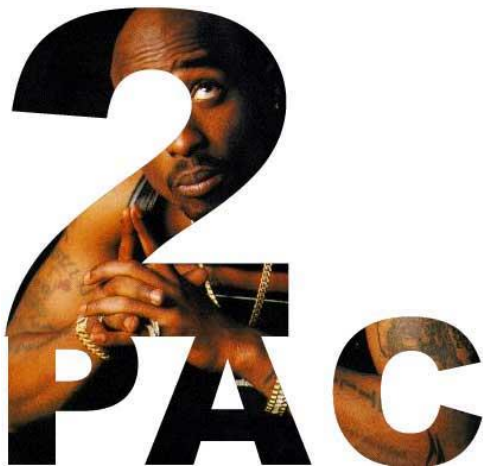
that with a huge effort may be turned into success. In the end of this second phase of hip-hop history, one of the most famous and influential crews that rap community has seen enters into play: “Beastie Boys”.



They will forget in a way the mixture of musical genres as punk or jazz which had shaped hip-hop so far in order to focus on what they would consider real rap from then on, despite of the fact that they began playing country and hardcore punk in their early phase. “Licensed to III” was the first album full of rap music they published three years later, setting the pace for the following groups of singers which decided to express their feelings through rap. We will talk a bit more about them in the next block of this work.

The start of the third and last stage for hip-hop seems intermingled with the ending of the second one. The end of “Old School” (for majorities) stage comes with the hand of the last “School Party” and the recording of a single which incorporated the songs “Sucker MCs” and “It’s Like That”, giving us a clue of the next generation of rappers. At the same time, the “New School” or “Golden age” of hip-hop gets under way in 1984, as we meet the first performers of “beatbox”, a way of making sounds quite similar to those made by real instruments but this time just with the mouth.

We should not forget to mention the presence of the crew “Run D.M.C” in those years, a group of rappers comprised by Jason Mizell, Darryl McDaniels and Joseph Simmons. These groups of hip-hop must be named because they really contributed into the change of rap society and enjoy an enormous importance; for example, Run DMC goes down in history by being the first crew to sign an agreement with a brand of clothes so distinguished as Adidas. We will see how sports and clothes will also receive the influence of rap in our days, with basketball and ECKO as two obvious examples of it respectively, or the first brand of clothes closely related to hip-hop culture, “FUBU”. This crew prolongs its success in time thanks to the publication of “Walk this Way” or “Raising Hell”, an album which will award it the first platinum disc for hip-hop artists. The Grammy awards decide to create a new category for hip-hop and they finally include them in 1989, the same year when the New York underground remains at last without the stains of evil graffitis which had covered them for years. The strong laws the government imposed to its performers more than ten years ago were exorbitant, but they proved to be effective.



Another icon of hip-hop and rap at the same level as the Beastie Boys or Run D.M.C arrived in 1991: Tupac Shakur (“2Pac”). He was an American rapper who stands out thanks to the quantity of discs he sold all over the world apart from the quality of his lyrics, which talk about violence and poverty in neighbourhoods, explicitly present in East Harlem, where he was born. He was also involuntarily responsible of the tensions between people from the East and those from West, probably the biggest fight between two different neighbourhoods in American’s history. Unfortunately, he will die just five years later after being shot five times while he was at the recording studio.



The art of graffiti recovers its good days, thanks to the emergence of “Banksy” between 1992 and 1994, a good graffiti artist who remains anonymous. He will mainly spray in England, and his works will deal with satirical designs about moral, politics and different races. These graffitis will fit into the new tendency in rap to complain about the abuse of power by politicians and high office people.

The enumeration of key figures for hip-hop does not stop there, and these years rap community will celebrate some hits by “Snoop Dog” as “Doggystyle”. It will reach the n°1 for Billboard, an American magazine written by people who specialise in hip-hop and rap. However, hip-hop community is left with mixed feelings with the consecutive deaths of “2Pac” and “Biggie”, two events which will bring a bittersweet taste to hip-hop society. This loop of ups and downs goes on with the huge success reaped by a young Marshall Bruce Mathers III, mostly known as “Eminem”, the rapper this work is based on. He would achieve to become acclaimed in 1999 by Aftermath Entertainment, a large company able of taking many rappers to stardom.

Already in the twenty-first century, Eminem continues growing within rap atmosphere and brings back the first Oscar award for hip-hop thanks to “8 Mile”, a film based on the suburbs close to Detroit, quite related to his life and youth. Sorrowfully, one of the members of “Run- MC”, the group of the 1980s, dies practically at the same time Eminem flirts with fame. It was the DJ “Jam-Master Jay” who died murdered by a shot in his head, again in a recording studio. From then on, rap music gets to spread as it had never done before. 2005 is the year in which hip-hop and rap peak, and right afterwards they witness a big decline which almost takes them to disappearance. Nevertheless, this situation does not last too many years and around 2008 it takes a 180-degree spin with a new lot of singers, as Rihanna or Lil Wayne, who help “old” rappers to enjoy a second life. They do not perform a 100% classic rap, there is no doubt about that, but anyhow they keep hip-hop alive till our days. Now the conflict deals with how rap has become something too commercial and has forgotten its roots, due to the fact that many people think that what is important now is to make money, and closeness which characterised rap music at the beginning is left aside.



This summary about hip-hop history is essential in order to understand rap, one of its branches and the core art of this work. On the other hand, it is also important to know its scenery all over the world. According to fulfil that gap, we have decided to talk about it in the next block.

1.3. Worldwide rap

Rap music has lots of representatives on the earth, MCs together with DJs. We will try to talk about the most famous rappers who are seen as icons in their countries. For the elaboration of this sort of list, we have decided to pick some of the main countries of Europe and to finish with the place where everything was born, the United States of America, the centre of rap.

- Germany: “Bushido”, also known as “Sonny Black”, is a German rapper who has decided to rap about what most of rappers consider to be the base of hip-hop essence, the lower classes. He also adds to the lyrics of his songs the frequent conflicts which take place in the suburbs, probably because he grew up in a tricky neighbourhood there in Berlin. Someone similar to him in terms of fame would be the crew “Die Fantastischen Vier”, shaped by “Smudo”, “And.Ypsilon”, “Thomas D” and “Dee Jot Hausmarke”. They were one of the first groups of rap music to sing in their own language. Last two constituents of this list are rappers who are quite related to present days, but they do it in a different way. The first one is “Matthias”, who is just 21 years old and belongs to the crew known as “Meth-U”. He has composed a song talking about the difficult situation of Ukraine, highlighting painful truths which tend to lay hidden deep underground.¹ On the other hand, the last rapper we will talk about from Germany will be “Jan Vandrey”. We are going to underline the fact that he has become famous thanks to the well-known platform of YouTube. The song he has written and more people know is “Rap Jeden Tag”, a title which we could approximately translate as “rap every day”. He may not be as famous as other rappers who have achieved millions of followers, but step by step he is being known by youth, and is one of the rappers who has shown a way to become popular with something everybody utilizes every single day, as it is internet.

¹ *Un rapero alemán 'incendia' Internet con una canción de apoyo a Donbass: ¿qué hay detrás de ella?*
<http://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/170358-rapero-aleman-apoyo-donbass>

- Italy: Lorenzo Cherubini, known as “Jovanotti”, is a singer who does not belong to any style in particular. However, he is one of the forefathers of hip-hop and rap in his country. He has also composed some songs which show pop and funk traits, the evidence he has contributed in the development of hip-hop history but that at the same time, he has not dedicated his whole life to just one musical style. If we had to choose two or three 24/7 Italian rappers, some names which would easily come to our minds would be “Caparezza”, “Joe Cassano” or “Fabri Fibra”.

- France: in this case, we have chosen France to exemplify a different kind of rappers. “Booba” is the artistic name for Elie Yaffa, a French rapper, and “Revolution Urbaine” the name of a young crew whose members are all about 19 years old and rap about Marseille between other things. However, what we are going to stress with this country is the female side of rap. Keny Arkana is a 32 years old woman who decided to rap when she was in the neighbourhood. She is related to Argentina, but nevertheless she raps in French and grew up in Marseille. She is one of those rappers who have decided to complain about the social system and show civil disobedience. “La rage” or “Nettoyage au Kärcher” are two titles of songs she has participated in, which lead her to the hate towards politics and the abuses of power, guidelines followed by first crews of rappers in hip-hop history.

- United Kingdom: the other country along with the astonishing USA inhabited by English speakers to have rappers who compose lyrics in the old language of Shakespeare. We are not going to find rappers with a tremendous international recognition in England, except one or two recent examples. “Young MC”, whose real name is Marvin Young, won a Grammy thanks to what was considered the best rap song, “Bust a Move”. Alternatively, a crew called “Roll Deep” is known because of the innovation in the world of rap with the usage of an “electronic rap”. Finally, one example much more recent and famous would be that of Patrick Chukwuemeka Okogwu Jr. People tend to know him as Tinie Tempah, a 26 years old rapper who has to his credit songs as “Till I’m Gone”, “Children of the Sun” or “Written in the Stars”, used in WrestleMania XXVII. This song saw the light in 2010 as his third single, and remains as the most sold since then.

- Spain: the country of paella and siesta has more than a word to say in terms of performers of rap music. To begin with, it is 100% compulsory to highlight the figure of “Nach (Scratch)”, Ignacio Fornés Olmo as his real name. This rapper from Alicante is considered the best Spanish rapper of all times, since he became to be renowned with “D.E.P” (1994) or “Trucos” (1997) till nowadays, thanks to his last album “A través de mí” (2015). His lyrics are quite close to what we study at school as poetry and literature, perhaps closer than compositions of the rest of writers of the country. In fact, “Los viajes inmóviles” (2014) is an album in which almost every song is read aloud, recited, practically as if Nach was merely reading poetry. He carries an incredible number of collaborations and tours on his back, due to the fact that he has won his worldwide recognition by himself fighting against all kinds of discriminations in his songs. His song “Manifiesto”, which comes right after “Anochece” as bonus track, shows an overall picture of his lyrics, related to the suburbs I mentioned before by naming his album “Un día en suburbia”(2008):

[...] “mientras los niños ricos viajarán en su burbuja, de lujo de arrogancia infalible, yo vengo de un lugar donde decían que triunfar era imposible” [...] “Nach otro juglar juzgando a juzgar al que juzga imposible” [...] “luchando contra el sistema que os corrompe” [...] “ganar dinero del sistema haciendo música contra el sistema”

Apart from him, there is a long list of rappers from different locations in Spain but with more or less the same level of admiration by the audience; “ZPU”, from Barcelona; “Juaninacka”, whose fathers are from Andalucía; “Zénit”, from Alcorcón; “Kase-O” and “El Chojin”, with names that do not fit them as Spaniards, one from Zaragoza and the other from Madrid despite of the fact that the colour of his skin does not help to think that; “ToteKing” and “Shotta”, two brothers from Sevilla; and two crews, “SFDK” and “Falsalarma”. Finally, we have included two cases which are interesting. The first one is the one of “Zarcort”, a rapper who as “Jan Vandrey” has become famous thanks to YouTube, and accompanies his songs with a video clip. Lastly, “La Mala Rodríguez”; similar to Keny Arkana in a way, mostly in the tone of voice. This female rapper stands out because of being a woman, taking into account that there are many more male rappers than female ones, but also because she mixes rap music with flamenco, showing with this her Andalusian roots.

- USA: last but not least, the biggest factory of English “Masters of Ceremonies” of the world. Beastie Boys were the crew to take the first steps towards hip-hop and rap, and today they are still considered the pioneers of this kind of urban culture and music. What’s more, their legacy is continued by lots of rappers with many followers in the present, who have made it possible for rap to become a trendy tendency. Tupac Shakur, Snoop Dogg, Ice Cube, Notorious Big, Lil Wayne, Jay-z or Wiz Khalifa are some of their names, with musical careers that any of the new MCs would dream with. We have left for the end of this group the two rappers who will guide us in the last part of this work, the critical analysis. Andre Romelle Young, better known as “Dr. Dre”, is the manager in charge of the progress of the careers of many idols of masses. Most of them are listed above, but some others are “50 Cent”, “Xzibit” or “Eazy-E”. He also raps and has published some albums, but this is not the side of his life he wants to undergo. In fact, the last rap performer we are going to mention here grew up in this complicated world thanks to his help, and that boy is none other than Eminem. The type of rap he sings is directly related to things which have happened in his life, and next point of this work will try to clear some aspects of his life at the same time as discussing the way he became famous.

2. EMINEM

2.1. *Biographical key features*

- His real name is Marshall Bruce Mathers. He started to avoid that name in order to utilize “M&M”, playing with his own initials; later on, he changed it to “Eminem”. Occasionally, he brings an alter ego to light in some of his songs, a topic we will discuss later on.
- Eminem will perform different types of rap music through the various stages of his life. He will even sing pop music at some points, but the other 99% of his career will be fully dedicated to rap.
- His childhood was not the one he would have wished to enjoy when he was a kid: his father left him and his mother immediately when he was born, so they had to travel from neighbourhood to neighbourhood till they finished living in the suburbs of Detroit. It was there where he became popular thanks to his skills as a rapper, winning numerous battles of cockfights, something which gave him the hint he would not be good at studies. There is a song which talks about his father and his sudden disappearance, “When I’m gone” (2005).
- Marshall has always been surrounded by controversy. Some of his lyrics talk about murder, corpses, homosexual and race discrimination, alcohol or drugs. In fact, he had to compulsorily leave his career in 2005 because of abusing of an enormous amount of sleep medication. His song “Careful what you wish for” mentions the cancellation of his European tour and the high probabilities that it was the end of his career right before the extract in which he becomes to rap.
- He came back to rap in 2009, after confessing his addiction to pills and thanking everyone who had helped him, but highlighting the fact that personal will had been essential in his recovery.

2.2 Race and gender conflicts

Marshall Mathers did not have it easy to achieve success in the world of rap music. However, he found the way to do it, despite of the fact that his identity suffered different transformations at the beginning of his musical career.

This can be attributed, in part, to the emergence and success of white rapper Eminem, whose music not only self-consciously draws our attention to the conventions that govern authenticity and identity construction in rap, but who also had to renegotiate those self-same conventions in order to construct himself as a legitimate presence in a predominantly black culture. (Lee, 2008: 352)

He was not as acclaimed as he thought he would be after the release of his first album, so Eminem decided he had to do something in order to change this. He has officially confirmed that his biggest influences who encouraged him to start rapping were The Beastie Boys, Vanilla Ice, KRS-One, Tupac Shakur, Notorious Big, Cage, Dr. Dre, Kool G Rap and LL Cool J. Nevertheless, all of them unless the Beastie Boys and Vanilla Ice are black people and Eminem was not. Here comes the first important obstacle he would have to face, being totally aware of it: “It’s obvious to me that I sold double the records because I’m white. In my heart I truly believe I have a talent, but at the same time I’m not stupid.” (Dawkins, 2010: 467)

He began talking about personal experiences in his lyrics, as black Afro-American rappers from Bronx used to do. Still he took the decision to make of his whiteness something positive, but without remaining in one of these two sides: “He is outside of and rejected by both a larger middle-class American society and also by, with the exception of Dr. Dre, the elite black hip hop subculture.” (2008: 356) We may say that he took the most of each community and mixed it in order to work well with a bigger amount of people who really loved hip-hop, to be really “authentic”. Eminem comes to turn the bases of hip-hop and rap by the hand of a very commercial style, something which focus its aim in the amount of sales instead of what real rap deals with.

We are aware all the time he is a white man with a pale face and blonde hair, because he ensures we get to know this. He does not try to hide his whiteness in any case, as the most of rappers used to do. The only point when he has seen the colour of his skin as a trouble was “in the song ‘8 Mile’ when he laments over his whiteness as an obstacle to his initial entry into

the rap world” (2010: 468). In addition, Marshall expresses how the white audience in “White America” has to be treated as an equal. In fact, Eminem shows some interest in rap world at the same time the position of the races in the world is changing as they had never done before. Belonging to the culture of hip-hop meant to be cool, and black race started to see how white rappers emerged from anywhere in order to copy their style. He does not like the way people sometimes judge him, as he expresses it in “The Way I am”:

“To deal with these cocky Caucasians who think, I’m some wigger who just tries to be black, cause I talk with an accent, and grab on my balls, so they always keep askin’ the same fucking questions”

In the 1990s white people became to perform “black music”, an evidence of how everything was fast changing, and Eminem was one of those who took advantage of this switch.

Eminem has seen himself immersed in numerous conflicts. The media has gone against him lots of times, but he has always answered they do not have to take him so serious. Maybe he thinks he needs to create controversy to be a real rapper, as those rappers from suburbs who are all the time being followed by the police and related to drugs. However, I have brought here one anecdote to show he does not really think 100% the way he explains in his lyrics: when he was once going to receive a Grammy, members of a society which supported gay and lesbian rights started to jeer at him in the middle of the event, due to some tricky lyrics in his last songs about sexual preference. Eminem quickly calmed those people down by performing his song “Stan” along with Elton John on stage, and giving him a hug when they finished singing. The reason for this behaviour relies in the way Eminem sees them in terms of personality. He feels there cannot be any other “other” than him, as Marcia Alesan Dawkins comments in her consideration about this fact:

In addition, Eminem understands that his presence and popularity necessarily exclude other “hip-hop Others”. This is why he marginalizes homosexuals, celebrities, women, and other white men in his lyrics and business practices. (2010: 480)

In my opinion, Eminem has found a gap in rap and has discovered how to fill it in the best way, without hiding the race he represents in order to get maybe more benefits. Many people brand him as a commercial rapper, but I think he has decided from the very beginning what to rap about. It is partly true that lately he has gone through a phase in which pop music has knocked his door, and has made some songs with Rihanna that do not reflect his style, but he still achieves to add his own touch to any song.

2.3. Issues with identity: multiplicity of self

On the other hand and what is more important for this work, this character shows a multiple identity but in another sense. This time we are talking about the three different sides of his persona, the three parts of his “I”: “Marshall Mathers”, “Eminem” and the most controversial one, “The (Real) Slim Shady”. Each of them represents something distinct, a particular way of behaving towards his audience and the whole world.

On the one side, we find his most personal self, a mixture between “Marshall Mathers” and “Eminem”. While he wants to be known as “Eminem” in battle raps, he also shows some songs where lyrics have a ‘sweet’ tone, clearly more calm than hardcore rap he performed at the beginning of his career. A clear example of him showing some respect for people who are not himself remains in the song “Like Toy Soldiers”. He brought to the rap music world something based in the song “Toy Soldiers” by Martika: he was allowed to use the same musical base, he did not do it in a bad way, and gave it a similar title as a homage. The chorus almost says it all:

“Step by step, heart to heart,
Left right left, we all fall down
Step by step, heart to heart, left right left
We all fall down like toy soldiers
Bit by bit, torn apart, we never win
but the battle wages on for toy soldiers”

If Martika shows herself next to a drug addict in the video of her song, this time Eminem uses this song to talk about the gang warfare. It was something usual in the USA that a neighbourhood decided to fight against another neighbourhood from a different part of the country, in order to leave it clear they were superior to the others. However, these confrontations went too far, and we arrived to a point in which at least two or three members of these gangs died every day. Here is when Eminem feels a bit guilty of feeding this kind of fights, the East against the West and so on, and writes this song to try to soften the tension down:

“And even though the battle was won, I feel like we lost it” [...] “And I’m so caught in it I almost feel I’m the one who caused it, this ain’t what I’m in hip-hop for, it’s not why I got in it. That was never my object for someone to get killed, why would I wanna destroy something I help build. It wasn’t my intentions, my intentions was good, I went through my whole career without ever mentionin’”.

He suggests he would like the situation to change and that all was exactly as it was before all these people died. He sort of refreshes the past when everybody was at peace. The death of his best friend, Proof, encourages him even more to write something like this.

“There used to be a time when you could just say a rhyme and wouldn’t have to worry about one of your people dyin’, but now it’s elevated ‘cuz once you put someone’s kids in it. The shit gets escalated, it ain’t just words no more is it?” [...] “I’m not gonna let someone else’s coffin rest on my conscience.”

There are at least two other main songs that represent his most personal side in a nutshell.

When he went through a moment in life that he became addict to sleeping pills, it took him time to understand the situation in which he was immersed and how to get out of it. He dramatizes the end of an era and the beginning of another one, free of drugs, in song within the album of the same name, “Encore”. The song ends with Eminem shooting at the audience and saying “See you in hell, fuckers”, and right afterwards he shoots himself. With this, he wants to manifest an important change in his life, at the same time he resets the mind of his followers.

The other song is the one he sang with Elton John as I have said before, “Stan”. It deals with the story of a fan who writes lots of letters to his idol, and as he does not obtain a reply, he decides to commit suicide. His sensitive side comes to light, showing he has felt that way sometimes. In fact, “The way I am” is the song and the book he utilized to come back after this period of suffering. He proves he is able to leave, at least for a while, his selfishness and think about poverty, fame and the tension he had to face when he became so famous he could not believe it. In the video clip, we see him jumping from a high building as his method to go over all these tense moments and become someone new.

[...] “and it helps in itself to relieve all this tension dispensin’ these sentences getting’ this stress that’s been eatin’ me recently off of this chest. And I rest again peacefully” [...] “I’m so sick and tired of bein’ admired, that I wish, that I would just die or get fired.”

However, the chorus is again the one which shows in the best way his insights and the eternal debate there is in his mind with his different personalities fighting:

And I am whatever you say I am
If I wasn’t, then why would I say I am?
In the paper, the news, everyday I am
Radio won’t even play my jam
‘Cause I am whatever you say I am
If I wasn’t, then why would I say I am?
In the paper, the news everyday I am
I don’t know, it’s just the way I am

The other side of Eminem is made of something even more important than his personal thoughts, and takes the name of “The (Real) Slim Shady”. He set the name by himself, and reached a new level of fame after the low results he had obtained before he created this ‘alter ego’. This “Eminem’s Mr. Hyde” manifests the evil side of his self, and is in charge of the black humour, insulting famous icons we will discuss now and make a comedy of rap. In 1998 he showed “My name is” to the world, and in that song he talked about him as ‘Slim Shady’:

Hi! My name is... (What?) My name is... (Who?) My name is... (scratch) Slim Shady.
Hi! My name is... (Huh?) My name is... (What?) My name is... (scratch) Slim shady.
Hi! My name is... (What?) My name is... Excuse me!

In the video clip we see him as a teacher at the beginning, and right afterwards he appears lying in a chair wearing a straitjacket, something which already warns us he is out of mind. It seems he wants to leave quite clear he has multiple personalities, because there is a scene where we see 9 heads of Eminem at the same time. This added up to the point when we see him as a puppet, in a strip club or as if he were the president of USA comes to verify it is not Eminem who does it, but his mad side “Slim Shady”. Even the name of this character gives us more clues to think that way, as he defines himself as thin and difficult to catch.

It all continues in “The Real Slim Shady” (2000), where we see “a factory of Eminems”.

May I have your attention please, May I have your attention please

Will the real Slim Shady please stand up?

I repeat, will the real Slim Shady please stand up?

We’re gonna have a problem here...

Right at the beginning, we see a group of people with Eminem in the middle, but mysteriously they all look very similar to him. When the nurse calls “the real Slim Shady” and he does not answer is when the multiple self comes into play. This is strengthened later on by what seems an army of fake Eminems, lots of young boys who wear the same clothes as him and have the same hair colour. This represents a metaphor, we all have something of Eminem inside of us: “He admits that there’s a little Slim Shady in all of us, but only he can be the real Slim Shady” (2010: 470)

On the other hand, it may be just a mock to his audience, because he adds “All you other Slim Shadys are just imitating.” The doubt will remain there, but if we think about the statement he pronounced on TV about not taking him so serious, it may be just another joke of him.

The last example of the presence of the real Slim Shady in one of his songs takes place in “Just lose it” (2004). Here he makes fun of Michael Jackson, laughs at Santa and Paris Hilton and takes part of a black people cockfight battling against himself warning us “Now this is the part where the rap breaks down. It’s real intense, no one makes a sound”, and finishes bringing his other self remembering his neighbourhood: “Everything looks like it’s ‘8 Mile’ now”, something which shocks because he is suddenly “back to reality”.

As a final reflection, I guess that all the identities Eminem shows us shape a package, and we cannot separate them, because that is the way he creates his own label. For me, if you like him and his style, you are going to like him forever, because hip-hop makes it possible over other musical styles. The way he mixes his different personalities makes him open to multiple audiences, because you may dislike one of his sides, but you are probably going to love one of the rest. Real situations from real life were the core for roots of rap, and Eminem is able to change this principles; multiple Eminems are, in reality, the perfect excuse to hide the lack of a real Eminem. If we have a look at the way he deals with the problems of his childhood and his

family, we notice he treats them as “others”. In my opinion, if you cannot face a problem for any reason, distancing yourself from the responsible of it is one of the best possible solutions.

In any case, the fact that Eminem has made a unique self is what really deifies him. After all, “be careful what you wish for, ‘cause you just might get it, and if you get it then you just might not know what to do wit’ it, ‘cause it might just come back on you ten-fold” (Careful What You Wish For, 2009)

Conclusions

Through the development of this work we have carried out an exhibition of the key events for hip-hop to develop, together with a dissection of rap in countries and a final critical view of the most famous American rapper and his different selves. Due to the fact that there is not real knowledge of this urban tribe in our society, and hip-hop is merely seen as something denigrating for the rest of the people who do not belong to it, our objective has consisted in explaining it in a way that hip-hop may become a more interesting art for the eyes of its readers.

On the other hand, the discovery of a personal side in Eminem has helped us to bring this different perception of hip-hop and rap. The maturity shown by him in various lyrics of his songs after his recovery from the abuse of sleeping pills shows a huge contrast to the times in which “The (real) Slim Shady” takes the lead. At the same time, the fact that he implies there is a hidden Slim Shady in each of us is something which may remain unknown for part of his audience, probably due to the truth that at the end he considers himself the real and only “Real” Slim Shady. Thanks to this sort of contradiction Eminem has achieved to encourage his followers to show him they really support him, to prove they are also able to show the features the real Slim Shady would do.

Some of his statements show us that the press and a big amount of people who pretend to follow him exaggerate things he does and sings. He is not as aggressive as we may think, or at least not so often, while he suggests not to take his offensive lyrics so serious.

Whether Eminem is a “Rap God” (2013) or not is a debate up to us. He may take “The Monster” (2013) out and show us the “Evil Twin” (2013) who is “The Real Slim Shady” (2000), because he is a “Bad guy” (2013) who is “Not afraid” (2010) of taking risks. His process of “Recovery” (2010) was as difficult as getting blood out of a stone, but in terms of health it is obvious that he came back “So much better” (2013) than he was in 2005. You may “Lose yourself” (2002) between all the MCs that USA has given to rap music, but what remains clear is that “Kings never die” (2015).

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