

The connection existing between poetry and music has appealed to many songwriters when writing lyrics to a song. Even though lyrics to a song are different from poetry in that they are accompanied by music, melody and harmony, the difference between poetry and lyrics do not lessen their similarities in both function and formula. Lyrics to a song and poetry customarily have the same components and are virtually one in the same. They both rely on certain elements like hyperboles, irony, word patterns and placement, etc. It is then through these elements the poet or songwriter is able to establish the meanings, both literal and figurative, of a song or poem, as well as the theme of the song or poem. These aforementioned elements are the identifiable essentials of poetry and a song's lyrics. It is the poet or the music artist, however, who gives poetry or music lyrics its creativity and uniqueness. The music artist, when writing lyrics, makes a song distinctive because the lyrics are an expression of the individual artist. One gifted music artist, who wrote from the soul and is arguably the greatest poet-songwriter of hip-hop music, is Tupac Shakur. Tupac's lyrics have been praised as well as scrutinized by many critics. They have also been immortalized as well as studied, because Mr. Shakur sent powerful messages through his words he wrote and rapped to the world, which has led to millions of Tupac followers and admirers. Tupac's lyrics are crafted poetically the way a poet crafts a poem. The lyrics to one of Tupac's songs entitled, "White Man'z World", are a prime example of the way songwriters or poets apply music to poetry. A "White Man'z World" is about the black women and men, in America, growing up in a white man's world*. By analyzing Tupac's lyrics to his song "White Man's World", one is able to identify the poetic elements applied to the lyrics, as

* Please refer to Appendix "A" for the complete lyrics to, "White Man's World", by Tupac Shakur.

well as the literal and figurative meaning of the song. The poetic elements Tupac uses in "White Man'z World" enhance the literal and figurative meaning of the song, which then lead to the theme of "White Man'z World". The theme in "White Man'z World" then sum up why the subjects of the song are significant to Tupac and his audience.

As mentioned earlier poetic elements to a poem or song include hyperboles, irony, word patterns and placement, and so on. The poetic elements are recognized in the song, "White Man'z World". Hyperboles are extreme exaggerations, which happen to be abundant in "White Man'z World". Tupac, for instance, tries to convey a message when hyperbolizing about violence and pain within his people living in a "white man's world". The exaggeration created between violence and pain, two emotional states, manipulate the listener into an engagement with the content of the lyrics. The first line of the first stanza Tupac immediately grasps the reader by inflating to the black woman, "You go bustin' your fist against a stone wall" if you do not use your brain, because this is what the white man wants. Embellishments add to the sense of violence, as the reader is assaulted by the harshness Tupac's words. Throughout "White Man'z World", Tupac describes a world filled with "riot(s)", "gunshots", "bleeding", "hate", "payback", "screaming", "struggling", "enemies", and "fight(s)". By using words to exaggerate the harsh realities of the world, the reader is able to visualize the world Tupac sees.

Irony is an evident or blatant meaning negated by a different meaning representing the writer's or speaker's true purpose. Simply put, irony is the opposite occurring in certain situations. Irony is also a poetic tool or poetic element. The poetic element of irony is evident in "White Man'z World". From stanza 1 all the way to stanza 15, for instance, Tupac emotionally describes the hardships of being in a white man's

survival for his people are to use their brain to progress their race and beat the white man. He strategically places "use your brain" in the 2nd line of the 1st stanza and the 1st line of the last or 16th stanza.

The denotation of a poem is its literal meaning, while the connotation uses figurative language for its meaning, the use of metaphors or similes as its guiding light. Tupac's use of poetic elements such as word patterns, word placement and irony assist and enhance the different meanings of "White Man'z World", both denotatively and connotatively. For example, in a literal sense, "white man's world" is mentioned and deliberately placed twelve times in the song so Tupac can literally get his point across by saying it is honestly a "white mans world". But below the surface, in a figurative sense, it is such a white man's world even the song Tupac wrote must be dominated by the name "white man". In essence, the white man owns the song Tupac wrote. Until his people are truly free, Tupac must dominate his song with the name, "white man", so he can show even hip-hop, the dominate culture in today's black youth, can be infiltrated by the "white man".

Further more, on the surface, violence and pain are stemmed throughout "White Man'z World". As mentioned, Tupac strategically places violent words to stimulate the readers' literal sense. In a figurative sense Tupac conjures up metaphors such as, "Staring at the walls of silence, inside this cage", in stanza 5, or similes expressing "Why should I care, like holding on to love that's no longer there", in stanza 11, to express pain and the feeling of being engulfed in a white man's world without hope.

Certain literal and figurative meanings of "White Man'z World" are stimulated by irony. For instance, the first few stanzas of the poem relates to Tupac sympathizing with

world, and even though black men are "proud to be black" they are still struggling in this "white man's world". He further states in stanza 15 white man "can never take us (black people) out". The irony here is when the reader gets to stanza 16, almost the end of the song. Tupac warns black people to "Use your brain, use your brain", because even though black people struggle in a white man's world it is not the white man who are killing the African American race, it is the opposite, black people are killing black people. "It ain't them (white people) that's killin' us (black people), it's us that's killin' us", Tupac shouts with anger, "It ain't them that's knockin' us off, it's us that's knockin' us off".

A rap artist's lyrical word and rhyming patterns are individualized and become a personal signature over the course of an artist's development. Tupac Shakur had a unique blueprint to his lyrics or rhymes. Tupac's word pattern and placement, both poetic elements, are evident in "White Man'z World". As with any standard rap lyric and usually any poem a rhyming pattern is used to dictate or influence the rap song or poem being heard. With the exception of a few out of place rhymes in "White Man'z World", Tupac seems to stick with an apparent rhyming pattern by rhyming every other line. The reader sees in stanza 9 there is a rhyme after every line beginning with, "being born with less I must confess only adds to the stress, two gunshots to my homies head, dyed in his vest". This continuous rhyming scheme is exhibited the rest of the stanza and mainly the entire song, as well. Tupac's word use and placement in "White Man'z World" is where he displays his genius and his power to influence. For example, to get his point across by saying it is truly a white man's world, Tupac mentions the actual expression "white man's world" a staggering twelve times! Tupac also emphasizes the only chance for

the black woman and the struggle it is "being a women, being a black women at that, no doubt" in a "white man's world". The irony here is in stanza 2 where Tupac says even though we are in a white men's world and we should be watching out for our women, black men also overlook "the fact we be ridin our sisters". Figuratively saying black men take advantage of black women as well. "We do no know (black men) the pain we be causin' (to black women) in this white man's world", as Tupac ends stanza two. Tupac ends the first part of the song, the beginning of stanza 7, by "apologizing to my true sister, far from bitches. Help me raise my black nation".

In analyzing the song, "White Man'z World", a main theme is apparent. The theme is related to white supremacy and black oppression, an assertion the world "belongs" to the white man, and to prevent annihilation by the white race, the black man must fight back. Evidence of this theme is in the title of the "White Man'z World" and in lines throughout the song like, "reparations are due", "being born with less", "struggling", "locked up falsely", "we under attack", "endangered species", "killin' us", "we must fight", "bear with me", and "check yourselves."

The theme white supremacy and black oppression of "White Man'z World" is certainly significant to Tupac and the listeners he was trying to reach out to. On a certain level, the theme appeals to a certain audience, community or skin color, those with whom Tupac identifies himself. On another level, however, the "White Man'z World" is accessible to a larger community and broad range of people because of the song's ability to elicit an emotional response, allowing readers' to identify with Tupac and his black people.

Therefore, one sees the power of words and message Tupac Shakur has portrayed in "White Man'z World". Tupac's use of the poetic elements helps readers see beyond the surface of his songs, in which many subjects can be studied with each song. Mr. Tupac is truly a wonderful poet.