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**Literary Intertextuality in the  
Lyrics of GZA, MF DOOM, Aesop  
Rock and Billy Woods**

# Literary Intertextuality in the Lyrics of GZA, MF DOOM, Aesop Rock and Billy Woods

Abstract: Rap and literature have always been intertwined with each other. To a degree, that is not surprising as rap music is an indirect successor of the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s. The generation of children that started hip-hop as a youth movement in South Bronx was the first one after the civil rights movement. Rap developed as part of the hip-hop culture and was never at its forefront. This article describes the manner in which literature has been integrated into rap records with regard to the socio-historical circumstances at times of their development. GZA, MF DOOM, Aesop Rock, and Billy Woods are the rappers analysed as they substantially influenced contemporary rap writing. Before the analysis is made, the main concepts are defined. A short description of the origin of hip-hop is given. Allusion, intertextuality, and sampling are defined and explained in the context of hip-hop as a genre. A short overview of research on intertextuality in rap is made.

Keywords: Hip-Hop, Rap, Intertextuality, Allusion, Sampling

## NOTE

The article is partially based on the author's MA thesis *Intertextuality of Literature in Billy Woods's Lyrics* accessible on the following link:

<https://dk.um.si/dokument.php?id=119169>.

Parts of this article have been modified and appear in the author's upcoming monograph *Billy Woods: Virtuoso of Intertextuality*.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Hip-Hop as we know it today started in the early 70s with DJ Kool Herc. He started throwing parties in the *rec rooms*, recreational facilities at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx used by young people, as they were suitable for parties (for a party in a basement would cause too much of a commotion for other inhabitants). At that time, the Bronx was the most impoverished area of New York City. It was heavily affected by the deindustrialization and the construction of the highway connecting New York and New Jersey, which led to a massive displacement of people. The people who stayed back were those that could not afford to leave. The deindustrialization was followed by large-scale unemployment. Additionally, housing projects were built where people with low income rates (mostly members of minorities and new immigrants) were situated. Those were managed by landlords who deliberately neglected their property and went so far as to burn their apartments to collect insurance money. It was in those circumstances that DJ Kool Herc was throwing his parties.

It has to be noted that the parties were not the starting point for the youth movement, but acted as the catalyst for a wider youth counterculture movement that had been developing since the late 60s. This counterculture was uniting young people through the arts of graffiti writing, DJing, breakdancing, and rapping. The specific contribution of DJ Kool Herc to this counterculture was the development of the so-called "break". At the time when DJ Kool Herc was throwing parties, he observed that people were dancing more vigorously to a specific part of the record – the first few seconds of the drum beat before the record starts. He realized that by playing two records at the same time, he could prolong the break and people could dance harder for a longer period of time. The technique of playing the break section of the two records at the same time was dubbed by DJ Kool Herc the 'Merry-Go-Round'. From this, we can see that rapping was not the most prominent part of this counterculture when it started. The shift of prominence within the hip-hop culture to rapping came when rap records started to appear in the late 70's (Chang 2005, 19-24 and 111-113). Using these developments as the basis, it is possible to establish the relevance of the contributions of subsequent rap artists to the genre.

## 2. RESEARCHING INTERTEXTUALITY IN RAP

Intertextuality is a common subject in rap. Yet, the research on it developed slowly as it was always given marginal attention in previous literature on rap, be it about music production such as in Joseph Schloss' *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop* (2004), or about lyrics

such as in Paul Edwards' *How to Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC* (2009). In any case, it was not until Justin Williams' *Rhymin' and Stealin': Musical Borrowing in Hip-Hop* (2013) that a comprehensive study on intertextuality in rap had been written. Williams (2013) tackles musical borrowing in rap music by arguing that hip-hop as such is an interpretative community in which different kinds of references are made that are understood differently by different rap listeners. His research focusses on the following three aspects of borrowing: musical borrowing from other music genres, borrowing from specific places such as an automobile, and sampling of voices in specific records. However, Williams did limit his research to a few influential and prominent artists such as Dr. Dre, 2Pac, 50 Cent and Eminem (Williams 2013, 15; 17-18), which might compromise the degree to which his research is generalizable. This article builds on his research by applying the concept of intertextuality to rap lyrics to observe how intertextuality of literature has been integrated into rap in general, which Williams 2013 fails to do. The article looks at two aspects of using intertextual references, both as a stylistic enhancement in rappers' writing and as a means to integrate challenging concepts into rap writing. For the sake of brevity, the analysis is limited to four rappers, namely GZA of the Wu-Tang Clan, MF DOOM, Aesop Rock, and Billy Woods. The rappers have been chosen because they are renowned for their rap writing and had a substantial influence on contemporary rap writing.

### 3. ALLUSION, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND SAMPLING

Before defining intertextuality, it is necessary to define allusion first, because both concepts refer to commonplace practices in rap, and are used there to incorporate literature. According to M. H. Abrams *Glossary of Literary Terms*, "[a]llusion is a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or a historical person, place or event, or to another literary work and passage" (Abrams 1999, 9). The idea of intertextual reference can be understood as an extension of the idea of allusion. Norman Fairclough saw intertextuality as a process that could be observed within the text and outside the text. Firstly, when Fairclough is talking about intertextuality *on the textual level*, he is referencing Bakhtin and Kristeva's definition of intertextuality as the text referring to other texts, connecting across different genres and writing (Fairclough 2013, 189). Secondly, when it comes to intertextuality *in medias*, he means the influence of different segments and relationships in society on Hip-Hop (Fairclough 2013, p. 200). In fact, both of these definitions are applicable to intertextuality in the genre.

The invention of DJ Kool Herc's 'Merry-Go-Round' was the start of intertextuality in hip-hop music. It also started what would later become

a common practice and one of the distinctive features of hip-hop music: the use of sampling. Sampling is a method of creating music by taking pre-existing recordings (musical and nonmusical) and arranging them into new tracks (Schloss 2004, 34). This brings us to intertextuality. From what was just explained, we can see that hip-hop music has been intertextual from its very inception because of the way it was produced. It can also be seen that hip-hop music corresponds to Fairclough's two-sided definition of intertextuality. Hip-hop music includes both musical and textual layers of intertextuality; as a medium, it has penetrated all segments of society from advertisements to political campaigns. This analysis, however, will focus on intertextuality in rap writing only, and it will make an overview of how literature has been integrated into rap writing throughout the history of the genre. The focus will only be on integration of literature because a much broader analysis would be needed to show how other media references (television, cartoons, movies etc.) have been integrated into rap. Because of the sheer volume of intertextuality of different media in rap writing, it is impossible to fit all of it into a single article.

#### **4. LITERARY INTERTEXTUALITY IN THE LYRICS OF WU-TANG CLAN, MF DOOM, AESOP ROCK, AND BILLY WOODS**

In the 1980s, literature was integrated into rap by rappers applying its general concepts to their lyrics, as can, for example, be seen on the Public Enemy and Ice T records. Allusion and intertextuality were occurring, but it was not until the Beastie Boys released *Paul's Boutique* that the frequency and unorthodox usage of allusions increased ("Beastie Boys" in Bogdanov et al) to contemporary levels. The two people who influenced rap the most with their literature are Malcolm X and Iceberg Slim. With Malcolm X, the idea was to bring back the awareness of the civil rights movement and its leaders among a generation born in its aftermath, and the Public Enemy records were to be the medium (Chuck D, 2012). Iceberg Slim was a direct influence on Ice-T (Ice T, 2012; 2013). The Beastie Boys achieved the diversification of literary allusions and intertextuality that still influences rap writing today.

The 1990s were the decade that expanded the stylistic possibilities of rap; most of the rap techniques used today originate from this time. Therefore, it is not surprising that allusions and intertextuality became more diverse during the 90's. Intertextual references to religious texts also became commonplace in rap at that time. On any record made between 1993 and 2000, Wu-Tang Clan made use of such references. Following the 2010s, even books were started to get adapted into and break the standards of rap writing.

## 4.1. WU-TANG CLAN

The Wu-Tang Clan are the most influential rap group from the 1990s. They were the first rap group with nine individual rappers, each of whom had his style of rapping. Stylistically, they combined Eastern mysticism with stories of crime in their communities (Bradley and DuBois 2010, 533). Their records have been known to make use of intertextuality as they sampled a variety of films, but they did not shy away from using literary intertextuality either as they are known to have integrated allusions to the Five-percenter doctrine and ideology.

The Five percenters are one of the branches of the Nation of Islam that was founded by Clarence 13X (whose government name was Clarence Edward Smith). He formed his own organization because he found the doctrine of the Nation of Islam too rigorous, and this attitude attracted young men to his following. His teachings were modelled after the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X's departure from it. As Clarence 13X saw how Malcolm X departed, he decided he could do the same. According to the doctrine of the Nation of Islam, people are divided into three groups: 85% of people are the uncivilized people that do not know God and are therefore mentally impoverished and slaves. Another 10% are the rich slaveowners of the impoverished, who teach them false knowledge. The remaining 5% are those who do not believe the lies of the 10% and teach the truth: that the true God is the black man. Clarence 13X expanded this interpretation to the Nation of Islam itself: he saw the 85% as the non-ruling members of Nation of Islam and 10% as the ruling part of the organization (including the leader Elijah Muhammad and his inner circle) (Knight 2007, 32-37). Two of the main concepts of the Five Percenter ideology were the "Supreme Alphabet" and the "Supreme Mathematics", which were based on the dialog between Elijah Muhammad and his master. In "Supreme Mathematics", each number from zero to nine was assigned a specific meaning (for example, "one" means "knowledge"). The "Supreme Alphabet" did the same for the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet, with A meaning Allah, and so on (Knight 2007, pp. 52-54). Clarence 13X maintained that the African-Americans were the original men (Knight 2007, p. 55), and there was also a strong patriarchal relationship between men and women within the organization. The men were referred to as 'Gods' whereas women were 'Earths'. The role of women in the organization was to be wives and mothers and to take care of the children (Knight 2007, pp. 208-210).

The Five Percenters were highly influential for rap from the late 1980s until the 1990s. Some of the more well-known rappers and rap groups influenced by them include Rakim, Big Daddy Kane, Brand Nubian and the Wu-Tang Clan (Knight 2007, pp. 177-186). From 1993 to 2000, the members of the Wu-Tang Clan released a slew of influential records, one

of them being *Liquid Swords*. This article will look at *Liquid Swords* to see how intertextuality was made use of.

### 5.1.1. GZA – LIQUID SWORDS (1995)

On the record *Liquid Swords*, intertextuality can be observed in the song titled "Cold World." The first two lines are a reference to the English poem "The Night Before Christmas" by Clement Clark Moore (n.d.). Compare:

"Cold World"

It was the night before New Year's, and all through the fucking  
projects  
Not a handgun was silent, not even a Tec

"The Night Before Christmas"

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse

GZA adapted the stanza of the poem and put into it a new setting.

Intertextuality and allusions to the Five-Percenter ideology can also be found. Men are referred to as 'Gods' throughout the record. In the song "Living in the World Today", intertextuality of the supreme alphabet is included in the line "Father You See King the police." The first four words are intertextual references to the supreme alphabet – Father, which represent F, You which is U, See is C, and King is K (Knight 2007, 52-54). If we put those words together, they spell out the word 'Fuck', and the line becomes "fuck the police."

### 5.2. MF DOOM

A substantial change in rap music occurred in the late 1990s with MF DOOM, who broke the previously established norms in rap writing. Rap as a genre used to put a lot of emphasis on authenticity and the so-called "realness." It was important that rappers were rapping about the topics they had actually experienced or were exposed to (White 2011, 97-98). In rap, there is also a strong emphasis on the first-person narrative, but this does not mean that rap is non-fictional. (It *can* be, as can be seen in one of the most well-known songs "Murder Was the Case" by Snoop Dogg.) These strong tendencies were completely disregarded by Daniel Dumile.

He decided to fictionalize all the narratives on the records and did so consistently, unlike other rappers who only did so occasionally. Most of his narratives were written from the perspectives of MF DOOM, Viktor Vaughn or King Geedorah. The first two are based on Marvel comic villains and the last one on Godzilla's arch-enemy, King Ghidorah—a three-headed space dragon (MF DOOM 2011). Stylistically, Dumile does not narrate from the first-person perspective, but from the third-person perspective to emphasize the character-driven narrative and to distance himself from the story. With the introduction of fictional characters, he parodies one of the core concepts of rap. Dumile uses allusion and intertextuality to add additional layers of interpretation to his writing. What is more, he routinely does not use the traditional rap structure in his songs. Most notably, he tends to avoid writing refrains and writes his songs as one verse.

The title of the record *Operation: Doomsday* is an allusion to the British mission to liberate Norway from the German occupation, which was given the codename "Operation Doomsday" (Paradata 2018). It is also an allusion to the novel *Doomsday Conspiracy* by Sidney Sheldon (1991). The skits of the record sample dialogs that reconstruct the dialog from the novel.

*Doomsday Conspiracy:*

FLASH MESSAGE TOP SECRET ULTRA  
NSA TO DEPUTY DIRECTOR COMSEC EYES ONLY  
SUBJECT: OPERATION DOOMSDAY  
MESSAGE: ACTIVATE  
NOTIFY NORAD CIRVIS, GEPAN DIS GHG VSAF, INS.  
END OF MESSAGE (Sheldon 1991, 3)

"The Time We Faced Doom":

[...]  
Flash message top secret ultra  
[...]  
Ears only  
[...]  
Arrange temporary transfer this agency  
[...]  
Metal Face Doom  
[...]  
Your concurrence in the above is assumed  
[...]  
Notify MF, KMD, GYP, CM. effective immediately  
[...]  
Top secret ultra-end of message



[...]

In the song "Doomsday" on the same record, he alludes to the said author:

While *Sidney Sheldon* teaches the trife to be trifer  
I'm trading science fiction with my man the live lifer [emphasis J. K.]

In "Go with the Flow", there is a paraphrase of the phrase Sherlock Holmes uses in "Adventure VII. The Crooked Man", in which Watson and Holmes converse.

"I have the advantage of knowing your habits, my dear Watson," said he. "When your round is a short one you walk, and when it is a long one you use hansom. As I perceive that your boots, although used, are by no means dirty, I cannot doubt that you are at present busy enough to justify the hansom.

"Excellent!" I cried.

"*Elementary*," said he.

"It is one of those instances where the reasoner can produce an effect

which seems remarkable to his neighbor, because the latter has missed the one little point which is the basis of deduction (Doyle 1997, 135-136) [emphasis J. K.]

Those utterances in the conversation are paraphrased in the song "Go with the Flow":

Who asked me what we don't got that you got son  
For one flow that's elementary, my dear Watson [emphasis J. K.]

In the context of the song, the poetic persona points out that producing a good flow is something obvious and necessary to be a rapper. In the same manner, Sherlock Holmes explains how he had deduced Watson's behaviour because it was his usual behaviour.

Later instances of Dumile incorporating literature into rap can be found on his records *Vaudeville Villain* (2003) and *Born Like This* (2009). On *Vaudeville Villain*, he alludes to the Vaudeville Theater that was popular in the United States in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a theatre performance with different, unrelated acts ("Vaudeville Entertainment", Encyclopaedia Britannica). The record *Vaudeville Villain* is a collection of songs that all feature unrelated absurd stories. On the record *Born Like This*, he samples Charles Bukowski reading his poem "Dinosauria We" (Bukowski 2007) from the documentary *Born into This* (Dullaghan 2006) in the song "Cellz:"

(sample of Charles Bukowski reading):

Born like this, into this  
 As the chalk faces smile, as Mrs. Death laughs  
 As political landscapes dissolve  
 As the oily fish spit out their oily prey  
 We are born like this, into this  
 Into hospitals that are too expensive that it is cheaper to die [...]

"Cellz":

[...] DOOM from the realm of El Kulum smelly gel fume  
 Separating cell womb to Melle Mel boom  
 Revelations in braille respiration inhale view  
 Nations fail and shaking of a snake tail make due  
 Blazing swords trace the haze praise the lord  
 Saving Grace, lace your broad she say she bored [...]

The verses in the song continue using the same cadence in the following stanzas.

### 4.3. AESOP ROCK

Aesop Rock is known for his dense lyrics and abstract imagery. In 2017, a study on the sizes of the vocabularies of rappers was published, and according to it, Aesop Rock uses the most unique words of all rappers in his song (Daniels 2017). The interesting aspect of Aesop Rock's writing is his usage of obscure allusions and the manner in which he uses them: he does so to give additional meaning to his writing. On the song "Save Your Self", Aesop Rock raps about being a better rapper than his contemporaries.

Spitting like a dragon with a similar demeanor.  
 Stood innocent bystand, witness the die-hard fans turn Rip Van [...] [emphasis J. K.]

He uses the simile of a dragon to show that he is such a good rapper that he 'breathes fire'. With this ability, he turns fans away from other rappers. He uses the idiom "to sleep on it" in the meaning of postponing something ("sleep on it", The Free Dictionary) with the allusion to Rip Van Winkle. "Rip Van" is the protagonist of a children's story in which he oversleeps the revolutionary war in the United States ("Rip Van Winkle", Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Aesop Rock's literary allusions become even more complex in his later work. On his record *Skelethon*, he uses allusions to give his texts additional layers of interpretation. On the song "Gopher Guts", on which he raps about his divorce and what effect did it have on his mental health, he alludes to the novel *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Stevenson 2005) in the following line:

Got a little plot of land where authority isn't recognized  
Contraband keeping the core of his Hyde Jekyllized

The poetic persona uses the allusions to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde to lay bare their mental health. The head of the persona is described as a plot of land. Medications are contraband, and the mental issues are Dr. Jekyll, for the effects of the medication, and Mr. Hyde for the symptoms of mental issues, referring to the fact that Dr. Jekyll was good-natured but had to transform into Mr. Hyde to be able to do bad deeds.

#### 4.4. BILLY WOODS

The author of this article has worked extensively on Billy Woods and the manner in which he integrates intertextual references into his work (see Kolarič, forthcoming; 2016). For the purposes of this article, a review of three items of Woods' opus will suffice.

Super Chron Flight Brothers – *Emergency Powers* (2007)

Super Chron Flight Brothers was a rap duo comprised of the rappers Billy Woods and Privilege. *Emergency Powers* can be considered the first mature record including Billy Woods, who has been known to integrate intertextuality into his writing as a crucial part of raps that gives them additional layers of interpretation. In his writing, postcolonialism is also one of the main concepts and is overwhelmingly present in his rapping. On the song "Slaughterhouse" there is a line with an intertextual reference to Hegel.

"Slaughterhouse":

You see? It's more than the words on the page  
*The dialect of slaves ever indirect*

"The dialect of slaves ever indirect" is a reference to Hegel's 2018 (1807) book *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, specifically to its chapter "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: the Dialectic

of Lord and Bondsman", known as the slave-master dialectic, in which Hegel describes how the relationships between the slave and the master are formed.

He explains the relationship of two fighting self-consciousnesses that are the same but want to be different from each other. To achieve the acknowledgment, they fight for dominance. The winner can kill the loser, but does not and becomes the master while the loser becomes the slave. Yet, the master is not the winner in the long run as he does not achieve the type of acknowledgment he desires. The slave tends to all of his master's needs under constant threat of death. This relationship is unstable as the master gradually loses his ability to do the required work for himself and does not know how to cope with death. The slave with his newly acquired skills can break free from the master and become an artisan. The problem that remains is that the slave's emancipation potential and self-consciousness are limited as his skills are limited to manual crafts, hence he still serves others. Indeed, the slave becomes the master over some aspects of himself, but the power structures still exist and the slave is not objectively free. The master and the slave have realized that the relationship is better if they provide service to each other (Hegel 2018 (1807), 198-210; Steinhart 1998).

On the song "Slaughterhouse", this theory is applied to the African-American experience with slavery and their navigation of the music industry. In the song, Billy Woods deconstructs the music industry. Despite the fact that rappers are dominant in the music industry, they still need to navigate the power structures of the United States system – the system that is a race regime by design. Here, we can apply Hegel to the African-Americans that were able to navigate the music industry after the end of slavery as musicians/entrepreneurs in their own right. In the long run, they were not able to fully control their own fate, much less the music industry as a whole. In the early stages of hip-hop, the artists did not own their records and did not receive royalties from the record sales (Charnas 2011, 61-71). It took a long time for a hip-hop artist to get decent record deals and become able to own his/her own masters. Nevertheless, the industry perpetuated rap and the images that would sell. Billy Woods uses the example of mainstream rap. The violent, misogynist imagery of the rappers is a reflection of their insecurities and the fact that they come from dysfunctional families. The poetic persona uses the imagery of grill jewellery and calls them "the new blackface," because historically, the image of the violent, hypersexual black man was one of the accepted portrayals of black people. Billy Woods calls the rappers "the great pretenders" as the image they portray does not reflect what the rappers think of themselves. On the surface, it might be seen as threatening, but this was merely a marketable imagery of an angry black man with which

the general population of United States is familiar and comfortable (White 2011, 19-32). The rappers, as menacing as they appear, are harmless as they do not control the whole system in which they operate. To show the fragility of their status, Billy Woods uses the reference to two songs: Tragedy Khadafi's "Live by the Gun?" and Public Enemy's "Miuzi Weighs a Ton", which both thematise the use of guns to assert dominance. However, Billy Woods turns this idea upside down. The line in the song is as follows: "Live by the gun? Trust me that Uzi weigh a ton". The other side of rappers asserting their dominance with guns is that if they make one mistake and break the law (by assault or ownership of unregistered firearm), their career is compromised and they go to prison. It does not matter how successful they are: in the eyes of the justice system, they are still just black men with guns. This is also the closure of Hegel's argument: despite the slave becoming an artisan, he is still not the one who controls the power system. In the same manner, despite rappers being the successful artist, they still don't own the record industry (recordings, production and distribution). This is an instance of rappers using intertextual references to introduce challenging concepts into their lyrics, which was described in chapter 2.

#### Armand Hammer – *Race Music* (2013)

One of the stylistic characteristics of Billy Woods's writing is combing popular culture with classical literature. One example of this is from the Armand Hammer (another duo of which Woods was part of) record *Race Music* in the song "Toad and Frog Can be Friends." The first four lines combine allusions to Fredrick Douglass and rappers with intertextual references to rap records.

Unpublished but ghostin' for Fredrick Douglass  
Trust/, I could write your whole album  
Eazy-Duz-It  
Raiders snapback with the Jheri Curl [emphases J. K.]

The poetic persona says that they are ghostwriting for Fredrick Douglass. Fredrick Douglass was an abolitionist, writer, and fighter for the equality of black people (Jarrett 2014). This can be interpreted to mean that the poetic persona is continuing the emancipatory work of Fredrick Douglass.

The next line claims that the poetic persona could write other people's records, which the third line continues with a reference to the title of Eazy-E's *Eazy-Duz-It*. The concept of ghost writing is preserved and can be seen as a commentary on the practice of ghost-writing in rap music. As has been discovered, Eazy-E did not write his own raps, but

they were written by Ice Cube (Charnas 2011, 268-269). This is supported with the final line here which describes Ice Cube's appearance at the time when he was still a part of N.W.A.

*Today, I Wrote Nothing* (2015)

Billy Woods also adopted the complete stylistic approaches developed by other writers. On his record *Today, I Wrote Nothing*, he adapted a collection of short stories by Daniil Kharms into rap form. Daniil Kharms was a Russian absurdist writer. In the 1920s, he was part of UBERIU, a collective of avant-garde writers from Leningrad. The collective was later disbanded and Kharms would go on to write children's literature. Throughout his career, he was in conflict with the Soviet authorities and was imprisoned several times. He died in prison in 1942. Kharms' writing is stylistically hard to define as his is fiction is absurd and nonsensical. In a sense, it is meta-fiction parodying and satirizing the existing forms of fiction and their structure with added slapstick humour (Kharms 2009, 12-17). On *Today, I Wrote Nothing*, Billy Woods adopts Kharms' writing style. He breaks every existing rap norm and writes very short rap songs. Note the conceptual similarity of the following:

Daniil Kharms 2009, 120:

Today, I wrote nothing. It doesn't matter.

"Dreams Come True":

Caught feelings off an old picture, hit her up like,  
I still miss ya. Two words: Nigga. Please. Fair enough.

It has to be noted that the stylistic adaptation of Kharms' work was done intentionally. Billy Woods was having writer's block and when he read *Today, I Wrote Nothing*, it occurred to him that he could also do what Kharms did, but in rap. He decided that he would intentionally break the traditional structure of rap and not think about how to write, but simply write (Woods 2015).

## 6. CONCLUSION

After this brief survey of intertextuality in the lyrics of four prominent rappers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, it is obvious that literature has had a tremendous influence on rap. How much literature is used in rap varies

in magnitude from rapper to rapper. We can see that intertextuality is mostly used mainly in two different manners by rappers – it can be used as a stylistic enhancement of writing (as seen with Aesop Rock and MF DOOM) and to convey difficult concepts with rap such as Hegel's Master-Slave dialectic employed by Billy Woods. However, it has to be noted that rap is a highly referential form and the intertextuality of different media should not be glossed over. To be able to fully comprehend how intertextuality has been integrated into rap, a broader analysis has to be done. It is impossible to generalize how much literature influenced rap without making a broad research of the history of all intertextuality in rap. To see that, there needs to be a comparative inquiry into how literature's influence on rap measures up against the influences of films, comic books, anime, etc. Only then can an accurate gauge be made.

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