

## Genesis

In the beginning I was just a kid, listenin' to Slick Rick  
Maestro Fresh Wes, Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince  
I would rewrite the lyrics and recite 'em to my best friends  
But I was just a copycat and this was just a hobby that  
Would probably pass after I'd exhausted all my sloppy raps  
And got the laughs I was after, typical little bastard  
Privileged middle-class mischievous little rascal  
With a ticket to sit in the back row at a rap show  
I listened to Fat Joe, Method Man, and B. I. G.  
And imagined livin' as a V. I. P.  
Though I didn't have a plan, just a fantasy  
But I could still pass exams with ease and plant trees  
To get cash for books, tuition fees, and rap CDs  
And I had a chance to read classic Greek tragedies  
I've always been addicted to words  
So I just immersed myself in English Literature  
But I was immature, and these were fickle times  
Between classes I would listen to rhymes and find  
My lips whispering lines as if in the background  
Then at nineteen I wrote my first original rap down

I can still feel that prickle of initial excitement  
I figured, "It's official y'all; this is enlightenment!"  
I pictured myself cypherin' with the likes of Big Pun  
Whippin' punks into submission with a flip of the tongue  
I did it for fun; I was ambitious and irreverent  
I figured I was clever enough to get the better  
Of any competitor, 'cause I was verbally first rate  
My early verses were based on discursive wordplay  
With no breaks, no separated parts, no bars, no hooks  
Just page after page past the margins of notebooks  
So far so good; I built my skills gradually  
And kept on track with the bachelor's degree  
Actually, I considered droppin' out to get respect  
But I figured more options would mean less regrets  
And besides, some rappers were comin' differently  
I discovered Blackalicious and Talib Kweli  
MCs who could rip the beat descriptively  
And then in my second season I had this epiphany  
"Rap is poetry!" and ever since I've represented it  
Openly through my position as an academic

So the next semester I convinced my teachers  
That hip-hop lyrics would be my thesis research

I thought I would be the first to study it in depth  
Reality check; the library index  
Already had a long list of hip-hop scholarship  
Steps that I followed in; David Foster Wallace and  
Tricia Rose and Brian Cross got acknowledgements  
And props; they taught me hip-hop history  
And I started to approach this culture realistically  
And the next step for me in this MC trajectory  
Was for me to freestyle obsessively  
On road trips I was a motor-mouth motorist  
I learned to flow sick on a solo tip  
Rockin' Dr. Dre beats – Xxplosive  
I was blowin' doors open; people started listenin'  
Hip-hop for me was a form of discipline  
Born Again on the discman, studyin' flows  
Whadaya know? When I was just twenty years old  
I hit the tracks runnin' my mouth like a bloody nose  
And took my first steps down this long dusty road

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