

# Types of metonymies in contemporary hip hop lyrics (in English)

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Dvopredmetni diplomski studij Engleski jezik i književnost i njemački jezik i  
književnost – nastavnički smjer

Bruno Šandor

**Tipovi metonimija u tekstovima suvremenog hip hopa na  
engleskome**

Diplomski rad

Mentor: prof. dr. sc. Mario Brdar

Osijek, 2024.

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## **Abstract**

In the dynamic landscape of language and expression, figures of speech play a crucial role in shaping communication. Among these, metonymy stands out as a powerful tool employed in contemporary discourse across diverse domains. From literature to popular culture, metonymy is not only a linguistic device but a nuanced way of conveying meaning, evoking imagery, and fostering connections between differing concepts. Even beyond the realms of literature, metonymy finds a dynamic space in popular culture, including music, film, and visual arts. In the realm of hip-hop lyricism, artists masterfully use metonymy to encapsulate complex narratives within compact verses. The aim of this paper is to explain the basic terminology of metonymy and its types while illustrating the most frequent and most compelling metonymies found in mainstream hip-hop lyrics. This will be achieved by using Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive linguistic approach to metonymy.

**Key words: hip-hop, metonymy, lyrics, imagery, communication**

## Sažetak

U dinamičnom pejzažu jezika i izražavanja, figure govora igraju ključnu ulogu u oblikovanju komunikacije. Među njima se metonimija ističe kao moćan alat koji se koristi u suvremenom diskursu u različitim domenama. Od književnosti do popularne kulture, metonimija nije samo jezično sredstvo nego nijansirani način prenošenja značenja, evociranja slikovitosti i podupiranja veza između različitih pojmova. Čak i izvan područja književnosti, metonimija nalazi inovativno mjesto u popularnoj kulturi, uključujući glazbu, film i vizualnu umjetnost. U području hip hop tekstova, umjetnici vješto koriste metonimiju kako bi saželi složene opise unutar kompaktnih stihova. Cilj ovog rada je objasniti osnovnu terminologiju metonimije i njezinih vrsta ilustrirajući najučestalije i najuvjerljivije metonimije koje se nalaze u popularnim hip hop tekstovima. To će se postići korištenjem Lakoffovog i Johnsonovog kognitivnolingvističkog pristupa metonimiji.

Ključne riječi: **hip hop, metonimija, tekst, slikovitost, komunikacija**



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# 1. Introduction

The early conception of metaphor, and the over-looked metonymy, was that “metaphors are based on a resemblance between the two entities that are compared and identified... and [that] you must have a special talent to be able to do it and do it well” (Kövecses 2002: X). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson both disagreed with that statement, claiming that “metaphor is often not based on similarity and used effortlessly in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people” (ibid.), effectively cementing the fact that the metaphor “is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning” (ibid.). Since then, many cognitive linguists have claimed that “metaphor plays a role in human thinking, understanding, and reasoning and, beyond that, in the creation of our social, cultural, and psychological reality” (ibid.). Metonymy, a figure of speech as equally as important as metaphor, is a conceptual tool that plays the same role, but is portrayed as less significant than metaphor in poetic production. It deserves more attention as a linguistic trait and should be deeper studied as an unavoidable part of human thinking. Krišković and Tominac argue that “the standard approach to the cognitive linguistic theory of metonymy emphasizes the conceptual and cognitive nature of metonymy where universal human knowledge and embodiment are essential for the interpretation of metonymy” (2009: 50). The cognitive linguistic study of metonymy has shown that metonymy is not merely a relationship between words but a fundamental cognitive process for giving meaning, using not only linguistic knowledge but knowledge of the world as well. As such, metonymy occurs in various situations where a part substitutes a whole or vice versa and where a part substitutes a different part. We use these cognitive processes regularly, so its study in the realm of hip-hop lyricism should show exciting results.

The first section of the paper will cover a brief description of hip-hop together with its motifs and origins. The corpus involves the Golden Age of Hip-hop, in which the most significant and groundbreaking albums and artists initially emerged. The artists and the records that are going to be analyzed were chosen based on popularity, cultural contributions, and overall worldwide appeal. The artists from this era in question are: Beastie Boys, N.W.A., Nas, and OutKast. Initially, a brief introduction of the performers and their place of origin will be provided. Beastie Boys and Nas represent the East Coast, N.W.A the West Coast, and OutKast the Southern hip-hop culture. The fact that these artists come from different geographical and cultural realms, offers three areas for analysis where hip-hop rose and grew to the cultural phenomenon that it is today. Furthermore, a section on methodology covers the methods of gathering material, the scope of the corpus that was analyzed, and the principal procedure of identifying metonymies. In the second section of the paper

a brief survey of metonymy and its types will be given. Several models of determining metonymy types are provided that come down to Lakoff's and Johnson's examples to better understand metonymic applications. Metonymy is drawn from real-life experience and consists of various target and vehicle entities that revolve around the same domain, this section will cover the hierarchy of the most common domains, referred to as idealized cognitive models. The third section comprises the obtained results throughout four different records and it is divided in part-whole, whole-part and part-part metonymy sections each equipped with a table that showcases various examples that were found during the analysis. The last section of the paper discusses the conclusion and the results of identifying and analyzing metonymy in hip-hop lyrics.

## 2. Methodology and the Corpus

### 2.1. Hip-Hop and Hip-hop Lyrics as the Corpus

Prior to delving into an examination of the types of metonymies present in hip-hop lyrics, it is essential to provide a concise introduction to the primary themes and the overall origins of the hip-hop culture and lifestyle. This will help illuminate the individuals who have had significant multigenerational influence and whose work will later be analyzed in this paper.

The term *rap* is often used synonymously with *hip-hop* and even though rapping is considered a primary component of hip-hop, the complete genre is a form of expression which comprises multiple elements, including DJ-ing (short for: disk jockeys), turntablism, beatboxing, breakdancing, fashion, street art, and others alike. The birthplace of rap can be approximately traced back to the streets of the Bronx, NY in the late 1970s. It was gradually developed in the United States of America by various subcultures of African-American and Hispanic communities. Hip-hop, on the other hand, is a subculture and an art movement whose development has “reflected the negative effects of post-industrial decline, political discourse, and a rapidly changing economy”.<sup>1</sup>

As hip-hop exponentially developed and flat out spread across the country and beyond, it brought upon what we nowadays refer to as *The Golden Age of Hip-hop*, during the mid-1980s and early 1990s. The pivotal changes involved diversity, stylistic innovation, mainstream success, official support, and, of course, advanced lyrical content. The lyrics themselves became multi-layered and metaphorical in nature and had a sense of curiosity when it came to exploring a wider array of subjects and themes: “It wasn’t just the music propelling hip-hop culture, street slang, later known as Ebonics, also crossed over into the mainstream. For example, the words “bling” and “fo’ shizzle” have been added to the Oxford English Dictionary”.<sup>2</sup> It is evident that since its conception in the late 1970s, the power, influence, and overall reach of hip-hop music have skyrocketed off the charts. Within twenty years, from approximately 1980 to 2000, hip-hop music went from underground cult status to the number one top-selling musical format, complete with Grammy takers and mainstream corporate support.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: <https://www.iconcollective.edu/hip-hop-history>

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: <https://www.iconcollective.edu/hip-hop-history>

All things considered, many still perceive hip-hop music as a genre that represents violence, drugs, and other negative aspects and conditions of life but regardless, the lyrical content has always centered around eco-social problems and, “as a product of a historically oral culture that embodies familiar metaphorical traits such as satire, irony, indeterminacy, sexuality, loyalty, betrayal, closure, and encasement (Gates 1988: 6) it is apparent that “African American rap music is especially rich in metaphoric language” (Crossley 2005: 503). Hence, rap music is seen as a “modern response to the social and economic ailments of the collective African-American community, which include joblessness, disempowerment, and poverty” (Smitherman 1997: 5), but because most rappers have mostly been male, “rap music is more representative of Black men's cultural norms than Black women's” (Neal 2002: 76). With that in mind, Crossley (2005: 505) suggested that “the most immediate experience that members of the hip-hop generation encounter is their neighborhood”. These picturesque-like descriptions result in frequent references such as the hood, the projects, the crib, the bricks, and others that conceptualize African American neighborhoods “as restrictive rather than protective objects” (ibid.).

The first artists that will be covered in this paper are Beastie Boys. They were an American hip-hop trio from New York City. The members Michael Diamond (under the moniker Mike D), Adam Horovitz (under the moniker Ad-Rock) and Adam Yauch (under the moniker MCA) formed the group in 1981 and made their studio debut in 1986 with *Licensed to Ill*, which greatly impacted the culture at large, and is regarded as the album that “brought hip-hop to the white kids in the suburbs, showing that rap music had much greater commercial appeal than many skeptics could imagine” (Matthew Reyes, 2016). Even though *Licensed to Ill* was the first hip-hop album to reach number one on the charts, the follow-up sophomore LP *Paul's Boutique*, which debuted three years later in 1989, is praised as “the pinnacle of hip-hop's golden era of sampling, and is still viewed as one of the finest rap albums ever made” (Alan Light, 2012). Despite the fact that *Paul's Boutique* initially failed commercially, in the meantime it has been recognized as their breakthrough achievement and a hip-hop landmark, owing to the innovative lyrics and the timeless sample-based production, which is why it was chosen out of their catalog for metonymic analysis.

The second artist Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones (under the moniker Nas) is another representative of the East Coast hip-hop scene. He was born in 1973 in Brooklyn, New York City and later relocated to Queens after which he began writing his own lyrics. In 1994, Nas dropped his seminal LP *Illmatic*, which positioned him as the “most critically acclaimed ‘thug narrator’ of his generation” (Paul Adey, 2024). Since then, Nasir remains “as highly esteemed in the street as he is in academic circles. Rappers and hip-hop scholars alike often note the educational, social and political impact

of Nas’s work as a contemporary urban storyteller, black public intellectual, and cultural spokesperson” (ibid.). Nas has had an extensive career over the years, but nothing has come close to his magnum opus *Illmatic*, which is why it was chosen out of his catalog for metonymic analysis.

While Beastie Boys and Nas were making a name for themselves on the East Coast, over on the West Coast a new group was establishing themselves as the pioneers of gangster (stylized as gangsta) rap. N.W.A. (in full: Niggaz Wit Attitudes) formed in 1987 in the city of Compton in California. Its five core members were Eric Wright (Eazy-E), Andre Young (Dr. Dre), O’Shea Jackson (Ice Cube), Lorenzo Patterson (MC Ren), and Antoine Carraby (DJ Yella). Attributable to the zeitgeist of the nineties, their music was considered controversial because it included “explicit references to gang life, drugs, sex, and distaste for authority, especially the police” (Justin Kautz, 2024). The sophomore LP *Straight Outta Compton* released in 1988 is considered to be their magnum opus, as it “details the lives of its creators via a blend of drum-heavy production, samples, turntable scratches, and aggressive, often profane lyrics” (ibid.). Ice Cube himself called it ‘reality rap’ because it offered “uncensored thoughts on women, drug dealing, gang activity, and police brutality – topics that had not yet been explored so candidly for such a wide audience in any genre of music” (ibid.). N.W.A. are pioneers of the genre and this album is the main representative of the West Coast hip-hop culture during the Golden Age of Hip-hop, which is why its lyrics have been chosen to be the focus of metonymic analysis.

Last but not least, OutKast is an American rap duo that was formed in 1992 in East Point, Georgia. Although currently inactive, it consists of rappers André Benjamin (under the pseudonym Andre 3000) and Antwan Patton (under the pseudonym Big Boi), both of which were born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. They released their debut LP *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik* in 1994 in “the midst of the ‘90s East Coast – West Coast rivalry, and nothing else in the world sounded quite like it” (Lior Phillips, 2019). Nowadays, they are regarded as one of the most influential hip-hop acts of all time. By achieving critical acclaim and fame, they put Atlanta on the map and were not “afraid of leaning into local slang and had no interest in catering to the expectations of radio rap.” (ibid.). As Andre himself said, “we had our own lifestyle and lingo and confidence from the inside, so it really didn’t matter what everyone else thought” (ibid.). This album stands as testament to the Southern hip-hop culture, which is why it was chosen out of their catalog for further metonymic analysis.

## 2.2. Methods of Analysis and Research

The analysis of song lyrics in this paper was conducted on the website Genius (initially launched as Rap Genius) that originally had a primary focus on hip-hop music but has since expanded to cover pop and contemporary Rock & Blues. The reason why Genius has become the biggest online collection or encyclopedia of music knowledge is because it offers users the ability to provide annotations and interpretation to a song's meaning or the meaning of a lyric straight from the artist, in return the lyrics or songs oftentimes receive an official Genius Verified certificate in the form of a green check mark, further consolidating them as genuine. The lyrics transcriptions themselves can either be sourced from the liner notes that appear on the sleeves of LPs or inside CD booklets. Some of the lyrics in this paper were simply crowdsourced, i.e. high-ranking users transcribed them by ear but they otherwise fulfilled the criteria of being spelled properly with the syntactic correctness in mind. Moreover, the meanings themselves or the possible messages they convey will not be the main focus of the work. Rather, sufficient context will only be provided if it concerns a metonymy that causes ambiguity or is difficult to understand without an explanation. It should be pointed out that Beastie Boys and Nas represent the East Coast of the United States, while N.W.A. represent the West Coast. In addition, OutKast played a pivotal role in the southern part of the US and dominated that area during the time. One album or record from each artist will be selected, the ones that are at the present moment considered as classics. Each song that makes up the album will be under analysis, but only songs that exhibit the presence of metonymy will be included in the paper. The metonymy types presented in this paper were found by using Ewa Biernacka's procedure of identifying metonymy in language:

1. Read the entire text to get a general understanding of the overall meaning.
2. Determine lexical units.
3. Decide on the metonymicity of each lexical unit:
  - a. For each lexical unit establish its contextual meaning – taking into account how it applies to an entity in the situation evoked by the text, as well as co-text (i.e. the surrounding text; what is said before and after the examined expression). Take co-text into account.
  - b. For each lexical unit determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the meaning in the given context.

c. If the lexical unit has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, and the contextual and basic meanings are different, determine if they are connected by contiguity, defined as a relation of adjacency and closeness comprising not only spatial contact but also temporal proximity, causal relations and part whole relations.

4. If a connection is found in step 3c that is one of contiguity: check backwards and forwards to determine if any other lexical unit(s) belong(s) together semantically, thus determining the extent of the metonymy vehicle; and mark the lexical unit (or lexical units which belong together) as metonymy vehicle. (Biernacka 2013: 117). To illustrate how this procedure can be adapted for identifying different types of metonymy, Littlemore offers an example of a frequent metonymic expression:

[. . .] they played a friendly against *the university*.

“In order to get from a specific instance of metonymy to a ‘metonymy type’ in this example, one might begin by taking the physical campus as the most basic sense (as it is the most concrete and tangible). One could then adapt the procedure in the following way in order to identify the metonymy type underlying this linguistic metonymy:

1. Identification of metonymy-related words
2. Identification of propositions
3. Identification of a domain
4. Identification of the relationship within the domain.

The word *university* is identified as a metonymically used word (1), and it is being used to refer to a university sports team (2). The domains are the whole university and the sports team (3) and the team is being talked about as if it were somehow a representative of the whole university, therefore the domain is the university and everything associated with it (4). The fact that *the university* is referred to, and not just the name of the team means that it is a whole for part metonymy” (Littlemore 2015: 127). In light of that, the next section deals with the definition of metonymy and its types and sub-divisions.



### 3. Metonymy

Lakoff and Johnson imply that metonymy primarily has “a referential function, that is, it allows us to use one entity to stand for another” (1980: 36). As well as it “serves the function of providing understanding”. They claim its purpose is “to focus more specifically on certain aspects of what is being referred to” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 37). Therefore, it is irrefutable that metonymies are “not random or arbitrary occurrences” (ibid.) and, as such, exhibit certain systematic properties. In addition, metonymic concepts have integrated themselves into our ways of communication and are “part of the ordinary, everyday way we think and act as well as talk” (ibid.). In contrast to metaphor whose primary function is “to create new meanings and offer new insights (where one thing is understood in terms of another), referential metonymy is based on existing relationships between the source and target, and is therefore less likely to create new meanings” (Littlemore 2015: 44). Panther states that “in a prototypical metonymy the target meaning is conceptually more prominent than the source meaning” (2005: 2) and that “the link between source and target is tight so that source and target may become almost indistinguishable” (2005: 5). Which is why “many of the canonical examples used to illustrate the term metonymy such as *Wall Street* to refer to the American financial industry or *the Kremlin* to refer to the Russian government are primarily referential” (Littlemore 2015: 65).

There are several models that differentiate between different types of metonymy. Panther and Thornburg’s model claims that “pragmatic functions of metonymy extend beyond the purely referential level” (Panther 2005: 2). This model distinguishes between three different metonymy types: referential, predicational, and illocutionary metonymy. On the other hand, Littlemore states that “Beatrice Warren’s model is one of the most influential models of metonymy” (2015: 43) as it distinguishes between referential and propositional metonymy, with the former being the most prototypical. Hence, this paper focuses primarily on referential metonymy. An example is given by Littlemore to further illustrate the term: “People are hungry for *Shakespeare* in America.” In this example, the noun *Shakespeare* refers metonymically to the noun phrase “plays written by Shakespeare”. Warren suggests a distinction between referential metonymies such as this one (where one entity is related to another) and propositional metonymies (where one proposition is related to another). For instance, an example of a propositional metonymy would be: “Rosalind *raised her eyebrows* and held out her hand.” In this example, Rosalind *raising her eyebrows* indicates that she was surprised. According to Warren, referential metonymies tend to violate the so-called truth conditions, which is why it is not possible to eat Shakespeare), whereas

propositional metonymies relate one proposition to another via an ‘if–then’ relationship (if she raised her eyebrows then she must be surprised). In conclusion, referential metonymies tend to occur in the head noun, whereas propositional metonymies involve other parts of speech” (Littlemore 2015: 44). Regardless of these models, Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez and Díez Velasco believe this distinction between referential and propositional metonymy to be irrelevant, and focus instead on the relationship between the metonymic expression and its referent and come to the conclusion that “all instances of metonymy can be described as one of two types: target in source metonymy, where the metonymic term is part of its referent, or source in target metonymy, where the referent is part of the metonymic term” (Littlemore 2015: 48). The example that they give of a target in source metonymy is *the pill* to refer specifically to the contraceptive pill, as in: “The great contribution that *the pill* has made to personal choice” (ibid.). Here, the word *pill* is used to refer to a specific type of pill, which means that the target of the metonymy (the contraceptive pill) is a subset of the domain covered by the general word *pill*. Along with the target in source metonymy, they give an example of the source in target metonymy, namely the use of *hand* in expressions such as: “All *hands* on deck.” In this particular example, the *hands* refer to “the sailors who are doing hard physical work so the hands are simply part of the domain” (ibid.). However, Littlemore claims that “the taxonomy proposed by Radden and Kövecses is hierarchical” (2015: 20). On the examples of Lakoff and Johnson this section showcases the various usages of metonymic applications:

The producer for the product (The author for the work):

I’m reading *Shakespeare*.

She loves *Picasso*.

Does he own any *Hemingway*?

The place for the event:

America doesn’t want another *Pearl Harbor*.

Let’s not let *El Salvador* become another Vietnam.

*Watergate* changed our politics.

The place for the institution:

*Washington* is negotiating with *Moscow*.

*The White House* isn't saying anything.

*Wall Street* is in a panic.

*Hollywood* is putting out terrible movies.

The controller for the controlled:

*Nixon* bombed Hanoi.

*Ozawa* gave a terrible concert last night.

An object used for the user:

We need a better *glove* at third base.

The *sax* has the flu today.

For instance, if we said “Shakespeare was a literary genius.” or “We really wanted to go to Pearl Harbor last year.”, this would imply a non-metonymic application and, as such, actually refers to a given entity as a whole. But if the sentences were rephrased to “I’m reading *one of Shakespeare’s works*” or “*The American government* is negotiating with *the Russian government*”, this would suggest that metonymy „uses one entity, or thing (such as *Shakespeare* and *Pearl Harbor*), to indicate, or to provide mental access to, another entity (such as *one of Shakespeare’s works* or *the American government*) (Kövecses 2002: 172). Kövecses defines it as “instead of mentioning the second entity directly, we provide mental access to it through another entity. The vehicle entity is the one that “directs attention, or provides mental access to another entity” (Kövecses 2002: 173) and the second one, to which attention or mental access is provided is labeled the target entity. In the examples above, Shakespeare and Washington would be vehicle entities, whereas *one of Shakespeare’s works* or *the American government* would be target entities. While being distinctive from one another, it is apparent that they are conceptual in nature and have to be closely related in some form or way: “We have two elements, or entities, that are closely related to each other in conceptual space” (Kövecses 2002: 175). Many of the principles determining vehicle selection correspond to people’s everyday experiences with the world, which illustrates an underlying cognitive linguistic premise that language is by and large both a reflection and product of our everyday interactions with the real world. (Littlemore 2015: 36). These principles proposed by Radden and Kövecses fall into three general categories: “human experience (our everyday interactions with the world), perceptual selectivity (things that we are more likely to notice because of the way our brains work) and cultural preferences (things that we have learned to notice because

of the culture in which we have been brought up). In addition to this, our preference for certain vehicle types is also influenced by our need to be clear and relevant (these are referred to as communicative principles)” (ibid.). Furthermore, cognitive linguists suggest “that a vehicle entity can provide mental access to a target entity when the two entities belong to the same domain, or as Lakoff puts it, the same idealized cognitive model (ICM)” (Kövecses 2002: 173). According to Kövecses, a conceptual domain, known as an ICM “can be viewed as a whole that is constituted by parts; more specifically, the conceptual entities, or elements, are the parts that constitute the ICM that is the whole” (2002: 150). This perspective on ICMs allows for the emergence of metonymies in two distinct scenarios: (1) where a whole represents a part or vice versa, and (2) where one part represents another part within the same ICM. In the first scenario, metonymies arise between the whole and a part (part1), rather than between two parts directly, with the remaining parts serving as background elements. Conversely, in the second scenario, metonymies occur between individual parts, with the overarching ICM context present in the background. These two configurations or versions are applicable to two different sets of ICMs. Scenario (1) aligns with ICMs such as “Thing-and-Part, Constitution, Complex Event, Category-and-Member, and Category-and-Property” (ibid.). On the other hand, scenario (2) is pertinent to ICMs like “Action, Causation, Production, Control, and Possession” (ibid).

Kövecses additionally adds that “the relationship between a whole and a part typically applies to things, rather than abstract concepts” (2002: 151). Things, especially physical objects, are conventionally perceived as possessing clearly defined boundaries and limitations and are internally structured with distinct components, which is why the *Whole ICM and its Part(s)* configuration “mainly captures metonymies involving things” (ibid.). On the other hand, *The Thing and Its Parts ICM* sprouts two possible variants, which are dependent on the relationship between the whole and a part:

The whole stands for a part: *America* for “United States”

[or]

A part stands for a whole: *England* for “Great Britain”

When we mention America to specifically refer to the United States within the broader context of the entire continent, we are employing the whole for part metonymy. Conversely, when we mention England while referring to Great Britain including Wales and Scotland, we are employing the part for whole metonymy which is “particularly productive in nonlinguistic forms of

expression, such as art and music” (Littlemore 2015: 23). The latter metonymic variant is also traditionally recognized under the term *synecdoche*.

Lastly, Radden and Kövecses make mention of the *Parts of an ICM* configuration which relates “conceptual entities that function as parts with respect to a whole ICM” (2007: 13). The part for part metonymy employed here typically applies to entities within an event, where events are “constituted by a relation and participants” upon which metonymies build on a relation and one of its participants or between two participants [that are] related” (ibid.). The next section will identify and illustrate all the aforementioned metonymy types that are recognizable in hip-hop lyrics.

### **3.1. Metonymy Types in Beastie Boys’ *Paul’s Boutique***

#### **Whole-Part Metonymy in *Paul’s Boutique***

In the track “*Shake Your Rump*”, Mike D discloses he is “running from *the law, the press, and the parents*”. Hereby he makes use of the whole for part metonymy. This metonymy type occurs in situations described as active zone, as Kövecses exemplifies it: “He hit me.” or “The car needs washing.” (2002: 152), the whole things *he* and *the car* may be said to stand as a whole for the ‘active-zone’ parts *his fist* and *the car’s body*, respectively.” With that in mind, “the law” and “the press” are generally seen as abstract things which can and do contain several parts, i.e. the police, rules, the courthouse, etc. or newspapers, reporters, the media, etc. In this particular case, the speaker is in reality running from actual “policemen” and “reporters” as active zones of the law and the press in mind.

#### **Part-Whole Metonymy in *Paul’s Boutique***

In the track “*Johnny Ryall*”, they mention and describe a vagrant who lived on the streets outside Mike D’s apartment at the time: “He’s got the hand me down *Pumas* and the tie dyes”. This example displays the first instance of the member of a category for the category metonymy, within confines of the Category-and-Member ICM. *Puma(s)*, here used as a vehicle entity, is a well-known clothing manufacturer originating from Germany, whose sneakers are being metonymically mentioned. Similarly, the song “*The Sounds of Science*” demonstrates another example of the same category in the following line: “Rock my *Adidas*, never rock *Filas*”. Both Adidas and Fila, German

brand of sneakers, have become eponyms, or generic terms and Mike D casually and effortlessly uses metonymy, primarily to express preference between two vehicle entities but also to provide mental access to the target entity ‘shoes’ / ‘sneakers’. Eponyms are a special sub-division of metonymy that stand for the whole class of similar products and are “often understood as a person (real or fictitious) after whom something is named. On the other hand, it is most often used to refer to the name of a thing, discovery, place, etc. based on the name of the person associated with it, very often with the intention of honouring that person” (Brdar-Szabó and Brdar 2023: 4).

As the song “*Johnny Ryall*” progresses, they continue to describe the homeless man Johnny, where the chorus contains another instance of the same metonymy and ICM model: “Drinkin’ *Night Train*, drinkin’ *O.E.*”. Namely, *Night Train* is a wine brand made by E&J Gallo Winery. It is traditionally associated with homeless people and alcoholics, rather than wine aficionados. This means that there are two vertically integrated metonymies that are chained together. First, we have the domain characterizing specific brands as low-quality alcoholic drinks which leads to a second domain that involves our knowledge of people who consume these drinks. Inferential metonymic chaining refers to a linguistic process where a series of metonymic connections are formed in a sequence, enabling the interpretation of meaning through linked associations. This process depends on implicit understanding and contextual signals, with each link representing a shift in reference or meaning based on logical or culturally recognized relationships between ideas. The transition from one concept to another occurs due to shared or implied connections, often rooted in cultural or experiential knowledge, allowing individuals to derive deeper or more complex meanings from basic expressions. Identically, O.E. is a nickname for Olde English, a brand of malt liquor which is likewise not held up to high standards. It is clear the relationship results in metonymies where these two vehicle entities, respectively, represent their target entity ‘alcohol’. In similar fashion, this particular metonymy comes about in the track “*A Year and a Day*” in the line: “Mix the *Bass Ale* with the *Guinness Stout*”. This particular mixture is known as Black and Tan among African-Americans – a drink made from Bass and Guinness, two distinct beer brands with varying tastes and production methods.

In the next track “*High Plains Drifter*”, we see another common archetype of the member of a category for the category within the Category-and-Member ICM: “I reached behind the seat and snatched a *Kool* from the pack”. *Kool* is certain brand of menthol pre-rolled cigarettes, meaning a single cigarette is part of the pack and which, in turn, represents the vehicle entity that provides cognitive access to the target entity ‘cigarettes’. An identical case occurs subsequently in the track

“*Car Thief*”: “Had a ‘caine-filled *Kool* with my man, Rush Rush”. A ‘caine-filled *Kool* means the cigarette has been laced with cocaine before the speaker will be knowingly using it with his friend.

Afterwards, also in the track “*Car Thief*”, there appears yet another prime example of the recurring metonymy type and ICM model: “Making like a DT, driving a *Gran Fury*”. A *Gran Fury* refers to an automobile vehicle that was manufactured by the American company named Plymouth. Further on in the track “*The Sounds of Science*” we see how frequent these metonyms have become: “Like bumping around the town like when you’re driving a *Range Rover*”. *Range Rover* also depicts an automobile vehicle which was made by the well-established company Land Rover. Likewise, in the track “*3-Minute Rule*”, Mike D says “But you’re lookin’ so fly inside your *BMW*”. *BMW* is a famous automobile manufacture company as well, originating from Germany and is nowadays easily recognizable and highly regarded, which speaks a lot about the person in possession of one and the same goes for a *Gran Fury* and *Range Rover*, as well. Even in the track “*Hey Ladies*”, when the Beastie Boys invite women into their car, they use the vehicle entity instead of the target entity ‘cars’: “Makin’ love in the back of my *Coupe DeVille*”. A *Coupe DeVille* is an expensive vintage model of American-made automobiles from the company Cadillac, contrasting the aforementioned *Gran Fury*, *Range Rover* and *BMW* vehicle entities. A Cadillac is also mentioned again in the track “*Shadrach*”, where MCA and Ad-Rock boast about their esteemed car accompanied by loud speakers: “Because the bass is bumping from the back of my *Fleetwood*”. The elegant car in question is most likely the 1989 Fleetwood Brougham d’Elegance. There are countless possibilities of car models or car names that can replace the target entity ‘cars’, which proves that “the member of a category that is used as a metonymic vehicle or target is an especially salient one” (Kövecses 2002: 153).

Later on, in the track “*3-Minute Rule*” that was mentioned before, a different example of the member of a category for the category within the Category-and-Member ICM is apparent in MCA’s verse: “It’s just two wheels<sup>3</sup> and me, the wind in my eyes / The engine is the music and *my nine’s* by my side”. The “nine” he keeps on his person refers to a 9-millimeter handgun, also known as 9mm PARA od 9mm Luger. The nine millimeters typically refer to the dimensions of the cartridge, but also apply to the gun as a whole and can overtly replace the target entity ‘guns’. There is a double metonymy at play here. The first metonymy would be part for the functioning whole where the cartridge refers to the gun using it. This is followed by a second metonymy, namely the specific for generic, because the label 9mm can also be applied to handgun produced

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<sup>3</sup> “Two wheels” is also a metonymy referring to a motor bike

by other manufacturers or companies. We will see different examples of similar vehicle entities in a later section.

**Table 1:** Vehicle and target entities throughout *Paul's Boutique*

	<i>Johnny Ryall</i>	<i>The Sounds of Science</i>	<i>A Year and a Day</i>	<i>High Plains Drifter</i>	<i>Car Thief</i>	<i>Hey Ladies</i>	<i>3-Minute Rule</i>	<i>Shadrach</i>
SHOES / SNEAKERS	Pumas	Adidas, Filas						
ALCOHOL	Night Train, Olde English (O.E)		Bass Ale, Guinness Stout					
CIGARETTES				Kool	Kool			
CARS		Range Rover			Gran Fury	Coupe De Ville	BMW	Fleetwood Brougham d'Elegance
GUNS							Nine (.9, 9mm)	

### Part-Part Metonymy in *Paul's Boutique*

As the narrators are describing the aforementioned vagrant Johnny earlier in the track “*Johnny Ryall*”, they implement metonymy in the form of an eponym: “*Louis Vuitton* with the Gucci guitar”. In this instance they are making use of the part for part metonymy, more precisely the producer for product metonymy, within the confines of the Production ICM. Simply by mentioning the name Louis Vuitton, an image of a relatively expensive handbag or purse comes to mind, which serves as proof that the producer and the product have interchangeable qualities as eponyms. Further on in the track “*3-Minute Rule*” we have Ad-Rock saying: “You got your 8 by 10, your agent, *your Harley*”. The so-called Production ICMs require an object or product that was made by the producer and this example uses the motorbike Harley-Davidson as the vehicle entity. Interestingly enough, even though William Harley and Arthur Davidson are founders and makers of Harley-Davidson (the company and the motorbikes), the metonym is shortened, using only William Harley’s surname. The next and last prime example of this frequently-used metonymy type is found in the track “*Stop That Train*”, when describing a stereotypical character’s



appearance: “The neck, tortoise, your *Lees* are creased”. *Lees* are a brand of designer jeans named after the founder of the company Lee, Henry David Lee. They were popular in the eighties for having creases but ultimately went out of fashion yet the company remains active even today. Hence, by using metonymy or more specifically eponyms, the lyrics can easily describe a person who is mild-mannered and plainly dressed as opposed to our narrators.

**Table 2:** Producer and product relationships in *Paul’s Boutique*

	<i>Johnny Ryall</i>	<i>3-Minute Rule</i>	<i>Stop That Train</i>
Louis Vuitton	Louis Vuitton		
William Harley, Arthur Davidson		Harley	
Henry David Lee			Lees

In the second verse of the track “*Egg Man*”, one special instance of the part for part metonymy occurs, more specifically the object involved in an action for the action metonymy, as a member the Action ICM: “I *egged* the chicken, now they got me in a cell”. Action ICMs need several participants, so here we have an object involved in an action and the action itself. To egg somebody or something means to throw eggs at them and is considered an event, more specifically, an event of motion. Afterwards in the track “*3-Minute Rule*”, Mike D uses an additional example of the object involved in an action for the action metonymy: “Customs *jailed* me over an herb seed”.<sup>4</sup> The Customs Administration has the power and means necessary to put someone in jail, so Mike D is saying he went to jail for the possession of marijuana. A third and final example of the corresponding metonymy object involved in an action for the action and the Action ICM is evident on the track “*Get on the Mic*”: “Let’s be real, and don’t *cloud* the issue”. If we use the noun cloud as a verb, i.e. when we cloud something, it becomes foggy or clouded and difficult to see through. In this manner, figuratively speaking, the issue would make somebody confused.

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<sup>4</sup> This is also part-whole metonymy. A customs officer is doing an arrest on behalf of the government, state or customs.

## 3.2. Metonymy Types in Nas's *Illmatic*

### Part-Whole Metonymy in *Illmatic*

The very first track “*The Genesis*”, contains two vehicle entities: “Ayo, Nas, put *the Jacksons* and *the Grants* over there!” and also in the latter line “Cause we spendin’ *the Jacksons*”. These examples display the first instance of the member of a category for the category metonymy, within the confines of the Category-and-Member ICM. A portrait of Andrew Jackson, the seventh U.S. president can be found on the twenty-dollar bill, whereas Ulysses S. Grant, the eighteenth U.S. president is featured on the fifty-dollar bill. Yet another example appears in the subsequent track “*N.Y. State of Mind*”: “I keep some E&J, sittin’ bent up in the stairway or either on the corner bettin’ *Grants* with the cee-lo lamps”. Nas implies he is betting fifty-dollar bills which showcases his venture and hungriness for money. A third variant of the vehicle entity can be found in the song “*Life’s a Bitch*”: “*The Washingtons* go to wifey, you know how that go”. George Washington, the first president of the United States, is featured on the one-dollar bill. Nas is basically saying the fifty-dollar bills get stashed, the twenty-dollar bills get used daily and the one-dollar bills go to “wifey”, yet it is unsure if Nas speaks of his girlfriend, mistress or perhaps strippers. He has not elaborated on the lyrics, but most importantly we have three vehicle entities that provide cognitive access to their target entity ‘money’.

The first track “*The Genesis*” hosts a different vehicle entity but is also a representative of the Category-and-Member ICM: “We tryin’ to see many mansions and *Coupes*, kid”. A Coupe here represents a closed roof, two-door passenger car with a three-box body for the engine and the passengers. In a way, Nas is saying he is trying to get rich in order to acquire expensive cars and big houses. This metonymy occurs again in the song “*The World Is Yours*” with a similar vehicle entity: “Whether cruisin’ in a Sikh’s cab or *Montero Jeep*”. A *Montero Jeep* refers to a SUV automobile made by the company Mitsubishi. These two examples serve as vehicle entities to the target entity ‘cars’, which established itself in *Paul’s Boutique*.

An alternative archetype of the same metonymy and ICM model is found in the songs “*The Genesis*”: “Who got *the Phillies*?” and “*One Love*”: “Rollin’ *two Phillies* together, in the Bridge we call ‘em oo-wops”. *Phillies Cigars* or *Blunts* are iconic, budget-friendly corner store cigars with hollowed out bodies that are filled with tobacco but for this purpose refilled with marijuana. Nas uses this vehicle entity numerous times throughout the album, like in the track “*One Time 4 Your Mind*”, he says: “Then I send a shorty from my block to the store for *Phillies*”, meaning he sends a woman from the neighborhood to buy him blunts, so he can roll up a joint as he wakes up in the

morning. Typically, the target entity here would be ‘blunts’ or ‘cigars’ but ‘cigarettes’ is a better fit because it is all-encompassing (for example a ‘marijuana cigarette’).

Nas also uses a cluster of vehicle entities that substitute the target entity ‘guns’, first seen in the song “*N.Y. State of Mind*”: “Holdin’ an *M16*, see, with the pen I’m extreme”.<sup>5</sup> The M16 is the designation for a series of eponymous models of American assault rifles that are based on the AR-15 automatic rifle. The same song contains yet another substitute metonym in the line: “I’m suited up with street clothes, hand me a *nine* and I’ll defeat foes”. The “nine” he would use to hurt his enemies refers to the 9-millimeter handgun, which was introduced in *Paul’s Boutique*. The 9mm PARA occurs rather frequently in later songs, such as in “*One Love*”: “Hangin’ out with young thugs that all carry *nines*”, which means Nas’s friends all have handguns for protection. In a later line, to avoid his stressful lifestyle, Nas narrates how he takes a weekend off to decompress, leaving his handgun home and turning his phone off: “To relax my dome, no phone, left *the 9* at home” and in the song “*One Time 4 Your Mind*”: “But now I know the time, got an older mind, plus control a *9*”. The implication here being that he has matured over the years but still carries a handgun because of the times i.e. the violent way the world or his world is arranged nowadays.

Returning to the track “*N.Y. State of Mind*”, Nas introduces a distinct vehicle entity in the line: “Once they caught us off-guard, *the MAC-10* was in the grass” as well as in the track “*One Time 4 Your Mind*”: “I hold a *MAC-11* and attack a reverend”. The MAC-10 and the MAC-11 are the Military Armament Corporation Model 10 and 11 submachine guns that were developed by Gordon Ingram during the 1970s. The Model 11 mentioned here is more compact and chambered for smaller rounds in favor of efficiency. The MAC-10 being “in the grass” could be a metaphor for the gun being hidden. In the latter line, Nas suggests he is not merciful and would even assault a reverend with his submachine gun. Moments later during the same song, Nas is using another vehicle entity with the same ICM model: “Be havin’ dreams that I’m a gangsta, drinkin’ *Moët’s*, holdin’ *TEC’s*”.<sup>6</sup> Nas narrates a fantasy sequence where he is rich and tough like a gangster, able to afford premium alcohol and well-equipped with guns. This particular vehicle entity reoccurs in the songs “*Represent*”: “Pulling a *TEC* out the dresser”, as well as in “*It Ain’t Hard to Tell*”: “Jam like a *TEC* with correct techniques”. The TEC-9 is a line of semi-automatic pistols developed in the United States by the company Intratec and serves to give mental access to the established ‘guns’ target entity like with cases that were discussed earlier.

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<sup>5</sup> A play on the expression “The pen is mightier than the sword.”, which is also a metonymy meaning written word is better than war.

<sup>6</sup> “Moët’s” is a part-part metonymy which will be analyzed later in the paper.

**Table 3:** Vehicle and target entities in *Illmatic*

	<i>The Genesis</i>	<i>N.Y. State of Mind</i>	<i>Life's a Bitch</i>	<i>The World Is Yours</i>	<i>One Time 4 Your Mind</i>	<i>One Love</i>	<i>Represent</i>	<i>It Ain't Hard to Tell</i>
MONEY	Jacksons, Grants	Grants	Washingtons					
CARS	Coupes			Montero Jeep				
CIGARETTES	Phillies				Two Phillies			
GUNS		M-16, nine (.9), MAC-10, TEC's			9, MAC-11	Nines, the nine	TEC	TEC

### Part-Part Metonymy in *Illmatic*

Just as likely as the Beastie Boys, Nas incorporates the part for part metonymy, more precisely the producer for product metonymy bearing the identical ICM model quite frequently. The first instance can be found in the very first track “*The Genesis*”, in the line: “Take this *Hennessy*” and “Pass that *henrock*, pass that *henrock!*” and once again in “*Represent*”, in the line: “So I guzzle my *Hennessy* while pulling on mad blunts”. *Hennessy*, even often nicknamed ‘*henrock*’, is a type of cognac produced by the French company *Jas Hennessy & Cie*, but the original founder of the dynasty is Richard Hennessy. We can see that these products or objects differ from the Beastie Boys’ *Night Train*, *Olde English*, etc., mainly because *Hennessy* is a favorite amongst African-Americans and is ultimately an essential choice when it comes to liquor preferences which is why it has become a frequently-used eponym.

By reexamining the track “*N.Y. State of Mind*”, a further instance of the producer for product metonymy is evident in the line: “Give me a *Smith & Wesson*, I’ll have niggas undressin”. The *Smith & Wesson Revolver Company* was founded by Horace Smith and Daniel B. Wesson who are metonymically being referred to in this example. Befittingly, the gun in question is a *Smith & Wesson*, a distinguished revolver or magnum handgun. In similar fashion we find an identical

product-producer relationship in the tracks “*One Love*”: “Your man gave him your *Glock* and now they run together” and “*Represent*”: “I drink a little vodka, spark a L and hold a *Glock* for the frontiers, wannabe ill niggas and spot runners”. A Glock is also a semi-automatic pistol or handgun invented by the Austrian engineer Gaston Glock, manufactured by the company of the same name. And last but not least, one final product-producer relationship can be found in the track “*It Ain’t Hard to Tell*”: “Sneak an *Uzi* on the island in my army jacket linin”. An Uzi is a rapid-fire submachine gun that was designed by Uziel Gal in the late 1940s. Because the gun is of a smaller build, Nas hints at the fact he can hide it in his coat, as to not draw attention to himself.

Two more producer-product relationships emerge in the tracks “*It Ain’t Hard to Tell*”: “I drink *Moët* with Medusa, give her shotguns in Hell” and in “*Represent*”: “*Moët* drinking, marijuana smoking street dweller”. Claude Moët was a French wine maker who founded the Champagne house Moët et Chandon. The drink Nas is sharing with Medusa is likely referring to a sparkling wine produced by Moët although it is unclear which one exactly. Similarly, in the track “*The World Is Yours*”: “I sip the *Dom P*, watchin’ Gandhi ‘til I’m charged”. It is no secret that Nas likes to drink expensive champagne while watching a movie in order to write effective lyrics and get his creative juices flowing.

**Table 4:** Producer-product relationship in *Illmatic*

	<i>The Genesis</i>	<i>Represent</i>	<i>N.Y. State of Mind</i>	<i>One Love</i>	<i>It Ain’t Hard to Tell</i>	<i>The World Is Yours</i>
Richard Hennessy	Hennessy, henrock					
Horace Smith, Daniel B. Wesson			Smith & Wesson			
Uziel Gal					Uzi	
Gaston Glock		Glock		Glock		
Claude Moët		Moët			Moët	
Dom Pierre Perignon						Dom P

### 3.3. Metonymy Types in N.W.A.'s *Straight Outta Compton*

#### Part-Whole Metonymy in *Straight Outta Compton*

The first instance of the MEMBER OF A CATEGORY FOR THE CATEGORY metonymy, within the confines of the Category-and-Member ICM stands out in the track “*Fuck tha Police*”, which deals with the violent critique of the police as well as political views of the time: “You’d rather see me in the pen than me and Lorenzo rollin’ in a *Benz-o*”. As mentioned previously, Lorenzo Jerald Patterson is MC Ren’s real name, so Ice Cube is saying that policemen would rather have N.W.A. in prison than driving around in a Mercedes-Benz as free men. In addition, the Mercedes-Benz gets mentioned again, albeit with a slightly different vehicle entity, in the track “*I Ain’t tha I*”, just as Ice Cube is describing a woman: “I used to get no play; now she stay behind me ‘cause I said I had a *Benz 190*”. The Mercedes-Benz 190 is a famous vintage model that cost way more at the time than it does now, but it undeniably denotes status or wealth, i.e. it implies one has that kind of cashflow capable of purchasing one, which is why the girl who hangs on to Ice Cube is a gold-digger who is beside him only after finding out the fact that he is now a man who is well off. These vehicle entities carry positive connotations that are not obvious at first glance but primarily provide access to the general rate and class of a car.

A further example of the same metonymy type and ICM scheme is evident in the track “*Gangsta Gangsta*”: “About drinkin’ straight out *the eight bottle*”. The eight bottle is a 40-ounce bottle of Olde English 800 malt liquor (commonly referred to as 8-ball). Eazy-E frequently rapped about this being his drink of choice. All the more, Ice Cube mentions this vehicle entity again later in the song: “Ice Cube’ll go stupid when I’m full of *eight ball*”, meaning that alcohol makes him act stupid. Based on the analysis, Beastie Boys also used the brand O.E. as a vehicle entity in *Paul’s Boutique*, showing how common it is in the streets, be that the East Coast or the West Coast.

There are several instances of the target entity ‘wheels’ throughout the album, such as: “See a nigga on *Dayton’s* and we creep” in the above-mentioned song “*Gangsta Gangsta*”. Dayton Wire Wheels is a car accessories mega shop that specializes in assembling and customizing wheel rims. Ice Cube is standing outside the workshop, presumably checking for possible targets to rob as they exit the shop. This particular metonym reappears in the track “*Dopeman*”: “Rollin’ *six-fo*’ wit the fresh ass *Daytons*”. There are even two metonymies present here. The vehicle entity, a “six-fo” is a reference to the 1964 Chevy Impala car model, representing the target entity ‘cars’. Dayton’s are

luxurious wire wheel rims intended to match a '64 Chevy Impala perfectly. The song is about a person called The Dopeman, who famously drives this car and upgrades his rims regularly.

**Table 5:** Vehicle and target entities in *Straight Outta Compton*

	<i>Fuck tha Police</i>	<i>I Ain't tha 1</i>	<i>Gangsta Gangsta</i>	<i>Dopeman</i>
CARS	Benz-O	Mercedes-Benz 190		Six-fo (1964 Chevy Impala)
ALCOHOL			Eight bottle (8-ball)	
WHEELS			On Dayton's	Fresh ass Dayton's

### Part-Part Metonymy in *Straight Outta Compton*

In the very first track “*Straight Outta Compton*”, Ice Cube lays out the first verse where he uses two vehicle entities to refer to the target entity ‘guns’: “AK-47 is the tool / Don't make me act a motherfucking fool” and “Every time I pull an AK off the shelf”. Ice Cube’s weapon of choice is notably the most famous automatic firing rifle, the AK-47, which was designed by Mikhail Kalashnikov. It is clear that the producer for product metonymy is used frequently throughout the album. Simultaneous vehicle entities “AK” and “AK-47” are employed to enable mental access to the target entity ‘guns’. Another equivalent case is apparent in the track “*Express Yourself*”: “And if you start fessin’, I got a *Smith & Wesson* for you”. We have already determined that the Smith & Wesson is Nas’s first weapon of choice but N.W.A. are no strangers to it either. Further analysis shows another instance of the same metonymy in the track “*Fuck tha Police*”, quoted from Eazy-E: “When I’m playing with the trigger of an *Uzi* or an *AK*” and in the track “*Dopeman*”: “His *Uzi* up yo’ ass if he don’t get paid”. Even though N.W.A.’s *Straight Outta Compton* debuted in 1988 on the West Coast, six years before the East Coast record *Illmatic*, it is apparent that Nas likes to use the same guns as vehicle entities, too.

In the previously mentioned track “*Gangsta Gangsta*”, Ice Cube incorporates yet another product-producer relationship, whilst describing himself as a gangster: “A t-shirt and *Levi’s* is his only disguise”. The product being mentioned here – *Levi’s*, which are a brand of jeans invented by Levi Strauss, imply the person is normally dressed to appear inconspicuous.

**Table 6:** Producer-product relationships in *Straight Outta Compton*

	<i>Straight Outta Compton</i>	<i>Express Yourself</i>	<i>Fuck tha Police</i>	<i>Dopeman</i>	<i>Gangsta Gangsta</i>
Mikhail Kalashnikov	AK, AK-47		AK		
Horace Smith, Daniel B. Wesson		Smith & Wesson			
Uziel Gal			Uzi	Uzi	
Levi Strauss					Levi's

Finally, two special cases of the Action ICM are observable in the track “*Parental Discretion Iz Advised*”: “I’m *engineerin’* the shit that you’re hearin’”. When we use the word engineer in its verb form, it means to design or bring about something. He is implying that he, personally, makes the lyrics we are listening to. This is a prime example of the agent for action metonymy. The second example can be found in the track “*I Ain’t tha I*”: “You shouldn’t be so damn material and try *to milk* Ice Cube like cereal”. This example belongs to the object involved in an action for action metonymy. To milk something or someone would mean to extract something beneficial like money or gifts as much from that thing or person as possible.

### 3.4. Metonymy Types in OutKast’s *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*

#### Whole-Part Metonymy in *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*

The most dominant case for the whole for part metonymy in hip-hop lyrics would be the personification of Uncle Sam – the cartoonish figure, or rather, the image that has been used as military propaganda in drafting young Americans into war, in order to represent the government and ultimately the United States of America as a country, which here serves as a metaphor that interacts with several metonymies. One such instance occurs in the track “*Call of da Wild*”: “Damn, I’d probably be mad even if I called up *Uncle Sam* to bring dough to the Goodie Mo-B”. Andre is saying he would still be angry and contempt even if he received welfare checks from the government.



### **Part-Whole Metonymy in *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik***

In the track “*Myintrotoletuknow*”, Big Boi raps about a vehicle entity we have familiarized ourselves with already, an instance of the member of a category for the category metonymy, within the confines of the Category-and-Member ICM, in the line: “I’ll buy you fifty-box of *Phillies* at the Citgo”. Big Boi makes it relevant that he is also a connoisseur of the same brand of cigars / blunts Nas has used as vehicle entities in his lyrics. This line implies he is smoking on a daily basis and is ready to buy a whole lot of blunts at the nearest gas station (Citgo) that sells them, all in one trip.

Exactly like their contemporaries, Andre 3000 and Big Boi use a range of unique vehicle entities that give mental access to the frequent target vehicle ‘cars’, like in the song “*Myintrotoletuknow*” where OutKast brag about smoking weed out of an expensive car: “I’m rollin’ reefer out of a *Regal*”. Reefer is a nickname for marijuana, whereas a Regal refers to the Buick Regal which was marketed by the American company Buick in the 1970s and 1980s. The title track “*Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*” showcases the most instances of vehicle entities, like in the line: “I’m bendin’ corners *in my ‘Lac*, boy, ‘cause that’s how we be rollin’ here” and a couple of verses later in the lines: “Rollin’ steady in that *Caddy* but them 50 bottles got to go” and “My crew be thick as two fat hoes sittin’ off *in a Brougham*”. Even though Beastie Boys referenced Cadillacs before, Andre and Big Boi do it in another manner, either to fit the rhyming scheme “‘Lac” or simply as a diminutive form “Caddy”. The last line likely refers to the Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham that was popular in the 80’s. The target vehicle ‘cars’ is referenced numerous times throughout the album, like in “*Player’s Ball*”: “Man the scene was so thick: *Lowriders*, ‘77 *Sevilles*, *El Dogs*, nothin’ but them ‘*Lacs*”.<sup>7</sup> Lowriders are a type of car that has been customized to have a lowered body. Next, they describe the 1977 Cadillac Seville which is a semi-premium model made by Cadillac. And Lastly, they refer to the Cadillac Eldorado, a very luxurious car, as “El Dogs” to confirm that their surroundings consist of nothing but Cadillacs. Just like Beastie Boys, OutKast also reference a similar DeVille model in “*Git Up, Git Out*”: “Back up in my crib, eat my shit, break out quick in my slick ‘84 *Sedan DeVille*, steady bouncin”. A Sedan DeVille was the last DeVille model ever made and fairly larger than the Coupe model and OutKast use it here simply for bragging purposes but also for evoking imagery of the target entity ‘cars’.

Compared to other artists we have analyzed in this paper, OutKast are a little tamer on their album and the vehicle entity ‘guns’ appears quite rarely. For example, in the track “*Ain’t No Thang*”:

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<sup>7</sup> “Lowrider” also refers to the driver of the car but not in this context

“My *nine* be doin’ fine until these niggas wants to clear me”. The 9mm PARA solidifies itself as the most famous and accessible handgun ever made and it occurs in the lyrics of all artists. The only other vehicle entity stands out in a later line: “trippin’ with that drama, *my Beretta’s* right beside me”. This vehicle entity has not been mentioned before. The Beretta is an Italian-made handgun only referenced in this album, despite being a globally-used pistol for various civil and army purposes.

A recurring instance of the member of a category for the category metonymy, within the Category-and-Member ICM is apparent in the track “*Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*”, the duo uses a new concept for vehicle entities: “Rollin’ straight *Hammers and Vogues* in that old Southern slouch” and in another verse: “Step up in my shoes, you crews sittin’ on *Trues*, and *Vogues* for the hoes only”. Hammers or Trues are hubcaps made by the companies Hammer and Truespoke which the duo puts on their Vogue tires. The most suitable target entity here would be ‘wheels’ because hubcaps and tires are both mandatory parts of a car wheel.

Identical to Beastie Boys, OutKast are employing the same vehicle entity that provides mental access to the target entity ‘shoes’ / ‘sneakers’ in the song “*Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*”: “Kickin’ the khakis and *Adidas*”. This implies their favoritism to the Adidas brand, exactly like their contemporaries.

**Table 7:** Vehicle and target entities in *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*

	<i>Myintrotoletuknow</i>	<i>Ain’t No Thang</i>	<i>Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik</i>	<i>Player’s Ball</i>	<i>Git Up, Git Out</i>
CIGARETTES	Phillies				
CARS	Regal		‘Lac, Caddy, Brougham	Lowriders, ‘77 Sevilles, El Dogs ‘Lacs	‘84 Sedan DeVille
GUNS		nine			
WHEELS	Hammers, Vogues, Trues				
SHOES/SNEAKERS			Adidas		

**Part-Part Metonymy in *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik***

Only two instances were found during the analysis, but have already been explained in the paper. These product-producer relationships ultimately consolidate the fact how popular and wide-spread these products, or rather, producers are. In the track “*Ain’t No Thang*”: “We comin’ around Atlanta and the niggas are really strapped with the motherfuckin’ guns and the motherfuckin’ *Glocks*”. Introduced in Nas’s album, the semi-automatic pistol or handgun shows up again in the Southern parts of the United States. Big Boi even uses a vehicle entity ‘guns’ and target entity “Glocks” simultaneously, but the purpose of this is unclear, it is possible he is explaining the sheer quantity of guns his rivals have in possession. In similar fashion, in the song “*Player’s Ball*”, the same vehicle entity used by Nas can be found in the line: “I’m like, no matter what the season, forever chill with *Smith*, I sip my fifth I chill with *Wesson*”. The magnum handgun reappears in OutKast’s work but it was also mentioned before when covering *Illmatic*.

**Table 8:** Product-producer relationships in *Southernplayalisticadillacmuzik*

	<i>Ain’t No Thang</i>	<i>Player’s Ball</i>
Gaston Glock	The motherfuckin’ Glocks	
Horace Smith, Daniel B. Wesson		Chill with Smith, chill with Wesson

## 4. Conclusion

As we looked at the hip-hop cultural movement since its conception in the East Coast of the United States, its prominence was felt only a few years later in the West Coast and half a decade later in the South of the United States. This paper included four extremely important albums not only in the history of hip-hop but in the history of music. They have effectively proven to be a rich source of contemporary metonymies. By combining the three areas of research, between roughly 1988 and 1994 we have concluded that there is an abundance of metonymies in the Golden Age of Hip-hop. There are several cases where metonymies are evidently in a sequence, i.e. they are linked together and it is necessary to connect them with associations of a cultural and logical nature in order to fully grasp the meaning of an expression. These artists skillfully and effortlessly employ metonymy to give a detailed insight into their surroundings and the culture they are surrounded by. The prevalence of eponyms is a clear indicator of how products and product names have widespread and synonymous usage in this discourse as well as in everyday scenarios.

The reason why hip-hop thrives in metonymical conceptions, is partly because they involve physical things that are in close proximity rather than abstract and complex ones. This mostly includes but is not limited to target entities such as cars and their accessories, firearms, sneakers, cigarettes, money, alcohol, and a few others. Even though the vehicle entities are referential in nature and may differ among these adversaries, the target entities have blended in into African-American culture so much, that vehicle and target entities oftentimes exhibit a reversible or interchangeable relationship. In conclusion, metonymy in hip-hop lyrics productively serves as a powerful linguistic device, enabling artists to convey a network of different ideas, cultural references, and social commentary in a concise and impactful way. By substituting a word or expression with something that is closely related, rappers can layer their lyrics with deeper meaning, resulting in connections to wealth, status, or community through indirect references. This technique enhances the depth of storytelling, making the music resonate with listeners who share or understand the cultural contexts embedded in these substitutions. Ultimately, metonymy enriches the poetic quality of hip-hop, reflecting both the genre's creativity and its role as a forefront for social and cultural expression.

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