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A 'coloured' history, a black future: contesting the dominant representations in the media through hip-hop beats

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A "coloured" history, a Black future: contesting the dominant representations in the media through hip-hop beats

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Abstract:

This research will critically analyse “conscious” hip-hop music and the way in which it contests media and mainstream ideas in the media. Conscious hip-hop refers to rap music that critically engages with hegemonic discourses and popular culture. It is framed and named in this manner by both the performers/ artists themselves as well as by leading hip-hop scholars within South Africa and globally. This research uses the music of Godessa and Brasse Vannie Kaap to interrogate representations of Black identities and gender in society.

Plagiarism declaration:

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It has not been submitted to any other university for degree examination before in an form.

Derilene Marco

…….

…….

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I'd like to thank my mother, my father, my sister and my extended family for their continual support and encouragement throughout this year. Even when you were not exactly sure what this project on hip-hop entailed, you remained interested and supportive throughout. You've been wonderful! I'd also like to thank my supervisor, Professor Gqola who has been fantastic and has seen many different versions of me, sometimes my tenacity and at points, my complete disillusionment. Thanks so much for your support and encouragement. Thanks also to the hip-hop heads who answered the many questions I had.

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Introduction:

Fifteen years after the end of apartheid, South Africa continues to rely on the language of racial and cultural classification. This is evident in self-identification, labelling of others as well as in the categories used by the media. Such racial language, and the identities it describes, relies on entrenched apartheid shaped ideologies concerning race, culture, and racialised access to spaces.

The language of race is complicated in post-apartheid South Africa because it carries the baggage of long histories of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. Part of this language of race and racialisation in South Africa, then, relies on categorisations such as "white", "coloured", "Indian" and "black/African". At the same time, long histories of resistance and self-assertion have further politicised racial self-identification so that the meanings of "Black", "black", "African" and "coloured" do not always coincide neatly with meanings ascribed to such individuals or communities by previous repressive regimes[1].

The subversive politicisation of "Black" by the South African Black Consciousness Movement and "African" by global Pan Africanism imbued these labels with freeing meanings when claimed as self-identifications. Consequently,

[1] In order to distinguish between the various meanings of B/black in South Africa, I use 'black' (in lower caps) to refer to the demographic group sometimes referred to as racially African. I use 'coloured' to refer to the demographic group which is historically non-white and non-black, however I make use of "Black" (upper caps) to refer to Black as defined under Black Consciousness – and now contemporary South African legislation – to include "African", "Indian" and "coloured". These distinctions are made in this paper so as to understand various descriptions of Black bodies which are sometimes referred to in different ways by authors and also by the hip-hop groups' lyrics which are the focus of this project.

after these movements, the same person can claim simultaneous Black, African and coloured identity, thus challenging the tidy categories that apartheid sought to impose.

This research project investigates how Blackness is envisioned in the lyrics of two Cape Town based hip-hop groups: the all male Brasse Vannie Kaap (BVK) and the all female Godessa. Highly politicised, both groups problematise representations of Black people that rely on apartheid parlance, and which are therefore hegemonic. I am interested specifically in how these groups interrogate the interstices between coloured identity and/as Blackness. Put differently, how do these groups speak about coloured and other Black subjectivities?

In order to do so, I first turn to the complex discourses on colouredness. This is particularly important given that both groups probe coloured identities, as the thesis will show. Ruiters problematises constructions of "the coloured" when she writes:

> 'Miscegenation' between the white settlers, the indigenes and the slaves, gave rise to a 'mixed' race person. The assumption that coloured identity was born from a combination of different people is problematic because it incorrectly assumes that identities are primordial and fixed. Identities are not immutable therefore they should be examined temporally to determine how they have

> addressed and dealt with changing relations within a society. (2006: 15)

Ruiters' reference to "miscegenation" between white settlers and slaves positions the history of "colouredness" in a framework of being problematic from the inception of this named race. Furthermore, Ruiters challenges the belief and assumption of how "coloured" people came about by opposing the idea of racial purity, hereby asserting a new, unrestricted way of viewing identities in general. Ruiters' assertion of examining racial identity is thus not limited to the matter of "coloured" identity but refers to the examining of racial identity both within different contexts as well as within changes of those contexts.

In order to understand the distinction between the terms racism and racialism, Hendricks defines these as follows:

> Racialism (imputing a racial essence into an identity) and racism (attaching differential value to 'race'-based identities and treating them accordingly) have been seen primarily as late nineteenth century phenomena instead of as common social practices from the beginning of the conquest of the Cape. Similarly, late nineteenth and early twentieth century 'scientific racism' – typified through eugenics theories- also has been viewed often as impetus for the development of the racist practices which evolved in South Africa.

> The acceptance of these premises, which assumed that racialised distinctions, with their corresponding boundary markers and hierarchical valuations, were not prevalent at the Cape prior to this period, implies a view of the construction of coloured identity exclusively as a twentieth century phenomenon. (2001: 30)

The assumptions we have inherited and that inform public discourse on the coloured people are shaped by a history of discourses of miscegenation; the creation of this identity and racial hierarchy in the Western Cape is situated easily in colonialist constructions of naturalised difference constructed by twentieth century identity and race politics.

Authors who have traced coloured history and associated the lineage to slavery are Lewis (1989), Goldin (1989), Freedburg (1987) and Adhikari (1992; 1997). Hendricks however raises objection to some of the analyses by the above-mentioned authors, barring Adhikari who supports the argument that slavery played a role in creating a sense of community and belonging within the coloured communuity in the period of enslavement. More recently, Ruiters (2006) also supports this idea. Hendricks writes:

> Although they (the above mentioned authors) make mention of the periods of slavery and enserfment, they gloss over them. Instead, their focus is on the political expression of the identity through the

> study of the formation of coloured political parties and their reactions to state-building policies and practices […] Absent from these analyses is the foregrounding that the formation of coloured political parties, and government classification of coloured, could only transpire if the identity had a prior resonance. (2001: 30)

Another assumption inherited by the racial group relates to the way in which slavery was exacerbated by the apartheid dispensation to create a group that was constructed as less than white, but not quite black. The Population Registration Act No. 39 of 1950 defined a coloured person as: “not a white person or a native”. (Erasmus 2001: 18), where, as the Act continues, “[t]he term ‘native’ is defined in the Act as ‘a person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa’”. (In Erasmus, 2001: 27) In addition to the Population Registration Act of 1950, other political and social actions and official Acts by the apartheid government and society, reinforced notions of the ambiguous and residual coloured population and hence of coloured identity.

However, the idea that coloured identity is solely a creation or an apartheid imposition is not entirely true, in that this created community is real. Erasmus writes, “coloured identities are not simply Apartheid labels imposed by whites. They are made and re-made by coloured people themselves in their attempts to giving meaning to their everyday lives.” (2001: 16)

In specific relation to the apartheid construction of the coloured race, Wicomb writes:

> Miscegenation, the origins of which lie within a discourse of 'race', concupiscence, and degeneracy, continues to bound up with shame, a pervasive shame exploited in apartheid's strategy of the naming of a Coloured race, and recurring in the current attempts by coloureds to establish brownness as a pure category, which is to say a denial of shame. (1998: 92)

Wicomb re-iterates Erasmus (2001) when discussing a post-apartheid coloured population in acknowledging the coloured identity as part of a broader identity and as something of meaning within that. Wicomb writes that within the new coloured political organisations that started in the Western Cape since the first democratic election, "there have been attempts at blurring differences of language, class and religion in the interest of a homogenous ethnic group" (Wicomb, 1998: 94)

Hendricks re-iterates the points that both Erasmus and Wicomb articulate when she writes that the coloured identity construction "has been cloaked by the perceived shame of 'illegitimacy' and lack of authenticity that has to a large extent psychologically disempowered the bearers of the identity." (2005: 118)

The identity therefore does not only disempower but it also creates a sense of non-belonging in a country that is overtly obsessed with ideas of nation building and embracing identity and cultural inclusion. “An uncovering and re-representation of that history will locate the community as quintessentially a sub-group of a larger African identity and negate the sense of non-belonging that remains the undercurrent of the identity.” (Hendricks, 2005: 118) This sense of disempowerment is problematic in a post- apartheid South Africa more than ever, as it not only exemplifies a number of illusions in our society, but also because our media continually buttresses the now familiar rainbow nation rhetoric.

Other authors who have discussed the historical aspects of the “coloured” identity have highlighted aspects from the Black Consciousness ideology as articulated by Biko (1978). Some of the authors who deliberate “coloured” identity and the many facets to the analysis and discussion on it are Erasmus (1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2001), Gqola (2001a; 2001b; 2004), Haupt (1996; 2001; 2004), Hendricks (2001; 2005), Lewis (2001), Grunebaum and Robins (2001), Wicomb (1998) and Strauss (2004).

This research takes a qualitative approach because it seeks to understand and make meaning of media texts, namely the lyrics of the music by BVK and Godessa. Content analysis and discourse analysis are the two main methods that are used in this research project. Discourse analysis is also useful because it pays specific attention to utterances or spoken word, both word for word, as well

as in a general context of the words and thus the message as a whole. Utilising these methods allows the researcher to both analyse the texts (lyrics) through specific words used as well as make meaning of whole texts, referring to entire songs.

The first chapter is a review of the literature that frames and informs this research project. It also outlines the methodology that is used in this dissertation. The chapter's review of literature is framed by cultural studies and popular culture studies approach. It anticipates a number of theoretical topics that are explored in the analysis chapters such as: a distinction between conscious and non-conscious hip-hop music; racial and cultural identity in South Africa; as well as a review of literature on gender and hip-hop. The literature review also incorporates the ideas of critical authors' work that shape this research.

The second and third chapters focus on the analysis of lyrics by Godessa and BVK. Lyrics that are analysed in chapter two and three are taken from Godessa's single *Social Ills* (2002) and their second album *Spillage* (2004); BVK's *BVK* (1998), *Yskoud* (2000), *Superpower* (2004) and *Ysterbek* (2006); as well as EJ Von Lyrik's *Method in The Madness* (2008). Both Godessa and BVK are Cape Town based hip-hop groups who have a history of producing conscious music as well as activism within working class Black communities in the Western Cape.

BVK is a Cape Town based hip-hop group comprising of seven men, three who rap and four who are break-dancers. BVK have been a group since 1996. The members of the group who rap are: DJ Ready D, the late Mr. Fat and DJ Azhul. The members of the group who break- dance are: Shortee Blitz, Faiek Cheez, Grant, Baby L and Linden. BVK's cds that range from 1998 to 2006 have been mentioned above.

Godessa is a Cape Town based all women hip-hop group. Godessa entered onto the hip-hop scene at about the same time as BVK, during the late 90's. The group's work around that time largely focused on community activism and their first single was released in 2002. Members of Godessa are: Shameema Williams aka "Shame", Eloise Jones aka "EJ Von Lyrik" and Bernadette Amansure aka "Burni". Godessa and EJ Von Lyrik's solo work have been mentioned above.

Chapter two uses the lyrics of the music by the above hip-hop artists to analyse and discuss identity. This chapter focuses on the manner in which Godessa and BVK articulate ideas about Black identity, self-naming and asserting themselves as active agents in choosing their own identities. The chapter also analyses what the groups express to listeners of their music pertaining the topic of identity in post-apartheid South African societies. Conscious hip-hop's promotion of identity consciousness plays a particularly important role in this chapter. Both the literature review and the analysis chapters highlight the prominence of the phrase

“knowledge of self” in conscious hip-hop music. The importance of Black identity being grappled with in the music is thus grounded in this phrase.

Chapter three uses the lyrics of music by BVK and Godessa to analyse and discuss gender. The groups promote ideas about both masculinities and femininities that are analysed in chapter three. This chapter analyzes what BVK and Godessa rap about in relation to gendered roles that are portrayed in different ways in their music. This chapter highlights the disparities within gendered roles and gendering that not only exists in society (as critiqued by Godessa and BVK) but also the disparities that exist in Godessa and BVK’s own ideas about gender that are seen in their music.

This study is important because it stands at the intersection of media/cultural studies scholarship on hip-hop, research on Black/ “coloured” identities and alternative constructions of gendered Black agency, usually found within critical race discourse and/or post-colonial studies. With the exception of the work of media scholars like Adam Haupt and Lee Watkins, hip-hop music has received scant attention in South African scholarship. The ability of conscious hip-hop to intercede new ways of thinking about and engaging societal themes of concern such as identity, culture and gender has also been given little attention. This study will contribute to this growing field within media studies, while at the same time bring to bear lessons gleaned from emerging gendered Black/ “coloured” identity studies.

This study has three questions. These are:

1. What does hip-hop take issue with in terms of these conflicting identities, one, “black” and “authentic” and one, “coloured” and hybrid?
2. How are constructions of these identities contested within local conscious hip-hop?
3. Is hip-hop a more meaningful and dynamic platform for representations of Black subjectivity than the mainstream media?

Chapter 1: Literature Review and Methodology

Hegemonic media communicates a dominant ideology about a number of things such as politics, racial stereotypes, and gender. In contrast, conscious hip-hop takes issue with these dominant ideas and representations through its counter-discursive lyrics.

This research will critically analyse how “conscious” hip-hop music contests hegemonic constructions of Blackness as represented in the media. Conscious hip-hop refers to rap music that critically engages with hegemonic discourses and popular culture. It is framed and named in this manner by the performers/artists themselves as well as the leading hip-hop scholars within South Africa and globally. This research project investigates how two leading South African hip-hop groups engage dominant constructions of race and identity in South African society, with specific reference to gendered representations of “coloured” and “black” identities in media.

Through the analysis of “conscious” hip-hop lyrics in the Godessa and BVK compact discs (cds), this research aims to critically engage with conscious hip-hop’s critique of media as a space which reinforces stereotypical notions about “different races” in accordance with racial stereotypes understood in apartheid discourse.

Theories in popular culture studies and cultural studies will be used in this thesis. The study will also draw on critical race discourse studies and feminist theory to explore racial identity and difference, hip-hop as a form of contestation and South African “coloured” identity studies.

However, it is necessary that popular culture be placed within the larger framework of media as a public space, “especially in view of how popular culture today is so closely bound up with the mass media.” (Strinati, 1995: xv)

McQuail identifies six points linking critical cultural theory to media as a public space. These are the following:

- Mass culture is a debased form in capitalist society
- Mass culture is designed to produce false consciousness
- Commodification is the central process
- Mass culture embodies hegemonic ideology
- Ideology can be decoded differentially and even reversed
- Popular culture can be distinguished from mass culture (2005: 117)

The media are largely “responsible for what we call either ‘mass culture’ or ‘popular culture’, and they have colonized other cultural forms in the process.” (Mc Quail, 2005: 118) Popular culture is a reflection of what is dominant in a certain society. Mass popular culture can form part of a standardised and

internationally marketed form of culture, whether it is music, films or art. Strinati writes: “mass culture is popular culture which is produced by mass production industrial techniques and is marketed for a profit to a mass public of consumers.” (1995: 10) This mass culture is what is referred to by many authors on both American and local hip-hop as “mainstream rap music”, and is often in direct contrast to the conscious hip-hop identified by the same authors. (Rose 1994, Haupt 2006, Bennett 2001, Forman and Neal 2004, Rose and Ross, 1994)

Popular culture is thus “a standardised, formulaic, repetitive and superficial culture, which celebrates trivial, sentimental, immediate and false pleasures at the expense of serious, intellectual, time honoured and authentic values.” (Strinati, 1995: 14) Mass produced and consumed popular culture therefore begins to define social reality for the mass public; it is a culture which “lacks intellectual challenge and stimulation, preferring the undemanding ease of fantasy and escapism.” (Strinati, 1995: 14-15) “The most widely disseminated and enjoyed symbolic culture of our time (…) is what flows in abundance by way of the media of films, television, newspapers, phonogram, video, and so on.” (Mc Quail, 2005: 118)

Adorno critiques popular culture by writing that the culture industry “is one of anti-enlightenment”. He continues with the following:

> Progressive technical domination becomes mass deception and is turned into a means of fettering consciousness. It impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. (1991: 92)

Furthermore, Hall critically analyses Black popular culture by positing that, "popular culture carries that affirmative ring because of the prominence of the word 'popular'". (1996: 469) Hall defines global Black popular culture as:

> A contradictory space. It is a sight of strategic contestation. But it can never be simplified or explained in terms of the simple binary oppositions that are habitually used to map it out: high and low; resistance versus incorporation; authentic versus inauthentic; experiential versus formal; opposition versus homogenization. (1996: 470)

Hall magnifies the use of the word Black in Black popular culture in saying that this is a "mark of difference *inside* forms of popular culture – which are by definition contradictory and which therefore appear as impure, threatened by incorporation or exclusion – that is carried by the signifier 'black' in the term 'black popular culture'". (1996: 471)

Popular culture shapes certain kinds of hip-hop music but provides a useful framework for analysing conscious hip-hop. It is for this reason that Hall's analysis of Black popular culture is particularly important. Neal considers hip-hop as one of the first forms of Black popular culture to develop "largely unmediated by modes of communal critique rooted in the formal and informal traditions of the Black Public Sphere." (1999: 160) The hip-hop that will be analysed in this study speaks to the issues raised about popular culture as a dominant culture and about the lack of agency of individuals who succumb to the kind of hip-hop that is part of the mass cultural industry.

Using cultural studies to read the media, Boyd-Barrett considers it a tradition that provides a "far more subtle appreciation of the ways in which media technologies are used in everyday life and the multiple ways in which audiences as cultural members take meaning from texts." (2002: 38) Furthermore, cultural studies also analyses "meaning in and through the text itself." (Boyd-Barrett, 2002: 47)

Similar to Boyd-Barrett, Kellner discusses cultural studies as drawing on:

> a range of fields to theorize the complexity and contradictions of the multiple effects of a vast range of forms of media/ culture/ communication in our lives and demonstrate how these artefacts serve as instruments of domination, but also offer resources for resistance and change. (1995: 28)

The discussion of cultural studies as a theory correlates with the above discussion on popular culture and society. This is so because the media help to shape the world and society in which we live and are "intimately connected with power and open the study of culture" to issues and topics that affect society. The media "help shape our view of the world, public opinion, values and behaviour, and are thus an important forum for social power and struggle." (Kellner, 1995: 37)

Authors like Hall (1996a; 1996b; 2001), hooks (2001), Kellner and Durham (2001), Horkheimer and Adorno (2001), Hebdige (2001), Canclini (2001) and McLuhan (2001) have critically analysed the value and developments of cultural studies to cover issues of identity, race, the notion of the Other and representation in media.

A number of studies on hip-hop read it as a genre of music but also as a form of contestation to mainstream media; contesting mainstream ideas about gender, about politics and about race, where mainstream media is defined in the terms spelled out above. Furthermore, other studies have been done on "coloured" identity in South Africa. However, not many scholars have covered the two topics together. Adam Haupt is one of a few South African academics who have written on some of the aspects this research will cover. Haupt's work covers issues on coloured identity and hip-hop as well as the way in which hip-hop proves to be a

form of contestation to mainstream media and hegemonic understandings of culture and economics at a global level. (Haupt 2001; 2004; 1996; 2008) Lee Watkins is another South African academic who has covered aspects of this study. (2001; 2004)

Haupt's work makes specific reference to conscious hip-hop acts such as Prophets of da City, Brasse Vannie Kaap, Black Noise, and Godessa. Many of these groups play an important role in deconstructing dominant ideas about race, social ills (also a title to one of Godessa's songs), shame and coloured identity. Haupt and other authors' differentiation between conscious hip-hop and mainstream hip-hop is useful as conscious hip-hop is generally based on sophisticated ideas that oppose oppression and mainstream hip-hop and rap more broadly.

One of the most obvious ways in which mainstream, hegemonic identities are contested in conscious hip-hop is through the interrogation of race-embedded meanings. Gqola writes:

> If apartheid worked well because it divided Black people, Black Consciousness realised that the most effective tool against racism as a force was Black solidarity. As a starting point then, BC redefined "Black" as a racial marker to include all South Africans on the receiving end of historical discrimination grounded in race.

> Black self-redefinition was perceived as crucial to toppling the power structure which, under apartheid, was identified as primarily based on race. (2001 a: 132)

It is necessary to highlight the fact that not all people who were classified as coloured by the apartheid government wanted to be part of this larger Black consciousness movement. Some people who identified as coloured were content to create and attribute their histories differently. Hence, the Black Consciousness Movement was interesting politically but also socially to those South Africans who identified with the larger movement and the social transformation the BCM tried to promote. BCM definitions also found their way into non-BC political spaces culturally and socially.

It is in this light that hip-hop music can be seen as a space of critical contestation of hegemonic racial discourses in South Africa. Hip-hop music's introduction in South Africa took place during a time when and where racial discourses were largely segregated, as were other aspects of socio-economic life. Hip-hop thus offers an interesting perspective of the way in which certain South African publics interact with and engage with media texts placed in the popular culture category. Black consciousness writing and culture has had an influence on the South African hip-hop scene as will be discussed.

The taking on of the fixed cultural and racial distinction of "coloured is problematic in itself. Gqola writes about the recent discourses on fixed racial categorization:

> In a democratic South African naming remains dynamic; reclamation and redefinition present new possibilities as evidenced, for example, by the shifting contemporary uses of 'c/Coloured' and 'b/Black' (Kadalie, 1995 and Wicomb, 1998). (2001 b: 96)

The racialised spaces of South Africa as well as our media's portrayal of cultures through race, rings true in Gqola's point that, although "abrasive representation" has been resisted for many years, "new ways of describing, prescribing and defining have come to the fore". (2001 b: 96) Gqola's caution is that despite new possibilities, "it would be naïve to assume that discourses of racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism crucial to white supremacist capitalist patriarchy would disappear overnight." (2001 b: 96) The contestation of these spaces and discourses allows access to a deeper understanding of the variety of historical Black experiences in this country.

In addition to the contestation of naming and claiming historical identities, it is necessary to consider the cultural dimensions that constitute what groups are. Language is a particularly important one for the purposes of this study and its link with the public sphere. I want to highlight the use of language in the form of dialectic shifts in the Afrikaans language, from standard Afrikaans to "Kaaps", the

latter of which is also known by the derogatory label “gamtaal”. This is a version of the language spoken by many Cape Coloured people, as well as by the hip-hop groups which will be discussed in this paper. Afrikaans historically emerged from linguistic creolisation of Dutch, African languages and various Asian languages. It became the lingua franca at the Cape for slaves drawn from various locations such as East Africa, South (East) Asia and the South African hinterland. Robert C. H. Shell identifies slavery in the Cape as a matrix for creolisation. He suggests that, “creoles were the most expensive and most preferred slaves.” (1994: 25) The status of Afrikaans in the nineteenth century was lower than it would be in the twentieth century, as it gradually became the language of white Afrikaners and of Afrikaner nationalism. It is possible to see “Kaaps” as a language closer to its origin, in the mouths of slaves, hence the label “kitchen Dutch”.

Afrikaner nationalist appropriations of Afrikaans led to the inversion of Kaaps in status, so that it became the dialect spoken by the descendents of the slaves who creolised it, hence it is now labelled “colloquial” and “colourful”.

While “gamtaal” is a derogatory word to describe the language and, in this context, its “coloured” speakers, it also highlights an identity different to Afrikaner identity, despite both groups speaking Afrikaans. Marlin- Curiel (2003: 67) discusses Brasse Vannie Kaap (one of the hip-hop groups this paper focuses on) in her article on the shifting identities of Afrikaans speakers in South Africa, “To

illustrate how different Gamtaal is from standard Afrikaans, Ready D explained that a white Afrikaner and his Cape Flats compatriots listening to the same sentence will come away with completely different interpretations." She writes, "Like Afrikaans, Gamtaal's search for normalisation will end when acceptance replaces stigma. Gamtaal will have to achieve its legitimacy as an oral rather than a written form." (Marlin- Curiel, 2003: 71)

I disagree with this point on acceptance, as Kaaps, as seen used broadly across "coloured" communities in South Africa, already has a place of acceptance. This acceptance is proven in Mr Fat's (a deceased member of BVK), assertion that "*gamtaal"* is legal (and) provides an important point of entry into pioneer hip-hop groups, Prophets of da City (POC) and BVK's own self-representation. (Haupt, 2001: 178) In a post- apartheid South Africa, an ideological shift in Afrikaner communities was seen by some, named "die verligtes" (the enlightened). The aim was to create more space, especially in the public sphere for other South African groups who claimed Afrikaans as part of their identities but the aim was also to promote a new kind of Afrikaner to a broader South African community, as a way of legitimising not only Afrikaans (a tool of oppression used during apartheid) but also the bearers of the Afrikaner identity.

Hip-hop and its contestation or appreciation of dominant ideas in society

Hip-hop scholarship in South African occupies an interesting space. The scholarship largely links with many discourses on identity and race in the country. Conscious hip-hop music is a good site for this research to take place because of the way in which hip-hop has historically provided a space of empowerment and agency for young Black artists. Haupt writes that while it is the employment of "gamtaal" or "ghetto code" (2001: 176) in some of the South African hip-hoppers' music that sets them apart from their American counterparts, an aspect that links POC and BVK's music "with the work of 'old school' artists such as KRS-ONE, for example, is their continual commitment to the Black Consciousness ideals of spiritual and intellectual upliftment. These ideals are often expressed in hip-hop by the phrase 'knowledge of self'". (Haupt, 2001: 173- 174)

South African hip-hop cannot be discussed without contextualising hip-hop's history and roots, mainly found in the United States. For the purpose of this study, a distinction between conscious and non-conscious hip-hop will be made. Both Godessa and Brasse Vannie Kaap, subscribe to conscious hip-hop music and culture. Ready D, an emcee[2] part of BVK asserts that the

> Version of history which he offers to those willing to listen presents coloured subjects with the opportunity to re-conceptualise themselves outside of the master narrative of apartheid and its own myths about

[2] Rapper or hip-hop artists who raps his or her lyrics

> ‘miscegenation’, the shame of slavery, the legacy of the *dopstelsel,* alcoholism and violence. (Haupt, 2001: 181)

Ready D (quoted in Haupt) highlights the explicit manner in which BVK’s conscious hip-hop challenges the listeners to reflect on their historical inscription in the manner described by the scholars cited in the Introduction to this thesis. Here, Ready D acknowledges the very direct way in which his group’s lyrics challenge representations of Black subjects, classified “coloured” that trap the latter in hegemonic narratives of mixing, alcoholism, violence and shame. What is suggested in the lyrics as an alternative is a freer version of the individual and collective “coloured”, as the analysis of the lyrics in later chapters will demonstrate.

Conscious hip-hop is hip-hop music that speaks to social problems in society, racial issues within the constraints of certain South African spaces, and the artists also speak to a larger political reality. Furthermore, this music serves as a platform for agency and the contestation of ideas regarding politics, society as well as understanding difference through, a lot of the time, Black consciousness rhetoric.

Non- conscious hip-hop, also known as “gangsta rap” (Haupt, 2001: 177) is hip-hop that can most easily be described as part of the MTV/ Hollywood media hype, on U.S imperialistic culture and hegemonic media representations.

> The conflation of hip-hop in general with a particular type of rap (gangsta rap) which sentimentalises gangsterism could thus undermine the attempts of rap groups such as POC and BVK to engage critically with issues such as gangsterism and the negative representations of coloured people in the media. (Haupt, 2001: 177)

Hip-hop's roots are found in the US and this partly explains the emulation of the US cultural model seen in many countries' hip-hop culture.

Hip-hop is traditionally known as a progressive musical genre which seeks to publicly critique certain dominant voices and spaces and thus hegemonic messages in society. Hip-hop is seen as a form of "contemporary black popular expression", and found its roots in New York City in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Because of its history rooted in a globalised, US-based Black popular culture, it is a form of "ideological power" against "racial and sexual domination, black cultural priorities, and popular resistance", among other things. (Rose, 1994) Rose, who has written extensively on hip-hop as a culture of expression, defines hip-hop as:

> an Afro-diasporic cultural form which attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity and

> oppression within the cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity and community. (1994: 71)

Forman (2002; 2004) echoes Rose and states that hip-hop started out as a form of “ideological power”. Initially seen as a “passing fad” of resistance by Black youth in the US, hip-hop now forms part of a multi-million dollar industry. After seeing that rap music “was here to stay, a permanent fixture in black ghetto youths’ musical landscape, the reactions changed from dismissal to denigration, and rap music came under attack from both black and white quarters.” (Dyson, 2004: 61) Rap music’s inception was thus considered a passing phase in the eyes of onlookers, for what they saw were Black youths speaking about certain societal issues and this was seen as a force and an activity that would dissipate with time. However, as rap music grew and started spreading from the Bronx, a New York City suburb, artists such as Kool Moe Dee, Busty Bee, Afrika Bambaataa and DJ Kool Herc began experimenting with the genre. (Dyson, 2004: 61)

Rap music’s popularity grew and the music was further propelled by,

> Run-DMC’s epochal success, (that) found an arena in which to concentrate its subversive cultural didacticism aimed at addressing racism, classism, social neglect, and urban pain. (Dyson, 2004: 62)

Furthermore, rap music also,

> creates space for cultural resistance and personal agency, losing the structures of the tyrannizing surveillance and demoralizing condemnation of mainstream society and encouraging relatively autonomous, often enabling forms of self-expression and cultural creativity (Dyson, 2004: 62).

Neal writes “arguably, no popular genre of music has been so self-consciously critical of itself as hip-hop.” (1999: 161) Forman discusses the inception of rap-music but also introduces and discusses the fact that once hip-hop music and culture became mainstream and accepted into the American media, the subculture aspect to hip-hop music came under scrutiny because of its increasingly popular commercial culture. A question raised within hip-hop culture was:

> Was the popular acceptance of rap evidence of an African-American cultural victory, or did it signal the ascendance of corporate America’s authority over hip-hop and black youth expression? The dilemma again refocused discussion on the ambiguous line between ‘cashing in’ and ‘selling out’.” (Forman, 2002: 215)

This issue is also articulated in the South African context in Haupt's recent book *Stealing Empire* (2008).

In South Africa, hip-hop's roots are in Cape Town. Watkins (2001) places hip-hop's inception in the Cape as a form of music which was based on African-American artists who used their lyrics in the form of rap music to speak to social issues in the communities in which they lived. As it evolved, rap music began to "describe and analyze the social, economic, and political factors that led to its emergence and development: drug addiction, police brutality, teen pregnancy, and various forms of material deprivation." (Dyson, 2004: 61) Hip-hop is therefore a form of cultural, intellectual and creative resistance to mainstream society and hegemonic media messages, often seen in rap music. The genre also speaks to the creation of an identity outside of the confines of the mainstream media and society in which we live.

Forman (2006) analyses and discusses mainly American hip-hop culture and speaks to the ideas of the music as defining reality according to space and place. Forman bases his writing on a trip through America and the blatant differences in music as defining space and location. In the same way, South African hip-hop heads[3] define identities and society according to space and place but also language. This aspect makes South African hip-hop different to the African-American home it stems from, in that American hip-hop is all or mainly in English.

[3] Hip-hop heads is a term used to describe people who are interested in and listen to hip-hop or who are themselves hip-hop artists.

BVK and Godessa often make use of “gamtaal” or “kombuis Afrikaans”. This language is used to relate to the audiences the music addresses. In the same way, kwaito groups such as “Skeem and Trompies routinely rap in vernacular forms of the major indigenous languages, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, and Zulu.” (Magubane, 2006: 215) Their use of the vernacular is “a conscious attempt to address the social, political, and economic issues that impact marginalized communities in ways that hold particular meaning for them.” (Magubane, 2006: 215)

In South Africa, one of the most interesting aspects to highlight regarding hip-hop is the racial distinction between “black” and “coloured” hip-hop groups. This is interesting because it also relates to how deeply entrenched difference is in South Africa. The distinction is also interesting when one considers that conscious hip-hop groups in South Africa speak out against these divisions. This distinction of difference also largely relates to geographical location in the country and various groups of colour who were forced to live in places because of apartheid policies.

In South Africa this geographical location has a unique influence on the issues the music speaks to but also the language used so as to reach a specific audience. While some groups articulate their messages by re-enforcing “colouredness” in terms of Black identity and identifying with a larger Black

culture, other groups feel it is necessary to distinguish themselves as “coloured” because they believe that there is a cultural distinction between being “coloured” and “black” in South Africa. Many conscious hip-hop groups incorporate messages they have learnt through Black Consciousness writing by Biko as well as other authors who have written on enslavement of Black minds, such as Frantz Fanon.

The vernacular Afrikaans used in local hip-hop is a deviation from the mainstream Afrikaans used in schools and formal settings, and was briefly discussed in this literature review. “Gamtaal”, is “a blend of Afrikaans with other codes such as prison and gangster languages, and is rendered erotic by an intonation that is street-wise and masculine.” (Watkins, 2004: 137) Furthermore, modern Cape Afrikaans comes from a long history of influence from Dutch, and combinations of other languages brought by slaves, settlers and indigenous people, such as the Khoi and the San. The modern Afrikaans is a hybrid language comprising a number of different influences and histories.

Through the use of “gamtaal” however, there is a clear distinction in the culture and also location and place, because the messages that will be analysed in this paper often speak to a specific “coloured” audience. This is so because of the vernacular that is used. Magubane (2006: 215) highlights this point regarding the use of different languages in South African hip-hop to speak to a certain cultural group or community. Watkins discusses these differences in his interviews with

hip-hop groups in the Cape. Watkins (2004: 136) describes language used in hip-hop and rap music as a “unique form of linguistic codes” combined with rhymes and humour that is then amalgamated to create a hybrid. It is especially important that alongside the lyrical hybridity, there is meaning and value. “Rappers do not want to sound like clones. In particular, it is considered that the music must have value, as hip- hop both raises and answers questions.” (Watkins, 2004: 136) Watkins (2004) discusses hip-hop and the hip-hop culture in Cape Town, raising a number of aspects of influence and culture within the hip-hop and coloured community.

Similarly, Baldwin writes that the critique of hip-hop as a form of black popular culture “must be understood within a history of identification located squarely in the ideological and material spaces of colonialism, racism and national identity.” (2004: 159) Hip-hop identifies, according to its history, with a poor and working class audience. Baldwin considers it necessary to interrogate how, if at all the ability exists to:

> fix hip-hop as pure difference from the norm or as a source of wrongdoing. It suggests that there is an already-agreed-upon national character threatened by a deviant popular culture (Dole) and leaves unquestioned the border where national character ends and popular culture begins. (2004: 159-160)

Baldwin (2004) as well as authors like Bennett (2004), Forman (2002; 2004), Rose (1994a; 1994b; 2004), Keyes (2004a; 2004b), Perry (2004), Neal (2004) and Haupt (2008) write about hip-hop and identity. With the exception of Haupt's prolific output, most scholars of hip-hop focus on the Americas or other international perspectives. Analysing hip-hop against racial and cultural identity is therefore a widely covered topic and many different opinions exist on it. However, this research's discussion on hip-hop focuses specifically on South African conscious hip-hop, an under- researched topic populated by a handful of scholars after Haupt. This may be a limitation for the study, because of the restricted material available. However, this study will further expand the study of South African hip-hop, and youth studies more broadly, by contributing to the field.

Lipsitz emphasizes the importance of youth culture by saying:

> Young people and their culture play a particularly important role in the neoconservative strategy. Images of 'gang members' and 'unwed mothers' mistake the effects of poverty for its causes, and discursively create a middle class absolved of responsibility for the systematic redistribution of wealth and life chances. (1994: 19)

Although it is difficult to find empirical conclusions regarding identity construction and hip-hop, it is possible to trace the ways in which race and identity have been

considered within the realm of hip-hop music and within the bigger realm of mainstream media. Haupt combines South African and American concepts of hip-hop in discussing and analysing local hip-hop and identity within "the operation of global capitalism and US cultural imperialism." (2008: 142)

Haupt contextualizes South Africa in a similar way to Baldwin, in discussing the difference between popular culture and national character in the United States. Haupt considers "whether the notion of subaltern counterpublics and the assertion by hip-hop artists of their democratic rights in South Africa undermine Hardt and Negri's claims about the decline of the nation-state under Empire[4]." (2008: 183) Haupt questions hip-hop's deviance from mainstream popular culture in terms of country vs. empire, while Baldwin questions hip-hop's deviance from mainstream culture in terms of national identity vs. difference to that national identity embedded in the mainstream media.

This research also considers the ways in which hip-hop and gender relate, largely because the hip-hop industry is male dominated. Decker asserts that hip-hop nationalism and the history can be largely associated with "sixties black militancy by positioning women who do not conform to the ideals of patriarchal family structure as ungrateful wives or gold-digging lovers". (in Haupt, 2001: 187) This has implications for both the kinds of masculinities represented as idealised and the overall positioning of women within hip-hop culture. Haupt links Black Nationalism in general to hip-hop nationalism by proposing that:

[4] Empire here refers to the US as a cultural empire and the nation-state as a country.

> Hip-hop nationalism attempts to position women within the confines of patriarchy and the struggle against racism is seen as a confrontation between black men and white men. This view is consistent with the patriarchal belief that the public sphere, the sphere in which the aims of imperialism and colonialism are furthered by men, is an exclusively male sphere. (2001: 187)

In reading how Blackness is gendered in the lyrics of BVK and Godessa, I will analyse the representations of both masculinity and femininity, since patriarchal gender prescribed roles form part of the hegemony that conscious hip-hop claims to critique.

According to bell hooks,

> the sexist, misogynist, patriarchal ways of thinking and behaving that are glorified in gangsta rap are a reflection of the prevailing values in our society, values created and sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. (1994: 116)

The economic game of prosperity between Black men in fact portrays a larger picture of Black subservience to a hegemonic order. This hegemony is what Biko

and Fanon, among many others, critiqued as Biko especially promoted Black culture, language and pride.

This study uses a qualitative research approach, specifically using discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis to achieve its research aims. Primary sources used will take the form of songs by the hip-hop groups, namely Godessa and BVK. Godessa and BVK's cds will therefore be the primary sources in this analysis. Secondary sources refer to existing work on the topic of hip-hop and identity construction in the media. The media here refers to various forms of media and the hegemonic messages they promote.

According to Wigston, a qualitative approach aims to "be more critical in nature and can be used when we need to penetrate the deeper layers of a message". (1995: 152) Qualitative analysis is a heterogeneous area of study, (Jensen, 2002: 236) where "the textual contents of the technological media, but also their materiality, scheduling, and social uses, are studied by qualitative research in order to explore empirically how the media generate meaning." (Jensen, 2002: 236) A qualitative approach is relevant because this method aims to provide a critical analysis of media messages and thus fits the aim of the study. Terre Blanche notes that social constructionist research methods,

> Like their interpretive counterparts, are qualitative, interpretive, and concerned with meaning. But where those working within the

> interpretive tradition focus on the subjective understandings and experiences of individuals or groups, social constructionist researchers want to show how such understandings and experiences are derived from (and feed into) larger discourses. (2006: 278)

This study on racial construction and meaning making in conscious hip-hop music shows how certain experiences and representations feed into and stem from a larger discourse of meaning.

Content analysis could be either qualitative or quantitative. “Content analysis is typically called a ‘quantitative’ method because it involves counting and summing phenomena.” (Stokes, 2003: 56) However, content analysis can also be used “to support studies of a more ‘qualitative’ nature.” In this regard, content analysis is seen as more of a symbolic method of analysis. (Stokes, 2003: 56) For the purpose of this study a qualitative approach will be used.

Content analysis “is a method which deals with symbolic phenomena and is therefore necessarily interpretive”. (Stokes, 2003: 66) Krippendorf (2004) also discusses content analysis as a method of analysis. Bertrand and Hughes affirm the interpretive aspect of content analysis in discussing content analysis as finding or analysing “meaning” in the text. (2005: 197)

With regard to this study, content analysis will provide a necessary framework for analysing certain media texts. It is also a tool for the interpretation of the mentioned media texts. Bertrand and Hughes affirm this aspect of meaning making in content analysis as a research method in that “content analysis (in any form) is concerned with the meaning of textual elements…” (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 189)

According to Wodak and Busch, discourse analysis is one of the key methodological approaches in cultural studies work. Furthermore, this form of analysis has also been used in cultural studies on “difference” or the “other”. Examples of key studies are,

> The representation of the “Other”, the representation of cultural diversity, and the reproduction of racism and xenophobia through media… Such studies have traditionally used a (critical) discourse analysis and cultural studies approach. (Wodak and Busch, 2004: 112)

Wooffitt defines discourse analysis as focusing on the “interrelationships between discourse and wider social structures. The analysis of texts is central to the task.” (2005: 139) Text in this context could refer to anything from a letter to a book or speech.

Schroder (2002) describes three aspects to critical discourse analysis, all of which are relevant to this study. The first relates to “the concrete social situations in which texts are produced and consumed”. (2002: 105- 106) The second dimension concerns “‘discourse practices’, for instance, the process through which specific media texts are produced in media organisations and consumed, or ‘decoded’, by audiences in the context of their daily lives.” The third dimension relates to the “macro-social level” and interprets the prevailing discourse in society in a certain way. (2002: 105- 106)

For the purpose of this research, discourse analysis will provide a framework to critically analyse the social situations which frame the hip-hop music. Discourse analysis also pays specific attention to “language above the sentence level. With respect to spoken language, this language-above the sentence unit might refer to utterances or perhaps entire conversations.” (Baxter and Babbie, 2004: 355) Discourse analysis also pays specific attention not only to the utterances but also the use and meaning of these utterances. These two aspects of discourse analysis play pivotal roles in this study. Finally, discourse analysis “provides a better grounding for the analysis of media language, through its systematic approach to data”. (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 191)

Chapter 2: "Knowledge of Self", conscious hip-hop and self-naming: BVK and Godessa Rapping about Identity

Writing about the dominant form of rap, bell hooks asserts that gangster rap music,

> Celebrates the world of the material, the dog-eat-dog world where you do what you gotta do to make it even if it means fucking over folks and taking them out. In this worldview killing is necessary for survival. Significantly, the logic here is a crude expression of the logic of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. (1994: 117)

In this context, hooks refers to the world of gangster rap music, highlighting that the genre of gangster rap exists in a larger framework of patriarchy, racism and capitalism. This is why this form of rap has commercial appeal, since it confirms and celebrates hegemonic values. hooks' description of "this worldview" thus problematises the use of Black gangster rap artists to promote white supremacist patriarchal power.

Echoing hooks, Sarah Jones, an American poet and emcee problematises gangster rap and places considerable emphasis on objectification of the female body in gangster rap. This quote resonates with bell hooks' assertion on gangster rap and its logic of crude expression in pursuit of financial reward Conscious hip-hop offers an alternative to artists and audiences as it gives both "a means of

engaging critically with mainstream popular culture as well as with the gangster rap genre." (Haupt, 2008: 142) Jones asserts:

And although we've lost Biggie Smalls
Your Notorious revolution
Will never allow you to lace
No lyrical douche in my bush
…
Your revolution will not be tossing my weave
Making believe I'm some caviar-eating, ghetto mafia clown
Or me givin' up my behind just so I can get signed
Or maybe have somebody else write my rhymes?
I'm Sarah Jones, not Foxy Brown (Jones 2000 in Haupt, 2008: 152)

Jones' use of a familiar mainstream hip-hop artist's name, the late Notorious BIG, also known as Biggie Smalls, challenges the values in the latter artist's work. The choice of prominent and popular rapper allows Jones to question what is celebrated within the rap world. She challenges the ways in which mainstream rap positions and represents women, through excessive attention to their bodies and valuing a specific kind of embodiment. Positioning herself directly opposite to Foxy Brown, another celebrated mcee, Jones critiques the kinds of masculinity and femininity espoused by the two rappers. Biggie Smalls is exploitative even as he speaks the language of revolution. Foxy Brown is complicit with the ways in

which her male colleagues limit entry for Black women unlike herself. Thus Jones objects to both Biggie's fake revolution, and Brown's complicity with the ways in which women are hypersexualised and cast in one weave-wearing mode. Both Biggie and Brown sell themselves for record deals and are prepared to enact stupidity and conspicuous consumption for a price and an audience. The clever use of language provides a subtext which not only addresses the hypocritical nature of gangster rap music by men but also evaluates women's lack of agency or performance.

Jones' excerpt is a fitting backdrop for this chapter because she distances herself from problematic and destructive Black hip-hop discourses, globally, as do BVK and Godessa. This links these artists in that it highlights a global critical wave in questioning representations of Black identity.

Both BVK and Godessa call attention to dominant narratives of identity, and stereotypes of "coloured" populations in the Western Cape; they suggest various ways in which to understand and grasp identity. These two groups have been chosen because of a long tradition of hip-hop music in the Western Cape grapples with varying Black locations. Here, I refer to groups such as Prophets of the City and Black Noise, pioneers in the idiom embraced by BVK and Godessa. The groups mentioned here developed an older hip-hop tradition of openly defying racist classifications in South Africa; thus, they have always had explicitly politicised music. These groups were shaped by and further influenced part of

Western Cape public spaces, through engaging with histories of naming and self-naming so as to illustrate their agency and their will not to be categorised as "coloured".

The term "coloured" was given to those who were seen as "mixed race" and Western Cape hip-hoppers wanted to and continue to reject this term because of the problematic associations with both the term "coloured" as well as stereotypes about "coloured" populations. In addition to this localised Western Cape project of naming and re-naming, the groups that this research focuses on, form part of a global project of claiming global Blackness in significant ways, as mentioned above in relation to Jones. 'Significant ways' refers to the claiming of Blackness as an identity to be proud of, as per Biko's assertions and writings about Black Consciousness.

It is for the above reasons that the groups this research focuses on can be classified as conscious hip-hop music. The term conscious hip-hop thus "alludes to the belief that you need to engage in a serious amount of critical introspection before you can make a meaningful contribution to your political and social context as a hip-hop artists, intellectual or activist." (Haupt, 2008: 144) Both BVK and Godessa continue to engage in the kind of introspection Haupt identifies. Their project allows listeners to partake in the same kind of introspection. Their project of naming both in the Western Cape and globally forms part of the larger project of re-shaping global Black identities in positive ways. It is for this reason

that, “conscious hip-hop continues to have underground appeal and is certainly employed as a tool in marginal spaces, such as the townships of Cape Town, South Africa.” (Haupt, 2008: 145)

Prophets of da City is one of the conscious hip-hop groups who spurred various groups of colour in South Africa to claim Blackness and question identity both during apartheid and in a post apartheid state. In the track “Black Thing” off the album *Phunk Phlow* (1995) the original lyrics are on the left and English translations are on the right hand side. POC assay local social and identity politics in the following way:

The term, ‘coloured’ is a desperate case	
Of how the devil’s divided us by calling us a separate race,	
They call me ‘coloured’ said my blood isn’t pure, but G,	
I’m not yakking my insecurity	I’m not wearing my insecurity
So I respond to this and ventilate my mental state with Black Consciousness	
…	
And I believe in each one teach one reach one from the heart ‘cause	
That’s where the beats are from…	
But racism’s a trap and the nation seems to lack	

knowledge of self

But it means what it seems

We're attracting anything but a black thing.

The use of and the disassociation with the political and historically loaded term "coloured" is particularly interesting because it highlights the manner in which they have chosen to name themselves *not* as "coloured" but as Black.

The first line of the excerpt explicitly denounces the term "coloured" in stating that it is a "desperate case". POC reject the apartheid project of racially classifying people because according to them there is no such race as the "coloured" race. This is evident at the end of the last line of this stanza, when the emcee says that to get out of this state of problematic racial classification, "I…ventilate my mental state with Black Consciousness." The rejection of "colouredness" is enabled by Black Consciousness rhetoric, which further allows self-expression, suggested by the verb "ventilate". In fact, the choice of the verb "ventilate" is particularly appropriate here since it enables a useful pun on the lyric's meaning. To ventilate is to make public, but it is also to allow his ideas to breathe. Both readings emphasise the connection of Black Consciousness to freedom.

Apartheid's categorisations according to race, break down promotions of Black pride and unity, through placing different 'races' as hierarchically divided. If "coloured" people started believing they were better than "black" people, ideas grounded in Black Consciousness would not be furthered because of the

eventual belief in racial hierarchy. Hence POC do two things in the first stanza, they alert the listener to the problem of racial classification and at the same time, disassociate themselves from the imposed term “coloured”. They provide the listener with an alternative to the racist discourse of apartheid’s classifications.

POC’s assertion that the “devil” has divided us “by calling us a separate race” thus examines colonialist/apartheid creations about race in South Africa. The assertion that the emcee is not insecure about these divisions highlights a clear distancing from the boundaries in which “the devil” wants to impose on him. His ventilation of his mental state is to embrace and respond through Black Consciousness. This is significant because in this, the group denounces the labels of apartheid, imposed on “us”, but also propose a solution to the problem in speaking about embracing Black Consciousness as an option of naming themselves or ourselves as Black, rather than forming part of a separate, created hierarchy of race.

The message is stressed in the second stanza. Another caution is provided and it follows on from the first stanza about race and classification, although this time, POC blame not only the apartheid state for the classifications of race but also alert the listener to the idea that without being aware of the problematic in the creation of racial hierarchy, s/he will also fall into the trap of being controlled. This means that more and more people classified “coloured” will not embrace Blackness because of beliefs about racial supremacy. POC thus assert that

blame cannot only be placed on apartheid, if individuals submit to the system. The final line of stanza two asserts this when the emcee raps: “We’re attracting anything but a black thing.”

Leading to the above point of POC problematising not only the act of racial classification by “the devil” but the lack of critical reflection by individuals, the emcee raps the following: “But racism’s a trap and the nation seems to lack knowledge of self”. POC do not allow the listener to believe that s/he walks into the “trap” blinded. They offer “knowledge of self” as filled with freeing options that allow escape from “the trap”. Listeners are therefore invited to embrace critical attitudes towards their society and claim agency to think outside of “the trap”.

POC thus probe discourses around being classified “coloured” and submitting to that classification because they assert self-naming through Black Consciousness, which means that all people of colour term themselves Black and that one does not need to submit to the system of apartheid and racial classification if aware and willing to act on that agency. This self awareness and thus agency to act, is foregrounded in knowledge of self: the idea of critically engaging with oneself as an individual as well as engaging with the rest of the world in order to consciously make sense of identity and in particular, self identification.

Brasse Vannie Kaap speak out similarly against the confines of racism in South Africa. BVK's significant use of gamtaal allows them to engage with a specific audience of Black South Africans, namely those classified as "coloured", but in doing so, denounce the term "coloured" as seen above with POC. BVK's use of gamtaal is significant in that it speaks to a largely Western Cape audience, using language employed in this region. The choice of this form of Afrikaans, with its clear slave roots is also echoed in the group's name which also references slavery. In the Cape, slaves were often named after their place of origin, for example, Sallie van Malabar, to mean "Sallie from Malabar". Brasse Vannie Kaap is Kaaps for "brothers from the Cape". The term gamtaal is derived from the Afrikaans word for language, "taal" and "Gam", the Afrikaans word for "Ham", referring to the cursed son of Noah. (Western, 1981: 147 in Battersby, 2003: 114)

BVK speak about alternative ways in which to think about identity other than submitting to the confines of being classified as "coloured". The intro to BVK's last album explicitly communicates the group's stance on being classified "coloured" in South Africa. Interestingly, this album was released in 2006 and while it can be read similarly to POC's "Black Thing" (1995), it highlights that questions of identity and naming are still pertinent in a post-apartheid society. The intro is as follows, with the original lyrics on the left side of the table and English translations on the right:

I am not a coloured

Never was, and will never will be

Ek moet mal wees om in te gee vir my enemy	I must be crazy to give in to my enemy

When I look in the mirror, it's God that I see

I am not a coloured

Ek is 'n mens met a kop en a pens, met intelligence	I am a person with a head and a body, with intelligence
Gebruik jou scripture as 'n reference because skin colour is not evidence	Use your scripture as a reference …

To try and force me into a box

To classify me as a gangster, a skelm of a klops	… criminal … or a coon
Oor die kleur van my vel or my street talks,	Because of the colour of my skin or my street talks

Apartheid's faults

Coloured, a racist weapon, a term of oppression

Wat my mense se integrity threaten	That threatens my people's integrity

The Cape Flats, that's my heaven
The home of brave women and men who have died
for the revolution

Now you know where I stand

So take your coloured comment, take your coloured
mentality,

Take your coloured rap group en hou it op 'n yard … and keep it at a shebeen

Waar die mense suip en praat, bitch, moan
en haat
Long live humanity

Where the people drink and speak, bitch, moan
and hate

The first stanza relates closely to POC's "Black Thing" discussed earlier in this chapter. The emcee's immediate and significant disassociation with the term "coloured" as well as its history is clear from the first line. Similar trends can also be seen in what BVK calls "my enemy" and what POC calls "the devil". Both references identify apartheid as the cause for racial classification; however both groups also scrutinize those who were classified as submitting to the classification of "coloured" and associations with this.

BVK's assertion of looking in the mirror and seeing God is poignant as it means that the emcee associates himself with God, not as part of the defiled God-less children of Ham, but rather a child of God.

Apartheid and slavery's impositions about God and Christianity being for the "pure white race", on the one hand, and Black people as heathens, on the other, are thus negated in this line. This assertion also disassociates the emcee from claiming the negative, the idea of being "mixed race" as opposed to claiming God and denouncing the association between gam or "colouredness" and impurity, all of which tie in with the racial subjugation of the separate group "coloured". The end of the stanza highlights explicitly that the emcee sees himself as a person, with a head and a body and with intelligence, in other words divorcing himself from the racial construction and asserting himself as a person, thereby negating the term "coloured" as dehumanising.

The second stanza builds on the first; however, where the first stanza claims God and rejects discourses around "mixed-race" and "children of Ham", stanza two more explicitly rejects the ideas associated with being "coloured" as the emcee refuses to be seen in these marginal terms of identity. BVK's assertion that "skin colour is not evidence to try and force me into a box" also shows that as a group, and as individuals, they do not want to be seen as one thing: "coloured". This categorization is not something they want to be associated with. "Coloured, a racist weapon, a term of oppression" describes the group's opinion about and the

implications of the term “coloured”. Weapons are associated with either protection or harm and in this context, BVK assert that the term was used as a double edged sword, both to protect white minorities in South Africa during apartheid but it also meant that many who were classified “coloured” used the weapon to harm and inadvertently, delegitimate(d) their identities as Black South Africans.

BVK also assert that “coloured” is a term of oppression, hence the metaphor for not naming themselves “coloured” is given meaning because being coloured has and had certain connotations in terms of racial oppression under apartheid, which meant having more privileges than black South Africans but fewer privileges than whites. The association of harm carried out through the use of words like “weapon”, “oppression” and “threaten”, also highlights the manner in which BVK name themselves, significantly not as “coloureds”.

Furthermore, exemplification of the “coloured” stereotype in this stanza shows that BVK express awareness and caution of the “coloured” identity as a construct. It is perhaps for this reason as well that the mcee dismisses calling himself a “coloured”, because the association with the term means submitting to the apartheid creation and in doing so, yielding an individual’s identity to being continually shrouded by “coloured” stereotypes.

The final stanza highlights the tools and mechanisms with which apartheid displaced people of colour in South Africa. While POC referred specifically to Black Consciousness as a relief from the domain of racist oppression, BVK make references to claiming what is Black. This is evidence of Black Consciousness rhetoric about Black pride. Hence when BVK say, “The Cape Flats, that’s my heaven”, it does not only refer to the unfair inequalities imposed on Black people by apartheid but also asserts a sense of pride in what belongs to Black people. The emcee continues by saying that The Cape Flats is “The home of brave women and men who have died for the revolution/Now you know where you stand”.

In saying this, BVK classify themselves not as “coloured” but as Black. Because of the stance of distancing themselves from being named “coloured”, BVK also ask the listener to question his/her or their own classification. Immediately after, the emcee again incorporates “coloured” stereotypes in order to convey the disassociation with the person who does not question their own identity. This is seen in the idea of the “coloured mentality” as a creation and an assertion made by apartheid, to negate a proud and unified Blackness. Indeed, a “coloured mentality” refers to the construction of “coloured” people as docile, confused and happily oppressed. The rejection of a “coloured mentality” rhymes with the narrative of “women and men who have died for the revolution”.

The power of the stereotype seen in “coloured mentality” is negated because it is seen as a destructive construct. The final lines of stanza three offer the listener a choice for the expression of his/her own agency through self-naming and distancing the problematic racist project of “coloured” classification.

Opposing BVK’s rejection of the constructions of “colouredness”, Erasmus asserts that to work through the constraints of the “coloured” identity, re-claiming the identity is also a transformative project. Erasmus speaks about “the power and pain of living with entanglements…” (2001: 25) The entanglements that Erasmus suggests are the following:

> The power and pain of living with entanglements demands politics based on remembering and living with the wounds of the past, and acknowledging complicity in the present. It demands living with everything one is. In the case of being coloured this includes living with the racist aspect of coloured identity formation and finding ways of changing it. It demands finding ways in which to relate to others from a place of ‘truth’ rather than a place of denial. (2001: 25)

Erasmus proposes that new ways need to be found to change the racist perceptions and associations with the term “coloured” as well as with the identity. In opposition to this view, hip-hoppers like BVK, Godessa and POC however

negate the term because of the problematic discourses around the creation of the identity, through apartheid, and then the stereotypes of drunkenness, drug abuse and gangsterism among others that are all creations of white supremacy. For them, the language of colouredness is irredeemably contaminated with shame and the stereotypes listed above. It is the language of Black Consciousness that frees.

While Erasmus suggests an acceptance of this history and the stereotypes of the "coloured" in order to move forward and re-shape the identity in new ways, local hip-hoppers form part of a larger Black Consciousness-influenced hip-hop movement which claims identity under a broader and more inclusive identity of Blackness.

One of the ways in which BVK, in particular, make sense of and make meaning of identity is by employing gamtaal in most of their lyrics. This conscious incorporation of what could be seen as a stereotype of Western Cape "coloured" communities allows them to converse with a specific audience but also allows them the space to not be marginally defined according to essentialist ideas or perceptions about what "coloureds" are or should portray. Employing gamtaal while saying they are not "coloured" is significant in the process of naming and working through historical inheritance. Gamtaal is thus employed with intent to act as "a counter-discursive voice, which signals their (BVK and POC's) refusal

to be co-opted into conservative and essentialist readings of colouredness." (Interview with Haupt in Haupt, 2001: 179)

Gam is also a derogatory term for a "coloured" person or behaviour associated with "coloured" people. This idea resonates with the work of BVK as cited above, when the emcee speaks about a "coloured" mentality. The use of gamtaal in mainstream media is interesting to consider because, when combined with stereotypical representations of "coloureds" in mainstream media, it can be interpreted as promoting the stereotype without any interrogation or understanding of the identity. A song titled "Kaap van storms" off BVK's first album, *BVK*, speaks about "coloured" stereotypes as problematic representations of "colouredness" such as always being represented as a gangster or a thief. The excerpt is as follows:

Hulle wys altyd lelike prente van onse mense.	They always show ugly pictures of our people
Hoekom moet ek altyd 'n gangster of 'n klops	Why am I always a gangster or coon/ minstrel
Soos al wat ons sien in 'n koerant of TVs	Like everything we see in a newspaper or on T.V
Hulle trek hulle neus se, 'Sies jy's 'n *low class coloured*	They raise their noses and say, "Sies, you are a low class coloured
Jou voorvaders was whites en slawe. So it must be	Your forefathers were whites and slaves. So it must

a bastard'	be a bastard'
But, wait a minute, if you trust my story and not his story sal jy sien	But wait a minute, if you trust my story, and not his story, you will see
My voorvaders was a king a queen and never knew drugs, guns of 'n kantien.	My forefathers were a king and a queen and never knew drugs, guns or pubs
Hulle was altyd daar om God te bedien	They were always there to serve God
Chorus:	
Issie Kaap van storms	It's the Cape of Storms
Storms vannie Kaap (rpt)	Storms of the Cape

BVK's point of view on stereotypes is evident when they make reference to seeing images of "our" people in newspapers and on television. In the first line of the stanza the emcee makes a statement about ugly pictures of "coloured" people. He then questions why the pictures are always representations of "coloureds" as gangsters or coons. This questioning deconstructs ongoing circulation of the coloured stereotype in the newspapers and television. The critique recognises that the media's influence over what is consumed by the public shapes public opinion. If the images of "coloured" people are always of the

stereotype, as thieves, gangsters and drunk coons dancing on New Year, this has material effects for how ordinary “coloured” people are interpreted in the larger society. BVK make a stand in this song about the racist representations and associations with those classified as “coloured”, a term they reject throughout their music.

In the fourth line of the song, reference is made to what other racial groups may say about “coloureds” when they see these negative images in the media. BVK illustrate how destructive media (mis) representations of “coloured”. However, BVK’s romantic Afrocentric approach to forefathers and histories is problematic, whether seen from the perspective of contentious race politics, Black versus white or within the domains of Black identity politics.

To limit Black histories to kings and queens would be to over simplify some of the problematic historic and contemporary racial developments that have been and need to be made in South Africa as well as globally. This assertion takes away credibility from the work of global Black identity politics and makes it seem as though historic discourses about slavery and miscegenation never existed when it is true that they did. Those histories cannot be negated and should not be excluded in the process naming and re-naming imposed identities.

Such romanticisation of an idyllic Black past is also not sustainable, since the presence of royalty requires its opposite. It is therefore not possible for all people

in a society to occupy privileged status. Such romanticisations also erase contestation and fluidities in Black pasts.

In the final line of the stanza BVK assert that their forefathers worshipped God, tying in to the above line of the song. Along with the assertions about romantic Afrocentric ideas, this line promotes the idea that the images seen in the media are problematic because of a negated history of royalty that has gone unnoticed. BVK's association between God and history is interesting because, despite the contentious romanticization of forefathers, BVK comment on the fact that not all ancestors were slaves and if they were, were not *only* slaves. Many slaves were Muslims while others ascribed to various formalised African Traditional Religions (ATR). The consideration by BVK in this song thus claims credibility in various other forms of organised religion that are not necessarily Christian. BVK thus make the point that the ancestors were moral people, with religious sensibilities whether that was ATR, Islam, Christianity or any other variant of religion. BVK also assert that God is not only Christian. Ancestors, in BVK's attestation, were not the amoral heathens that missionaries said they were.

In addition, BVK's Black Consciousness assertions directly challenge racist and early Christianity's distinctions between children of God (white people) and children of Ham (dark skinned people). Relating to the BCM and Christianity, Gqola writes that "Black consciousness was highly critical of the role that Christianity played in the subjugation and pacification of Black people and

therefore sought to find an alternative to the mainstream white version of Christianity…" (2001a: 133) Hence, while BC as well as BVK rejects the racism in Christianity, they do not negate Christianity through Black theology in South Africa, or Liberation theology in other parts of the African diaspora.

In the song "My Taal", BVK illustrate to listeners that language is the site for creation of meaning; relationships to language therefore matter since they can lead to silence or voice. The chorus and first stanza of BVK's "My Taal" off their last album expresses this:

Ek praat in my taal	I talk in my language
Ek slaap in my taal	I sleep in my language
Ek dink in my taal want my taal is my taal	I think in my language because my language is my language
Ek doen die ding in my taal	I do the deed in my language
Survive met my taal	Survive with my language
Ek kom jou haal met my taal	I fetch you with my language
Want my taal is my taal (rpt)	Because my language is my language

Stanza 1:

My taal is my taal	My language is my language
Die way ek kom praat is baie spesiaal	The way I come to speak is very special
Hy staan sterk en hy sal nooit val	He is strong and won't fall
Ek kan hom los in 'n dwaal	I can leave him in confusion
As jy nie not vattie	If you don't pay attention
Som public en glattie hatie	Some publics hate it
En hulle wil hom nie meer praatie	And they don't want to speak him anymore
Because of dringend dinge en ander vriende	Because of important things and other friends
They wanna develop accents and they wanna point the vinger	… want to point the finger
Ek is 'n vollende Suid-Afrikaner	I am a complete South African
My taal is cooler as 'n paar bane	My language is cooler than a pair of Raybans
Ek spieg in die gevriet van George Bush se planne	I spit in the face of George Bush's plans
Sit politicians binne die skane	Shame politicians

Dit is uit jou hande	It is out of your hands
Hy is binne my hart en my brein en dan kom hy verby my tande	He is in my heart and my brain and then he passes by my teeth
Tot binne in jou ore	Into your ears
Nou's die hele land op my spore	Now the whole country's at my heels
In my taal se ek vir jou: I am not a coloured of 'n kleurling	In my language I tell you: I am not a coloured
Jy sal jouself vasloop en jouself deurbring	You will get yourself into a corner
Apartheid is verby en die suffer van teering	Apartheid and the suffering is over

In the chorus and intro to the song "My Taal" BVK assert the power of owning ones language. Through claiming language, they take ownership of the process of identifying oneself and discussing the challenges of social change, while at the same time, enjoying their language by for example, having sex with or in an individual's claimed language. They show that language is not only a means of communication at the level of utterances but it is also a means of interacting with others and self-assertion. They declare that the meaning of language is part of identity and thus illuminate the importance of not negating it. The second last line in the chorus, "Ek kom jou haal met my taal" indicates an unapologetic use of

what they claim as their language. By saying “I will fetch you in my language” they personalise their narrative to/ for the listener.

The first stanza builds on the chorus but also personifies language, through the use of “he” in the Kaaps instead of “it” when speaking about language. While the stanza starts with a claim of identity in language, in “My language is my language”, the second line continues to say, “The way I come to speak is very special.” This indicates a sense of coming to tell others about the language, again personalising the address. It also speaks about the claiming of language. The third line personifies language to “He” as though language is strong and sturdy. While the language is fluid, the image of a strong person portrays a sense of continuity throughout time, a sense of invincibility.

This personified language continues into the fourth line, where language is still imagined in the image of a person, however this time, the emcee says that the language won’t get lost in confusion. This similarly portrays the idea/ image of language being able to cross boundaries of various situations, the idea that it finds itself and knows itself within turmoil. The association here could also be made between the way in which Afrikaans has developed and the manner in which Western Cape Afrikaans speakers have developed their own kind of colloquial Afrikaans that has been maintained. BVK thus assert that ownership and belonging are grounded in language.

The next line proceeds to address those who disassociate themselves from the language. BVK promote the idea that if attention is not paid to developments of identity in language, both language and identity will be lost to the impartial actions of people who seemingly have more pressing commitments in their lives. BVK critique and distance themselves from these somewhat lost people, in a similar way that they distance themselves from those who self- identify as “coloured”. BVK proceed to draw parallels between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa when they speak to people who are too busy to be consciously aware of their identities, and who, with their new friends, “who wanna point the vinger”. BVK say that while the past cannot be negated, the language that provided so many people with the communicative discourse to learn, agree or disagree, should not be negated simply because new opportunities exist.

Furthermore, they also distance themselves from those South Africans who are not critically aware of their pasts, their present and their futures. This is articulated in the next line when the emcee says “Ek is ‘n vollende Suid-Afrikaner”, as though he has just discussed South Africans who are not fully so, as though they are unauthentic South Africans. In this song, BVK critique identity through language and the importance of preserving the relationship(s) between the two.

The next section of the stanza uses the language to articulate disagreement, disgust and shame at South African politicians, assumedly both nationally and

internationally because of the annoyance that they express at George Bush's plans. BVK thus go between vocalising their ideas about language and identity, and employing their own agency in language and their self-named identities. This is seen in the way they make a statement about owning language. The emcee raps: "My taal bring die vlame. Dit is uit jou hande." In other words, the emcee associates action (flames) with language and takes ownership of that action. The emcee also conveys the idea of literal choice, in terms of not only using language but also figuratively choosing to be interested in identity.

This is in reaction to parliamentarians as well as George Bush's global plans. Language personified is said to be *inside* the emcee, and the image of that language coming out of him is created when the emcee raps about how "He" (the language) passes from his heart, and his brain, past his teeth and into your ears. The idea is thus also that language is shared; that identities are created and shaped by what is said and how people interact. The power of language is thus in being able to act on agency to teach, share and employ change.

In the final lines of the stanza, BVK assert that now the whole country is at their heels, which could mean that, through language, they have created awareness so they are figuratively being followed. This is an association between the power of language and the influence it has on others. In light of the country following their lead, BVK echo the intro's assertion of "In my language I'm telling you, I am not a "coloured". Again, the emphasis on using their language to convey the

message highlights their process of self-naming without negating histories of Blackness and language in South Africa.

Linking this process to the final line about apartheid and moving forward, speaks to moving beyond problematic discourses of racial classification in “colouredness”. BVK also contemplate ways of not erasing histories or legacies, through retaining language. The song “My taal” seems to contradict the manner in which BVK sentimentalise histories of Blackness in “Kaap van Storms” (1998).

Local conscious hip-hop thus chooses not to ignore but to redefine representations of the “coloured” and aims to re-assert histories and the imagination of the group classified “coloureds”. The choice to do so is perhaps a contribution to creating new positive possibilities for the group. Local hip-hop does not ignore the past nor does it trivialise present day discourses of inclusion or representation. Rather, it creates a critical space for understanding and critiquing some of the dominant discourses of national identity that South Africans who are not part of the “essentialised” races can grapple with and also make meaning of. Local conscious hip-hop continues to be of appeal but also continues to act as “a hidden transcript. Among other things, it uses cloaked speech and disguised cultural codes to comment on and challenge aspects of current power inequalities.” (Rose, 1994: 100) Hence, conscious rap music is “a contemporary stage for the theatre of the powerless.” (Rose, 1994: 101)

"Bollie" is another song off BVK's last album. "Bollie" indicates an exciting development in the music produced by BVK in that, in addition to tropes about identity and re-imagining Black identities, the intertextuality that is used between two different creative sites by Black men, provides the listener with different ways of thinking about the message. "Bollie" starts with an introduction by Boeta Joe and Boeta Gamat from the popular theatre production, Joe's Barber. The intro is as follows:

Boeta Gamat: Jy ken mos vir BVK?	You know BVK?
Boeta Joe: Ja	Yes
Boeta Gamat: Ja…Brasse Vannie Kaap, ja	Yes…BVK, yes
Boeta Joe: Nee ma kyk, hulle's kwaai ne	No, but look, they are good hey
Boeta Joe: Yesterday! Boeta Gamat, hy spring van een been af Bollemakisie in die lug	…he jumps from one leg and does a cartwheel in the air
Boeta Gamat: Ek het gesien ja, daar by die skool, hulle't mos daar gedingese Ja maar hulle sing kwaai jong	I saw yes, at the school, when they "thingied". They sing well

Boeta Joe: Yesterday!	
Boeta Gamat: Maar hulle rap dan in Afrikaans	But they rap in Afrikaans
Boeta Joe: Ek wonder hoekom, is it legal, Boeta Gamat?	I wonder why. Is it legal..?
Boeta Gamat: Ek weet nie, miskien kan hulle nie…Hulle's vannie kaap man Engels nie so lekker nie	I don't know, maybe they can't…They're from Cape Town man. English isn't good.
Boeta Joe: Ooo! Hulle kannie Engels praatie	Oooh! They can't speak English
fades into laughter before start of stanza	

The incorporation of Oscar Petersen and David Isaacs (actors who play Boeta Joe and Boeta Gamat in a play called *Joe's Barber*) is significant in that the song not only displays an intertextuality between two different creative genres, namely theatre and music but also displays that options exist in terms of ways in which one can engage with the re-imagination of identity. Petersen and Isaacs use "coloured" stereotypes in their theatre production, in similar ways as BVK to address concerns within the society termed "coloured".

The dialogue between Boeta Joe and Boeta Gamat is interesting because they introduce BVK as a local group but do not classify them racially; instead they discuss BVK's use of Afrikaans in their rap music and question whether this is legal. This questioning of the *legal* use of Afrikaans is interesting because "My Taal" is a very clear response regarding BVK's stance on the use of their language and they legitimise their use of Afrikaans as part of a larger identification of themselves. This song is creatively refreshing because it shows how identity and representations can be played around with in terms of portrayals of the "coloured" stereotype, both in *Joe's Barber* as well as in BVK's music.

Boeta Gamat and then Boeta Joe's agreement with him on the idea that because BVK are from Cape Town they cannot speak English is significant in that it regards some of the historical language and cultural discourses founded in the Cape. Furthermore, in the same way that BVK rap in Afrikaans and gamtaal, most of *Joe's Barber* incorporates similar language discourse to convey meaning. Parallels can thus be drawn between the similar projects of observing and addressing identity in the Western Cape through different creative genres. The manner in which both BVK and *Joe's Barber* employ language plays a significant role in the Western Cape project.

Perhaps Isaacs and Petersen were included so as to draw these parallels between the genres but also to assert themselves in terms of the global project of Black identities. Significantly, the parallels that can be drawn

between the similar projects of *Joe's Barber* and BVK are contradicted by the work of South African politicians who seem to lack awareness or the inclination to form part of a meaningful project of development despite the anti-apartheid fight. This idea is articulated in the laughing that leads from the talk between Boeta Joe and Boeta Gamat into the first stanza. The quote starts with the chorus of the song as the song proceeds from Boeta Joe and Boeta Gamat into the following:

Chorus:	
Ek praat bollie, jy praat bollie, ons almal praat bollie, maar moet nettie lol'ie	I talk nonsense, you talk nonsense, we all talk nonsense, but just don't interfere
Chokie choke choke	
Is 'n joke joke	It's a joke joke
Vat jou goed en gooi en verby en moet nettie lol'ie	Take your things and leave and go en just don't interfere
Stanza 1:	
Ek se vir jou, ek is daai ou	I'm telling you, I am that guy
Toe hel met tai bo	To hell with tai bo

Hier doen ons Thabo	Here we do Thabo
Hier's die plekkie vir jou mm bekkie so maak dit styf toe	Here's the place for your mmmbheki (bekkie in Afrikaans is mouth- play on the same pronounciation) so shut it
Solank jy my hoor met jou oe	As long as you hear me with your eyes
Siem sala biem	
Nou's jy getoor	Now you are under the spell
Ek issie mal nie	I'm not crazy
En Tokyo Sexwale en Tlali	And Tokyo Sexwale and Tlali
En daai's nie allie	And that's not all
Het jy gehoor van daai ander case?	Have you heard about that other case?
Hulle moer vir Pieter met die vys	They beat up Pieter
Want hy steel..uit Koos se Kombuis	Because he steals..out of Koos' kitchen
Gerald kry 'n summons by Morkel	Gerald gets a summons from Morkel

Want hy't furniture by die agterdeur uit gesmokkel	He smuggled furniture out the back door
Leon klap vir Tony	Leon smacks Tony
Hy se hy's phoney, hy kannie 'n party hou nie	He says he's a phoney, he can't keep a party
Niemand kan hom vertrou nie	Nobody can trust him
Het jy gehoor van Allen?	Have you heard about Allen?
Hulle se hy's 'n skelm	They say he's a thief
Hulle't hom gevang met die geld in sy bosak	They caught him with money in his top pocket
Was ek hy dan stiek ek it weg in my broeksak vir good luck	If I was there I would hide it in my pants pocket for good luck
Nou sit ek in Joe se Barber	Now I'm sitting in Joe's Barber
Waiting for them to cut my hare.	Waiting for them to cut my hair.

The song is BVK's commentary on South African politicians and the problematic discourses surrounding their lack of integrity and good leadership. BVK's political assertions are significant for this chapter as it shows their agency in critiquing not only apartheid for its problematic racial politics but also problematises post-

apartheid leadership, highlighting the trend of social and political consciousness in their music.

BVK start the stanza with the emcee saying, “I’m telling you, I am that guy”. In this line, the emcee gives credit to the consistent attempts of BVK at creating consciousness as opposed to South Africa’s political leaders. He continues with a critique of Thabo Mbeki South Africa’s ex-president by saying that opposed to tai-bo (a form of cardiovascular exercise) here in South Africa we “do” Thabo. This indicates that Thabo, who has been given a place of leadership, does nothing, indicated by “hier is die plek vir jou mmmbeki, which has the same pronunciation as mouth in Afrikaans. BVK thus disapprove of Thabo Mbeki’s political stance of quiet diplomacy concerning the crisis in Zimbabwe, South Africa’s neighbouring country.

The stanza continues to name different politicians in South Africa and to link their names to their contentious actions. BVK critique a number of things in naming these politicians such as corruption of power, corruption of the public’s vote and agency, as well as a critique of the façade of democracy. BVK name provincial and national leaders and in this way, place blame not only on national structures of power and the leading party, the ANC but also on individual greed. BVK’s inclusion of Tony Leon is fitting because they comment that he could not even lead an opposition party that was and would be valuable to the growth of democracy.

The end of the stanza is significant, as the emcee speaks about himself again, but describes himself wearing a balaclava waiting to cut his hair at Joe's Barber. The description of the balaclava is interesting because thieves are often represented or encountered wearing this item. There is thus a clear contrast in what BVK assert in this illustration between the image of a potential thief or someone to afraid of, and those dressed in suites who are supposed to be trusted, such as the politicians just mentioned in the stanza.

In this song, BVK assert the contradiction of image because most of the politicians have committed crimes despite their political status, while the ordinary person who gets his hair cut is the stereotype image of someone to be weary of. In doing so, BVK thus assert agency in opinion and the choice people have to make political decisions, as well as the choice to believe stereotypical representations of people. BVK's work in this song also displays constant intertextuality between the everyday images of people as illustrated by having hair cut at Joe's Barber with Boeta Joe and Boeta Gamat in the song, at work with elevated images and impressions of leaders.

The chorus of the song is a social review of what talking nonsense and doing nothing entails. The apathy that BVK remark on refers both to the leaders they exemplify in the song as well as publics who do nothing about indolent and corrupt politicians. BVK thus promote thought-provoking ways of regarding how

leaders are elected and how publics are content with the lack of action. This idea is proposed in the final audacious line of the chorus, “Maar moet nettie lollie” (but just don’t interfere).

Hence BVK’s critique is also double fold, because, in the same way that the public has the power to elect, the same public also needs to assert themselves when those elected are not doing their work. The song is interesting because of the incorporation of two different creative genres, both by Black male artists, as well as the critique made by BVK on the matter of South Africa’s so-called democratic leaders. This indicates development as well as consistency in their ability and agency to not be complacent when issues concern them.

Godessa’s contribution to the hip-hop scene is also interesting in terms of identity and naming. In different ways to BVK, Godessa assert themselves as a conscious hip-hop group. While they do not employ gamtaal in most of their songs, as seen in BVK’s lyrics, they do use a variety of Black identity concerns as a palate from which they rap. EJ Von Lyrik’s solo album, *Method in The Madness* also incorporates patois as well as including gamtaal used in certain songs and also by artists who she performs with.

As highlighted with BVK and POC, Godessa also disassociate themselves with the term “coloured” in various ways such as labelling themselves Black in their music. Problematically, Godessa also, in some of their music fantasise the

associations between Blackness and history. They do this by negating aspects of history through elevating Black histories in ways that could not have affected the majority of Black people in South Africa. However, it is important to note that although both Godessa and BVK are conscious in their promotion of Black identities in contemporary and historical spaces, they are also creative artists.

“Mind ablaze” off Godessa’s second album alerts listeners to think outside of the limitations that have been set for them. The song proposes ways of re-imagining realities without limiting yourself to race. The excerpt is as follows:

Chorus:

I wanna get rid of all the tension and set your mind ablaze,

just move with the groove let it all hang loose and please let me drop a phrase. (rpt)

Stanza 2:

It don’t matter if you’re mellifluous, merciless or venomous

Melonous or light skinned or just a little yellow-ish

Walls are demolished with the knowledge that im coming with

Possibilities are limitless

So is this lyricist

Let me penetrate the crevices

In-between your brain matter

Generate an influence of the very brain matters

Now you switched on like a lantern to this hypnotic type “ish” that make your back burn!

Godessa challenges the listener to “set your mind ablaze” by thinking about the world in new ways that do not limit you to constructs of society. The second stanza of the song starts by saying that it doesn’t matter what race you are or what temperament you are, possibilities are available and there are no limits to what can be achieved. The second and third lines of the stanza articulate that it does not matter what kind of opinion you have, or how you classify yourself racially, the message is that in this dispensation, where the walls have come down, possibilities exist to re-think about your own identity. It is effectual that the three descriptions of race, “melinous, light skinned or just a little yellow-ish” are all descriptions of those classified as “coloured”. Hence, one can assume that Godessa also make a specific call on people classified as “coloured” to rethink their possibilities in relation to identity.

In the context of possibility, the emcee could be speaking directly to the concept “knowledge of self” in individual identities but also the comprehension that racial classification no longer confines South African identities. There is a sense of suggesting that with the breaking down of the walls of entrapment, there are opportunities that exist and it is necessary to change mindsets from the way apartheid taught people to think about themselves as well as each other. It also addresses the idea that walls have figuratively been demolished for Black South Africans in terms of apartheid beliefs, that people of colour were worthless and that the spaces exist now, the knowledge exists now, to re-create and redefine themselves.

In addition to the idea that there are no limits to exploring your identity, the emcee also asserts that she is limitless, whether in what she has to say or in her abilities as an emcee. Godessa thus convey their own views on claiming new spaces as artists. By asserting that the listener should let this information penetrate their brain and generate an influence means that they want to make a positive impact but also want listeners themselves to continue the project. The images of light and change seem prevalent in the message as well, both in the chorus, “set your minds ablaze”, as well as in the final line of the stanza, where the emcee says that the listener is “switched on like a lantern”. This message corresponds with notions of exploring change and re-defining past ways of thinking about identity.

Godessa's identity consciousness is also articulated in a song called "Journey of mine", a song which describes much of their personal journey (ies) with identity. This song explicitly negates the term "coloured" as the three emcees assert themselves as young Black women and associate their learning about the possibilities of renaming through the concept "knowledge of self" located in hip-hop music. The excerpt of the chorus and first stanza are as follows:

Chorus:

I remember way back, It was laid back

If you move too fast you get your head slapped

May I ask that you would replay that so you never forget where you're at,

Where you came from and where you began,

It's just a matter of time, in fact this journey of rhymes in tact

Stanza 1:

Young kid on the lap of her mom

I never knew I'd become a conscious young woman considering the place I come from

Remembering the days of high school

Jam and bread was as common as the eight o'clock news

And that's when I first encountered hip-hop

As far as I can remember

But my sickness was…

But let's move on to the days when self development began

It was strange to my fam

How I'd change the plan

And from the onset,

Knowledge of self was the concept

I never thought of myself as being a born Black

And my contact with hip-hop led to more facts

And For that, I thank the Lord cos he saw that

There was a need to organise among all Blacks

Ever since is evidence and don't intend to fall back.

The stanza starts with the emcee as a child, unaware of social inequalities and problems with racial classification. She continues to say that she was also unaware of the fact that she would become more aware of herself and question her identity as a "conscious young women". The first part of the stanza is significant in that it contextualises not only this woman's life and lack of awareness but many others who were born into the same context. The reference to jam and bread indicates the kind of lifestyle she was born into, a low-income household of colour. The relation to the consumption of jam and bread to the eight o' clock news displays a kind of disparity between her family's lifestyle and the idea of white media of apartheid, which highlights social inequalities between Balck and white South Africans during apartheid.

Her entry into the world of hip-hop changed her mindset and her lack of awareness about racial inequality through her growth in the concept "knowledge of self". Godessa thus assert that agency and critical thought about their identities changed once they came into contact with conscious hip-hop. In an

interview with EJ Von Lyrik from Godessa she related the same experience that the emcee raps about in terms of economic backgrounds and breaking out of the confines of apartheid racial impositions. She said that Godessa formed because they were tired of seeing (mis) representations of Blackness in the media and a lack of awareness about identity among Black youths. (Interview, 2008) Hip-hop thus became Godessa's tool to engage with Black youths and to re-assert concepts such as self-awareness and racial re-identification.

Thus, as the emcee continues into the second part of the stanza, "where self development began", she explains how it was different for her to think outside of the confines of "colouredness", because she never thought of herself as being born Black. However, once she had encountered and engaged with a new way of thinking about race, she understood and realised that the creation of the "coloured" group was problematic. Her re-naming of herself as Black was founded through her self-development in hip-hop as the mechanism for change.

Conscious hip-hop is thus given credit and meaning in this assertion. As identified in BVK's lyrics on identity, Godessa also assert their Black Consciousness ideals in this song. Interestingly, the emcee continues to thank the Lord that He saw the need to mobilise Black youths during apartheid. The association between God, hip-hop and re-naming is thus given different meaning in Godessa's lyrics as opposed to BVK's, where the inclusion of God was to disassociate themselves from being the (historically labelled) children of Ham.

The final lines of the stanza indicate a sense of gratitude in the knowledge that they could re-assert themselves and question their identities outside of the confines of apartheid, so as to act on their agency as Black youth. The final line also indicates finality in the knowledge that having learnt the things they have through hip-hop and having named themselves outside of "colouredness" and rather as Black, has allowed them not to negate the past but to acknowledge the problematic discourses of race and identity in the Black South African past in significant ways, and to, defiantly, never go back.

While Godessa have made considerable inroads and contributions to rethinking about the ways in which people classify themselves, the song "These times" on their album *Spillage* takes an exceptionally tribalistic stance on identity which they ground in Africanism. The caution with regard to this song is similar to that of BVK's "Kaap Van Storms", in which too much credit is given to an Afrocentric royalist approach toward Blackness. The effect is that certain histories are negated. Quotes from different parts of the song give insight into the approach by Godessa. It is as follows:

Starts with drums beating and chanting in the background, continues throughout the song

In these times when blood lines intertwine

Like the

Vines of branches aligned with

Past, present and future

Time through eyes blind

I opened

Mine is a tale that runs like the River Nile

Africa

African hold me in the cradle of human kind

They say you masochistic, blessed killing, ritualistic

You must

Rise above these

European, Western, colonial oppressive lies

Complicating lives

You must rise

……

We mirror our ancestors' existence, culture, tradition from a true African perspective

……

We are one

And this is not meant to be said as a slogan or a banner for one to exploit one another

We are powerful as one, diverse but One nation, one continent, one people…

One,one, one Africa

But the battle has only begun.

The song is problematic in its approach, as though Godessa assert that all Africans are part of one tribe. The propsition is that this tribalism would answer all problems of inequality in South Africa and in Africa. This is problematic for two reasons, firstly because it negates aspects of Black and African history and secondly because it trivialises the challenges that face South Africa and Africa

with very few solutions other than promoting a unified tribe of Africans who are not in denial about being African.

The song starts with an unclear context of time and the association between time and bloodlines intertwining. It continues into a contradiction of bloodlines intertwined between past, present and future and then locates the emcee in an African tale that runs like the River Nile. The use of the River Nile is an interesting way in which to contextualise herself and her tale that assumedly is her personal history intertwined with Africa. Because the Nile flows through a number of African countries, each with their own histories and contexts, one assumes that her tale does too. The first section of the song continues to create this image and belief of Africa as a whole, a place conjoined and connected in its ritual, its beliefs. Godessa then assert that opposed to Africa's unified legacies, European and Western cultures try to make Africans believe they need to change their systems. The emcee identifies these interactions with Western and European countries as "complicating lives", referring to African lives.

While Godessa promote a positive contribution towards labelling oneself African and assert agency in saying "rise up", they contradict the ability to label when they assert the idea of a homogenous African culture throughout this song. The emcee romanticises images of Africa as well as her location in these images, such as "Africa, hold me in the cradle of human kind" as well as the concept of the Nile related to her tale as a South African. Symbolically the Nile is significant

historically in many ways as well as biblically, however the romanticisation of both the images of Africa interlinked with the emcee's personal tale of being African, negates other personal histories of Africa. I say this because in the song, Godessa lend themselves to the over-simplification of African histories and cultures in terms of illustrating the contradiction of a victimised Africa as the beautifully tribal continent versus the conquering West who came to overthrow the united African tribe.

Arguably Western countries can be blamed for some of the problems Africa faces today and in African countries' pasts, but to promote a historically flawed notion of a unified tribe of Africans almost lends itself rather to the problematic interpretations of Africa by the west than promoting Africa and it's people in a realistic way. This romaniticisation is of concern also because the song negates individual histories. Africa is not one big continent but consists of many different countries. While Godessa promote a positive image of Africa, and encourage Africans to "rise up" against oppression by Western countries, they also assert homogeneity about Africa that historically never existed. It appears as though Godessa assert humanity in Africanism in this song.

The last line of the stanza says, "We mirror our ancestors". Again, the question of knowing what their (the ancestors') existence entailed is brought to the fore. The song exalts unification in identity but, as mentioned above, oversimplifies various aspects of history. Furthermore, a "true African perspective" creates the

impression that an essentialised African and an essentialised African culture exist. They do not explain or give suggestions to what makes Africa so authentic in its existence and in its homogeneity. Furthermore, the assertion that this "true African perspective exists" delegitimises anything outside of this and it is perplexing to identify who is included in this perspective, other than a broad stroke of belonging in being African. The last section of the song as quoted, briefly indicates diversity in Africans but contradicts the rest of song where they assert a unified Africa and a "true African culture."

The end of the song appears to find fault with specifically South African Black identities that denounce their roots in Africa. The emcee raps the following:

On the topic of xenophobia, Southern Africa

Why are we melanin, intolerant, question mark, exclamation point, FULL STOP

As if we feel black dominance

Are we not from the African continent?

It's always I'm 2/3 Spanish 1/3 Dutch, ¼ of an eighth Portuguese, Latin American, Indian Asian but NEVER, NEVER any mention of being African

Are we that cosmopolitan?

The assertion of being Black and proud is a theme throughout the song despite problematic historical aspects. Hence, in the above section, Godessa criticise Black South Africans who seem to negate their own histories of being African. While Godessa's point is valid, the contradiction in the song still lies in the essentialisation of African tribalism. In the section quoted above Godessa promote consciousness about identity and the lingering problems of racial hierarchies in western colonial and apartheid impositions, the idea that whiteness is always seen as better than being Black, however they offer limited suggestions in terms of renegotiating or re-thinking about Africanism. Instead, they offer a problematic approach in terms of acceptance that one is part of the African tribe.

EJ Von Lyrik's "Freedom in a cage" featuring Teba, off her first solo album similarly approaches the topic of a lack of mental freedom and self-awareness. "Freedom in a cage" seems to draw less on the idea of an essentialised tribe. The chorus of the song is as follows:

Asian, b b-b-black man, white son!

Anglo Saxon, all the nations

What a gwan?

You keep freedom in a cage and you think it won't cause rage?

Rpt

EJ, as opposed to BVK's frequent use of gamtaal and Godessa's sporadic use of Afrikaans and gamtaal, incorporates a substantial amount of patois in her music. Patois is colloquial language affiliated with Jamaica. When asked about EJ's use of patois in her music, she said: "One of the reasons why I braved patois was (also) because of what I believe it stands for. They're also people of colour and I don't see anything wrong with me embracing what that stands for. Why is the French R acceptable yet patois isn't?". (Interview, 2008)

The chorus to "Freedom in a cage" acts as an introduction to the rest of the song. The assertion from the first line is a promotion of active unification by all nations against having their minds and their thoughts caged. The final line of the chorus asks the question and personalises the problem, although she does not identify who she speaks to. The question could also be rhetorical and would tie in with the initial lines of alerting and creating awareness about what it means if freedom is kept in a cage. EJ's description of freedom in a cage is also interesting because freedom cannot literally be caged, hence she projects histories onto her listener(s), making the listener think not only of their own freedom but the restriction of various groups of people during history, such as apartheid in South Africa.

The first stanza to “Freedom in a cage” rapped by EJ is as follows and includes the final bridge in patois:

In this matrix of nameless beings, we’re only digits

Virtually real, similarly ill, mental midgets!

Capitalism ain’t cold, it’s damn frigid

Humanity don’t feature yet we find ourselves in it

Flesh and blood up against a metal rod

Subduing our eve thought

Controlling perception

Captured by Media Madness

Responsible for you gladness or sadness

Trapped in a world where your senses are encaged

in fences

They're relentless!

Social conditioning to keep us all in-line

If you deviate, be sure you'll do the time

Psychological pre-programming keeps you confined

But yo! It's so subtle that you don't really mind

'Cause the truth is disguised

Fooled by the sugar coat

Schooled by a crooked note

So stressed, oppressed

To ensure all three of your eyes remain blind!

Bridge in patois:

We nah hav di time fi di passive resistance	We don't have the time for the passive resistance

We gwan overthrow your political system	We are going to overthrow your political system
Set dem all ablaze	Set them all ablaze
Gwan burn dem down!	Going to burn them down!
Rpt	

The first stanza of “Freedom in a cage” explores three different influences that limit people’s possibilities to think about their identities and themselves in different ways. These are identified as capitalism, the media and governments although government influence is given more attention in the bridge. She starts the stanza with saying that in this world we all matter as numbers, not as individuals. The blame for this lies in the three influences that have been highlighted. She describes people in the second line as “Virtually real, similarly ill, mental midgets!”. This line correlates with the line in which she says that even though everyone is human, humanity does not exist. EJ makes specific reference here to a world of virtual reality, in which everyone does the same things everyday, such as use the Internet but nobody questions anything that they encounter in these virtual worlds. She takes issue with the world of humanity that seems to exist in a realm of cyberspace, while true humanity and interaction seems non-existent.

The following part of the stanza links the influence of the virtual world to that of media consumption. In this section, EJ problematises the media influence on the way consumers view the world. She thus disapproves of the way in which the media controls the individual's ability to act independently. She critiques the lack of freedom the individual has to make decisions and think outside of what the media assert. Freedom to choose, in EJ's opinion, is limited because the media influence everyone, so consumers' abilities to critically engage with the media is restricted. She expands on this point by saying that the media become "responsible for you gladness or sadness" and because of this she alerts the listener to knowing that through this they will become socially conditioned to thinking about the world in the way the media wants them to, ultimately ending up caged and "trapped in a world where your senses are encaged in fences."

The role of the media to shape public opinion and to influence identities is, according to EJ, the same as psychological programming. She also points out that it would not be seen in this way because it is "so subtle", and is described as "sugar coat(ed)". In highlighting this, she alerts the listener to the idea of being psychologically brainwashed by the media. This also ties in with the idea of human beings moving increasingly further away from human relations. The media create impressions of what they want people to think, look like and conform to.

EJ contends that without being consciously aware of what happens in the world around, society runs the risk of cloning of each other because nobody questions the information that is consumed. In this stanza, EJ alerts the listener to the problem of the unaware and passive consumption of media products. She equates passive consumptino to oppression, a term associated, in the South African context, with apartheid. The stanza ends with the assertion that “all three of your eyes remain blind”, a possible caution on her part that even when contentious media is interacted with, nobody does anything to contest the media product or its availability in the public arena.

The bridge of this song draws parallels between passive consumption, and governments or political systems. This section sung in patois, contends that passive consumption has developed to such as degree that consumers retain too little agency to oppose depictions or/and representations they do not agree with, because they know nothing else. She describes this as “passive resistance” and says that there is no time for that because the humanitarian problem relating to passive consumption is already so severe.

One can assume that EJ’s description of the urgent overthrowing of the political system relates to asserting herself and others against the confines of what the media, and governments want people to think, breaking out of the cage. The idea of burning these institutions down is not so much an attempt at literally wanting people to burn down the systems that entrap them, but rather figuratively burning

down the systems that control the minds of people. EJ's assertion to overthrow the political system also indicates her opinion on the way governments perpetuate the system of media influence.

The title, "Freedom in a cage" is thus also a play on words because people have the choice and the freedom to engage in the media, yet they find themselves stuck in a world of passive consumption where they have the agency to choose whether to engage in media or not. The idea of freedom in a cage is thus also literal, as people confine themselves to the cage by losing their individualities and their agency in the cage of media products.

The songs in this chapter have highlighted various aspects pertaining identities of Blackness, from various ways of claiming Blackness as opposed to buying into representations of "coloured" stereotypes; to problematically locating Blackness in romantic representations of Black histories. The examples that have been used highlights that much local conscious hip-hop claims Black identity in constructive ways so as to imagine new ways of being from apartheid's racial impositions.

This chapter has mainly drawn on the work of BVK, Godessa and EJ Von Lyrik, as well as an excerpt from one of POC's songs. This section has also brought to the fore how both BVK and Godessa problematise aspects of identities and how they, in many ways also offer suggestions so as to provoke consciousness and

change and significantly, name themselves Black instead of “coloured”. Both BVK and Godessa do this so as to disassociate themselves from the stereotypes of “coloureds” both historically and in contemporary spaces.

This chapter has also identified and problematised some of the ways in which the groups have romanticised some of the concepts of identity by negating certain historical events of naming and claiming identities in certain ways. The idea of romanticisation also played a significant role in the groups making certain assumptions about identities or homogenising traits of individual identities whether based on nationalism or tribes.

Chapter 3: Engaging with gender and gendered roles through hip-hop by Godessa and BVK

The distinction between conscious hip-hop and gangsta-rap makes for interesting analysis and discussion about the depictions of gender and gendered roles in hip-hop and the imposition of these representations onto youth. This chapter looks at how the work of BVK and Godessa articulate ideas about gender and representations of men and women. This chapter uses excerpts of lyrics from BVK and Godessa's albums to analyse Black gendered identities and considers the ways in which the groups problematise gender portrayals in society.

Gangsta rap's representations of both black masculinity and black femininity are problematic and the excerpts used in this chapter draw on conscious hip-hop's assertions about black masculinity and femininity. Rose asserts that women in hip-hop often use their music to "interpret and articulate the fears, pleasures and promises of young black women whose voices have been relegated to the margins of public discourse." (1994: 146) It is interesting that women in hip-hop take on this role while men in hip-hop often depict questionable gender politics.

Haupt asserts the following about gansta rap and its assertions about black masculinity:

> It is thus the commodification of a particular type of hip-hop- gangster rap along with its questionable gender politics- that leads to specific mainstream representations of black masculinity; and… gangsta rappers have been willing participants in this process." (2008: 150)

The representations that both Haupt and Rose focus attention on, are consumed forms of culture and this chapter will consider the various ways in which Godessa and BVK interpret and articulate their gender politics. The work of these artists is an intriguing space in which to discuss gender because it exists within the ideals of conscious hip-hop and social as well as individual awareness, cornerstones of conscious hip-hop music. Godessa and BVK's work are also rich sites for analysis because of their occupation of Black cultural spaces as men and women (as articulated in chapter 1). One can thus see how they question and problematise, and even suggest solutions to thinking about gendered identities in new ways.

Brasse Vannie Kaap's assertions on gender are interesting in that, despite their consciousness about identity questions and self naming, they seem to relegate gender issues to the margins in some of their songs. By this I mean that they prescribe gender roles within a masculinist framework and assert specific roles to women and men, hence playing into the conservative ideas and constructs pertaining to gender and gendered roles.

In a song titled “Jy smaak my” off BVK’s first album and remixed for their third album, they play out a scene of a young man pursuing a young woman. Two male emcees rap as the young man from Mitchell’s Plein while one female responds (as the young woman from Garlandale) to the advances by the young man. In this song BVK probe racial discourses in “coloured” societies and address notions of class and privilege. They also discuss romantic interactions based on class distinctions within “coloured” communities.

This song raises a number of interesting aspects concerning BVK’s gender politics in the way they dismiss the woman’s disinterest in the man’s approaches as “snobbish”, granting her no agency in her choice as a woman to choose who she wants to like or date. The song is interesting because of the language used to convey the message that the emcee finds the young woman attractive and likes her; but is also interesting because of the assumptions made by the emcee about how he imagines the woman in a possible future.

The chorus of the song and the first stanza is as follows:

Jy smaak my, jy smaak my nie	You like me, you don’t like me
Jy smaak my	You like me

Jy, ek is lief vir jou!	Hey, I love you!
Rpt	
Stanza 1:	
A very good morning my sexy young lady	
You must become my baby	
You ride me crazy	You drive me crazy
The brasse don't want me to bowl you	The guys don't want me pursue you
Cos they say you stirvy	Because they say you are conceited
And you only speak for English	And you only speak English
I don't spoke it so lekker	I don't speak it very well
I wanna be your guy so I'm not	
Shameless to try	
…	

Wait! I know I'm from Mitchell's Plain and you from Garlandale

When they catch you like that grou oe and your hare are styl

When they catch you with your grey eyes and your straight/ sleek hair

The song starts with the chorus, a definitive statement with the young man telling the women he likes her. The song continues with the emcee who speaks to the young woman he likes, calling her "my sexy young lady" and the instruction that she "must" become his "baby". This initial projection of masculinity in the way he addresses her alerts the listener to the male's self- assumed position of dominance. This assertion places the song and BVK's gender projection in a contentious space because of the way the emcee converses with her but also the assumption that because he likes her, she must return the favour.

The idea that he is from a different social background and he "don't speak it (English) so lekker" makes it appear as though he tries to win her over by explaining his authenticity in other ways. This is also articulated in the way he speaks about how he is unashamed to try and win her love. The young man thus places himself and the woman in different spaces while trying to convince her

that he is worthy of her attention and affection. This display of supposed authenticity is however shrouded by his insecurity later on in the song.

BVK thus problematise classism and privilege within “colouredness” in the Western Cape. However, in their disagreement with the problematic ideas that surround “coloured” groups in the Western Cape, they display questionable gender politics, in the way the emcee assumes a hyper-masculinist role towards the young woman and in the way the woman is described as being physically beautiful only. This displays a limited representation of the young woman and the young man’s reasons for liking her.

In the second part of the first excerpt, the emcee does two things, he makes a distinction between them in that he places them in different geographical spaces and he associates where they live with differences in their appearances. While the emcee is from Mitchell’s Plein and cannot speak English very well, the young woman is from Garlandale and only speaks English. The disparity between class and the grossly unfair impositions made on people of colour by apartheid are addressed by BVK in this section. However, BVK also make a comment about what is considered beautiful when the man describes the woman as having grey eyes and straight hair; and as sexy but “too stirvy”. One can thus assume because of the representation of the young woman who has been described in this way, that all young women with similar features have a more privileged status than young women who do not have light eyes or straight hair, or that all

women who cannot be described in this way are unattractive. This description of beauty is dubious because it seems that BVK promote and perpetuate the stereotypes about womens' beauty that are found in mainstream media spaces that, in other songs, they address and disagree with.

As though in response to the advances by the young man from Mitchell's Plein, the young woman responds with the following:

His hair is well, kroes

His hair is well, kinky

There's no other way for me to say it

And I don't think I want to have anything to do with him

I mean, can you imagine the embarrassment?

There'll be no way I can stand for that

Not with my status!

A final quote from the song is part of the young man's brief response to what the woman says (as quoted above):

I've had nogal enough of this stirvy coloured mentality that's in your kop	I've actually had enough of this stirvy coloured mentality that's in your head
I think for you to change your frame of thoughts is to get in your chops geskop	I think that for you to change the way you think is get beaten up
Just because you is watte and sexy	Just because you are sexy and stuff
Doesn't mean you can disrespect me	
Please girl, don't let the vanity expect your beauty	
…	
Your gesig is grand	Your face is pretty
You gonna stoot my laaitie innie pram	You are going to push my baby in a pram
For every tort there is a masterplan!	For every thought there is a masterplan!

The young woman's response to the approaches of the young man are spoken as though she is deliberating the idea with herself whereas his attempts at pursuing her always seem more public as though he is addressing her and his friends, as though validating his motives to other and to himself. She starts off by speaking about his hair that is not straight. While he highlighted her straight hair as an aspect of her beauty, she dismisses his hair as an unattractive aspect of his appearance, automatically denoting the relation between hair and physical beauty. This comment thus alerts the listener to a relation between how his (the emcee's) hair would have a negative impact on her social status. The use of the woman's comment in the song plays on the use of the stereotype of hair and social status. She describes dating someone with "kroes hair" as embarrassing. BVK thus comment on the problematic history of displacement and racial and social segregation in the Western Cape. This is echoed in the woman's comment about hair and personal status as a woman from Garlandale in relation to a man from Mitchell's Plein.

Associations with hair are historically problematic when related to apartheid race classification mechanisms. Erasmus writes that, "until recently, in most coloured-African communities 'good hair' meant sleek or straight hair… The notion of 'good hair' and the silences and pain attached to it are not unique to coloured-African experiences." (2000: 383) BVK thus problematise the idea of beauty and hair but do not evaluate the hyper masculinist assertions of desire and what is considered attractive. There is thus a contradiction exhibited in this song which

indicates that BVK ignore pressing concerns about race and gender relations despite an assumedly racially aware role throughout the song.

In response to the woman, the young man seems to lose his temper and a display of hyper masculinity comes to the fore, when he asserts that for her to get rid of her mind set, which he labels a “coloured mentality”, she should be physically abused. Furthermore, he does not seem to pay any attention to her disinterest in him, whatever her reasons may be. The only change in attitude on his part is a more aggressive, almost angry approach towards making her his girlfriend. This attitude also displays a problematic approach to ideas of ownership of women’s bodies. The idea that is put forward by the young man and thus by BVK is that when the young woman is his girlfriend he will have ownership of her mentality as well as her body. This also strips agency from the woman who is described as having a “coloured mentality” and limits this mentality to women’s behaviour.

This aggressiveness displays a negation of female agency on the part of BVK because despite her feelings, the young man persists in, not asking, but instructing the woman that he wants her and there doesn’t seem to be any need to question that. Furthermore, it is interesting that the emcee assumes that the young woman disrespects him when throughout the song he objectifies her beauty and doesn’t take her seriously when she rejects his advances. It can thus be said that *he* infact disrespects *her* instead of the other way around.

The last excerpt from the song is a projection into the future by the young man who starts by commenting on the young woman's pretty face. He continues to say that she will push his child in the pram. The projection is described as his masterplan. This is a contentious assertion on the part of the young man because it makes the listener wonder what the plan involves when the woman has already said she is not interested. The idea of the woman's beauty in relation to the baby in the pram is interesting because it makes the listener wonder whether the masterplan involves actual furthering of the pressure he has already placed on her by perhaps raping her to have a child with her. Even the mere assumption of this as a possibility as articulated in the quoted lines is concerning.

I thus agree with Haupt's description of BVK in this song as displaying a "masculinist narrative...because the problematic "coloured mentality" is located in the minds of female subjects." However, I disagree with Haupt on his description of the male in this narrative as finding a "consolation (..) offered to the lover's seemingly hopeless situation" in the woman pushing his baby in the pram. (2001: 184) What Haupt alludes to as a consolation negates the assertion by the young man that the woman will be pushing *his* baby in a pram and it is for this reason that considering Haupt's analysis can also not be interpreted outside of a masculinist framework. It appears that Haupt's analysis of this song excuses the aggressive assertion made by the young man to the woman.

BVK thus do not find fault with socialised hyper masculinity which is at play throughout this song. As mentioned earlier, they also, by ignoring the woman's disinterest, strip all agency that she asserts when she voices her disinterest. In light of the lack of problematising young black male identities, BVK cannot offer suggestions on new ways of interpreting beauty, bridging racial socio-economic constructs and so the value in disagreeing with the representation of the "coloured" Black stereotype fails to amount to anything in this song.

It is interesting that BVK's "Jy smaak my" displays this masculinist narrative when "Vat jou goed en pak" on their *Yskoud* album promotes women's agency. It appears that BVK have limited their womanist imaginations to situations that affect women negatively, such as being raped or abused by their partners or husbands. While BVK display a completely different approach towards women in this song as opposed to "Jy Smaak my", which allows and promotes women to actively change situations that affect them badly, their message still stems from a trajectory of male dominance. Assumedly the idea is that unless a male partner is abusive, women should remain submissive. This in itself is concerning because it does not legitimise BVK's hyper-masculinist approach.

"Vat jou goed en pak" describes a number of narratives of women in situations of domestic abuse. This analysis makes use of one of the narratives, where a young wife gets physically abused on more than one occasion by her delinquent husband. The chorus and excerpt are as follows:

Chorus:

As hy beginne slat	If he starts hitting
Dan vat jou goed en pak	Then take your things and leave
Dan maak jy ‘n saak	Then make a case
En sorg dat hy bad	And make sure he suffers
As hy beginne slat	If he starts hitting
Dan vat jou goed en pak	Then take your things and leave
Dan maak jy ‘n saak	Then make a case
Dan rek jy sy gat	And make sure he gets given a hard time
Shame, kyk hoe lyk sy	Shame, look at how she looks
Haar oe’s altyd dof en vol trane	Her eyes are always fuzzy and full of tears
Dinge moet verander	Things must change

Maar doen jy iets reg of vekeerd dan lug haar man sy hande	But if you do somehthign right or wrong her husband lifts his hands
Ek kry haar jammer want sy's nog jonk	I feel sorry for her because she's still young
Maar daar's niks meer lewe in haar nie	But there's no life left in her
Sy kannie haar man se gesig vedra nie	She can't stand her husband's face
Maar sy wil hom oekie velaatie	But she also doesn't want to leave him
Ek remember a while back	I remember a while back
Voor sy nog gepraat het van trou	Before she spoke of marriage
Was sy like mal oor die ou	She was crazy about the guy
Sy't gese sy gaan hom verewig hou	She said she'd hold onto him forever
Maar toe eendag notice ek haar oeg is blou	But oneday I noticed her eye was blue
Toe se ek vir haar "girl don't be a phoney"	So I told, "girl, don't be a phoney"
Love is not that blind	

Die bra's nie reg vir jou nie	The guy's not right for you
As daar 'n eerste keer dan bet ek daar's 'n tweede keer	If he did it once he can do it again
Sy se toe, ja hy's jammer vir wat hy gedoen'it	She said he was sorry for what he had done
Maar 'n maand later toe doen hy it weer.	But a month later he did it again.

The excerpt explains a narrative of abuse in which a husband beats up his wife and she always has excuses not to leave him. The long excerpt is to display the main narrative of abuse that this song speaks about and addresses. The chorus starts with BVK trying to communicate with women who are in similar situations of abuse. The chorus provides the positive suggestion that is consistent throughout this song: for women who are being abused, to pack their bags and leave abusive husbands, make a case against them at the police station and make sure they don't come back, make sure they suffer.

The excerpt from the song is about how a young woman married a man she was in love with, and now cannot seem to break out of the delusion of "love", as he abuses her. The emcee relays a narrative that many women on the Cape Flats and in other parts of the country can relate to. BVK thus problematise woman and child abuse in this song and promote agency among women to assert

themselves by leaving abusive husbands. The emcee starts by describing how there is no more life in her eyes and how she cannot stand her husband but still stays with him. The situation of women and abuse is not an uncommon narrative in society thus the song automatically makes the listener sympathise with the women's situations. Hence, part of BVK's aim with this song is to create awareness among women that they do not need to stay in destructive relationships.

The emcee tries to advise her that she doesn't have to stay with someone like her husband and that, if he has beat her once, he will most likely do it again. While the woman dismisses the emcee's advice, the excerpt ends with the re-occurrence of her abuse. The song thus does not only articulate the violence of abuse but also asserts that it is never something that happens once, hence the song cautions the listener who cannot leave her partner but also the listener who wonders whether the partner will do it again. Although BVK's disagreement with the male as an abuser is blatant, they do not call into question the hyper-masculinist display of violence. Instead they present a narrative of female suffering and vitcimhood.

Although BVK positively assert independent female agency in this song, it is interesting that they do not examine the male imagination at any point in the song. BVK problematise women abuse from the imagination of the female and the authority they have to do so is questionable. In opposition to this it is perhaps

within the imagination of the female as the victim that they speak out against male perpetrators. This song is different to “Jy smaak my” where BVK dismiss female agency, but makes one aware of the approach they take to gender discourses. It appears that BVK only problematise male behaviour in abusive situations and this limits their suggestions to a masculinist approach. It is also interesting that BVK only assert women’s agency from a trajectory of women’s victimhood, as though limiting women’s agency to situations such as abuse. The notion of speaking from a trajectory of victimhood is also concerning because in this way BVK limit women’s cabilities to being victims, in this way negating the boundles possibilities for women as active agents of their lives.

BVK’s song about abuse is different to EJ Von Lyrik’s assertions on the same topic in a song called “Flight over many cities” in which she problematises abuses but does not victimise women. Instead, she takes a very strong, pro-womanist approach toward women being able to get themselves out of situations that are harmful or abusive to them. The difference in the approach is interesting as the following quote of the second stanza of the song illustrates. The quote is as follows:

He said I had to let my spirituality slide and

Let go of all my dignity and pride and

I said no! I said no! NO! NO! NO!

I'd had to lose my integrity to be

And I said no. NO NO NO NO!

I won't compromise with my soul!

I don't care but I'll not be told!

I am a woman and you should know

With or without you I'll still feel whole!

Rpt

See the seasons are changin'

My life's rearranging

But I'm still the same and

What I believe in it can never be taken

That's why this black woman will never be shaken!

Won't be a victim to emotional abuse

I refuse to be used!

Always revealin' the truth, so please tell me WHO ARE YOU,

To come with Babylon ideologies to my doorstep?

Still wanna force it?

Von Lyrik isn't for it!

I will not allow you to lock me mind up in a dungeon.

I'm so very sorry! (4 times)

The quote displays a completely different approach to women in abusive situations than what is seen in BVK 's "Vat jou goed en pak" as analysed above. The excerpt starts with EJ rapping from a first person perspective when she speaks about how "He" wanted her to change herself to be more of what he wanted her to be or to embody. Her descriptions of what these characteristics are, that he wanted her to change, are also interesting. She describes and claims characteristics such as her "spirituality", "dignity", "pride" and "integrity", which the

man she speaks of in the song, wants her to discard. EJ thus portrays women as multi-faceted and does not limit her or women's imaginations to victimhood when in destructive relationships such as abusive situations. Furthermore, the repeated use of the word "no" is poignant as it asserts the agency of the woman throughout this song and immediately distances the listener and the abused woman from the notion of victimisation and sympathy.

EJ asserts a sense of possibility for women to disagree with their partners and to, significantly, remove *themselves* from circumstances that are abusive or damaging in any way. There is also a sense of pride in being a woman, that is seen in this song that is not seen in the BVK song because the situations of abuse that are described and the roles of the women are imagined from such different perspectives. While the one limits women's experiences of abuse to shame and victimisation, the other opens up women's minds to agency, pride and integrity.

The following part of the excerpt is also profound as she relates the above section of not letting go of "integrity" and "pride" to not compromising with her soul and proclaiming herself as a woman. The final line of the song also advocates strength and ability to be whole as a person with or without a partner. This is repeated as an attempt at emphasizing the importance of women envisioning themselves as independent both in and out of relationships becase in knowing this, women have limitless agency.

The idea accentuated is that women should not only be strong when they are already in situations that are harmful to them but should embrace agency with or without a man/ partner; and that they should be consistent in their assertions of agency. EJ thus takes power away from male abusers or the masculinist trajectory by asserting women's agency at all times and not situating women's agency in "comfortable" or palatable spaces for men, such as the conventional belief that men should never beat women and so in that situation of abuse only, is it acceptable and necessary to act against the man.

In the following section, EJ relates her "life rearranging" to the changing seasons, giving the impression of change and associations to change with the seasons of the weather. Despite what is described as change around her, she remains the same and this is related to never being shaken. The image is like that of a storm around the person and her sense of self and her belief in herself is what keeps her grounded and ensures that "this black woman will never be shaken". Hence, EJ relates her own sense of self as a woman and her stance on her labelling of herself as a Black woman.

EJ also displays an interesting use of patois in this song and throughout the album, which she was criticised for in the media. On this, EJ says the following about representations of women of colour: " It is not safe enough for a "coloured" woman from Cape Town to do something like that. They expected something and

this wasn't it. If it were a guy, nothing would've been said. But because I'm a woman and I'm a "coloured"….its a problem!" (Interview, 2008) EJ's assertion is particular in that she identifies as a Black woman and thus promotes her and other Black women's abilities and strength.

She continues by asking, "Who are you?", personalising the message to whoever is trying to limit her and also personalising the question to the listener who relates. The question also ties into problematising the other as the perpetrator because, while she speaks to and about women throughout the song she also addresses the perpetrator in this line, not negating his existence and once again, eliminating the element of victimisation by speaking directly to the person who is trying to change her. Hence, EJ does not demand sympathy from this song but rather respect and defies the often-problematic representation of Black women in abusive situations by not sympathising or delegitimising their agency. The end of this section also asserts EJ's personalisation of how she won't stand for it and "isn't for it", referring to being changed.

The final section from the excerpt which is repeated four times says that she will not allow her mind to be locked up in a dungeon and ends with her unapologetic "I'm so very sorry!". This association between ones mind and a dungeon seems to echo EJ's "Freedom in a cage" which was analysed in Chapter one. EJ again expresses the relationship between agency and freedom to think. She critiques women who allow their minds to be stifled by figuratively having their minds

locked up in a dungeon. The image of a dungeon is associated with being dark, dank and below the ground, as though burying ones mind.

The chorus of this song is EJ's suggestion of a solution to the problem. It is as follows:

Let's take a flight over many cities

I'd like to show you where the stars grow

And where it's pretty

Just open up and spread your wings

You'll be free with me

Hey! Hey! Oh!

Let's take a flight over many cities

I'd like to show you where the stars grow

And where it's pretty

Just open up and spread your wings for me!

Although romantic in its approach, EJ again promotes getting away from the problem, embracing the ability to get out of the situation that is trapping someone “in a dungeon”, and embracing freedom. Her assertion that the listener should “take a flight over many cities” with her, is also figurative in its promotion of experiencing something different. EJ creates the idea that she will be the guide when she says, “I’d like to show you where the stars grow and where it’s pretty”. Her suggestion does not only ask of the listener to embrace change and to think about her life and her situation in a way that can change it but also suggests that experiences such as abuse or suffering do not need to be endured alone. The idea of helping one another as women through bad experiences is also articulated in the final line of the chorus, when EJ says “Just open up and spread your wings for me!”, as though the very thought of the experience of difference is the first step to challenging and changing a situation that has become destructive but familiar.

Finally, it is this positive attitude from a “womanist-centred” trajectory that makes this song less of a sympathetic ode to abused women and more of a pro-active attempt at re-thinking and imagining new ways of encountering abuse of any kind. EJ also does not promote distinctions among various kinds of abuse by asserting that some abuse is more harmful than others. The idea promoted through this song is that any kind of abuse or attempt at controlling someones mind is problematic. EJ asserts her own agency throughout the song, while saying that she would like to show you, the listener, that you too can embody

this. This song thus differs from BVK's offering on the same topic as it does not limit female abuse to victimhood, neither does it promote women's agency only in relation to physical abuse; but alerts the listener to the various kinds of abuse that can problematically "lock your mind up in a dungeon."

EJ's "Living my dreams" contemplates masculinity's assumptions about ownership over women's bodies. EJ uses the scenario of young women, some even young girls who are prostitutes for various reasons and who are enslaved to drug abuse, and get infected with HIV/ Aids by the men that sleep with them. She thus displays her disgust at the ways in which men have sex with and infect these young women with diseases and infect their minds. "Living my dreams" critically raises awareness about the topic of prostitution. The first stanza and the chorus are as follows:

Sweet sixteen, wide eyes with many dreams

Won't ever reach the skyline by seventeen

Lured to a bed of thorns with pretty things

Some are forcefully taken against their will it seems

Sometimes they become victims of poverty

Mothers need to be feedin' the rest of the family

So they're taken on a journey

Baby girls, women in their twenties and their thirties

No diamonds and pearls for the ladies of the night

Authorities say their laws are airtight

Yet it is looser than the belt of the man that
support the scam

Paying filthy green cash, just to slap her ass

And feel her thighs though she's twelve
years old

Pump her body full of heroin before she's sold

To the highest bidder, the slyest critter

I'm vexed at the exploitation of the
feminine gender!

Chorus:

Help me see that I could be living

my dreams

Dying should not be the only option

for me!

The first stanza starts by describing a girl aged “sweet sixteen” who is excited about life and has many dreams, however by seventeen she will probably be so far from those dreams because she becomes a prostitute. EJ describes the manner in which young women are “lured” to the profession “with pretty things”. She then mentions other possibilities for why women become prostitutes such as poverty. EJ starts the song by problematising prostitution as an unfair short- cut to death; something EJ feels no women needs to experience. She continues in this section to say that there are “no diamonds and pearls for the ladies of the night”, alerting the listener to the misconception that many prostitutes want to do the job they do. She thus says that there is no glamour or gratification in this profession and hence continues to assert relations between living and having dreams about possibilities other than prostitution.

She condemns justice in the law when she refers to “authorities” who say the “laws are airtight” but she says that the airtight laws authorities referred to are in fact “looser than the belt of the man who supports the scam”. EJ thus critiques the injustices and loopholes of the system of law in the way in which it actually provides no protection or protective systems for prostitutes who are mistreated,

abused and objectified. The way in which men who act as “pimps” and “owners” by pass these airtight laws on a continual basis is interesting because it raises concerns about the air tight system that authorities allude to. The system is also questioned with regard to men who pay for sex. There is a clear disparity in terms of who the law then chooses to protect. EJ thus relates the ability to bypass laws with money. The objectification of the woman is thus ignored, if realised at all, because of the notion of paying for the service.

EJ continues the description of situations by also relating the ability to by-pass laws to the men who “own” these women’s bodies and the way in which they destroy these women’s lives without anyone taking note. This is EJ’s way of taking note and saying it does not have to be this way. In addition to her speaking out about the problematic discourses surrounding child prostitution, she also problematises the way in which the males who assumedly “own” these women get them addicted to drugs so that there is an even greater level of dependency between “owner” and exploited “worker”.

This stanza also comments on the industry of child prostitution and the lack of integrity and respect that men who have sex with children have. The topic of child prostitution is often pushed to the margins of discussion, dismissing it as problematic street children who want to cause trouble. EJ describes a young girl who is only twelve years old and is a child prostitute. While the mainstream media does not pay much attention to the reality child prostitution, EJ screams

for attention to the topic in this song. The exploitation not only of women who need alternatives to keep their families afloat but also of young girls, some who are kid-napped, is a problem in South African society. The topic of (child) prostitution seems to go unnoticed because of the way in which the system is governed by patriarchy and complacency.

The final line of the song asserts how EJ is “vexed at the exploitation of the feminine gender”. She not only displays her anger at the situation of prostitution and child prostitution but also asserts that the periphery influences on prostitutes and child prostitutes such as drugs and ownership over these women’s/ girl’s bodies should not be going unnoticed by authorities. Hence the plea that is heard in the chorus is so much more pertinent because all options for living out the “sweet sixteen” dreams are lost in drug abuse and ownership. Also, the chorus is written from a first person perspective as though the child prostitute is begging for help. EJ thus personalises the plea and ensures that it also resonates as a caution against this problematic industry.

The second stanza continues from the chorus and continues to take the form of the first person. This part of the song exhibits the plea from a prostitute and the desperation and despair in the place she has come from, living her dreams, to dying because she sings “now I am three months infected and being rejected…”. The infection spoken of refers to being infected with HIV/ Aids, again alerting the

listener to the power relation between money and ownership of women's bodies. EJ continues and concludes this part in patois as follows:

Woman never asked fi dis! Me a kill dem by di million	Woman never asked for this! I'm going to kill them by the millions
Never come fi test!	Never come for the test!
Young woman doesn't even know di meaning of bliss	Young woman doesn't even know the meaning of bliss
Dem evil men are putting little girls at risk!	Them evil men are putting little girls at risk!

EJ displays her anger at men who infect young women who are prostitutes, in the same way that she exhibits her anger at the exploitation of all women in the previous stanza. Her assertion to kill them, the men, who never test themselves so know their status, shows her own desire to commit harm to those who have, without thought, hurt and taken away the lives of the women she sings about in this song. The problem of men not testing themselves for HIV goes beyond this context and perhaps EJ's anger at unprotected sex in this context is interpreted as a caution whether or not sex is being paid for. In this section, EJ also makes the relation between men who are HIV positive and young women who get stripped of future possibilities because they are infected with HIV.

EJ places emphasis throughout the song on destructive discourses of male dominance, but negates some of the suggestions that could make this song less of an identification of the problem and more of an assertion of positive possibilities within this dire narrative. Possibilities in this context refer to various options that exist for women to protect themselves from HIV and STI's, that do not immediately equate to dying. It is however EJ's unapologetic disagreement with the system of patriarchy that enslaves young women and young girls that makes this song a real achievement. Her disagreement is thus not limited to her own sensibilites but alerts the listener to some of the problematic discourses that have been highlighted in this analysis; hence, she also creates awareness at another level of interaction through the music and the audience.

Godessa's assertions about gender and gender roles are interesting to consider because at points they assert their femininity in ways that romanticise the female gender, while at other times they assert that they are female rappers but that this does not limit them to talking about issues that only affect women or to be seen as only addressing women. There are however moments in which Godessa seem to contradict themselves, both in the way they perceive themselves as a hip-hop group, and in their ideas about the imagination of women in fantastical ways. Godessa's "Nguwe" off the album *Spillage* illustrates the above idea. The first stanza of Nguwe is quoted as follows:

If you look in my eye

You'll see what a gwan

Three mighty sisters one big champion

My retina's dispensing visions of a queendom

Young lions forsaken in a Babylon

Young lion raise up your fists like iron

To the kingdom of Zion, I knew the time would come

She was softly spoken like the sounds of violence

Sweetly crying as if a deafening silence

Erupted in her womb

Emergent islands in

Volcanic climates

Although she was Black

And by violence we all flow through the belly

of a kindness

That cycle is timeless

She reminds us of endless possibilities

The fact is, I live to breathe, I don't breathe to live

Because life has been strategically pinpointed

between my thighs and between my hips.

In this first stanza and throughout the song, Godessa assert themselves as women but name themselves as queens ruling over a queendom that the emcee possibly sees in the future. The first line of the song speaks directly to the "three mighty sisters" who make up the group and relates this to the idea of ruling over a "queendom". The line also relates the three to the idea of being one champion. The emcee thus asserts both a fantastical power and a romantic positioning of the three women. She changes her point of discussion from the queens to young lions, giving the impression of young, impressionable images but also wild, and potentially dangerous lions in the future. The relation the emcee makes between the young lion and Zion is interesting because it fantasises the idea of the wild and young related to the place of tranquillity and eventuality that exists outside of the realm of realism.

The next part of the song no longer incorporates the three queens or the young lion but speaks about a specific woman, who the emcee refers to as “she”. The woman is described in various ways as though something violent happened to her but this is related to a deafening silence that erupted in her womb. It is unclear whether this woman went through a physically troubling time or whether the description is a figurative description of a “Black woman” who had to break through the violent silences of oppression or hardship. Furthermore, it is also unclear because the emcee relates the short narrative of the unnamed woman, to a plural and inclusive violence in her use of the word, “we”. “She” is incorporated again as an image of a woman who has overcome obstacles because of the association between the woman and endless possibilities.

The emcee’s final assertion in this stanza is that she lives to breathe and doesn’t breathe to live which indicates a choice in her will to live. Despite her figurative description of living and breathing, it is the concept of choice that is being offered to women; an idea that continues into the last lines where Godessa take away the assumption that women are not limited to motherhood. At the same time however, Godessa create the illusion of a romantic earth goddess in this song as they assert themselves ruling over a queendom, and give power to the mythical “Mother Earth”. The use of the word queendom is also interesting because it eliminates histories of patriarchal rule and oppression and places that power in the hands of the romanticised women they speak about.

The song is problematic in that while Godessa romanticise women, they also seem to extract women from earth onto an imagined planet where goddesses reign. Towards the end of the song the emcee raps the following:

I'm not far from the sky

Though I represent earth

In my palm there's an eye

So my centres stay blurred

If you score don't deny

These fires that burn

Like a menstrual cycle the goddess returns

This section of the song describes the goddess as watching over earth, associating nurturing and care to the image of the goddess. However, in doing so the goddess is extracted further away from reality. The emcee is the goddess and again raps about the cycle of life as mentioned in an earlier stanza, except this time the cycle is related to the female menstrual cycle. The song thus comes full circle in its attempt to speak to the possibilities of the female imagination both literally and figuratively. The imagination of the female goddess in line with other

celestial bodies is an attempt on Godessa's part to magnify the importance of women both to themselves and to others. "Women, rule what's yours" is another affirmation made by the emcee, which aligns itself with the romantic discourse between women and goddesses, that Godessa refer to.

While the message of the song resonates with other songs by Godessa in terms of the way in which they name themselves and identify themselves as Black women, the song's unique description of women and women's agency in a "queendom" is problematic at the level at which it negates reality and seems to limit the message to a romantic image of women who are not even on earth. Because of this, it is a potentially inaccessible message for women to relate to. Furthermore, it is not only the idea of the female that is romanticised but also the idea of, as mentioned in one part of the song, the menstrual cycle of the goddess. The association between life, the menstrual cycle and the concept of eternity seem to not only romanticise the female but also the imagination of the female not as human but as goddess. This is exhibited in the following quote: "We bleed, we breathe life into eternity!" (Godessa, 2006) They seem to draw a parallel between the female's menstrual cycle and the idea of womanhood.

While Godessa assert themselves and other women as goddesses from another planet in "Nguwe", Godessa assert themselves in a different way in "dissfunkshin", a song also featured on the *Spillage* album. This song expresses the misconception that because Godessa is a group of women, they are limited

to taking task matters that affect women only. Godessa proclaim this on their first full album as though speaking against conservative gender divisions in society, and through doing so, open themselves and their music up to unlimited possibilities both within their capacity as artists and Black female artists in a male dominated industry. The first stanza of “dissfunkshin” is as follows:

When it comes to pitching ideas and pitching careers

I feel a bit like Hannibal Lector

Psychoanalytical cannibal animal factor

Mind over matter

Mine matters

It ‘s the rhyme that you’re after

Shatter your mainframe with my feeble stature

After all I’m not a female rapper

Discussing female matters

Like the x and y chromosome factors

Cos when it comes to challenging thoughts and musical scores

Directed by musical thoughts which were selectively bought

I'm collecting your thoughts, your intellect

Internet of sorts

Connecting ports

From Cape Town to these international shores

The emcee starts this stanza by rapping about ideas, comparing her ability to pitch ideas and grow in her career; to the "psycho analytical" cannibalistic character from "Silence of the Lambs", Hannibal Lector. If the listener is familiar with the movie, the immediate image is of the character Hannibal Lector and his unapologetic attitude towards cannibalism in the movie. The emcee equates her abilities as an artist to Hannibal Lector's cannibalism. This is echoed in her assertion that "mine matters, it's the rhyme that you're after" referring to her work, ideas and abilities.

The emcee continues as though she is conversing with someone specific when she challenges them or the individual to "shatter your mainframe with my feeble stature". The emcee describes herself in saying that just because she may be smaller; this has no relevance to her ability to engage lyrically or to oppose

dominant structures that may stand in her way. Immediately after this, she asserts herself and thus Godessa when she says that she is not a female rapper. In saying this, Godessa distance themselves from the belief or possible assumption that because they are three female emcees they are less credible or less important because they are women and are limited to women's discussions.

This assertion is also important because it is a message to both the listener as well as other emcees, who may or may not be female, that in the same way that they distance themselves from being confined to classifications as "coloured" because they self-name themselves Black, so too do they distance themselves from the confines of being seen narrowly as only women. Godessa create awareness about themselves but also make other women think about their identities being confined to "women's issues" in their occupations or spaces they occupy. Godessa thus make a comment on the way in which females occupying spaces such as hip-hop are viewed in general and take themselves out of that stereotype so that they are seen as unique and talented, not as women only discussing women's issues.

Although Godessa problematise a number of discourses that affect women based on the constant battle against patriarchy, and power in problematic patriarchal structures, the assertion in this song is that although they do rap from a "womanist-centred" perspective they are also artists and creative agents and should be as respected as any other artist in industry despite their gender.

The emcee continues to describe herself as not only being able to engage creatively but also to challenge and pick up on certain things, and here she relates herself to an internet of sorts. This description alerts the listener to a knowledge base that is large and growing, hence describing the Godessa's talent and musical abilities as not limited to the local hip-hop scene. This is articulated in the final two lines of the stanza when the emcee relates her abilities to that of the Internet, "connecting ports, from Cape Town to these international shores".

In this song, Godessa put forth two main ideas, firstly that their creative abilities as emcees are not limited to them being women and secondly, that because they are aware of the needs associated with speaking out for women in a largely patriarchal society, does not mean that their range of creativity is limited to women's subjectivities. The album *Spillage* is a successful attempt on Godessa's part to illustrate the range of topics they can and do address in their music. Godessa also assert that their hip-hop is not limited to the local scene, immediately projecting themselves as professional emcees and distancing themselves from the limitations of being categorised as only South African hip-hoppers. Again, Godessa have successfully negotiated the confines of being categorised in one way. Godessa have proven to be successful at breaking the boundaries of South Africa because of their numerous overseas performances, and their ability to perform alongside artists from other continents.

With reference to Godessa's plethora of overseas performances as opposed to fewer South African performances, EJ Von Lyrik says the following: "We get criticised for not performing in SA and only performing overseas. If you, as a South African can pay me as well as the international artists who come here we'd perform. There is no respect for me as a South African artist. Groups that play before big international groups play for free. You (the local groups) get the worst sound so that when the international acts come on they look amazing. When we perform in Europe we have the same sound and we perform as well if not better than them." (Interview, 2008)

Godessa's assertion in the song rings true in what EJ says as well. The song also promotes a sense of being part of a global community of hip-hop artists who perform globally as well as locally. The group do not want to be limited to being categorised as only South African and thus having to be mistreated because of the perception that international artists are better than local artists.

Godessa take a stand on problematising situations that perpetuate certain mindsets and actions in society. Godessa's first single "Social Ills" was not only their first single but also their first critique of the media and the influence of advertisers on youth consumers. This song has been included in this chapter because it communicates with young men and young women about individuality among other things. The song starts with a critique of young people who all look

like clones of each other because of the influence of the media. The second stanza continues as follows:

Right if I'm different never judge me by your book

See what I wear and how I look, might leave the
in crowd shook

Like the fingerprints of a crook (crook)

You can immediately make that distinction by
just one look

It's like society conditions you to be a clone

And when your seeds grow up they lack a mind
of their own

And the media perpetuates the situation

With advertising rituals as the exclamation

This excerpt is a critique of the media that portrays images that make young people want to follow the media trends. The emcee starts off by saying that if she is not concerned by her image as “different”. In this way, she “others’ herself from

the “in crowd” but highlights how it is in fact more bizarre for everyone to look like clones of each other than to be oneself. She associates her difference as alarming to those who submit to representing themselves according to the stereotypes seen in the media.

The stanza continues to say that because everyone looks so much alike it is easy to be seen as the misfit, however Godessa problematise the stereotype and the representation of stereotypes in the media. Because the media influences society so greatly, the emcee includes society in her critique of social cloning. The blame for cloning is thus not limited to the media but extends to include society because it is society that will criticise the person who does not fit in.

In addition, Godessa make a cautionary note when they say that “when your seeds grow up they lack a mind of their own” because they are speaking directly to the youth who conform to what they are told is fashionable or beautiful and then being regretful of their lack of knowledge when they are older. Godessa’s advice is not limited to image but also to the idea that if one does not question certain things when young, or show like or dislike based on personal choice, one inevitably loses the ability to be independently minded when older. This is problematic because the notion of conforming to the stereotype also promotes a lack of aptitude to think outside of what dominant media and societal discourses demand. Godessa thus speak not only to stereotypes of dress codes and physical attributes but at another level, contest the media’s project of

stereotyping identities, whether gender, racial or other. The final lines of this excerpt thus assert how media and adverts perpetuate the situation, essentially placing blame.

However, the song is not without suggestions to thinking about oneself in different ways that do not have to encompass what the media says is right. An extract from the third stanza is as follows:

If you don't fit the conventional essential

Editorial like cartoon pictorials

Individual development ain't affordable so this is in memorial

Of people with hair in all the wrong follicles

Probable cause as society flaws caught in the claws

Can't be original of course

I got a divorce from Levi's jaws and musical whores

Media is the source when it comes to mental sores

And public applause

This stanza acknowledges individuals who do not try to conform to the media images seen everyday. The emcee raps, “this is in memorial of people with hair in all the wrong follicles” referring to stereotypical perceptions about what is considered fashionable because having hair in the wrong follicles means that the individual has not bought into the system of media images controlling their lives. The idea put forward that individual development is not affordable also critiques the perception that it is more difficult to be different and to fit into society than for everyone to be the same. The emcee’s use of the word memorial is interesting because a memorial usually refers to a person who has died. Godessa could potentially be “mourning” the death of free- thinking in this section.

The emcee, in speaking about herself as having gotten a divorce from “Levi’s jaws and musical whores” disempowers fashion labels who control and shape individuals’ beliefs about their self worth in relation to the labels they can or cannot afford. On this, the emcee offers that the media are the source of mental sores, again problematising media images that penetrate into society and strip individuals of their distinctiveness. At the same time, buying into the media “grants you public applause”. Godessa take away value from “public applause” based on uninteresting self-representation. The emcee divorcing Levis is significant because she takes herself and also representations of the group outside of the confines of what the media expect of a female hip-hop crew. But in addition to this, she places herself in the “out” group.

For the listener, it also shows Godessa's ability to critique a situation they take issue with and at the same time, to embody the difference they ask listeners to take heed to. Godessa also problematise the notion of conformity, which allows an individual a definite, albeit cloned space in society, as opposed to being different and consciously choosing the spaces the individual wants to occupy. The decision to occupy certain spaces and partake in various activities based on personal desires not media desires, is what Godessa actively project throughout this song. These self-claimed "wants" can only be attained through knowledge of self, as the emcee raps in the next line.

The relation between wealth and individuality is made again in this stanza. Knowledge of self allows a much richer experience as a person than being a carbon copy of someone in the media. The media images that Godessa highlight are related to the problem as they refer to hyper sexualised images of both men and women in stanza one. While the song problematises society's lack of individuality and agency to be "different", Godessa suggest new ways for media consumers to think about what they watch, listen to, read; and by virtue of the message, what they mirror.

The final stanza of "Social Ills" is as follows:

Deviation from the norm

Is similar to navigation in the storm

This mainstream slave ship is sailing and

before long

You will mourn when your individuality

is gone

So caught up in material bullshit

That the thought of being real seems putrid

Whatever else you hear seems to be muted or strange

Coz imitation's the epitome of fear for change

In this final stanza, the emcee relates the task of being different to the stereotype, to navigating a storm, asserting that while it is not easy to not look the same as everyone else, one has the opportunity and the ability to be an individual. As a caution, the emcee offers that once the figurative ship (being ones individuality) is gone it is something that will be mourned. Again, they assert he idea of mourning relating to something dying figuratively. Interestingly, the ship is described as a slave ship, relating the media's power and ability to control, to the idea of being enslaved as well as being owned.

The final part of the stanza alerts the listener to how warped a mindset one has when the ability to “be real seems putrid”. This probably also alludes to the idea that the idea of being real may be so foreign to some people because they are so caught up in the ideas of the material world perpetuated by the influence of the media. The emcee’s final comment on fearing change or difference is interesting because it alerts the listener to the level of entrapment when one cannot think or hear anything outside of what the mainstream media projects.

Godessa’s comment is thus also on the power of the media and the ability it has to destruct individuality and construct mass complacency with regard to identities. “Social Ills” is fitting for this chapter because it critically addresses and challenges consumers who, in other songs by Godessa, are advised to act on their agency and individuality to get themselves out of problematic situations such as abuse. However, if the constructs of mainstream society have disenabled an individual’s competence to think independently, it is a much more challenging feat to act on anything other than what media images condone. And, as bell hooks asserts, the media is controlled by white patriarchy entrenched in capitalism. (1994: 17) hooks’ sentiment resonates with Godessa’s caution against the power of the media not only at the level of physical consumption but also at the level of mental consumption. It is necessary to understand and be aware of the deeper impact of media consumption. It is thought provoking that Godessa equates media consumption to slavery because in this way they create

awareness about the continual collapse of free- thinking and individuality in society.

Examples of both BVK and Godessa have illustrated the different ways in which the groups navigate gender in society. BVK places assertions about women within the realm of masculinity and thus offer narratives that are largely dominant in a patriarchal society. Excerpts from BVK's lyrics have shown this but have also shown the problematic way in which males place female agency only within the limitations of abuse and even then, victimisation and sympathy are idealised from the male trajectory so as to be seen as progressive.

Godessa offer a number of suggestions for both women and men to think about their identities in terms of their gender. Despite Godessa's shortcoming of romanticising the image and the imagination of the female, their tendency is largely to promote "womanist-centred" assertions and women's agency within the realm of everyday life. As opposed to BVK, Godessa do not limit women's agency to women's issues, as they do not limit themselves to being considered only as female rappers. Godessa thus take a progressive stance on matters that affect females, by taking "female matters" outside of the confines of being described as concerns or topics only pertaining to women. In this way, they critique the way in which society still frames women and men within the confines of gender. EJ Von Lyrik does similar work to Godessa but plays less of a romantic role and in her breaking out of the conventional stereotype in both the

music industry and in society. By producing her own music and actively engaging in the project of naming herself, she also discusses new ways of being young, Black and a woman or a man.

Conclusion:

Through the analysis of BVK and Godessa's lyrics, a number of points have been raised on identity construction in relation to racialised and gendered representations. On the topic of identity, both groups have highlighted problematic discourses in the manner in which Black identities are grappled with in South Africa. BVK and Godessa's prominent display of Black pride in their music highlights their conscious stance on the disparity between historic discourses on definitions of people as Black and/or "coloured". This Black pride also echoes much of the groups' awareness and incorporation of Black Consciousness works in their music. Their critique of apartheid and racial categorisations pervades not only society but also the mainstream media's representations of racial classification and the perpetuation of racial stereotypes in the media. It is no small matter that their lyrics return to explicit mention of hegemonic representations of Black people carried in the media. In particular, it is BVK and Godessa's self-naming as Black that places them outside of solely addressing issues of identity, as they actively engage in shifting and re-imagining their Black identities.

BVK and Godessa thus do not limit themsevles to addressing changing contexts of identity but imagine new ways of challenging, questioning and interacting with identity. This envisioning of new ways of viewing identity is a suggestion by both groups throughout their work. For conscious hip-hop heads this is an interesting

project to undertake for two reasons. The work of conscious hip-hop acts such as BVK and Godessa act as forms of activism that deconstruct the dominant, while at the same time, provide suggestions of how to re-consider historically racial impositions and categorisations.

Conscious hip-hop thus acts as a useful tool for society but especially for youth who interact with hip-hop at various levels. Here, entertainment is not limited to mainstream hip-hop or mainstream media's banality, but is expanded to be entertaining as well as consciously enlightening, what Black Consciousness writing often termed "consciousness raising". This form of engaging with hip-hop and its seemingly limitless ideas can then be seen as an unintrusive way of consciously interacting with identity; it provides both Black and non-Black listeners a unique context and way of defining and claiming identities.

In particular, the way in which both groups probe discourses on "colouredness" is localised because their questioning and self-naming authenticates the existence of culture but denounces the label "coloured". This is seen in the lyrics quoted in Chapters 2 and 3. BVK and Godessa distance themselves not only from "coloured" stereotypes and representations thereof but they also dissociate themselves from historical trajectories of shame and disempowerment, commonly associated with representations of "coloured" groups.

Both BVK and Godessa have shortcomings in their assertions on identity, such as the romanticisation of histories associated with “colouredness” and Blackness. This has been discussed in Chapter 2, and it is this limitation that complicates the ways in which both BVK and Godessa address ways of re-imagining identity. In other words, their project does not equally deconstruct all totalising discourses on Blackness, but assume less rigour when dealing with generalisations shaped by Black Nationalism.

BVK and Godessa approach gender subjects differently. While both groups consciously address Black identities as active agents, their departure points differ significantly when they rap about gender. Lyrics cited in Chapter 3 illustrate BVK’s position as situated in the male imagination which has been discussed as problematic. Haupt writes that, “Much like black nationalism in general, hip-hop nationalism attempts to position women within the confines of patriarchy”. (2001: 187)

The positioning of women within the confines of patriarchy rings true with regard to BVK. The distinction between male and female roles is made clear in BVK’s songs, as they situate experiences as men’s or women’s in nature. This was exemplified in some of the songs used in chapter 3 of the analysis such as “Jy smaak my” and “Vat jou goed en pak”. This is problematic as it undermines their critical work on racial identity. BVK’s gender positioning is also problematic because it indicates their own patriarchal subjectivities and the associated

acceptability of patriarchal values. The negation of womens' agency is displayed throughout BVK's songs and this limits their gender positioning to a counter-productive exercise.

Godessa, as an all women group, rap from a "woman-centred" trajectory. While BVK negate many dominant social male discourses that subjugate womens' agency, Godessa embody and rap about this. The lyrics quoted by Godessa and EJ Von Lyrik thus provide new avenues for women of colour to think about their identities not only in racial terms but also as women. Both Godessa and EJ create awareness at a level that is not limited to the male imagination but depart from the imagination of women as active agents of their own identities. Their problematisation of social contexts also do not emerge from the notion of victimhood but rather victory over patriarchy and the confines of masculinity.

EJ Von Lyrik's significant entry into a different level of the industry also actively contradicts neat gender categorisation. Assumedly a male industry barring a few female hip-hop acts, EJ recently started producing music in addition to launching her first solo album, challenging stereotypes about what women are limited to being able to achieve. EJ is thus the embodiment of abilities that are not limited to men.

While BVK rescind's women's agency in many of their songs, Godessa's appropriation of tropes about goddesses negate some of their authenticity. While

the idea is that Godessa assert themselves as strong and active women agents, some of their music simplifies and limits women's experiences to the imagination of the fantastical. This is problematic as it promotes a conflicting message of agency in reality vs the fantasy of women godesses.

In light of the works of the above artists, this research has considered the way in which conscious hip-hop music provides a positive alternative to interacting with social and racial constructs in society. This research has proven that the hip-hop groups used in this research, actively assert their racial identities in ways that are not limited to the imagination of apartheid constructions and thus negate the racial categories of apartheid. The way in which the groups grapple with not only the labels "coloured" and Black but also the histories of these, prove their ability to provide new ways of interacting with questions and conflicts of identity, race and culture. BVK and Godessa's assertions about gender also prove that the way in which women and men are perceived in society are still largely based in the confines of patriarchal definition. This proves a long way toward gender equality in society as situations and discourses pertaining to women are still framed by/ in patriarchal constructs. Women's agency thus still needs to be regarded in opposition to these dominant discourses.

This thesis has also shown how conscious hip-hop provides a critical space to question and shape various contexts that the mainstream media does not prioritise. It is also for this reason that, despite the various shortcomings of BVK

and Godessa (and conscious hip-hop in general), conscious hip-hop can be seen as a platform for meaningful change and critique and can be used as a form of critical engagement with gender, identity, culture and problematic histories of race in post-apartheid South Africa.

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