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University of Cape Town

MAPPING THE BEAT, BEATING THE MAP: THE RELIGIOUS WORK OF HIP HOP, REGGAE AND KWAITO IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the DEGREE OF MASTERS
IN RELIGION in the Department of Religious Studies at the
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

February 2003

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ABSTRACT

In a post-apartheid, recently democratised South Africa African identity is constantly being negotiated within the media, the political sphere, and a variety of cultural expressions. Firstly, I explore the ways in which the popular musical forms of Hip Hop, Kwaito and Reggae in South Africa are contributing to the forging of a global African identity which challenges Eurocentric conceptions but also inserts an implicit response into recent debates about the limitations of an essentialist, Afrocentric paradigm. Secondly, I argue that the construction of this identity can be located within an interpretative framework that examines how popular music is engaged in a kind of religious work. Historically, musical expressions emerging out of the diaspora as well as from the continent have been media for retaining and reformulating African religion and culture under conditions of extreme social upheaval. Scholars such as Jon Michael Spencer have argued that the religious aspect of black music is informed by the need to be liberated from an oppressed mentality and therefore liberation needs to be regarded as a religious activity, an alternative spirituality which challenges existing socio-political values. Musical expressions such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito can be understood as creative transpositions of indigenous African religion within the context of a worldview informed by the supernatural power of the spoken word, the production of a sacred sonic space, and the advancement of what Hip Hop scholar Nelson has referred to as a "combative spirituality."

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would firstly, like to thank my supervisor Prof. David Chidester for encouraging me to write this thesis and to explore the boundaries of religion and academia. His sense of humour and passion for music has been a great inspiration. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the NRF for their financial support over the last two years. Without their contribution, I would not have been able to complete this thesis. Thanks to Dom for sharing her time with me and to all those I have interviewed, formally and informally, but may not have included in this thesis. Finally, big up to my friends, family, colleagues, and my husband Pieter, who have always shown an interest in what I do and have offered advice, help and encouragement in their own unique ways.

"There's something at the heart of musicians' work that is close to God. The more you go into music, the more deeply spiritual it becomes." (Sting) [1]

"It don't mean a thing (if it ain't got that swing)." (Duke Ellington)

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[1] Quotation cited from an advertisement for Compact Disc Wherehouse (*Mail and Guardian* 25 October 2002)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"All the Africans in the house raise your hands! All of you who didn't…where the hell are you from?" shouts M.C. Sky 189 at the Black August concert held in Cape Town recently. The University of Cape Town's student newspaper, *Varsity,* published a series of articles entitled: "Identity Crisis: just who is and isn't African?" which featured a cartoon depicting a group of black rugby players discussing their respective choice of players along side a group of white youth dressed in Hip Hop gear referring to each other as "homie" (*Varsity* September 2002). American Hip Hop performer, Jeru the Damaja, rejected a South African journalist's claim to being African and was quoted as saying to Charles Leonard: "What you are is a European-African, like I'm an African-American – you're a European with residency in Africa" (*Mail and Guardian,* 7-13 September 2001). Increasingly, our attention is being drawn to instances that highlight the notion of Africaness in relation to identity. In a post-apartheid, newly democratised South Africa, the assertion of an African identity is constantly being negotiated within the media, the political sphere and through a variety of cultural expressions. Broadly speaking, this thesis is comprised of an argument that is twofold. In chapters 2, 3 and 4 I look at the way in which popular musical expressions are contributing to the forging of a global African

identity that, not only challenges Eurocentric conceptions of Africa, but also inserts an implicit response into recent debates regarding the possible limitations of an essentialist, Afrocentric paradigm. In chapters 5 and 6, I argue that the construction of this identity provides spiritual fulfillment and an awareness of being-in-the-world and that music, in this context, can be interpreted as being engaged in a kind of religious work. In doing so, I have chosen to focus on, what I have loosely termed, urban African music which could encompass a wide variety of musical expressions ranging from Jazz to Rap. However, my interest lies primarily with musical forms that convey messages of resistance and, because of their subversive content, often hold a strong attraction for young people. Both Hip Hop and Reggae are musical forms which have emerged out of the African Diaspora and share an intimate relationship with the history of oppression and resistance of black people globally. As a result, there is a growing body of academic literature related to both these musical genres. Kwaito, however, is a musical expression which has emerged only within the last decade and has been described as "South Africa's Hip Hop" (www.cnn.com). Much like the early days of Hip Hop, Kwaito has been accused of being vulgar and sexist but as a member of the Kwaito act TKZee has pointed:

> Parents never liked it [Hip Hop] either. They said it was full of swearing, but the youth loved it. Now Kwaito is like that, but it's South African. (Tokolo in an interview cited from **www.rage.co.za)**

In its ten years of existence Kwaito has already begun to show signs of shedding its superficial exterior and is emerging as a powerful voice for South African youth. As yet, academic literature related to Kwaito remains extremely limited but its growing popularity amongst both black and white youth of South Africa, coupled with the interest the academic community has shown with regard to popular culture, this is almost certain to change. In the absence of academic literature related to Kwaito, I have developed a thesis which is underpinned by a firm belief that Kwaito is on a similar trajectory to musical expressions such as Hip Hop and Reggae. In writing this thesis, I have drawn on the work of a diverse range of scholars who have stimulated an ever-growing academic interest in contemporary African musical expressions. I hope that my thesis, especially with its inclusion of Kwaito, is a useful contribution to the study of music in society but also to popular culture and religion as a whole.

I begin my thesis with chapter 2 by looking at the arguments put forward by scholars who are concerned with not only sustaining but also expanding the African center which lies at the heart of Afrocentric discourse. The African Diaspora is the largest dispersal of a people that the world has ever experienced and, as a result, we can no longer speak of a singular African identity. Studies of the Diaspora have done much to highlight the multiple African identities which are undergoing constant transformation today and it is in the area of music that we see, most clearly, the creation of a "Global Africa" which provides an antidote to a essentialist type of Afrocentricism. In chapter 3, I tackle some of the myths surrounding the notion of authenticity within the context of global, cultural exchange. I argue that South African urban music is an authentic expression of African culture because it is the result of a complex process of cultural production and exchange in which local and foreign influences, such as language, undergo continuous adaptation and reconfiguration in ways that are meaningful to communities in South Africa. Using postmodern spatial analysis in chapter 4, I argue that music is one of the many forms of culture shaping a notion of Africa no longer bound to its physical, geographical location. I look at instances in which musical expressions such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito contribute to the "imaginary reunification" of a people as means of constructing a united, African identity with which to resist the threat of Western hegemony. In chapter 5 I focus on urban African music in terms of its continuity with the African oral tradition but concern myself with the empowering aspects of laying claim to a heritage which has its roots in Africa. Within a South African context, I show that this is particularly relevant for the predominantly "coloured" Hip Hop community who are re-defining who they are free from the categories imposed on them by apartheid. In my final chapter entitled "A Rap on Religion" I argue that, ultimately, the creation of a global African community through popular musical expressions means that music has taken on a religious function for many individuals today. The relationship between music and religious experience has a long history, especially with regard to African communities and the development of black liberation theology as a response to its encounter with Christianity. In this chapter, I look at music as source of "combative spirituality" which challenges the dominant socio-political order as well as its role in facilitating a connection with the transcendental power of a supreme being or one's own spiritual consciousness.

By writing this thesis, I hope to achieve two goals. One is to contribute to body of scholarship which seeks to challenge the ways in which we have been thinking and talking about religion, and to forward a definition that concerns itself with what religion is *doing* as opposed to what we think – or assume - people are believing. In order to achieve this goal I have avoided simply summarizing some of the theoretical debates regarding the definition of religion or offering a definition of my own. Instead, I have chosen to bring out the voices we do not normally hear in such debates. The words and songs of performers, poets and individuals whose identity and spiritual orientation is inextricable from their music are given center stage in this piece of work.

My other goal is to participate, meaningfully, in a conversation, occurring at a particularly exciting moment in our country, when issues of identity – in relation to the global and local – are being reformulated in the context of post-apartheid South Africa as well as in a globalizing world. For the first time since apartheid, individuals are free to create an identity for themselves without relying exclusively on narrow racial, or ethnic, categories. As a result, we are witnessing a process whereby individuals are drawing on cultural resources which vary both temporally and spatially in order to create new identities that are source of meaning and power in post-apartheid South Africa.

Bring on the noise.

CHAPTER 2

EXPANDING THE AFRICAN CENTRE

"The whole world is Africa." [2]

"The whole world is Africa", sing Reggae band Black Uhuru, "divided into continents and states" and now, more recently, this sentiment is echoed by scholars within the field of African studies who have been arguing for the need to look beyond an essentialist, Afrocentric ideological paradigm. In a lecture delivered at the University of Los Angeles, California, Ali A. Mazuri highlighted the need for an alliance of all cultures in order to resist the threat of Western hegemony. He questioned the extent to which Afrocentricty, as an antithesis to Eurocentricism, can provide a meaningful challenge to the West because, by definition, it is unipolar with Africa as its centre. Mazrui views Afrocentricity as an ideology which is concerned with ensuring that Eurocentricism is confronted with its 'other', namely, Africanity and argues for a shift to a multiculturalist approach which is multipolar in that it has multiple centres. He is joined by fellow African scholar, Elliot Skinner, who has articulated the need for Africans to draw on cultural and ideological paradigms which are not exclusively African:

> It is clear that given the requirements of the modern world and the imperatives of the new millennium, African peoples cannot rely exclusively upon our own paradigms and traditions as guides for action. It must not be assumed, however, that our paradigmatic achievements must be undervalued as we assert ourselves in the contemporary world.

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[2] Lyrics from a Black Uhuru song entitled "Whole World is Africa."

> Instead of talking about syncretism of African cultures with those of others, we must emphasize redefinition; and more importantly, the 'retrieval' and enhancement of African culture traits. (Skinner 1999: 39)

African-American scholar, Manning Marable (1995) has criticised the 'separatist' and 'racially essentialist' (123) type of Afrocentricism which fails to take full cognisance of the multiple identities and the dynamic productions of culture which occur throughout the black world and its Diasporic communities. Traditions and cultures developed in the Diaspora provide a useful framework in which to explore the ongoing construction of an African identity as it is not burdened by notions of cultural purity. In his study of Diasporic cultures, Stuart Hall (1990) attributes this to the fact that the Diaspora experience is defined by an active recognition of diversity in which the concept of identity is shaped by difference and hybridity. Essentially, it is this continuous production and reproduction of identities through dynamic processes of transformation and affirmation of difference which points to Africa's extraordinary ability to adapt and respond to changing circumstances and challenges the Eurocentric assumption of African culture as static and resistant to change. Criticising the tendency for Afrocentrics to be monculturalists, Fox (1999) has argued for a Diasporacentric approach to African identity and culture. According to Fox, Diasporacentrism can be understood as the expression of a "centerless center" which serves to challenge the vast array of 'overdetermined centrisms'. He attributes this to the multiple identities which have developed in the Diaspora and given rise to new "floating centres" which are fluid, mobile and indeterminate. This is clearly evident in the case of the Rastafari who have developed a distinctive spiritual geography around an African sacred centre which is not bound to its physical, geographical location (see Delle Donne 2000).

In their introduction to the book, *Senses of Culture: South African Cultural Studies*, Nuttall and Michael have argued that South African society has always been made up of identities which have been configured in complex ways but that these identities have been concealed in the past firstly, by apartheid and, more recently, by the discourse of rainbow nationalism (Nuttall and Michael 2000). They attribute this to the fact that the concept of creolisation is seen as counterproductive to the ideology of nation building and the myth of the rainbow nation which is based on, what they describe as, "polite proximities" of culture Within the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the idea of multiculturalism is preferred over creolisation because it alludes to the co-existence of multiple, yet relatively fixed and contained identities (Nuttall and Michael) and it has been somewhat disturbing to note that the media and state-driven project of nation building cannot seem to move beyond the now nauseating *Simunye* myth in order to create a truly pluralistic society in which difference is acknowledged and actively engaged with in meaningful ways. However, within the arena of popular culture it becomes clear that creolisation is a global phenomenon which deconstructs the idea of fixed, contained identities and forms part of an ongoing process in which cultures, worldwide, are continuously produced and reproduced.

A global African identity which transcends the possible limitations of Afrocentricity, while still retaining a distinctive Africanity, is currently being produced within the realm of South African popular culture, most visibly in the arena of music. Drawing on various cultural expressions developed by Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora, South African popular culture can be understood as contributing to Mazrui's (1993) notion of a "Global Africa" which conceives of Africa's presence within the world, geographically, and in the form of its peoples within Africa and the Diaspora. A global African identity which transcends the limitations of Eurocentric notions of nationalism is largely constructed through musical forms which have emerged out of Africa and the Diaspora. In this respect, music functions as a soundscape [3] which contributes to the forging of an African identity but, most importantly, establishes a postmodern spatial paradigm in which Africa is no longer bound to its physical geographical location and can exist in the lyrics of songs and in the ears of its listeners irrespective of where they might find themselves.

In developing this line of analysis, my approach to popular music can be seen as a challenge to the work of Theodor Adorno (1990) who reduces popular music to a standardized, predictable form of music, implicated within the capitalist-commodity system in which (young) passive recipients are deluded into

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[3] This can be seen as an example of Appadurai's (1996) notion of various 'scapes' as a means for understanding the flow of culture globally and the way in which cultural groups construct themselves

believing that they are engaging in 'free choice':

> Individuals of the rhythmically obedient type are mainly found among the youth - the so-called radio generation. They are most susceptible to a process of masochistic adjustment to authoritarian collectivism. (312)

It will become clear that, despite its commercial viability and mainstream appeal, urban African music [4] performs a countercultural function and is proving to be a force to be taken seriously in its response to hegemonic discourse. Furthermore, my understanding of the role of popular music, especially in relation to the construction of a transnational, African identity, is informed by theorists who have adopted a spatialised analysis of popular music. In the introduction to the book aptly entitled, *Mapping the Beat,* Swiss et al. explain that the contributions to the book can be characterised by their exploration of the possibilities of a "cartography of sound" which function as a "territory of power" (1998: 3). In the context of this thesis, urban African music can be seen to be occupying one of Lefebvre's (1991) spaces of representation [5] in that it works to subvert the spaces of power established by the dominant culture and operates as a form of "countermapping" whilst remaining located within the day-to-day spaces of everyday life. It is clear then, that this piece of work should be read with the assumption that music and other forms of popular culture are not merely consumed but are actively produced and reproduced in meaningful

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beyond the confines of national borders.

[4] The term urban, African music in this thesis refers to Reggae, Hip Hop and Kwaito. I have chosen this term as the concept of black musical expression is too limiting and the inclusion of urban is a response to African music studies which tend to focus on what is regarded as 'traditional'.

[5] As opposed to representations of space which refers to the way in which the dominant order inscribes

and empowering ways.

Furthermore, in my analysis of urban African music, and its implications for expanding the African centre, I hope to contribute to the move away from the focus on 'tribe' and 'tradition' which has tended to dominate the study of African music with the exception of scholars such as David Coplan and Veit Erlmann. In my research, I have found that most scholars refer to *black* music when discussing Jazz, Hip Hop or Reggae as part of the broader project to highlight that the connection between Africa and Afro-American music is based on similar experiences of racial discrimination and oppression. However, I refer to urban African music because it would be limiting to discuss popular musical expressions such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito as being "black" because although such forms may have their roots within black resistance to white dominance and oppression, over time, these musical expressions have emerged as important symbolic resources for individuals and cultures globally and have continued to bear testimony to the truly transnational nature of music. [6]

It would be naïve to generalise about African musical expressions and fail to point out the tendency for Reggae, Hip Hop and (to a lesser extent) Kwaito, to romanticise Africa or convey an essentialist notion of Afrocentricism. Reggae/dub poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson who is widely regarded as a cultural icon for black artists since the 1970's, has been critical of what he regards as

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itself in the form of spatial imagery associated with politicians, engineers and urban planners.

[6] See chapter 4 for a discussion on the transnational appeal of this musical genre.

"reverse racism" and crude Afrocentrics which have become characteristic of black nationalist discourse in African popular music. Remarking on Hip Hop performers who draw on the myth of Africa's glorious past as an attempt to instil racial pride, Linton Kwesi Johnson stated in a recent interview:

> Black Kings and Queens? Who wants to identify with absolute rulers? (cited from an interview in *Mail and Guardian* June 28 - July 4 2002).

Similarly, in *The Black Atlantic,* Gilroy is critical of the way in which Hip Hop is claimed as being distinctly African-American even though, according to Gilroy, it owes much to the Jamaican soundsystem culture of the 1970's:

> Here we have to ask how a form which flaunts and glorifies in its own malleability as well as its transnational character becomes interpreted as an expression of some authentic African-American essence? How can rap be discussed as it sprang in tact from the entrails of the blues? (Gilroy 1993a: 34-35)

Turning our attention to a homegrown example, Kwaito has been described as a "truly post-apartheid musical form" because of its contribution to the construction of new identities in a newly democratised South Africa (Stephens 2000: 273). Drawing on Diasporic musical genres such as Ragga, Hip Hop, Dancehall and R'n B, Kwaito is distinctively South African because of its use of various African languages and township slang. According to Stephens, Kwaito is a post-apartheid cultural phenomenon in which the African body is 'freed' from political consciousness and is 'repositioned' in "spaces of new physical freedoms" (263). However, closer attention to lyrics of songs such as Boom

Shaka's "Ashamed" and Arthur's "Don't call me Kaffir" reveals that, rather than depoliticising the African body, Kwaito becomes a means through which to articulate a response to current socio-political issues within a localised, distinctive African identity. Johannesburg-based poet and Y-FM news producer, George Hill, claims that Kwaito is an important mode of expression for youth to articulate growing dissatisfaction with the empty promises of government and politicians (Hill 1999). Today it seems as if the youth of South Africa are constantly trying to free themselves from the misconceptions and prejudices of an older generation who regard them - and their music - as being concerned with acquiring the latest imported labels and dedicated only to the pursuit of hedonism but, as George Hill, reminds us:

> We dig to jiva to eminwe pezulu or monatifela (party time), drink Redds and sport the latest Pelle, Fubu and Diesel wear. We dig it like a grave. But it isn't all that matters to us. (Hill 1999:12).

What is particularly interesting is the way in which there has been enormous amount of white South African youth who have embraced, not only Hip Hop culture, but also Reggae and, more recently, Kwaito. Clearly, such forms constitute a vast cultural resource base which transcends the limitations of race and nationalism and is drawn upon by young South Africans as a means of constructing an African identity. Popular music provides a useful lens through which to view identity because it reveals the fluidity and mobility of identity and therefore, according to Frith (1996), can be regarded, essentially, as the experience of the self-in-process offering a sense of both self and others.

Scholars have highlighted the increasing importance of the performance space as an arena for political discourse in post-apartheid South Africa in which the struggle for legitimate rule has been replaced with struggle for identity (Gunner 1994). In the arena of music, specifically, we are witnessing a process in which localised forms of ethnicity are creatively appropriated and combined with global cultural resources. This is clearly reflected in the inclusion of indigenous languages [7] like Xhosa, Sotho-Tswana and Afrikaans [8] in South African Hip Hop, and Kwaito and Reggae lyrics and, in some cases, in the assertion of a particular ethnicity as coloured, black or African (see Watkins 2001). Urban African music can therefore be understood as one of the many performance-based forms which are contributing to the forging of a post-apartheid culture and are engaged in a process of 'writing the nation':

> The latest examples of performance culture need to be seen as linked to the resilient and on-going making of culture by those with no recognised voice and no respected place in the older order of things. (Gunner 1994: 2).

Popular cultural forms such a Kwaito, Hip Hop and Reggae can also be understood as addressing the challenge which, according to Njabulo Ndebele, contemporary South African artists are now confronted with; namely, to seek new ways of thinking and perceiving which is no longer constrained by exclusively protest orientations (Ndebele 1991). As early as 1991, in his collection of essays on South African literature and culture entitled, *Rediscovery*

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[7] See magazine article entitled "Hip-Hop Pantsula's Perfect Choice: Deciding to Rap in his Native Setswana was the Best Thing He Ever Did." (*Drum* Issue 471, September 13, 2001).

of the Ordinary, Ndebele called for the freeing of the "social imagination" (65) in order to deconstruct the epistomological limitations imposed by the experience of oppression under the apartheid regime. These popular musical forms have been criticised as being unconcerned with political issues but what we are witnessing is the creative displacement of the white oppressor who, for the most part, has tended to dominate the imagination of the oppressed. South African author, Zakes Mda has pointed to the transformative role of the arts within African society and culture and has argued that creative modes of expression and performance has always been an integral part of African society which functioned to, not only reinforce but also challenge, existing norms and values (Mda 1994). South African youth have, historically, drawn on urban African music as a means to communicate social and political issues as well as to mobilise a counter culture of resistance.[9] In many ways, contemporary musical forms emerging from Africa and its Diasporic community are continuous with oral traditions and are therefore effective in conveying political and social messages.[10]

These musical genres fulfil, what Skinner has identified as, the need to develop the enormous potential which lies in the more inclusive notion of Africanity - as opposed to Afrocentricism - in order to resist contemporary hegemonic paradigms (Skinner 1999). The post-apartheid generation, the so-called 'born

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[8] In particular local Cape Town artists, Brasse Vannie Kaap and Godessa.

[9] See Watkins 2001 and Haut 1996 for a discussion on Hip Hop as a means of resistance in South Africa. In Gilroy's (1991) "There ain't no black in the Union Jack" there is reference to two South Africans who were imprisoned for singing banned songs written by U.K. Reggae Band, Steel Pulse.

free' youth are often accused of being politically apathetic and uninterested in the struggles of the past. However, I would argue that what we are witnessing is a shift in which the struggle has broadened its scope in the sense that youth are actively constructing and negotiating an African identity in a number of dynamic and creative ways outside of an overtly political arena. South African youth might not be taking to the streets armed with placards and slogans but, by drawing on the vast array of cultural resources yielded by the continent and by peoples in the Diaspora, a distinctive and global Africanity is being forged in the form of fashion, music, art and a host of other forms of popular culture.

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[10] See chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL EXCHANGE, GLOBALISATION AND THE MYTH OF AUTHENTICITY

"Ag, why do you dish out that stuff man?....Tribal music! Tribal history! Chiefs! We don't care about chiefs! Give us jazz and film stars, man! We want Duke Ellington, Satchmo, and hot dames! Yes, brother, anything American. You can cut all this junk about kraals and folktales and Basutos in blankets forget it! You're just trying to keep us backward that's what!" [11]

Ultimately, a discussion about cultural modes of production and how they relate to the construction of an African identity needs to be located within a broader concern with deconstructing the myth of "authenticity" and the way it is used to apply moral judgment on cultures. More and more it is becoming clear that authenticity is a notion based on a need on the part of the observer rather than on what is being observed. In other words, rather than asking: "Is this authentic? A more pertinent question would be *who* is asking: "Is this authentic?" In answering this question, one cannot escape the great sense of irony at the growing demand for the 'pure' and 'authentic' by the West as it laments the loss of non-Western cultures and religions. Is this search for authenticity a displaced sense of guilt? The myth of authenticity is informed largely by a long established tradition of emphasizing notions of purity and homogeneity with regards to culture. To what extent is it in the interests of maintaining Western hegemony to sustain ideas of non-western subjects as passive recipients of imported culture? The growing body of research dedicated to Diasporic cultures, most especially, have contributed to undermining assumptions that cultural mixture or hybridity is inferior. Furthermore, I propose that it is this constructed notion of 'authenticity' which lends weight to the perceived threat of globalisation and Americanisation as it does not take full recognition of Africa's ability to appropriate, re-invent and construct imported cultural forms in ways which are relevant to us [12]. Broadly speaking, I am interested in urban African music as a tangible cultural expression which reveals that there is no such thing as pure forms of culture. Referring to black popular culture, Stuart Hall says:

> Always these forms are the product of partial synchronization, of engagement across cultural boundaries, of the confluence of more than one cultural tradition, of the negotiations of dominant and subordinate positions, of the subterranean strategies of recoding and transcoding, of critical signification, of signifying. Always these forms are impure, to some degree hybridized from a vernacular base. (1992: 28).

In a paper entitled *The Americanisation of South Africa*, Campbell (1998) traces the history of American presence in South Africa from as early as 1698 and yanks us out of our intellectual safe zone encompassed in the simplistic notion of 'cultural imperialism' by highlighting the processes of selection and reinterpretation which has shaped the way in which America has influenced South Africa. In her book entitled *Readings in African Popular Culture*, Karin Barber (1997) challenges the emphasis on the forces of globalization and

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[11] Unidentifed man talking to journalist Anthony Sampson cited in Stapleton and May (1990: 201).

[12] See Wagnleitner and May (2000) for a collection of papers on the role and impact of American products and culture outside of its borders.

identifies the need to focus on the production and consumption of imported culture to determine how Africans use foreign culture. All too often criticism of the onslaught of globalization or cultural imperialism is accompanied by a romantic conception of the "local" which is valorized as "deep" in contrast with the dominant global forces which inevitably come to be regarded as "shallow" (Hannerz 1996). The local is then seen as something which is in danger of being tainted by the global. However, being receptive to cultural influences foreign to one's own does not necessarily lead to the impoverishment of local culture but can work to provide invaluable resources for that culture. Cultural production and exchange is a dynamic process in which cultural forms are subjected to constant adaptation and reconfiguration :

> There is 'management of meaning' by which culture is generated and maintained, transmitted and received, applied, exhibited, remembered, scrutinized and experimented with. Often this is something much more than just a routine maintenance of culture where there is strain between received meaning on the one hand and personal experiences and interests on the other, and where diverse perspectives confront one another, cultures can perhaps never be completely worked out as stable, coherent systems they are for ever cultural 'work in progress' (Hannerz 1997:14).

There is a tendency to criticise contemporary South African musical forms as imitators of European or American culture which, not only undermines their validity as cultural expressions, but also reinforce an outmoded notion of an imperial centre dominating a colonial periphery. As Hannerz (1996) and others have pointed out, globalisation does not necessarily mean total homogenisation and that exchanges within our global village have already shown potential for enormous cultural gain. Looking at South Africa's "tstotsi" culture and Sophiatown of the 1950's, Hannerz has argued that we can either see this as an example of the enormity of power of the centre over the periphery; or of the way in which a dominant, imported culture was used as a form of local resistance for black South Africans who, by "accepting New York", were "rejecting Pretoria" (Hannerz 1996:170). At the time, oppressed blacks in South Africa shared a sense of solidarity with their African-American counterparts and the celebration of African-American culture offered black South African's cultural capital with which to resist white South Africa without completely displacing African religion and culture. In *Afro-American Music, South Africa and Apartheid*, Charles Hamm (1988) traces the history of American influence on South African music and shows how imported music was 'Africanised' by local musicians and performers [13]. Likewise David Coplan (1985) shows that although the relationship between South African and American music emerged largely out of the need for black people to create a sense of solidarity against discrimination and white dominance, South African traditional forms continued to have huge appeal [14]. This being the case especially the with rise of Black Consciousness in the 1960's when musicians began combining imported American musical forms with elements of traditional African music, for example, the Malombo Jazzmen who developed their musical style based on

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[13] For example, Victoria Mlongo's "Zulu Twist" (Hamm 1988).

[14] In *African Rock,* Stapleton and May (1990) report that Ladysmith Black Mambazo who, for the most part, perform Zulu choral music remained high in the national music charts at the height of Jazz's popularity.

traditional, Venda healing rhythms. The quote in the beginning of the chapter should therefore be read in the context of the appeal of American music as a means to challenge the government-imposed separation of black South Africans according to 'ethnic tribes' and not as evidence of the displacement of African culture with its American counterpart.

Musical forms which trace their origins to Africa such as Swing, Jazz and Blues popularised by American artists like Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gilepsie, to name a few, emerged as a source of great inspiration to South African musicians such Abdullah Ibrahim, Miriam Makeba and Dolly Rathebe:

> I like Duke Ellington; I liked his music because it always had that African sound, that sound of a fellow coming across the veld playing this concertina under his blanket repeating this thing for a long time and also humming there: hmmmmm,ummmmm. (South African musician, Peter Rezant cited in Nixon 1994:12-13).

In his book, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollwood*, Nixon has argued that some performers at the time found African music more acceptable once it had returned to the continent in a "transmuted", transatlantic disguise" (Nixon 1994:13). However, Nixon's analysis is somewhat limited because he does not account for the complexity of cultural exchange in which African musical elements were taken by slaves to the New World and Europe, reworked in the Diaspora, and then travelled back to Africa where they were reworked again before being transmitted to the rest of the world. This is clearly visible in the distinctive Africanness of artists such as Miriam Makeba, Fela Kuti and Ishmael Lo, who have enjoyed enormous popularity, both on the continent, and in Europe and North America. The reciprocal relationship between African and American music was noted by James Brown after seeing a performance by the late Fela Kuti:

> …he (Fela Kuti) was developing Afro-beat out of African music and funk. He was kind of like the African James Brown. His band had strong rhythm…Some of the ideas my band was getting from that band had come from me in the first place, but that was okay with me. It made the music that much stronger. (James Brown after seeing Fela Kuti perform in Lagos cited in Gilroy 1993b:237.)

The ongoing exchange and reconfigurations of culture which continue today is manifested, most visibly, in the arena of popular music by artists such as Janet Jackson who, as an African-American, released a music video inspired by 1950's Sophiatown. Such an example clearly shows how American inspired cultural forms are reworked and imbued with distinctively South African cultural elements which make it attractive for contemporary African-American expressions of popular culture. Moreover, the importation and subsequent reformulation of American culture by black South Africans have had far-reaching consequences both spatially and temporally:

> But the mythical community is still there, claiming its place, it would seem, in the useful past of the South African future; and in the view from afar, Sophiatown belongs not only to South Africa but to the world (Hannerz 1996:171).

Clearly then, the arena of popular music emerges as an empowering platform which not only allow individuals to feel as sense of shared unity within a global form of expression but also facilitates a process whereby individuals can contribute to the creation of identities which are based on local national and ethnic affiliations. (Regev 1997). For this reason, the pervasiveness of American popular music cannot be attributed merely to cultural imperialism but needs to be accounted for in terms of the way in which the rest of the world has used it to construct a sense of localised difference and articulate resistance. For example, Zimbabwean born Hip Hop artist Shingirai and his crew Mau Mau have recently released an album entitled "Coup Mfecane" on which he raps entirely in Shona (http://www.rage.co.za). Similarly, rather than just merely taking on imported American culture, South African artists have imbued musical forms such as Kwaito, Reggae and Hip Hop with a distinctively South African voice by combining indigenous languages with an English-Afrikaans-Sotho-African-American patios. Prophets of the City, a Cape Town based Hip Hop collective usually rap in the Afrikaans vernacular:

> My broertjie kry n skoot dwars deur sy kop
> want daar was n gang fight op onse blok
>
> Don't let F.W. puzzle you
> Hy maak jou kop vrot in sy oe is jy nog altyd n kaffer en n hotnot (extracts from "Dallah flet" 1993).

Another local Hip hop performer, Lunga Street, draws on the language of American rappers but claims that South African Hip hop has its own identity by its inclusion of Nguni languages (see Hill 1999). Simarly, Kwaito's roots can be traced to local artists such as Chicco, Brenda Fassi and Sipho "Hotstix"

Mabusa as well as more contemporary American imports such as R'n B and Hip Hop, Dancehall and House but its lyrics are, for the most part, made up of Nguni languages and its associated vernacular:

> All this was stirred into the witches brew of kwaito, until it turned potent. The South African flavour came from Chicco's and Brenda's styles, the street-slang lyrics, even the rythymic forms of older, more traditional local music. Like our new Constitution, kwaito had something of everything but, beneath it all, *it was unmistakably South African"* (Hill 1999: 13 my emphasis).

There is some contention amongst local musicians as to whether one should communicate one's message in English, which has the potential to reach many cultural groupings in South Africa, or whether to localise the message by performing in one's mother tongue. In an interview with Dom, a Cape Town based graffiti artist and Hip Hop D.J. the importance of having to "vernaculate before you can speculate" was explained to me:

> Among say, the black community, a lot of them are involved in Hip Hop and a lot of them have arguments about whether they should rhyme in Xhosa or Zulu , or whatever their language is and there's an argument that comes up. You gotta keep real to yourself. Some say that if you're going to vernaculate you're not going to attract the masses of crowds that you would if you were rhyming in English. But it shouldn't be about that. It should be about them getting into what you do. So if you're vernaculating it will also open my mind. O.K. so I don't understand what you're saying but that will challenge me to go out there and learn say, Zulu. We are in Africa. I think its important. I think its important to reflect where you're at. If you're a kid living in the hood of Khayalitsha, or you know, some of them don't know how to speak English, that's how they rhyme. We should appreciate where that's coming from. Get ourselves to their level instead of getting them to come down to where we're at, you know. (interview with Dom October 2002)

Language is inextricable from its socio-political context and is implicated, historically, within the context of oppression and therefore becomes an important tool of resistance. As Nettleford has noted:

> social protest manifests itself in language change...For defiance of society includes defiance of its language. (Nettleford 1979:18)

For this reason, vernacular language is used self-consciously by local performers as a way of asserting a distinctive identity and as a means of resistance against a dominant culture who regards them as inferior:

> We want to be street, you know! When we do interviews and shit like that and we speak gamtaal, or whatever, that shit's on purpose so the kid at home can say, "Fuck, they're speaking my language", you know? They're representing, you know, what comes out of the township and shit. So if some middle class motherfucker comes, "Oe God, skollietaal." The shit's not for them, you know what I mean?....I don't care if some white-ass dude at home thinks, "Oh shit, look at this....uncultured,' you know. I want some kid from ghetto to think, "Naa we can relate to that. (Shaheen from Prophets of Da City cited in Haupt 1994: 58).

Within Reggae, there is the use of an alternative language structure - distinctive to the Rastafari community and sometimes referred to as 'Dread Talk' [15]- which forms part of the construction of a space free from the restrictions imposed by Western ideology by emphasising the creative and empowering potential of primarily, oral language and therefore constitutes an active confrontation of the dominance of European culture:

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[15] See chapter 6 for a detailed discussion on Rastafari language and the supernatural power of the spoken

> We were fighting colonialism and oppression but not with gun and bayonet, but wordically, culturally. (Count Ossie interview by Pollard 1982: 24).

In his discussions on black popular culture, Stuart Hall has argued that the test of whether something is authentic can be accounted for in terms of the reference it makes to the experience and cultural expressions of black people (Hall 1992). In the quote below, Watkins argues that Hip Hop constitutes an authentic cultural expression for young South Africans but I would argue that his analysis can be broadened to include related musical genres such as Reggae and Kwaito:

> Rap music can be regarded as authentic in so far as it allows hip-hoppers to emphasise differing perceptions of the world around them. Through their activities, hip hoppers not only create and negotiate their own boundaries but use them to make political statements, in which differing perceptions of style and 'authenticity' form the basis for mobilisation. (Watkins 2001:31).

Urban African musical forms such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito can be regarded as authentic not merely on the basis that they are an extension of African expressive culture but, ultimately, because they are cultural resources that can be continuously worked, and re- worked, to construct and mobilize an identity which is meaningful for individuals within their socio-political, historical present.

In exploring some of the dynamics at play within the construction of an African identity, I have highlighted the pitfalls of reducing the processes of cultural exchange and transformation to 'cultural imperialism' as well as attempting to challenge the notion of 'authenticity' which, all to often, informs a discussion regarding Africa or

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word.

what constitutes Africaness. However, it would also be a gross oversight not to take into account the political and economic inequalities which have historically informed - and continue to - pervade the relationship between Africa and the West. As tempting as it might be, I do not wish to dismiss or deny the potential for the erosion of African and other non-western ideological frameworks in light of the threat of McDonalisation and (coca)Colanisation of global culture; but I firmly believe that applying new understandings as to how we perceive forms of cultural expressions - and their processes of construction - has the potential to challenge Eurocentric conceptions of Africa.

CHAPTER 4

AFRICAN(S), NATIONALISM AND IDENTITY

"Don't mind your nationality, you have got the identity of an African." [16]

When discussing the question of African identity immediately there emerges a distinction between nationalist-derived categories of identity and a broader, more inclusive notion of Africaness. On the home front, it seems as if the question as to who can claim to be *South* African remains largely undisputed but it is the notion of Africaness which seems to provoke the most debate. Drawing on post modern geographical and spatial analysis I would like to explore the extent to which the African identity that is currently being shaped, by cultural resources, such as music, within African and in Diasporic communities, transcends the limitations of its geographical location and has the possibility of existing free from Western imposed categories of nationalism. Viewed in this way, Africa emerges as a symbolic framework within which to articulate a critique of Western modernity and, released from its geographical shackles, can be seen to encompass a space free from the cultural, political, economic and social dominance of the West.

The crisis of identity in the Western world has been linked to the weakening of former national identities and the emergence of new identities. In his analysis of the development of culture in relation to processes of globalization, Friedman

(1994) argues that the concept of citizenship, or membership in relation to territory and state, is gradually being eroded making way for new identities which are based on "primordial loyalties" in relation to more concrete forms of culture such as race, ethnicity and local community (86). I would argue that we should see popular cultural forms such Hip Hop, Kwaito and Reggae as a manifestation of the process Friedman has identified as being one of "cultural fragmentation" in which the dismantling of the centre gives rise to new identities (86). The significance of these identities and creolized forms of culture, which draw on both local and global cultural resources, are relegated to the category of subculture or 'youth culture' reinforcing the perception that these identities are temporary and marginal in comparison with those based on religious, ethnic or national affiliations. Ted Polhemus (1994) has done much to document the rise of what he has termed "styletribes" at a time when, paradoxically, individuality and personal freedom are seen as the defining features of our time. He argues that the need to belong, the "tribal imperative", remains a fundamental part of human nature, without which, results in feelings of alienation. It is therefore no coincidence, according to Polhemus, that the decline of identities based on national or religious affiliations parallels the rise of styletribes because they fulfil the need for community [17] and a sense of common purpose which is seen to be lacking in modern life. Moreover, membership of these communities or tribes extend beyond the boundaries of town and country and often members are strangers which are linked by adopting similar styles of adornment, musical

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[16] Lyrics by Reggae artist Peter Tosh from a song entitled "African".

[17] Hip Hop scholar, Tricia Rose (1994a) has written of how, within Hip Hop culture, identity is shaped by a

preferences and media. Continuing the line of analysis forwarded by Attali in his seminal book, *Noise* [18] popular cultural expressions such as Hip Hop, Kwaito and Reggae contribute to the formation of 'tribes' or communities through which individuals can derive a sense of belonging and, ultimately, (as I will argue in the final chapter of my thesis) perform a religious function in people's lives.

The emergence of a global, transnational, creolized African identity within the arena of popular music is by no mean unrelated to Africa as a place with a specific geographical location. As Butzen (1978) has argued, a sense of place serves as an integrative function in society in that it provides a group, or an individual, with a significance that is related to the need to perceive that one has roots or a place in the world where one belongs to as part of broader, shared community. I would argue that, through urban African musical expressions, individuals derive a sense of belonging and community which is expressed spatially in terms of the references such expressions make to Africa and in their inclusion of distinctively African musical styles and structures. However, this conception of Africa moves beyond its significance as a continent within a specific geographical location and becomes a portable, sacred space embodied by individuals globally. As Gabriel Marcel once said: "an individual is not distinct from his place, the is that place." (cited in Relph 1976: 43). Recent post modern approaches to spatial analysis have recognised space as something

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sense of community and is manifested in the form of a 'posse' or 'crew'.

[18] Attali regards all musical expression as a tool for creating a community in that it works to link a power

which is socially produced rather than being an objective and neutral phenomenon free from the influence of ideological forces. Despite the fact that human beings have the tendency to associate themselves with a specific location, or territory, this centre of meaning and significance is not merely spatially located but is constructed out of values and beliefs (Shils 1975). Similarly, Tuan has argued that "mythic" space is an intellectual construct which can be understood as a means of fulfilling humanity's fundamental needs and is not, as Tuan suggests:

> ….. particular point on the earth's surface; it is a concept in mythic thought rather than a deeply felt value bound to unique events and locality. (Tuan 1977:150).

The organisation and meaning of space and place should therefore be understood as a product of socio-political and ideological process rather than just in physical and geographical terms [19]. Postmodern approaches to geography provide some useful tools with which to analyse the emerging global African identity which is being produced here on the continent and in the Diaspora. Musical modes of expression such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito are a reflection of the way in which Africans, all over the world, draw on a vast cultural resource base as part of a process of 'imaginary reunfication' (Hall 1990: 222) in response to a historical experience marked by fragmentation and profound transformation and become a resource of resistance and identity. Furthermore, this self-constructed 'map' provides not only a

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center to its subjects and therefore can be regarded as an attribute of power (Attali 1985).

[19] See also Soja (1989) for the ideological construction of place.

way in which to understand and relate to the lived experience of the world but poses a challenge to the dominant world view. Positive Black Soul are a Senegalese crew of rappers and break dancers who fuse Hip Hop and Reggae with traditional, Senegalese music and are known for their distinctive lyrics which are made up of a combination of Wolof and French to articulate a political message with tracks such as "President d'Afrique" which includes samples of Mandela's speech made on the day of his release (http://www.music.org.za) In his analysis of Hip Hop culture in the U.S., Decker has argued that members of the Hip Hop nation form an "imagined community" which serves to articulate a collective challenge to American nationalism by providing an "imaginative map" and "inspirational territory" as part of its strategy of resistance (Decker 1994:100). The Universal Zulu Nation is a music, community service and arts organization founded by Afrika Bambaata in 1973 to spread Hip Hop culture and uplift communities world wide (www.hiphopcity.com). Naming themselves after the Amazulu people of South Africa, members of the Universal Zulu Nation, irrespective of their nationalities, regard themselves as a tribe.. Turning to the South African context, our local Hip Hop artists are very conscious of the inclusion of African-American music as well as traditional Cape or African musical expressions which, not only reveals the influence of black culture (Watkins 2001), but points to a more inclusive notion of what constitutes African culture. Ultimately, African popular music is indicative of a postmodern vision because it has freed itself from the confines of the modern state (Gilroy 1991) and is simultaneously both global and local because it constitutes an arena in which the global and local intersect in such a way that we see (as Erlmann point out) Hannerz's concept of "management of meaning" in action:

> ....the growing articulation of South African music with the modern world system, the intertwining of transnational culture and local practice, is both effected by and reflected in the dialectical relationship between notions of locality, identity and authenticity and images of inter-cultural exchange, global ecumene and humanity. (Erlmann 1997:171).

This is evident even in a very localised, indigenous form of music such as Kwaito which acknowledges the power of an inclusive African identity:

> I'm dreaming of a day when we spittin' in swahili
> Movies on dvd no more cd's and tape recorders
> I had a vision of an Africa without borders (Lyrics from Bongomaffin's "IV")

The continuity of Reggae with African indigenous forms of music functions as a means of communicating a sense of unity amongst Africans as well as rendering it an effective transnational medium. Savishinsky (1994) argues that Reggae serves to establish wider and more inclusive sets of relations which extend beyond the narrow confines of ethnic or kinship-based relations. This is clearly evident in the fact that Reggae has attracted a widespread and culturally-diverse following beyond Africa such as Native Americans, the Aboriginals of Australia and the Maoris of New Zealand (see Chang and Chen 1998). Mitchell documents an interesting phenomenon in which the Aboriginal people of Australia have made use of the pan-Africanist vision, communicated through Reggae, in order to transform themselves from a subordinate minority within their own country into a global majority of non-white people (Mitchell 1996). The appeal of Reggae as a musical form for so many diverse social groups bears testimony to the ability of music to provide an identity independent of modern categories of nationality and address socio-political issues. Jones attributes this to the experiential aspect of Reggae:

> Reggae, first and foremost produced a 'feeling' rather than any explicitly political attitudes. Its power lay in its capacity to capture a particular 'mood' or sentiment by a combination of both verbal and non-verbal sounds; sounds which were able to express intimate personal feelings and voice desires that were not race-specific." (Jones 1988: 154).

The appeal of Reggae as a musical form for so many diverse social groups undermines the misconception that is representative of a 'separatist subculture of withdrawal" (Jones 1988: 49) but rather, bears testimony to it's ability to provide an identity independent of modern categories of nationality. The creation of a new identity which displaces the need for a nationalistic-derived identity is clearly articulated by Reggae artist Bob Marley:

> Being Jamaican - I don't see as I being Jamaican., I see I-self as a Rasta - being Rasta! So Jamaica is Jamaica, Africa is Africa, I-man a Rastaman! (cited in Neill 1997: 25).

It is evident that the way in which the self is conceptualised within Reggae can be understood as forming part of, what Neill aptly refers to as, a "anti-nationalist self-referencing terminology". The notion of the 'Rastaman' is therefore a refusal to recognise modern, national boundaries as legitimate, and in response, construct a meaningful space from which to derive a sense of identity free from the confines of national borders imposed by modern, Western geography. The construction of a distinctive musical expression forms part of a process of the construction of an African identity which supersedes the limitations of modern, nationalist categories, and in turn, is implicated within a broader ideological framework which seeks to challenge Western ideology. A member from a Cape Town based Hip Hop collective, Brasse Vannie Kaap, expresses a similar sentiment:

> Well, I don't regard myself as a coloured person because that, for me, is a derogatory statement. As a black person, umm…I've still got doubts about that …you see…because, see that my roots are entwined into many colours, at present, I rather say that I'm a born African, to the 't', you see….and not try and be the partial one and say, I'm a white person, I'm a black person, I'm a coloured person, or try to be an Indian person, so you see, I see myself as a true South African, African to the 't', that's how I see myself…I see myself as a human being first…African second and then, once again, a human being." (cited in Watkins 2001: 39).

Within the analytical framework of urban African music, Africa, as well as its implication for an identity, cannot be understood in terms of modern understandings of geography and its relation to nationalism. The transnational appeal of African, popular musical expressions across linguistic and cultural boundaries has emerged as a powerful tool to communicate and mobilise resistance for communities world wide [20]. Unlimited by spatial and geographical boundaries, the Africa which is being continuously produced and reproduced in popular musical expression represents a collective consciousness of going forward to a new social order irrespective of nationalities and offers significance and meaning to a broader spectrum of those who experience oppression. However, the power of such a process lies in the fact that, through music, individuals are willing to challenge and expose the contradictions and ambiguities of a unified African/black identity at an intensely local level. In an important study, Lee Watkins has shown that Hip Hop culture in Cape Town has come to represent a space in which African identity is actively contested by individuals who identify with a more global black consciousness in contrast with others who embrace the category of 'coloured' as a meaningful source of identity (Watkins 2001). Watkins reports on of one his informants who used the signature tune of SABC's "Simunye" (meaning 'we are one') in a performance but changed it to "we are not one" which vocalised a direct challenge to the myth of national unity as well as the conflicting attitudes within the Hip Hop community. What is interesting for the purposes of this thesis, is that even in the construction of an intensely local 'coloured' identity we see the influence of global culture at work. As an interview with a member of Grave Diggers Production reveals, some individuals identify with Latinos in America as a strategy for constructing and mobilising a coloured identity:

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[20] Ribbat (2000) has written about the way in which rap is used by German youth to express their resistance to xenophobia and racism. The widespread appeal of urban African music has given rise to Russian,

> The misconception that rap music is black…wrong….rap music is a black and Latino thing. People don't emphasise the Latino part which means brown skin. We associate ourselves more with brown skin…It got labelled as a black thing. The Latino's don't get their due; over half the original hip hoppers were Latinos. (Raoul cited in Watkins 2001: 32).

In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy celebrates the move towards an Afrocentric discourse in which a "totalising conception of black culture" is reinvented and, is rendered powerful, because it does not exist in relation to any specific, existing black community (Gilroy 1993a). Gilroy has argued for the need for Africans to move beyond the confines of nationalistic-derived perspectives on issues of identity and history and challenges the extent to which identities such as African-American and Anglophone-Caribbean are informed by Eurocentric, nationalist categories (Gilroy 1993a). Although Gilroy's challenge is located within the context of Diasporic identity and cultures, a critique of

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Chinese and Indian Rap groups. (see Perkins 1990).

nationalism clearly has relevance for the contemporary African context in which concepts of nationhood threaten to perpetuate imperialist divisions of the continent and its peoples and, ultimately, undermines the potential power which lies in a global African identity. Within the contemporary, post-colonial context, ideas relating to 'nationhood' and cultural 'purity' are particularly dangerous because they perpetuate colonialist, imperialist ideology which have been internalised, for the most part, by an African elite. The transcending of nationalistic-derived notions of identity will have a profound effect on the potential of Africa to exude its influence on the world as, ultimately, it constitutes a refusal to sustain the divisions which exist as a result of the legacy of colonialism and neo-imperialism. In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, identities have become much more fluid and ambiguous - open to re-interpretation and re-invention - and individuals are free to identify with existing or imagined others outside of South Africa:

> Unlike those stages in South African history in which ethnicities were invented and reinvented to facilitate oppression, the ethnic identities embraced by hip hoppers are symbols of strength and resistance. When juxtaposed with hip hop globally, it can be seen that the deployment of ethnicity among hip-hoppers in Cape Town is a strategy that helps to determine the dynamic of the mythical Universal Zulu Hip Hop Nation. For the citizens of the Hip Hop Nation, imagination is, in itself, a source of power. (Watkins 2001: 43).

CHAPTER 5

AFRICAN ORALITY AND THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN WORD

"Just words-sounds-paawa, bradda, dat what I-n-I deal wit, just words-sounds-paawa" [21]

"The lyrics you can analyse. The riddim you must feel. " [22]

In this chapter, I would like to explore urban African music in terms of its continuity with traditional musical and oral traditions without reducing these musical genres to simply an extension of African culture. It should be clear by now that urban African music is a product of a dynamic and complex process of hybridization which extends across cultural and temporal boundaries. Moreover, it is located within the constantly shifting and, sometimes, contradictory arena of popular culture and therefore its continuity with African cultural forms should not be viewed simplistically as the attempt to regain a lost heritage. The pervasiveness of urban African music is indicative of the power which lies within popular culture as a medium through which to articulate opposition, largely unnoticed by the dominant culture, who tend to dismiss it as 'low' culture. I would like to argue that music emerging from the African continent, as well as from its extended family in the Diaspora, should be understood as an extension of traditional African culture only so far as it functions as a means of resistance to European hegemony by asserting a distinctly oral space free from the dominance of Western ideological constraints.

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[21] (cited in Pulis 1993)

[22] (Getto Bard Wayne, Dub Poet cited in Chang and Chen (1998: 1)

In *Cultural Identity and Global Process,* Friedman links the rise of new cultural movements, which are characterised by the need to regain a traditional identity and cultural heritage, with society's increasing disillusionment with modernity's version of "progress" (Friedman 1994). For this reason, the search for cultural roots and the identification of (sub)cultures with a 'lost' heritage can be interpreted as a challenge to dominant hegemonic discourse (Friedman 1994). Musical expressions such as Reggae, Hip Hop and Kwaito are an integral part of the construction of an empowering identity in which individuals can, on a global scale, lay claim to a cultural heritage which can trace its roots – real or 'imagined' - to Africa. Ethnomusicologist Veit Erlmann (1991) has argued that the study of popular forms of expression and performance are crucial to understanding the way in which popular consciousness draws on the past as a cultural resource in the construction of tradition. Furthermore, it these constructed traditions and 'imagined' communities which gives rise to a "horizontal comradeship" (Erlmann 1991:13) in which communal bonds are reworked in ways that are empowering and meaningful to individuals within their specific socio-political, historical context. It is for this reason that the identification with one's lost African heritage becomes a crucial ideological tool for performers and artists from Diaspora communities:

> We found that coming back to the drum was the most important move that a black man can make...Because, via the drum it connects our African genes whether we are conscious of our connections or not. It is

> natural….that we talk through the drum. (Prof X cited in Decker 1994: 113).

In *The Black Atlantic* Paul Gilroy has argued that contemporary African musical forms allows individuals to temporarily transcend modernity because they succeed in creating an imagined past which is 'anti-modern' as well as a 'post modern' future (1993a: 37). According to this analysis, urban African music can be seen as "eloquent pulses of the past" which are anti-modern in that they assume the appearance of premodern forms - reimagined in the present - as a means of articulating future aspirations and ideals. Urban African music can be characterised by the fact that it is engaged in a process in which it simultaneously looks back to the past, as well as forward to the future. Such expressions draw on the political struggles of resistance movements which are working towards the liberation of Africans as well as from Africa's cultural heritage. Performers such as Sister Souljah continuously affirm the relevance of the African past for the political struggles of Africans in the present. As part of the celebrations in memory of Malcom X, she provides a vivid explanation of this ideal in her address to the congregation of a Baptist Church in Harlem:

> Rap music has inspired me because I know that when Chuck D tell you to "bring the noise," he's telling you that it's hard. And when you hear the tribal beat and the drums, they are they same drums of the African past that draws the community to war. The drum beats are faster, because the condition is accelerating so they've got to beat faster. And when your feet are jumping, dancing…it's the spirit attempting to escape the entrapment. When you feel that the children have gone mad, if you don't feel it, and when you look at the dances you don't see it and when you listen to the music and you don't hear a call, then you've missed the jam. (cited in Rose 1994b: 62).

With regards to the South African context, Hip Hop cultural forms have been embraced largely by coloured youth as way of re-visiting a denied history and ancestry in order to assert an identity free from the ambiguities created by decades of racial segregation. Historically, the coloured community have occupied a position of racial liminality within South African society and experience a profound sense of displacement created by a colonial and apartheid legacy which dispossessed them of an African identity and heritage. This profound sense of loss, and the experience of voicelessness which accompanies it, is clearly revealed in these extracts from lyrics by Cape Town based Hip Hop crew, Grave Diggers Production:

> A black and white cloud hangs over my head
> Born and bred
> *To be camouflage to be like the living dead*
> Born to behave like a blank cheque. (lyrics from "Slow Death", my emphasis)
>
> Fragments of truth, stolen youth
> No roots, scattered past
> A jelly cast
> Can come in any shape size or colour
>
> So too are our people of colour
> *No culture no past no tongue*
> A brain no voice no tongue (lyrics from "Fragmentation", my emphasis)

The coloured community, especially its youth, perceive themselves to be lacking in cultural resources on which they can construct an identity and have tended to draw on African-American Hip Hop, which asserts a cultural and spiritual connection with Africa, in order to address this (see Klopper 2000 and Watkins 2001). Artists and performers like Emile Jensen of Black Noise perceive Hip Hop cultural forms, with its emphasis on oral and dance performance, as a continuation of premodern, African oral and performance traditions. Jensen, who is the South African representative for the Universal Zulu Nation, identifies himself as 'African' and believes that coloured youth can explore the "black side" of their history by adopting cultural forms which have their origins in Africa, as in the case of breakdancing, and suggests that graffiti is the modern day equivalent of the rock art produced by the Khoi/San (Klopper 2000).

The notion that there is an intimate relationship between traditional and contemporary cultural expressions is supported by studies showing the historical, structural and functional continuity of contemporary African musical expressions with traditional African culture[23]. For example, the call-and-response technique which is characteristic of the African oral tradition is used by Reggae performers of the Dance Hall DJ style, who sing or talk over recorded samples of music (Chang and Chen 1998). Scholars have also drawn attention to similarities between the vocal sounds of traditional African music and the modern 'beat box' technique:

> The hums, grunts and glottal attacks of Central Africa's pygmies, the tongue clicks, throat gurgles and suction stops of the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert, and the yodelling, whistling vocal effects of Zimbabwe's m'bira players all survive in the mouth percussion of such "human beat box" rappers... (Dery 1988: 34).

The assertion of a link between the expressive cultures of the past with its contemporary manifestations should be interpreted as forming part of a process in which the memory of a one's cultural heritage is invoked and reformulated to construct an identity which is powerful in the present. Within the context of a post-apartheid society, the memory of an Africa past serves as a womb in which

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[23] (see Gilroy 1993b, Jones 1988, Rose 1994b)

historically-dispossessed individuals take refuge and nurture an identity which can be reborn, in the present, free from the categories of identity imposed by the apartheid legacy:

> That's right the whites taught me
> To hate who I am
> They labeled us as coloured
> But now I know I'm a black man. (Lyrics taken from South African Hip Hop crew Black Noise 's song entitled "Rebirth")

The historical continuity of urban African music with its traditional counterpart is asserted mostly in terms of its emphasis on oral, as opposed to literal, modes of communication. Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito performers are interpreted as an extension of the story-telling or narrative tradition of Africa and fulfil a role within contemporary society much in the same way as the praise poets of Southern Africa or the griots of West Africa. Within the context of Hip Hop, the M.C. is seen as a powerful figure because of the African-derived belief that words are sacred and have the power to evoke what is being said (see Sylvan 2001). African-American performer, Soul Williams believes that the power of Hip Hop poetry and performance lies in the fact that words have the power to invoke and that, essentially, they are prayers. In response to a question on what the audience can expect in his performance at the Urban Voices Festival held in Cape Town earlier this year, he responded:

> You can just expect to experience my first opportunity to recite these prayers here in South Africa. You will witness how, when I write something,……how it can bring them to fulfil their dreams. (cited from an interview on Bush Radio, August 2002).

The association between status and verbal mastery is firmly entrenched in African social structures and therefore the creative reinvention and restructuring of words by contemporary performers can, in many ways, be seen as the continuation of the African oral heritage (Shusterman 1991). Furthermore, the emphasis which these musical expressions place on orality can also be interpreted as a protest against the individualism of modern, Western society because it is experienced as 'spoken word', rather than as a written form, and can therefore be experienced communally. In an important piece of work entitled, *Orality and Literacy,* Ong provides some explanation on the communal character of the oral form:

> Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups. When a speaker is addressing an audience, the members of the audience normally become a unity , with themselves and with the speaker. (Ong 2002: 73).

Ultimately, such an interpretation of urban African music reveals that popular culture is an important ideological arena because it forms part of the construction of a space free from the restrictions imposed by Western ideology by emphasising the creative and empowering potential of primarily, oral language. Performers will often display their verbal prowess through creative and imaginative 'word play' in which words are re-constructed in order to reflect their true meaning which is congruent with the experience of subjugation and oppression. Reggae performers, in particular, employ a distinctive language to communicate the message of Rastafari and challenge European hegemonic discourse:

> Through the political vision of Rasta, the reggae lyricist attempts to jettison the Eurocentric value system of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie by expounding Afro-centric values and fostering a sense of collective racial identity. (Jones 1988:27).

For the Rastafari, sound is the very essence of words and, both words and sounds, are related to power (Owens 1976 and Barret 1977) because as ontological 'sounds', they are understood as having the power to manifest what they really are (Chevannes 1998). The notion of 'word-sounds' is conceptualised in a fundamentally African way as 'vibrations'which have power to impact directly upon the material world (Chevannes 1998). For this reason, performers employ a linguistic device which alters the way words sound so that sound elements reflect the meaning of words more closely. For example, the beginning of the word 'oppression' contains the word-sound 'up' which Rastafari regard as a misrepresentation of its meaning by Europeans as a means of keeping Africans unaware of the reality of the situation. Reggae performers such as Peter Tosh sing of the "downpressor man", altering the word 'oppression' to 'downpression' which is believed to more accurately reflect its true meaning:

> Downpressor man where you gonna run too?
> Downpressor man where you gonna run too?
> Downpressor man where you gonna run too
> All along that day
> You gonna run to Jah
> Begging him to hide you
> All along that day (extract from 'Downpressor Man" from his 1977 album entitled "Equal Rights")

The removal of negative connotations which is perceived to exist within the language of the 'downpressor' forms an integral part of the construction of Rastafarian language and words such as *ded*icate are replaced with *livi*cate because of its similarity to the word 'dead' (Simpson 1985). The Rastafari believe that, within the construction of a distinctive language, they have exposed the contradictions between sound and meaning embedded in the discourse of the coloniser and have reassembled English into a language of "upfull sounds" (Pulis 1993) which free Africans from an enslaved mentality. This notion is encompassed in Bob Marley's hit "Chant Down Babylon" in which he sings of the power of Reggae to raise political and spiritual consciousness in order to challenge the dominance of Eurocentric political and ideological discourse :

> So come we go chant down Babylon one more time
> Men see their dreams and aspirations
> Crumble in front of their face
> And all their wicked intentions to destroy the human race
> An how I know, and that's how I know
> A reggae music, mek we chant down Babylon
> With music mek we chant down Babylon
> This music mek we chant down Babylon (lyrics from "Chant Down Babylon" taken off the album "Confrontation')

Reggae lyrics will also usually be made up of words that have been reformulated to include an 'I'. The use of I-n-I as a substitute for you and me blurs the divisions between singular and plural and thus simultaneously represent individual freedom as well as the connection and unity of all Rastafari (Witvliet 1985). Most importantly, it replaces 'me' which is regarded as an expression of subservience because its use ensures that the speaker is always the object and never the subject (Waters 1985). The concern with object and subject is related to the way in which objectification formed a central part of the slave experience and I-n-I can therefore be understood to be the assertion of the speaker as the subject of his/her own history (Witvliet 1985). Reggae performers such as Bunny Wailer thus juxtapose the concept of 'I' against the notion of 'you and me' as a metaphor for good and evil which, in turn, is used to critique the history of oppression of African people:

> In the beginning there was only one concept
> And that's the concept of 'I'
> Then arose Apaleon, the devil, claiming that its 'you and me'
> And from that day on there is trouble in the world. (Bunny Wailer, extract from a song entitled "Blackheart Man").

Scholars such as Rose (1989; 1994a; 1994b) and Sylvan (2001) have highlighted the continuity between Hip Hop, as a contemporary African musical expression, and traditional African performance culture. However, their work represents an important line of enquiry in which we see a departure from a simplistic, reductionist approach which tends to romanticise urban African music as a natural successor to its traditional counterpart. According to Rose, the aesthetic principles of flow, layering and rupturing in Hip Hop's lyrical and visual art, performers create and sustain a rhythmic motion and a circular continuity with built in ruptures which can be interpreted as Hip Hop's emphasis on - and challenge to - continuity (see Rose 1994a). The inclusion of rupture in the form of a "cut" or "break" in Hip Hop music, (break)dance and art is characteristic of African expressive culture which works as a mechanism for coping with unpredictable and destabilizing events (Rose 1994b: 69). Ultimately, the power of orality in Hip Hop lies in the fact that it is not merely a continuation of African oral traditions but rather, it is firmly entrenched in the modern, urban experience. Hip Hop scholar, Trisha Rose challenges the idea of it being a linear extension of oral culture and argues that Hip Hop is characterised by a complex combination of orally-based expressions and post-modern technology which works to challenge many aspects of literate and technological society and articulate a distinct oral past while still remaining firmly located within an urban context (Rose 1989). Rose regards Hip Hop as an expression of what Ong (2002) has referred to as post-literate orality:

> The concept of post-literate orality merges orally-influenced traditions that are created and imbedded in a post-literate, technologically sophisticated cultural context. So Hip Hop "humanizes" technology and technologizes orality simultaneously. (Rose 1989: 38).

As an indigenous musical form influenced by both Reggae and Hip Hop, Kwaito can also be regarded as a form of post-literate orality which prides itself on being truly African in terms of its continuity with the oral tradition but whose significance remains rooted in the present. South African Kwaito group, Bongomaffin sing of this phenomena:

> 360 degrees of horizon and perspective
> herbal-interactive, futuristic retrospective
> oral traditions detail the history of every man's existence....every man's existence.

I would like to argue that urban African musical forms emphasise their continuity with traditional African orality because it represents a direct challenge to written history in which the African has been repeatedly marginalised and 'written out'. Music then becomes an important medium through which the oral history of a previously historically-dispossessed people can be communicated without the literate bias which occurs in Western knowledge. Reggae has been described as experiential music but, as poet and reggae artist Linton Kwesi Johnson points out, it is not experiential merely in the sense that people experience the music but rather that it is true to the historical experience of an oppressed people (Johnson: 1976). This can be understood in the context of a worldview which regards the past as forming part of the present and is thus inseparable from it. Reggae lyrics communicate the idea that the experience of slavery and colonialism should be understood as a living force that shapes the present which prevents temporal distance from identifying with either the pre-colonial, ancient Africa of their ancestors as well as the experience of slavery and oppression under colonial rule. For this reason, many Reggae artists sing of the condition of slavery as if they themselves had experienced it, for example, in "Slave Driver", Bob Marley sings:

> When I remember the crack of the whip, my blood runs cold, I remember on the slave ship when they brutalised my very soul.

Similarly, Hip Hop's lyrics and sampled sounds operate as a historical, oral text through which a community can reformulate knowledge and information about itself, but most importantly, construct it's own memory (see Rose 1989). Samples and lyrics such as those from South Africa's Prophets Of Da City's 'Blast from Da Past" work as an alternative historical narrative which is congruent with the experience of non-whites under a series of racist regimes. The track is made up of samples such as "Ons Suid Afrika" and "Jan van Riebeeck" which make references to South Africa under colonial and apartheid rule and are juxtaposed with samples which refer to the struggle for freedom such as "Africa shall know no peace until we in the South are free" [24].

However, the past, and its traditions, are relevant in the context of urban African

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[24] The words and voice of praise poet and freedom fighter Mzwakhe Mbuli.

music only so far as it shapes the future. "Our music fortells our future. Let us lend it an ear" urges Jacques Attali because he attributes music with the power to transform our aspirations into something tangible and "make audible a new world that will gradually become visible" (1985:11). In the case of urban African musical forms we see a process at work, referred to by Gilroy, as the "'invocation of utopia" (1993a: 37) in which the power relations between the oppressed and the oppressor are redefined through the power of the spoken word. The historical development of African musical forms is inextricable from the history of slavery and oppression and, as political discourse, tended to exist on a "lower" frequency as they were created and performed under the watchful eye of the slave master. Under conditions of slavery, music emerged as a crucial autonomous space of cultural and political freedom. Its contemporary manifestations within popular culture can be seen to continue with the most fundamental of African musical traditions by functioning as a vehicle of learning and medium of socio-political commentary whilst remaining relatively inconspicuous to the dominant order it is seeking to subvert. As Hip Hop poet Soul Williams explains:

> The beautiful thing about what we do is that it's coded language. I feel very masterful in the skill of being able to code what I say so that those who need to hear what I'm saying get it and those who don't won't? It seems as if Hip Hop is one way we can go through the smoke screen undetected because they think we all just rapping about cars, chains and girls. (interview on Bush Radio, August 2002)

Urban African musical expressions pose an added challenge to the Western, literate tradition because they do not rely exclusively on verbal forms of communication. The notion that music challenges the assertion of the superiority of language and writing as the most elevated expression of human consciousness (Gilroy 1993a) is most visible in urban African music. Rhythm puts experience into a communicable form and transmits a description of experience which is then subsequently recreated as a result of someone acting as the recipient of the experience which is being communicated (Nelson 1999b). For example, George Lipsitz has argued that movement in Hip Hop breakdancing can be interpreted as an embodied form of resistance in that individuals are, through their distinct dance movements, 'talking back' to the dominance exerted over the repressed black body (1994: 22).

In the case of Reggae, its effectiveness has been attributed to its ability to fuse verbal and non-verbal forms of communication (see Jones 1980). In his analysis of Dub as an offshoot of Reggae, Campbell argues that this unique musical form has been successful in innovating a non-verbal mode of expression which is evocative of the use of drums by slaves as a means of communication:

> Rockers and dub encapsulated a form of communication which said the levels of downpression were too dread to be spoken about. (Campbell 1980: 13).

Reggae's distinctive rhythm structures work as a non-verbal mode of communication which express the social and political ideals contained within a utopian vision in which Africa and Africans are freed from political and ideological dominance. The downbeat of the drummer is said to symbolise the dismantling of an oppressive society and the akette drummers, which are lighter and more upbeat, is suggestive of the emergence of a new social order (Thompson 1981:267). Gilroy argues that the invocation of a future, utopian vision has always tended to exist in the form of dance, song and performance because, in the history of African peoples, words alone have never been adequate to articulate those "unsayable claims to truth" (Gilroy 1993b). Under conditions of slavery and colonisation religion and music were the only expressive forms tolerated (see Jones 1988 and Waters 1985) however, there was a time when the drum was banned as it constituted an enduring reminder to the slave master and missionary that the "savages" had not lost their capacity to communicate or "speak" through the drum (Clarke 1980). Music has always enjoyed a long history with revolutionary politics and Gilroy suggests that this is because musical expression somehow resonate with the complexity of the notion of utopia by its ability to transcend linguistic, textual or discursive limitations while simultaneously communicating the hope for a better future. Contemporary manifestations of the African musical tradition locate themselves within popular expressive culture to communicate a dissatisfaction with the present context of modernity which continues to sustain the dominance of Eurocentric socio-political and economic structures much in the same way as the musical traditions of slaves challenged the authority of the slave master.

Ultimately, urban African music is music of invocation. An invocation of utopia but also, because of the historical tradition from which it emerges, an invocation of Africa. Sacred space can be understood as a ritual space in which an individual or group can embody the way 'things ought to be' and, by implication, ritualisation is therefore a type of embodied spatial practice (Chidester and Linenthal 1995). Performance and consumers of urban African musical forms can be interpreted as participating in a kind of ritual activity which constructs and sustains Africa as a sacred space. Smith has argued that ritual is not an expression or a response to the sacred but rather that place is made sacred by ritual (Smith 1987). The continuity of urban African music with African oral and musical traditions, as well as in its retelling of an Afro-centric history and vision for the future, individuals can, collectively, participate in a set of ritual activities which are essential in maintaining the sacredness of Africa. Moreover, as we have seen in part four, urban African music facilitates the forging of a transnational identity in which Africa is embodied by individuals globally and is therefore a portable sacred space no longer bound to its physical, geographical location. Urban African music is thus engaged in a process of mapping alternative spaces of power in which individuals can transcend the modern condition and exist free from the dominant ideology of the West. The role of music in constructing an alternative space which transcends conventional geographical location is encompassed by the words of Reggae legend, Bob Marley who stated in an interview:

> Well, as man we live 'mongst music. See music - music is a godly ting. They say we live 'mongst country - a country, but country's not it...Me wanna speak to all the children, me wanna speak to everyting that moveth and liveth on the earth. All my family a music[25].

Through the medium of music individuals, irrespective of their national or ethnic identities, are empowered with the ability to construct and sustain a soundscape which is based on an ideology of resistance to the dominant, oppressive symbols and categories imposed by Western ideology as well a utopian vision for the future.

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[25] This quotation is cited from the album 'Talkin' Blues' which is comprised of some of Marley's music and selected interviews.

Musical expression such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito become crucial tools of resistance because of the scope they provide to articulate - verbally and non-verbally - a critique of Western modernity. Ultimately, the power of urban African music resides in the fact that it represents a space in which the vision of an 'Africa' which is still yet to come can, in the present moment, exist.

CHAPTER 6

A RAP ON RELIGION

" This is my church. This is where I heal my pain. God is a DJ. " (Faithless)

"rhythm cutting sharp so' cuts at your hurt; you feel it for the bass history is a moving/is a hurting black story" [26]

A response to the notion that "God is dead" has stimulated a line of inquiry which has sent scholars from various fields looking for religion in the most unlikely of places. If the field of religious studies hopes to make any contribution to an understanding of what is meaningful to people in terms of what they are thinking or, more importantly, experiencing, our research cannot be restricted to spaces which have come to be regarded as obviously "religious" or "sacred". Religion is an intensely imaginative and creative area out of which the most fantastical myths have emerged and has inspired a wealth of musical and artistic expressions, without which, human civilization would be a spiritual wasteland. Why should the *study* of religion not show the same appreciation for imagination and creativity and shift its focus to the spaces in which human beings find themselves most inspired and ecstatic? Within the last decade, the field of popular culture has received much attention and has yielded a steadily growing body of research which is starting to reveal that the seemingly most profane area of culture is starting to look like what we hold most sacred. Cultural theorist, Stuart Hall has identified the ream of popular culture as an "intensely mythic

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[26] Extract from a dub poem by Linton Kwesi Johnson (1975) entitled *Bass Culture*

space" within which we can explore the truth of what we experience and, ultimately, understand who we are (Hall 1992: 32). Within this final chapter, I hope contribute to this discourse which is expanding our definition of what counts as religion and build on the work of scholars such as David Chidester, who has found religion, alive well, in some unusual places:

> However, if we look again at the privileged examples that we have considered – baseball, Coca Cola, and rock 'n' roll- they seem to encompass a wildly diverse but somehow representative range of possibilities for what might count as religion. They evoke familiar metaphors-the religious institution of the church, the religious desires attached to the fetish, and the religious exchanges surrounding the sacred gift-that resonate with other discourses, practices, experiences, and social formations that we are prepared to include within the ambit of religion. Why do they not count as religion? (Chidester 1996: 28)

So far, I have argued that urban African music is proving to be crucial in the shaping of a transnational identity located within a global community whose affiliations transcend temporal and spatial boundaries and, in doing so, fulfil an important need to belong or participate within a collectivity beyond the individual self. In the final part of my thesis, I would like to argue that music facilitates the creation of a heightened sense of community transforming it into one of the many sectors of culture to which 'the religious' has shifted. In a paper entitled *Rhythm, Ritual and Religion,* Mark Harvey asserts that music is serving to actively renew the root meaning of the term religion, namely, *religare* (i.e. to bind or tie together) and, by doing so, instil a sense of communion with a transcendent power whether that be a supreme being or one's inner-spirituality:

> In the complex whirl of symbols and shards of meaning that constitute contemporary consciousness and culture, those who celebrate our common humanity authentically and without sentimentality do the bidding of that creative spirit some call God. They help us to bind together in the dance of life, moving with rhythms yet unimagined toward an ecstatic and just community of feeling and faith. (Harvey 1994: 201)

In her analysis of American country dancing, Juliana Flinn (1995) forwards a definition of religion as a phenomena that brings people together across those boundaries which exist within a modern, individualistic society and concludes that this expressive form fulfils the need for communality within an, otherwise, alienating existence. [27] The relationship between music and religious experience has a long history within the development of human culture and society. Phenomenologist of religion, Gerardus van der Leeuw attributes dance and music with being one of the earliest means available for humans to gain access to what constitutes the sacred and collectively achieve experiences of religious ecstasy (Leeuw 1963). Within the context of contemporary society, musical performances and events contribute to affecting an intense, cathartic experience in which the audience and performers can collectively transcend the mundane, everyday world. As King and Jensen explain:

> A powerful measure of reggae potency is its predisposition toward dance. Whether it be in the streets of Kingston or in a dance hall in Great Britain, reggae brings people together to share the intimate ritual of dance. Through this physical activity, the dancer often becomes intoxicated in the celebration of sound and movement, disregarding predicaments and contradictions of the outside world. Dance is a vehicle for catharsis from the external world. In the words of Marley: Forget you worries and dance" (*Natty Dread*). (King and Jensen 1995: 32).

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[27] Many of the participants she interviewed speak of dancing in religious terms and claim that it brings them together and connects them in the way that religion does (see Flinn 1995).

According to Harvey, the deliberate manipulation of rhythm and the organisation of performances according to a specific sequence are all designed to complement the elaborate shows and use of lighting techniques which work to evoke a sense of the mysterious or mystical (Harvey 1994). More and more it is becoming clear that we are presently living in an age where religion is no longer limited to temple, mosque and church and has become diffused through many aspects of contemporary culture. In the context of urban African musical expressions, the dance floor has replaced the altar:

> I, a true head cherish the thought of a planet for Hip-Hop Godbodies
> A temple for conscious Hip –Hop Godbodies
> Where MC's come to pray, word play and freestyle all day –
> Building lyrical skillz (extract from *Hip-Hop – The Love of My Life* by
> Charles Rupare a.k.a. Manifesto Shallah http://www.hiphop.co.za)

Beyond the confines of religious institutions, individuals are drawing on popular music as a means to generate their own ideological and cosmological orientations which, in turn, are sustained through ritual gatherings, often around a sacred calendar of annual festivals or events.

The communal character of traditional African music has been well documented [28] and it is this aspect which is said to live on in the rhythmic structures of its subsequent contemporary manifestations. Urban African musical expressions seek to limit the extent to which the performers and members of the audience remain as distinct, separate entities. A sense of community is created through the relationship between the performers and the audience who participate in mutual dialogue which results in a cathartic experience (Gilroy 1991). Rhythm can be construed as theological, according to Hip Hop scholar Angela Nelson, in that it allows individuals to reach a liberated state and achieve a transcendent sense of community (Nelson 1999b). However, it is not only through its rhythmic structures that Hip Hop and other urban African musical forms foster a shared sense of solidarity, these musical expressions form part of a broader culture to which individuals feel they belong and are able to derive a communal identity. Tricia Rose provides some insight into this and makes some observations which can be expanded to include other forms of urban African music:

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[28] For example, the Pocomania, where musical performances last until both the performers and members of

> Identity in hip hop is deeply rooted in the specific, local experience and one's attachment to and status in a local group or alternative family. These crews are new kinds of families forged with intercultural bonds which like the social formation of gangs, provide insulation and support in a complex and unyielding environment and may, in fact, contribute to community building networks which serve as a basis for new social movements. (Rose 1994a:78-79).

In terms of Reggae, music is integral to the forging of communal ties which are sustained outside of the context of the musical experience and help to give shape to the Rastafari as a community. This is clearly revealed in the words of a South African Rastafari informant responding to a question about the role of music within their lives:

> It tells us the truth of praising Jah. It gives us the way how we should cope in our moment. It is the rhythm of Africa. It is the movement of sound which shows us the movement of Jah. (cited in Oosthuizen 1990:45).

As an explicitly experiential form, music has become intertwined with the construction of identity because it provides scope for us to imagine our own cultural

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the audience fall to the ground from exhaustion. (Thompson 1981).

narratives as well as position ourselves within them (Frith 1996). In the context of this thesis, the construction of identity through music is seen as a kind of religious work which, not only addresses the need for communality, but also becomes an important resource through which one can feel spiritually fulfilled. In the quote which follows below, Deon from Cape Town's Prophets of Da City points, quite clearly, to the cultural narrative of black consciousness within urban African music and its relationship to religious experience:

> My interpretation of black consciousness is, basically, being humanist, because the way I view black consciousness is being conscious of yourself, your community, who you are, where you come from. So once you have peace with yourself and you are elevated to a position where you can call yourself a higher being, automatically you'll be able to work with the masses out there. You first have to establish yourself before you can establish anything else among the people. Once you reach a conscious level, you automatically move through a spiritual transition. You basically meet your maker, once you're on those different planes...you can communicate with people, work with people...... (cited in Watkins 2001: 37)

Dances associated with urban African music have been defined as simultaneously sensual, violent and cathartic because, according to Dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, they serve to invoke Fanon's notion of the 'emotional sensitivity' of the oppressed and provide an outlet through which to communicate this experience (Johnson 1976: 400). This 'emotional sensitivity' can also be interpreted as a cathartic experience similar to one of spiritual possession which, in African religion, brings about healing amongst individuals and the wider community. The physically and spiritually moving power of urban African music, affecting both the performer and audience, has been likened to the experience of ecstatic possession in African religion (see Shusterman 1991) in which one enters, through dance, into an altered, heightened state of consciousness:

> ….music has a rhythm that just called my soul. It would make my soul jump out of my body, literally, and I'd have to move to it….It really calls me, it really does…..Sometimes my body does things I can't even control and it's like I'm not even here…It's just a link. Something touches you one day, just sparks your whole consciousness, and shows your body you can. Time and space is all about the rhythm in your body…..It's the ancients. It's definitely the ancients." (interview with performer, Guerrero by Sylvan 2001: 286).

Historians of Reggae Davis and Simon (1992) have defined Reggae as tribal music which has a hypnotic, trance-inducing effect. In *Black Culture, White Youth,* Simon Jones attributes the widespread appeal of Reggae to its ability to generate "uplifting feelings" amongst his interviewees who spoke of experiencing a "natural high" as a result of the music (Jones 1988: 154). It has the capacity to 'move' one, physically and emotionally, according to Jones, and bring about a sense of self-liberation, in which both body and mind are freed (Jones 1988). In "Trenchtown Rock", Bob Marley sings of "freeing the people with music" which speaks to the ability for one to achieve, even if only momentarily, liberation through music which articulates and gives shape to future social and political aspirations. Similarly, Hip Hop is said to play a ritualistic and cathartic role in the lives of individuals because it transports individuals out of their everyday reality and creates a moment, both temporally and spatially, in which one is liberated (see Nelson 1999b). The role of music in articulating this utopian vision must be understood within the context of the role of music within African culture in that it does not merely reflect a particular interpretation of reality but forms an integral part of actively constructing and sustaining that reality. As ethnomusicologist and drummer John M. Chernoff explains:

> African music is a cultural activity which reveals a group of people organising and involving themselves with their own communal relationships...The aesthetic point of this exercise is not to reflect a reality which stands behind it but to ritualise a reality that is within it. (Ethnomusicologist and drummer John M. Chernoff cited in Erlmann 1999:250).

Historically, musical forms which developed both on the continent and in Diaspora communities were inevitably implicated in the reinvention of African religion and culture as a means of resistance to European domination. African people adapted rhythm as a way of creating spiritual and physical harmony which served as an antidote to conditions of extreme social upheaval (Nelson 1999a). In his book *Protest and Praise*, Jon Michael Spencer looks at African music within an interpretative framework of theomusicology in which he looks at musicology as a theologically informed discipline and argues that, historically, music:

> ….. empowered those who possessed it to endure slavery by temporarily elevating them out of the valley of oppression up to a spiritual summit (Spencer 1990: 136).

Within the context of slavery and colonialism, religion formed an integral part of the justification for the oppression of black people. Christian doctrine contained within the bible, originally the only reading matter available to slaves, was subsequently reinterpreted and blended with certain aspects of African culture to develop a theology of liberation. Black protest movements were often led by religious leaders such as Martin Luther King and Marcus Garvey and the development of a musical tradition which contained both a religious and political message was inevitable. For this reason, it has been argued that the history of African music is inextricable from the religious experience of African people:

> To go back in any historical or emotional line of black music leads us inevitably to religion, i.e. the spirit worship. This phenomenon is always at the root of black art, the worship of the spirit - at least the summoning of or by such a force. (cited in Campbell 1980: 192).

If the religious aspect of African music is, historically, informed by the need to be liberated from oppression, it follows that the pursuit of freedom can be understood in terms of it being a religious activity which works to provides an alternative spiritual, as well as ideological worldview. Furthermore, urban African musical expressions such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito can thus be regarded as a set of counter cultural expressions which have their roots in socio-political resistance as well as modes religious experience - forming part of, what Hip Hop scholar Angela Nelson refers to as, "combative spirituality" [29] (see Sylvan 2001). Reggae poet, Mikey Smith has the following to say about the liberatory power of music which he regards as a:

> ....vehicle of giving hope. As a means of building them awareness as such. Poetry is a part of the whole process of the whole liberation of the people. (Mikey Smith cited in Middleton 1999: 80?).

Contained within African musical expression is a theodicy [30] concerned with a vision for the future in which the social and political aspirations of Africans are fulfilled. This is clearly revealed by the prevalence of religious imagery and metaphors contained within Reggae lyrics themes of protest, captivity and prophecy [31]. Jamaican born artist and performer Linton Kwesi Johnson believes that the acute

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[29] The original reference (Nelson 1991) is not available in South Africa.

[30] (see Gilroy 1993b)

[31] See King and Jensen (1995) article entitled *Bob Marley's Redemption Song: The Rhetoric of Reggae and Rastafari.*

suffering experienced by Africans has generated an intuitive need for inner peace and spiritual strength and that this need is compatible with liberation as a political aspiration (Johnson 1976). This sentiment is encompassed in an extract from the following lyrics from a Dub poem by LKJ entitled *Bass Culture:*

> ....you feel it because it is your pain; you feel it because it is your hunger, it is your sprout. Deep down-inside, from you hear it, you feel it', for it is your heart-song and it touches your soul's senses.

Activists who draw on the creative and performing arts in order to bring about social and political change have, traditionally, attempted to position themselves on the margins of society whilst developing transcendent critiques based on their vision of a better future. The Rastafari, for example, perceive themselves to be in exile from their spiritual homeland, Africa/Zion because of their refusal to internalise and conform to the modern, Western social, political and economic order. In the context of this self-imposed exile, the Rastafari vision of a utopia can only be achieved by the dismantling of the present "Babylon" system:

> ....the flight [to Zion] commences in the ashes of Babylon and constitutes a passage to the antithesis of Babylon, it entails a radical detachment from the vampire system." (Johnson-Hill 1995: 291).

The condition of exile appears as a dominant theme in Reggae with lyrics often containing a message of repatriation to Africa which can be interpreted as a metaphor for the realisation of a future in which Africans are freed from the dominance of Western hegemony. As Bob Marley sings in "Rastaman Chant":

> I hear the words of the Rastaman say
> Babylon your throne gone down
> Gone down
> Babylon your thrown gone down

I say, fly away home to Zion
Fly away home
One bright morning when my work is done
I'll fly away home

Since the 1960's we are witnessing the resurgence of the power of religion and music as a vehicle for social and political commentary, to such an extent that, West has made the claim that music is "the last form of transcendence available to young people" (1988: 187). Similarly, in the introduction to the book *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, Andrew Ross makes this claim:

> As a daily companion, social bible, commerical guide and spiritual source, youth music is still the place of faith, hope and refuge. (Ross 1994: 3).

In South Africa, the euphoria of our first election has subsequently been replaced by feelings of frustration and disillusionment with the present political and economic climate and music has emerged as a primary source of representation and expression for young people:

> Yes, we're Kwaito-bedonnerd! Many of you believe it represents all that is wrong with the "youth of today". Booze, sweaty sex, wicked beats and loads of attitude - kwaito culture freaks the shit out of you. But to us this musical form and culture expresses our hopes, fears and dreams. Its ours. It talks to us in languages and postures we recognise as our truths. This music that you find vulgar and offensive means more to the youth of this country than you can imagine. It is a mirror of our lives. Once you understand kwaito, you'll begin to understand us. (Hill 1999: 12).

My interviews with local Hip Hoppers revealed that many of them felt that, despite the advent of democracy in South Africa, we continue to experience a limited degree of freedom and that Hip Hop culture provides a secure base from which to generate a worldview which challenges the existing political climate:

> It goes back to freedom. We all chant freedom: we live in a free world or whatever. But do we actually know the extent of what freedom really means, you know. .. As soon as you say something that's against the norm you're gonna be chanted down. It's happened throughout time and its still happening. The thing about revolution is that you can't chant revolution if you're not going to be able to sustain yourself. If you're going to revolt you need something to fall back on. Fuck the system. I don't need the system. I've got this. That's the only way you're really going to be able to throw a revolution. (interview with Dom October 2002).

Many Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito songs are devoted to raising political and social consciousness but also communicate practical advice on issues such as drugs, crime and sex. In a song entitled "Maak 'n Skyf", Brasse vannie Kaap warn against the dangers of using hard drugs:

> Cocaine, it maak jou insane
> Dit spiel met jou brain
> En maak jou verdwyn
> Dit gee jou 'n pyn.

Reggae performers such as The Wailers attempt to instil a sense of pride and self-worth in the face of oppressive circumstances urging you to "stand up for your rights". [32] Whilst Reggae legend Bunny Wailer preaches about the importance of selflessness in "Pass it On":

> Its your own conscience that is gonna remind
> That its your heart and nobody else's that is gonna judge
> Be not selfish in your doings

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[32] Extract from a song entitled "Get up, stand up".

Pass it on
Help your brothers in their need
Pass it on
Pass it on

Hip Hop, in particular, has established itself as an appealing alternative to drug and gangster culture by fulfilling the need for communality and providing a creative outlet for feelings of frustration and aggression. Under the leadership of its founder, Emile Jensen, Black Noise, have developed projects such as "Healing the Hood" which work to discourage South African youth from turning to crime and promote a culture of tolerance and non-racism. In her study of Hip Hop culture in Cape Town, Sandra Klopper, has observed that the workshops run by Black Noise were extremely successful in facilitating a process whereby young people were able to express themselves in various ways ranging from graffiti art, breakdance as well as poetry and rap (see Klopper 2000). Urban African music has become an important cultural resource for youth, in particular, to draw on in order to move beyond the confines of liberation theology and express a self – and collectively - defined concept of spirituality which challenges existing structures, values and norms:

> It's telling people something through music, through something that most people like and enjoy. It gives you a lot of wisdom. Cos in your heart, you know you feel that way, and when you listen to it you know that other people are thinking them on the same kind of ways and it kind of gives you more strength. (informant cited in Jones 1988: 160).

In a chapter entitled *Rap Music, Hip-Hop Culture and 'The Future Religion of the World'*, Sylvan claims that, essentially, musical subcultures are functioning as religion in people's lives and concludes that:

> ....these new religious forms have already irrevocable changed the

> lives of millions of people, not only in terms of the texture of day-to-day living, but also in the way they see the world and the social forms that have sprung from those epistemologies. They signal the emergence of a significant alternative religious choice that bypasses the narrow opposition between traditional religious institutions and secular humanism. (Sylvan 2001: 296)

My research has revealed that Hip Hop is a source of spirituality primarily because it encompasses numerous means of self-expression ranging from break dancing, graffiti art to rapping, and expounds values and principles which can be integrated into everyday life. Moreover, these modes of self-expression are intimately linked to the process of developing one's inner-spirituality which Hip Hoppers refer to as "knowledge of self":

> Knowledge of self is that everyday we are learning something. We can never say we come to a point and say we know completely what makes up our existence, you know, and its all about growth.....If you don't grow, you die. So everyday, you're learning more about yourself through deejaying or whatever. ....I'm a Hip Hop head learning more about myself just to make myself a better person. To strive to be higher. To strive to use all the capabilities that I've got and to use them to my fullest potential. So knowledge of self. You can use it to just elevate mentally, physically, spiritually. You just gotta study yourself and be aware, be conscious. When you connect to that higher being that we've all got but we're so disconnected from because of everything that is happening around us. (interview with Dom October 2002)

In his study on the Hip Hop community in San Francisco, Sylvan discovered that individuals directly experience the power of a transcendent being which manifests itself, through Hip Hop, into everyday reality. Responding to a question about what it means to him to be a performer, Guerrero speaks directly to Hip Hop's ability to provide 'knowledge of self' which is interpreted as a profoundly spiritual process:

> I look around at everything, and everything I absorb is God and I can express that, literally…So it's really an expression. It's like praying. It's like being with God, literally, like being with God. Hip hop culture is a spirituality. And its everything I can think of. Anything I am that I can do, that happens in this world, it's like that music, it's the culture….It just gives you a purpose. It shows you why you're here….It knows that I know God everyday…All those values have become part of the music and now it's in me every day. (interview with Guerrero by Sylvan 2001:292).

Urban African music works as "combative spirituality" , because it is an ideal form of protest that provides scope to challenge the authority of the present socio-political reality, while simultaneously asserting a connection with a transcendent, ultimate reality whether it takes the form of a supreme being or belief in a higher self:

> Pick a path, go with social norms and a world that you know is bullshit, or go with yourself. Recreate your whole being instantly through conscious choice. Take charge of your life and its direction, you are God! (cited from a leaflet written by Wealz, a Cape Town-based graffiti artist).

Spencer (1994) argues that Hip Hop expounds a theological discourse underpinned by "salvational knowledge" or "rap gnosticism" in that performers convey existential knowledge as a means to conscientise people. This is reflected in the fact that performers often assume names which speak directly to their role in promoting a message of liberation such as Poor Righteous Teachers, Prophets of Da City, KRS - One (Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone) and Brothers of Peace. Sibusiso Radebe is a local Hip Hop artist who sees himself as a "lyrical prophet" writing and performing lyrics based around social issues and predicts as to how they will have an influence on the future (Hill 1999: 14.) In his poem entitled "Hip-Hop – The Love of My Life", Manifesto Shallah highlights the role of Hip Hop performers as prophets and teachers:

> How I long to see true Hip-Hop prophets,
> Riding Shaolin dragons and freestyling to the people,
> Foretelling the coming of the most high, the prolific wordsmith,
> How I crave to hear prophecies of falling and fallen MC's and up-coming MC's, (http://www.hiphop.co.za)

Reggae artists like Burning Spear often deliver a live performance which closely resembles the question-and-answer style of a preacher as a way of positioning the historical experience of black people within the present and liberate the audience from mental slavery. Led by Winston Rodney, legendary Reggae band Burning Spear remind the audience of the history of the oppression of Africans:

> Do you remember the days of slavery
> When they beat us
> When they use us? (extract from a song entitled, "Slavery Days")

In his examination of three Reggae Dub poets, Middleton argues that contemporary performers are modern day prophets:

> Possessed with intense focus and singular purpose, their non-traditional verse and unique rhythmic expression seeks to raise the consciousness of the hearer in a manner not unlike the Hebrew prophets and psalmists of ages ago. (1999:77).

Similarly, in Hip Hop we see that performers are seen as spiritual leaders who provide both moral and spiritual guidance for the community:

> MC's are like the priests or the pastors of the people right now because a lot of children don't listen to their parents anymore. A lot of kids don't go to church anymore. So MC's have been elevated to this recognisable status that's easily accessible. It's our duty as MC's to bring morals to the community, just like the griots in Africa brought morals and they try to pass down things that were basic... (Gaines interviewed by Sylvan 2001: 291).

Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito are musical expressions which have been influenced heavily by a history of black resistance and are underpinned by a distinctive Afrocentric and countercultural worldview which stand in direct opposition to mainstream culture. It is therefore inevitable that the worldview which is being expressed has become up tied up with notions of truth as part of becoming enlightened and liberated from an oppressed mentality. Sylvan makes the argument that Hip Hop promotes an alternative religious worldview because it rejects the notion of "otherworldly salvation" and, instead, concerns itself with the truth of a present set of circumstances which are perceived as oppressive (Sylvan 2001). In Reggae we see the same refusal to place hope in the power of a transcendent 'other' which is inextricably bound up with the deception of African people. In "Get Up, Stand Up" The Wailers sing:

> Most people think, great god will come from the sky
> Take away everything and make everybody feel high
> But if you know what life is worth
> You will look for yours on earth
> And now you see the light
> You stand up for your rights

The notion of truth expounded in music is essential to liberation both spiritually and politically, especially in the case of those who feel they have been deceived about their true origins and history which, in turn, formed the basis of their subordination:

> Preacher man don't tell me heaven is under the earth
> I know you don't know what life is really worth
> It's not all that glitters is gold
> *Half the story has never been told*
> And now that the children have seen the light
> They're gonna stand up for their rights. (extracts taken from "Get up, stand up" by The Wailers my emphasis)

Performers and creators of what has been termed as 'conscious' Hip Hop insist that their role as artists is intimately connected to their role in challenging the reality we are presented with and expose the truth which has been repeatedly distorted by both history and the media (see Shusterman 1991: 627). Furthermore, truth, in this context, should not be understood as a notion of singular, ultimate Truth but rather a concern for the truth of the experience of living in an ever-changing socio-political and economic reality which reinforces and sustains vast inequalities. This becomes particularly relevant when we focus our attention on the South African context in which the post-apartheid generation are repeatedly accused of being politically apathetic (see *Mail and Guardian* November 2002). I would argue that this notion of apathy should be reinterpreted and understood as the need for truth in response to a profound sense of mistrust of the political arena which has not met the social and economic expectations of the population. South African journalist and Y-FM producer, George Hill believes that in a post-apartheid context, the significance of the struggle is being displaced by modes of expression, such as Kwaito, which have more relevance for the youth than the political arena:

> You have your liberation struggle; we have hardcore beats and lyrics straight off the streets, truths you can't cut through. More than any politician, M'du, Boom Shaka, Skeem and Ou da Meesta tell it like it is. (Hill 1999:13).

Spencer traces this preoccupation with truth to earlier musical expressions such as the blues and implies that it is this concern for truth which accounts for the religious nature of African-based music forms:

> That blues singers always professed to have told the truth was perhaps the most enlightened language these singers could use to describe what they doubtless sensed to be a religious experience. (Spencer 1990:110).

With regards to Reggae, Thompson has argued that it is an "affective epistemology" because it communicates, rhythmically and lyrically, a message of truth based on an emotional experience. (Thompson 1981: 259). The message conveyed by urban African music is perceived as being based on the collective experience of both the performer and the audience which serves to validate the truth of the message:

> In making the music the musicians themselves enter a common stream of consciousness, and what they create is an invitation to the listeners to be entered into that consciousness – which is also the consciousness of their people. The feel of the music is the feel of their common history, the burden of their history; their suffering and their woe; their endurance and their strength, their poverty and their pain." (1976: 398).

Within the context of an age which has yielded the technology to disseminate information instantaneously across the globe, individuals are constantly exposed to instances which confirm that we can no longer trust the authority of state and religious leaders, or even the media. Music is emerging as one of the many ways in which individuals are empowering themselves to generate their own sense of spirituality and identity[33] which is not based on conventional religious institutions or political structures. Urban African musical expressions are seen to provide a direct link to a spiritual power that transcends – and can therefore challenge - the authority structures of the material world. Ultimately, the significance of Reggae, Hip Hop and Kwaito lies in its ability to provide a truth(s) which can be validated by an individual through the power of their own experience.

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[33] Most Hip Hop artists and performers take on a pseudonym or "tag" which they have tattooed on to their bodies (see Klopper 2000). The act of re-naming and marking oneself permanently can be interpreted as ritual act of commitment to Hip Hop.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

"It is, of course, true that the African identity is still in the making. There isn't a final identity that is African. But, at the same time, there is an identity coming into existence. And it has a certain context and a certain meaning" (Chinua Achebe) [34]

In order to construct the main arguments of this thesis, I have woven together various lines of analysis, some of which include Africanist discourse, ethnomusicology, postmodern spatial analysis as well as theory relating to popular culture and religion. I have chosen to drawn on a wide range of scholarship, primarily, because I wanted to write a minor dissertation that would both stimulate discussion and highlight areas of research that intersect with each other in ways that provide insight into the role of popular culture in South Africa. I have constructed this piece of work, in such a way, that any one of the chapters could be expanded but, most importantly, problematized even further. Ultimately, I would hope that my thesis would reflect one of the most valuable lessons I have learnt from my supervisor Prof. David Chidester that the role of the scholar is not to find solutions to problems but rather to create more problems.

I have explored Hip Hop, Reggae and Kwaito as components of South African popular culture which are working to actively shape a global African identity that challenges Eurocentric notions of nationalism. Furthermore, I have highlighted the compatibility of this identity with a postmodern notion of place as being embodied and therefore not necessarily bound to a physical, geographical location. Looking at the current debate on the limitations of Afrocentricism, I have argued that the ongoing process of the construction of identity within South African popular music can be construed as a direct response to this problem because it is a transnational cultural resource unconstrained by both time and space. Moreover, it is this transnational, cross-cultural identity which will be crucial in resisting the threat of dominant hegemonic political, cultural and economic paradigms as well ensuring Africa's meaningful contribution on a global scale. It has been one of my aims to deconstruct the myth of authenticity in the context of a globalizing world and to contextualise a concern regarding the dilution of culture and tradition. I have argued that this claim is unfounded when we look at the empirical evidence of how cultural exchange is actually working. Urban African music has been shown to be in continuity with African culture and oral modes of expression as well as with a historical tradition of creative cultural selection and invention in response to the threat of Western dominance. Finally, I concluded this thesis by arguing that the process of forging a global African identity is intimately related to how individuals orientate themselves in relation to 'the sacred' or the notion of a transcendental power. Drawing on the work of scholars who have alerted us to the idea of popular culture as religion, I have argued that urban African music has, historically, been implicated in the political and spiritual liberation of African people and in the construction of a utopian vision. Music, according to this interpretation, performs a religious function by fulfilling the need for ritual and community, by providing spiritual and moral leadership and by expounding a set of morals and ethics to live by. Most importantly, these musical expressions lay claim to an experiential form of truth which empowers individuals to challenge existing political and religious structures.

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[34] Cited in Appiah, A.K. (1992) *In My Father's House.*

In terms of future research, I think that the issues raised in this thesis are particularly relevant in light of the recent debates regarding globalization. If we are to move beyond a superficial definition of globalization, it is important that more in-depth research is done on how culture and identity is being developed on a local and global level. We need to move beyond superficial interpretations of this process contained within such notions as center/periphery if we are to gain an understanding of how globalizing forces are shaping the local experience. Urban African music is only one of the many instances in which we see cultural exchange in a globalizing context. In a post-apartheid context, issues of identity have come to the fore within South African society. The motivation behind this thesis is, partly, to encourage scholars to look at the way in which these identities have been configured in a post-apartheid context but also to pay attention as to how this process is located in relation to Africa and to the rest of the world. Interest in the cultural heritage of Diaspora communities, especially the African-American community has yielded important works by scholars such E.E. Dubois and Mellville J. Herskovits but what about the search for roots – real or 'imagined' - within South Africa? Is traditional culture, especially amongst our youth, being diluted or is it simply being recreated? Moreover, what constitutes 'the traditional' in South Africa? These are just a few of the many questions which, I believe, need to be addressed. At present, the study of religion in South Africa is confined to the study of tradition and theology to such an extent that what constitutes religion tends to be limited to temple, mosque and church. There is much exciting and innovative work to be done with regard to expanding our notions of the religious in this country. Finally, in writing this thesis, I have discovered an abundance of literature dedicated to the study of Hip Hop and Reggae in Europe and North America but published work on the development of these musical expressions within the South African context is minimal in comparison. I would like to see more research being undertaken into *South African* popular music as it has the potential to provide a useful lens through which to view and gain insight into South African society and culture.

For di time is nigh
When passion gather high
When di beat jus lash
When di wall mus smash
An di beat will shiff
As di culture alltah
When oppression scatta [35]

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[35] Extract from LKJ's (1975) *Scatta-Matta-Shatta-Shack!*

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