Rap and the articulation of resistance: An exploration of subversive cultural production during the early 90's, with particular reference to Prophets of da City.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the ways in which Cape Town rap group Prophets of da City articulate their resistance to apartheid and, in particular, the ways in which they attempted to intervene in politicians' attempts to pacify the black electorate during the build- up to South Africa's first democratic elections. Initially, I attempt to clear a space from which one could discuss POC's work as postmodern and postcolonial. I then theorise POC's use of sampling as a postmodern strategy whilst, at the same time, pointing out that rap has its origins in the African-American tradition of Signifyin(g). Through my discussion sampling, I suggest that rap, as postmodern cultural practice, challenges concepts of originality as well as uniqueness. I also discuss POC's work as part of subculture and analyse Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* in order to explore the black artist's struggle for space within the public sphere. Finally, I contend that both Lee and POC's texts are flawed because they marginalise gender politics. I briefly discuss Queen Latifa's rap music to suggest that the discourses of race and gender are inseparable.

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This thesis will explore the way in which the rap group Prophets of da City (hereafter referred to as POC) articulate their resistance to the repression and oppression of apartheid. I will commence by relating POC's experiences as performers to the general circumstances under which black artists engaged in cultural production. I will argue briefly that over the last thirty years most black artists and musicians, including POC, shared similar experiences with regard to censorship and restriction under the apartheid state. Particular attention will be paid to rap as postmodern performance and I will argue that POC's texts are both postcolonial and postmodern. This position will be approached by discussing the perils of using labels such as "postmodern" and "postcolonial" in the South African context and I intend to define these terms for the purposes of this thesis. In the second chapter I will discuss two South African academics' views on postmodernism in articles which were published during the eighties (Carusi, 1989: 78-95; Liebenberg, 1988: 271-285). In my thesis I will not refer to postmodernism as an historical phase, but as a discursive strategy which operates in the way that Linda Hutcheon elaborates in *The Politics of Postmodernism*. Hutcheon sees parody as a central feature

of postmodernism which engages at the level of representation so as to confirm and subvert the "power of representations of history" (Hutcheon, 1989: 93-101). Postmodern parody, a deconstructive strategy, foregrounds the politics of representation and

> parody signals how present representations come from past ones
> and what ideological consequences come from both continuity
> and difference (Hutcheon, 1989: 93-94).

My analysis of POC's texts in the third chapter would include those which rely to a large extent on sampling as a discursive strategy. Sampling, according to Richard Shusterman, is an important feature of rap which he describes as "deconstructive art" (Shusterman, 1991: 6). Like postmodern representation in general, rap challenges concepts of originality and uniqueness and deploys and thematizes its appropriation "to show that borrowing and creation are not at all incompatible" (Shusterman, 1991: 5).

Once I have established that rap music's use of sampling is parodic, I will point out that it is not merely technology that makes rap music subversive. In the fourth chapter I will argue that rap music derives from an African-American vernacular tradition which Henry Louis Gates refers to as

Signifyin(g) (Gates, 1988: 49). Reference will be made to the fact that POC classify their rap as part of the hip hop subculture. Here Dick Hebdige's definition of subculture in *Subculture. The Meaning of Style* will be discussed so as to tie his explanation of subculture as rupture to Derridian notions of rupture, aporia and the assertion of difference. In my analysis of postcolonial tracks such as "Blast From Da Past" off *Age of Truth*, which aggressively rejects colonial narratives about Africa and its colonisation, I will show that sampling has the potential to foreground the politics of representation. I will also refer to Spike Lee's use of rap music in his film *Do the Right Thing* in order to demonstrate that the concept of noise or rupture (both literally and metaphorically) in rap is a strategy employed in the black artist's contest for public space and self-expression (Rose, 1995: 145). This discussion will then be linked to POC's attempts to challenge hegemony by creating noise within the dominant discourse about South Africa's political reality. In the final chapter I will suggest that POC's attempts to address issues relating to racial oppression are flawed because their texts marginalise gender politics. I will briefly consider American rapper Queen Latifa's music because she succeeds in merging the discourses of gender and race in her work. Finally, I will suggest that Queen Latifa's music may present a solution to some of the

problems in POC's texts.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 <u>Who are Prophets of da City? A brief history of POC</u>

POC are a rap group from Cape Town who were the first South African rap group to sign a contract with a record company (Tusk). Their first album, *Our World*, was released in 1990 and the band members at that time were DSA (Shaheen Ariefdien, son of jazz musician Issy Ariefdien), Ready D (Dion Daniels), Ramone (the group's dancer) and Jazzmo (a beat boxer). In 1993, with the release of *Age of Truth*, Ramone left the group temporarily to be replaced by Junior 'Danisa' Dread (who left before the release of *Phunk Phlow*) and Ishmael Morabe.

On the group's first two albums the rap songs were performed in English and Afrikaans, but when Ishamael and Danisa joined the group they rapped in Zulu and Xhosa on some songs and thus increased POC's target audience. Thus far the group has been doing well for itself and has toured South Africa and Europe extensively. In South Africa they toured the country as part of an anti-drug campaign and they also participated in a national voter

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education tour titled "Rapping for Democracy" during 1993. Amongst other overseas performances, they participated at the Montreaux Jazz Festival and, more recently, performed at Glastonbury, a contemporary British version of Woodstock. POC are currently in London, where they have been stationed for the past year and have signed a recording contract with a British record company. I interviewed the group on 24 October 1994 shortly before they left for the United Kingdom. They were to have released their fifth album during April of this year, but this has not happened. According to Jacob Dlamini of the *Sunday Times*, POC's fifth album, *Universal Souljaz*, has been released in the United Kingdom and has met with positive reviews from British critics and audiences (1995: 25). At this point, however, the album is not available in South Africa.
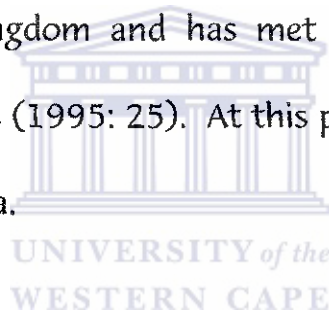
Age of Truth is of particular interest to me because it differs significantly from the first two albums on a technical and discursive level. The high quality of this album's production indicates that the group was in a financial position to spend much studio time on it as well as use sophisticated technology such as digital sampling. The lyrical content of their third album also shifted from subtle criticisms of apartheid to a scathing attack on the National Party. Not

surprisingly, most of the songs on the album were banned, in contrast to the fact that only "Roots" (a black consciousness song) was banned on *Our World* and that only "Ons Stem" was banned on *Boom Style*.

Age of Truth was released in October 1993, at a time when it was uncertain whether South Africans would, indeed, participate in free and fair elections. Politicians from across the political spectrum, particularly those of the National Party and the African National Congress, were calling upon the electorate to "forgive and forget" so as to create the correct political climate for a democratic election process. POC's album situated itself in direct opposition to political campaigns which either sought to pacify angry South Africans or to recruit votes for political parties which it deemed to be reactionary. *Age of Truth* did this largely through lyrics which urged the electorate not to vote for the National Party, by speaking about police corruption and brutality, by addressing a variety of social problems caused by apartheid, by talking about how difficult it is for black South Africans to forgive the enforcers of apartheid and by aggressively rejecting neo-colonial narratives about Africa. This album's single, "Understand Where I'm Coming From", received no air time on S.A.B.C. radio and was aired once on S.A.B.C.

television on "The Toyota Top Twenty". The group's record company at the time, Tusk, did not promote this album very aggressively. In fact, I only managed to find one copy of this album at a Musica store in Cape Town at the beginning of 1994. According to Shaheen, Tusk also refused to shoulder any responsibility for possible repercussions which the album's content may have generated. When the group recorded their album in Bophuthatswana, their DAT tapes were confiscated because one of their tracks, "Power To Da People", closed with the following lyric: "Fuck Mangope even if we record here" (*Age of Truth*, 1993). The group's experiences therefore not merely reflect the extent to which the apartheid state directly controlled cultural production, but also reveal the extent to which the recording industry has internalised its surveillance as well as how conservative it essentially is. POC's history has therefore been characterised by censorship and it is my contention that their experiences as artists are consistent with the difficulties which black artists have experienced in the sphere of South African cultural production. Let us briefly explore the conditions under which black artists rendered performances and texts over the last thirty years.

1.2 A brief overview of black music and theatre in urban centres since the 1960s

Black theatre and music in South Africa has been characterised by direct and indirect state intervention, restriction and censorship. Robert Kavanagh, for example, points out that the Afrikaner nationalist state established its hegemony by implementing Bantu education in 1953 (1985: 48). In line with the introduction of this education system, Afrikaner nationalists saw to it that "suitable plays in Bantu languages" were published "under the government's auspices and published by companies owned by the growing Afrikaner capitalist section" (Kavanagh, 1985: 48). By the sixties, the extent to which the state intervened in cultural production became more far-reaching. Legislation such as the Separate Amenities Act and Group Areas Act, along with pressure from white musicians, saw to it that black musicians were forced out of city venues (Coplan, 1985: 191). The Publication and Entertainment Act prevented black and white people from associating or collaborating "outside working hours and working relationships" (Kavanagh, 1985: 51). This Act also prohibited mixed audiences and prevented black performers from performing in white venues. These laws had adverse effects

on black music because the only venues left were "big concerts and outdoor jazz festivals in Soweto", which were often sponsored by South African Breweries and organised by United Artists (Coplan, 1985: 191). According to Coplan, these concerts were not very successful due to "social, organisational and programme conflicts" (1985, 192). The deterioration of the black urban music scene forced musicians such as Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) into exile and others into early retirement or "an early grave" (Coplan, 1985: 192). Ultimately, state intervention created a gap in the development of musical talent in the country as many leading musicians were no longer present to act as mentors and role models to young musicians (Alperson, 1993: 26). The gap which this situation created in the sale of South African music was filled by the promotion of American artists which, according to Shaheen, is more profitable because record companies merely have to distribute units which have already been marketed and processed.

In contrast, Kavanagh argues that apartheid legislation did not necessarily affect black theatre negatively (1985: 52). Instead, it shifted the positions of power in collaborative theatre with white English-speaking directors and playwrights. White producers were now at a disadvantage because if they

wished to involve themselves in black theatre or entertainment on a commercial or other basis [they] would have to produce a product which pleased black, and not white, audiences (Kavanagh, 1985: 52).

Black playwrights and directors such as Gibson Kente and Sam Mhangwani, pioneers of township theatre, became more successful. By the late sixties, the independence which black theatre began to enjoy of English-speaking white management, contributed to the rise of a form of political theatre which advocated Black Consciousness ideology (Kavanagh, 1985:53). The students who were involved in this form of theatre moved away from avant-garde models provided by the works of Pinter, Beckett and Sarte to adapted African-American, West African or Caribbean material and the "creation of material 'relevant to the black experience' in South Africa" (Kavanagh, 1985: 48, 53). However, censorship of work by serious political theatre groups or township theatre directors such as Kente became more restrictive by 1973 (Kavanagh, 1985: 55).

For the purposes of this thesis it is important to observe that serious political theatre in the late sixties and early seventies was interested in material which

narrativised the black experience of oppression - however erroneously homogenising such narratives may be - and thus directors and playwrights turned to African-American and Caribbean material. Coplan observes that within African intellectual circles, at least, "there was a clear association of Afro-American performance culture with urban cultural autonomy" (1985: 149). The tendency by black artists to use American material has a history which stretches as far back as the forties:

> Only a few jazz musicians of the 1940's brought anything identifiably South African to their playing of American swing. The reason was simply the identification of traditional music with the rural present and tribal past. Begun by the missionaries, this negative association grew until the 1950s, when the Afrikaner government's policy to 'develop along their own lines' entrenched the attitude for the next twenty years (Coplan, 1985: 148).

Internalised colonial ideas thus initially accounted for urban musicians and performers' preferences, but the shift toward material which was specifically relevant to the black experience was brought about by apartheid policy. Within South Africa's jazz history at the very least, the contribution of American jazz was positive because it relied upon much interaction between South African and American musicians. According to Coplan,

American [musicians] who looked to Africa for inspiration like John Coltrane were leading South African jazzmen to reexamine their own indigenous resources (Coplan, 1985: 189).

Interaction between South African and American musicians brought musicians such as Philip Thabane closer to their cultural roots and affirmed their identity as African. Thabane and his band, Malombo Jazz Men, combined a pastiche of musical styles that included

neo-traditional music, African church melodies, *marabi*, *mbaqanga*, and the jazz guitar work of Wes Montgomery and John McLaughlin [which gave] it a feeling at once indigenous and rural contemporary and urban . . . . Intensely theatrical poetic recitation was vital to the Malombo's music, and the group soon became associated with African cultural nationalism and the emerging aims of the Black Consciousness Movement (Coplan, 1985: 196).

Jazz itself and the interaction between South African and American jazz musicians, therefore provided a cultural alternative to the repression of apartheid. It could thus be said that the difficulties which POC faced with regard to censorship and restriction in the past is consistent with the experiences of black artists involved in cultural production in the past. It also

appears that the group's use of an African-American art form, rap music, conforms with black artists' reliance on African-American or Caribbean material in an attempt to construct black nationalist narratives which rely on the notion of a global black experience of oppression and resistance.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Talking about the postcolonial and postmodern in the South African context

Postcolonial and postmodern cultural practice could easily be conflated with each other as both practices appear to engage critically with dominant discourse. Like postmodernism, postcolonialism "repudiates all master narratives" (Dirlik, 1994: 334) and both practices appropriate and subvert signifiers from within Western discourse. In Arif Dirlik's article on Third World criticism, "The Post-Colonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism", he states that

> [c]rucial premises of postcolonial criticism, such as the repudiation of post-Enlightenment metanarratives, were enunciated first in post-structuralist thinking and the various post-modernisms that it has informed (1994: 336).

Elsewhere in the article, Dirlik states that the "language of postcolonial

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discourse" is the "language of First World post-structuralism" (1994: 341) and he suggests that both post-structuralist and post-colonial discourse involve a "crisis in historical consciousness" (1994: 337). He contends that because the images of the colonizer and colonised were shaped by "the experience of colonizing the world", the end of colonialism places the identity of both colonizer and colonised into crisis (1994: 337). Whilst I find it useful to view postmodernism and postcolonialism as discourses which deal with crises in historical consciousness and identity, it should be pointed out that each discourse developed from distinctly different positions. Postmodernism engages with Western discourse from within and postcolonial theory engages with Western discourse both from within and outside of it; it is inside of Western discourse in so far as it employs strategies such as deconstruction to dismantle binary relations such as self / other and oppressor / oppressed. It is outside of Western discourse precisely because the colonised merely exists within Western frames of reference as the Other - the unnameable or the irretrievable.

The title of Dirlik's article refers to the 'post-colonial' (with a hyphen) as an aura, which signifies that Dirlik speaks of the 'post-colonial' as an historical

moment or mood. To Anne McClintock, however, the use of the term 'post-colonial' is deceptive because it "re-orients the globe once more around a single, binary opposition: colonial / post-colonial" (1994: 292). McClintock contends that the orientation toward "a binary axis of time rather than power" celebrates the "pastness of colonialism" prematurely (1994: 294). This celebration, she holds, "runs the risk of obscuring the continuities of colonial and imperial power" (McClintock, 294). One of the contexts in which the term 'post-colonial' is inaccurate is Apartheid South Africa where colonial power was transferred from the colonizers to privileged members of the colony (McClintock, 1994: 292-295). The term which I propose to use in this paper is 'postcolonialism' (without a hyphen). I am, therefore, identifying with the position taken by Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge in "What is Post(-)colonialism?" These critics conceptualise 'postcolonialism' (without a hyphen) as "ideological orientations rather than as a historical stage" (Mishra and Hodge, 1994: 284). From this perspective it becomes possible to view postcolonialism as already being "implicit in the discourses of colonialism themselves" (Mishra and Hodge, 1994: 284). Mishra and Hodge's formulations thus make it plausible for one to conceive of a situation where postcolonial cultural practice holds radical potential in what McClintock calls "break-away

settler colonies" (1994: 295), such as the Apartheid state.

It is with the awareness of the complexities involved in using terms such as postmodern or postcolonial that I approach South African cultural production. In an article published in 1989, Annamaria Carusi suggests that in South Africa

> there is a large part of the (white) population, for whom the label "post-colonialism" is not an issue at all. Post-colonialism . . . has been accomplished . . . in a most successful manner. The South African nation exists because of the success of the construction of Afrikanerdom (1989: 80).

To the black majority in 1989 the post-colonial (in the historical sense) label is at issue and the sort of cultural production which is of interest to postcolonial critics and artists is that which is subversive and articulates resistance to Apartheid. Those who oppose Apartheid are thus interested in subverting white hegemony in various spheres. One such sphere is the cultural domain. [1] Afrikaner Nationalism as Derrida argues, has its foundations in European discursive categories:

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[1] I use the noun `domain' here specifically because Afrikaner Nationalists made every attempt to control all means of cultural production. There was only one culture for them and they were at the centre of it. Consider, for example, the destruction of `grey ' areas such as Sophiatown where South African jazz musicians and fans interacted spontaneously. During the Apartheid years, the jazz community was fragmented as the Group Areas Act made it difficult for musicians to meet and audiences to support musicians. Pianist Rashid Lanie points out that young

> The history of Apartheid (its "discourse" and its "reality", the totality of its text) would have been impossible, unthinkable without the European concept and the European history of the state, without the European discourse on race . . . without Judeo-Christian ideology (Derrida, 1980: 165).

Carusi's contention that postcolonial discourse can be valuable for South African liberation and resistance literature is thus supported by Derrida's contention that apartheid is "unthinkable without" European discursive categories. She makes the connection between European discourse and apartheid explicit when she calls apartheid "neo-imperialism" (1989: 81). A

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musicians' mentors and role models had gone into exile and that this stunted their growth as musicians (Alperson, 1993: 26).
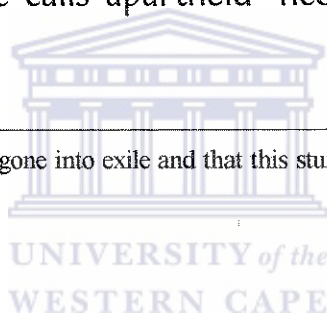
successful dismantling of apartheid would thus require a deconstruction of the European discourse on race, gender and religion and the European concept and history of the state. As the black South African subject is interpellated by the discourse of apartheid, that subject is also confounded by European discourse - not as a speaking subject, but as a spoken subject and, therefore, as Other. It is from this perspective that postcolonial discourse and deconstruction become valuable in the South African context as the racial Other can, to a certain extent, engage critically with the very discourse that interpellates it and begin to challenge assumptions which support the process by which it is Othered. In the next part of this discussion, I will attempt to determine whether it is possible to apply postmodern theory in the South African context by considering an argument which opposes its deployment.

In his article "Postmodernism: Progressive or Conservative?", Wilhelm Liebenberg outlines "three dominant themes" in postmodernism (1988: 274). These are the "suspicion of metanarratives", the "fictionalisation of reality" and the "embracing of mass culture" (1988: 274-275). According to Liebenberg, these "themes" indicate that postmodernism is "untypical of the

culture of those who have to deal with the harsh realities of Apartheid"

(1988: 285). Instead, he claims that postmodernism best belongs to the

liberal bourgeoisie who choose not to commit themselves to a particular

political stance (1988: 285). Of postmodernism he states that the suspicion

of metanarratives and the fictionalisation of reality make it impossible for

one to claim that political alternatives to Apartheid are not as fictional or

deceiving as Apartheid itself (Liebenberg, 1988: 284). Postmodernism, says

Liebenberg, can thus not be called progressive as it does not further the

cause of those fighting against Apartheid (Liebenberg, 284). Liebenberg also

claims that the postmodernist embrace of popular culture "caters for a

slightly more sophisticated audience than the general masses" (1988: 282).

Ultimately, Liebenberg dismisses the usefulness of postmodern strategies in

the Apartheid state (now democratically defeated) and presents the

oppressed masses (for whom he appears to want to speak) with no real

alternate strategies against Apartheid (anti-) cultural practices. It is not very

clear whether Liebenberg objects to the value of postmodernism as an

historical phase or as a discursive strategy and he seems to dismiss the term

as if it referred to one theory, which can be reduced to "three dominant

themes" (1988: 274). In the following section of this paper, I will repudiate

Liebenberg's reductive claims by analysing Annamaria Carusi's discussion of

post-structuralism, post-colonialism and postmodernism. During the course

of this discussion I hope to move closer to introducing my own conception of

postmodernism as a critical practice which needs to be employed as a tool

along with specific discourses.

During the course of her discussion, Carusi describes post-structuralism as

> the affirmation of difference as pure negativity,
> giving way to an infinite pluralism or dispersion: the
> index of its failure is the point at which it erupts
> into positivity (1989: 87).

Carusi states that it is this "affirmation of difference as pure negativity" which

dooms the employment of post-structuralism "in the service of a political

agenda" to failure (1989: 87). This is so because any political commitment,

such as the struggle for gender and racial equality, contains within it the

"desire for transformation which marks the point of eruption into positivity"

(Carusi, 1989: 87). At this point the theory is filled with contradiction as the

desire for closure makes the affirmation of difference incoherent (Carusi,

1989: 87). Of postmodernism Carusi states that the theory's "crisis of

legitimation" problematises the political effectiveness and desirability of any intervention (1989: 87). When she discusses post-structuralism in relation to postcolonial discourse, she contends that the "naming of the Other as Other" indicates that post-structuralism forecloses otherness and that it cannot break with "Western systems of thought . . . of operating a radical transformation" (1989: 89). Hence her conclusion that

> when faced by the post-colonial or forms of neo-
> imperialism, while post-structuralism can account
> for the mechanism of imperialism, it cannot account
> for that which counters it (Carusi, 90).

This critic's apparent dismissal of post-structuralism's applicability to postcolonial discourse is extended to postmodernism. She states that whilst postmodern discourse is valuable when "the victim is forced to express him / herself in the terms and the discourse of the oppressor", the theory collapses

> when faced with something which is untranslatable,
> a residue which remains because of the peculiarity of
> languages . . . . A radical transformation is
> unthinkable in post-structuralist terms, because the
> site of "otherness" is a hole in its discourse (Carusi,
> 1989: 90).

Thus both postmodernism and post-structuralism, in themselves, cannot hold solutions to victims of colonialism or neo-imperialism. However, this situation does not necessarily bring one to Liebenberg's contention that postmodernism cannot be a progressive strategy in the South African context. Instead, what it does point to is that both discourses cannot be ends in themselves, but need to be employed as strategies in conjunction with specific resistance discourses.

Post-structuralism and postmodernism indeed *have* to be employed with a political agenda of some sort. Carusi's contention that political commitment entails a desire for transformation and, therefore, closure which makes the affirmation of difference (required by post-structuralism) impossible (1989: 87), is somewhat simplistic. Her position, at this point, seems to prove Liebenberg's view that postmodernism provides the liberal bourgeoisie with a means to evade the political. Whilst Liebenberg's claims cannot be refuted easily, I think that Carusi conflates the actual *desire* for transformation (and thus the desire for closure) with the *achievement* of transformation. The struggle against racism in South Africa may be advanced by a transformation such as the democratic election of a government which represents the
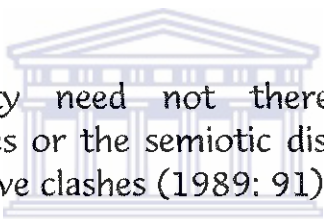
oppressed majority , but race, class and gender oppression continues to be part of the South African reality. Closure in the fight against neo-imperialism in South Africa has not been achieved and, in the face of the dynamic nature of reality, will never be achieved. To believe to the contrary would be to engage in a form of reductiveness which allows people to evade social responsibility for the process of transformation.

Unlike Liebenberg, Carusi attempts to present solutions to the problems she finds with post-structuralism and postmodernism's applicability in the South African context. She refers to Gayatri Spivak's discussion of the Subaltern Studies Group in an attempt to effect the repositioning of historicism (1989: 90-91). The Subaltern Studies Group, says Carusi, can reveal the limits of Western humanism "by a commitment to the subaltern as the subject of his history" (1989: 91). The notion of a subject is replaced by one of "subject effects embedded in a socio-historical configuration" which

> allows for an understanding of the materiality of a "body",
> traversed by plural and sometimes contradictory lines of
> determination, which constitute it as a subject capable of action,
> in those socio-historical configurations (1989: 91).

Apart from the fact that Carusi does not   make explicit the significance of

Spivak's choice of words "his history" as a possible reference to patriarchal ideology, she does seem to improve upon the Althusserian and Lacanian notion of the subject being interpellated in specific (and often violent) ways by intersecting discourses. Here her conceptualization provides the Other with the possibility of articulation and thus empowerment. With the emphasis on subject-effects as material instances which shift from the unconscious or language to discourse (a more tangible space where subjects engage in dialogue about their different positions and views), Carusi contends that

> radical heterogeneity need not therefore be limited to unconscious processes or the semiotic disposition; its full effect can be felt in discursive clashes (1989: 91).

The assertion of radical heterogeneity (difference) is thus brought into discourse and, as Carusi's words "discursive clashes" suggest, more explicitly into the political (the contested and interactive public sphere of action). This critic also contends that the post-structuralist perspective of the Other as "irretrievable", "unlocatable", "refractory" and "unnameable" makes it possible for one to talk about the Other as an effect which can construct "a consciousness able to withstand Western homogenization" (1989: 92).

With the colonised body's heterogeneity asserted in discursive possibilities beside "unconscious processes set in place by the exigencies of the Symbolic", it becomes possible for that body to become the

> subject of its own history and [to turn] the table on the imperialism of . . . humanism by <u>appropriating</u> its positivism from the position of its own negativity and heterogeneity (Carusi, 1989: 92-93).

It is from this position that Carusi contends that it becomes possible for black writers to appropriate postmodernism and even realism as politically effective tools (1989: 93). This position, I believe, not merely applies to literature, but to cultural production in general.

The appropriation of which Carusi speaks therefore needs to be extremely deliberate and brings one closer to Linda Hutcheon's description of parody as both inscription and subversion of that which is its subject (1989: 93-94) . This sort of appropriation amounts to a form of bricolage which Derrida discusses in *Writing and Difference*:

> The bricoleur, says Levi-Strauss, is someone who uses "the means at hand", that is the instruments at his disposition around him . . . not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once,   even if their form and

their origin are heterogeneous . . . . If one calls bricolage the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that all discourse is bricoleur (1978: 285).

Derrida's statement that "all discourse is bricoleur" is echoed by Linda Hutcheon's claim that, within her conception of postmodernism, all representations come from past ones (1989: 93-94). Postmodern parody is then a form of bricolage because, in Derrida's words, it uses the means at hand (1978: 285) to foreground the politics of representation (Hutcheon, 1989: 93-94). Postmodern parody, like bricolage, is a "critical language itself" (Derrida, 1978: 285) and both affirms and subverts that which is its subject so as to expose underlying weaknesses within as well as assumptions about the discourses which it interrogates. In the next part of this thesis I will argue that it is this critical language which POC use to assert their heterogeneity and to articulate resistance against the oppression of apartheid.

3. Finding the postmodern in a postcolonial text (or vice-versa). Sampling as postmodern parody

POC's third album, *Age of Truth*, is filled with anti-National Party rhetoric and sets out to undermine the African National Congress' as well as National Party's attempts to pacify the black electorate. This album, like the ones before it, consists of a pastiche (or bricolage) of musical styles, media snatches, languages and dialects. Samples (audio snatches from other music, radio or television programs or any fragments of pre-recorded sound) are used to create pastiches which are parodic, in the sense that Linda Hutcheon uses that term, and they assert the group's own political viewpoints. Although *Age of Truth* addresses issues such as alcoholism, drug abuse, unemployment, township violence, gangsterism and police indifference to and complicity in the violence in black areas in as direct a manner as North American rappers like Public Enemy or Ice-T, the album manages to assert its difference by sampling specifically South African material alongside American material.

Through this deliberate process of bricolage, the group attempts to highlight possible similarities between the experience of black South Africans and African-Americans without homogenising the politics of the South African situation. Consider the first track, "United We Stand", for example. The track begins with an American orator (possibly Malcolm X) addressing a crowd:

> The government does not care if black men and women die. They already plan to go to war (POC, 1993).

Shortly thereafter, a male Afrikaner (possibly addressing parliament) says, "We have every right to maintain our identity as white." At this point, the previous speaker's last four words echo and we hear Pik Botha, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, state, "We don't celebrate Van Riebeeck's Day." Throughout the collages of sound, we hear a loop (a particular sequence of sound that is repeated) of crowd noise as an orator chants "Black Power!" This is accompanied by a male choir rendering an extremely low vocal accompaniment to a sample of someone discussing slavery as well as a sample of a documentary or news report of Steve Biko's death. The rappers begin to chant, "United we stand. Divided we fall. An injury to one is an injury to all." Here a direct reference is made to the   United Democratic Front as the

slogan "An injury to one is an injury to all" was popularised by the U.D.F. in 1983. This track's variety of fragmented samples, which follow very closely after each other to weave a narrative of POC's choice, conflate the American civil rights movement of the sixties and seventies with South Africa's Black Consciousness movement and the struggle against Apartheid in the seventies and eighties. "United We Stand" reminds one of the formative influence which the American civil rights leaders such as Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King have had on many South Africans who opposed Apartheid. The reference to Pik Botha's denial that Van Riebeeck's Day is celebrated as well as references to the American civil rights movements and slave narratives make an implicit connection between Apartheid in South Africa and Western imperialism and racism in America. This track's intertextuality thus situates the album politically and implicitly justifies the use of American cultural products in its articulation against Apartheid and its symptoms. In this instance, POC seem to assume a similar position as students involved in Black Consciousness theatre of the 70s (discussed earlier). These students preferred African-American or Caribbean material which was relevant to the black experience.

Whilst the first track samples some of the same material which American rappers may sample in their own texts (Malcolm X speeches, for example), "Blast From Da Past" appropriates material which refers almost specifically to dominant representations of South Africa's past and those who oppose it. Here Linda Hutcheon's discussion of postmodern parody as inscription and subversion is exemplified (1989: 93-98). The track commences with someone saying, "More than three hundred years ago" (referring roughly to the period in which South Africa was colonised) and is followed by possibly an American rapper singing the phrase "the revolution." Hereafter, we hear Mzwakhe Mbuli (a praise poet who often performed at trade union meetings during the 80s and was closely involved in the U.D.F.) : "Africa shall Know no peace until we in the south are free." The discourse of liberation from colonial domination is thus juxtaposed against that of colonialism and what Carusi calls neo-imperialism. We find that samples such as "Ons Suid-Afrika", "Jan Van Riebeeck" and "A commander whose name was Jan Van Reibeeck" are followed by a loud and very aggressive "FUCK OFF!" These samples of colonial phrases are subverted by appropriating them out of their original contexts and are positioned as anachronisms in the face of the unmistakeable voice of the people who reject what Carusi calls neo-imperialism (apartheid) (1991: 81),

as POC seem to suggest through their oft-repeated "FUCK OFF!" after these samples.

This 53 second track reaches a hilarious climax when a justification for `the horror' of imperialism is quoted:

> When the Hottentot men shooted (sic) us with their bows and arrows . . . they were not harmless (POC, 1993).

POC therefore employ sampling in "United We Stand" and "Blast From Da Past" in order to inscribe narratives about Africa only to subvert them and expose the weaknesses in the dominant Western representations of Africa. This process closely resembles Hutcheon's description of postmodern parody. Postmodern parody installs and ironizes its subject in order to problematize and denaturalize "the history of representations" (Hutcheon, 1989: 93-94). Hutcheon claims that this form of parody is not ahistorical, but that

> we are inevitably separated from the past today - by time and by the subsequent history of [past representations] (1989: 94).

"Blast From Da Past'"'s use of sampling to decontextualise colonial narratives thus signifies the group's willful celebration of the pastness of colonialism, but also exemplifies Hutcheon's claim that postmodern parody expresses an awareness of the view that there is a continuum between the past and the present as well as "ironic difference, difference induced by that very history" (1989: 94). Sampling is linked more explicitly to postmodern parody when Hutcheon describes this form of parody as being "both deconstructively critical and constructively creative, paradoxically making us aware of both the limits and the powers of representation - in any medium" (1989: 98).

Sampling is therefore postmodern in the sense that Hutcheon uses it and is more than merely "blank parody" (Jameson, 1988: 16). Hutcheon's conception of postmodernism as a constructive discursive strategy is one among many. Frederic Jameson, for example, views pastiche, and not parody, as being central to postmodernism (1988: 18). Jameson claims that pastiche signals that

> stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum . . . . [It] means that one of [postmodernist art's] essential messages will involve the necessary failure of art and the   aesthetic, the failure of

the new, the imprisonment in the past (1988: 18).

Jameson's pessimistic sentiments are echoed in the lyrics of Irish rock band, U2, on an album titled *Achtung Baby*.

> What are we going to do now it's all been said?
> No new ideas in the House, and every book has been read (U2, 1991).

It is *my* contention that the views expressed by Jameson and U2 are symptomatic of what Jean-Francois Lyotard calls the postmodern condition, which he defines as an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984: xxiv). This condition is one wherein Western systems of thought experience a crisis in historical legitimation and Enlightenment meta-narratives are repudiated (Dirlik, 1994: 336). According to Lyotard, the "crisis of metaphysical philosophy" corresponds to "the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation" (1984: xxiv). The crisis which this incredulity holds for Western systems of thought is made apparent when Lyotard claims that

> if a metanarrative implying a philosophy of history is used to legitimate knowledge, questions are raised concerning the

validity of the institutions governing the social bond: these must
be legitimated as well (1984, xxiv).

With the perceived obsolescence of metanarratives, it becomes difficult   for
institutions to govern social bonds such as those between self/Other or
coloniser/colonised and knowledge about (and thus power over) the Other
becomes difficult to consolidate. Derrida cites the "Nietzschean critique of
metaphysics", the "Freudian critique of self-presence" and the "Heideggerean
destruction of metaphysics, of ontotheology, of the determination of Being as
presence" as discourses with which this "decentering" (or rupture) of
metaphysics is closely associated (1978: 280). This position is therefore
expedient to critics who position themselves in opposition to imperialism and
colonialism because they are now able to repudiate or, more accurately,
deconstruct meta-narratives which legitimate either process. Dirlik's claim
(discussed earlier) that "[c]rucial premises of postcolonial criticism . . . were
enunciated first in post-structuralist thinking and the various post-
modernisms that it has informed" (1994: 336) supports such a view.
Deconstruction, in the form of postmodern parody, therefore becomes the
strategy of both the postmodern and postcolonial artist. However, to those
positioned on the margins of Western discourse, deconstruction is potentially

more liberating as it presents them with means to counter their marginalisation. Jameson's conception of postmodernism is thus useful in so far that it conveys a sense of the Western crisis in cultural and political authority, but one should also explore the radical potential of Hutcheon's claim that "present representations come from past ones" (1989: 93).

Postmodern techniques, such as sampling, are radical because they challenge notions of uniqueness as well as our "capitalist notions about ownership and property" (Hutcheon, 1989: 93; Shusterman, 1991: 5) in order to convince one that the notion of origins (and thus authority) is mythical. In an article about digital sampling, rap music and American law, Thomas Schumacher argues that sampled recordings are transgressive because they abolish the myth of the "pre-technological musician", which positions a single subject in the creative process of a musical piece (1995: 264). He contends that legal doctrine is influenced by this myth:

> Even though . . . authorship can now be assigned to corporate entities instead of artists, and even though originality has come to mean origination (here, the 'fixing of sound'), copyright is still influenced by the ideological construct of the 'author' as a singular 'origin' of artistic works (Schumacher, 1995: 259).

Schumacher refers to three U.S. court decisions on copyright and sampling (*Acuff-Rose Music Inc. v. Campbell, Boyd Jarvis v. A&M Records et al.* and *Grand Upright Music v. Warner Bros Records*) in order to demonstrate that the contradictions in legal doctrine "have been consistently resolved in the interests of copyright holders" (1995: 255-259). What sampling technology does is to problematize any attempt to locate a singular author (in other words, an origin) within a musical production and to insert a number of active agents (DJs, engineers and producers) into this process (Schumacher, 1995: 262). The dispersal of authorial origins in sampling thus places the assignment of copyright, a property right, in question. We therefore find that this dispersal is part of an overt attempt by rap musicians to subvert hegemonies which are supported by legal doctrine. Within the law we find that "the granting of copyright to authors . . . situates them in the dynamics of power" (Schumacher, 1995: 263). It is thus power which is at stake within cultural production, which has conventionally been viewed as a realm merely governed by the aesthetic. POC express an awareness of the power dynamics at play in copyright law when they discuss the various ways in which rap artists sample material in an attempt to subvert the economic and legal

power of record companies or, simply, to express themselves artistically:

> DION: But now you've got some record companies that's setting up some ridiculous publishing shit, you know, where . . . you've got to pay thousands of rands just to use a sample. And, I mean, hip hop is basically about fusing all type of stuff; scratching, you know, mixing . . . . So you get this white motherfucker doing all sorts of ridiculous shit and at the end of the day saying it's business, you know. And I mean, fuck that. Somebody wants to sample our record it's fine by *me* (POC Interview, 1994).

To POC it is therefore white hegemony which is sustained by copyright and publishing laws and there seems to be precious little which they can do about this, except to comply with the laws which protect copyright holders or sample material in ways that their origins are not recognisable at all. Although the group largely complies with copyright laws, there are subversive moments on certain tracks (in "Dallah Flet 2" off *Age of Truth* or "Wack MCs" off *Phunk Phlow*, for example) where distorted effects or instruments and backing tracks are used momentarily or throughout a rap song. On tracks such as these, it is very difficult to trace the source of these tracks.

Even where their sampling practices and   intertextual references do not

infringe upon copyright laws, the technology which they employ reminds one of rap's aims to provide "critique of the ownership of sound and 'Rockist' aesthetics which remain tied to the romantic ideals of the individual performer" (Schumacher, 1995: 266). On "Wack MCs", for example, Dion interrupts Shaheen's scathing (as well as parodic) attack on gangsta rappers and instructs the engineer to "take it to the next song." Dion's intervention collapses the notion of the singular author or performer in musical production and draws our attention to the constructedness of representation and performance. This constructedness, they reveal, involves much collaboration during pre- and post-production. As I have suggested earlier, POC's sampling on tracks such as "Blast From Da Past" and "United We Stand" position sampling technology unmistakably as transgressive in not merely an economic sense, but a political one as well.
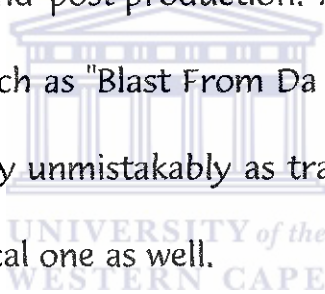
4. Rap as Signifyin(g)

Whilst it is useful to theorise sampling as a part of Hutcheon's conception of postmodern parody, one should be wary of slipping into binary formulations or of dehistoricizing the techniques which rap artists use. One could, for example, view sampling as an intervention which completely overturns that which it wishes to critique. Such a view would be unrealistic because, as suggested earlier in this chapter, the desire for transformation can never be entirely achieved in the face of the dynamic nature of reality. One could also slip into the danger of viewing sampling in rap as a practice peculiar to the postmodern condition and overlook claims by critics such as Thomas Schumacher that rap music, and the techniques at its disposal, comes from a tradition of what Henry-Louis Gates calls "Signifyin(g)" (Schumacher, 1995: 264; Gates, 1988: 49).

The tradition of Signifyin(g) is an African-American one which has its roots in West African belief systems. This tradition is what remains after the Diaspora and the subsequent alienation from African culture and religion which

which these captive Africans experienced. Gates discusses Signifyin(g) in relation to the Ifa system of interpretation and states that whilst the mythological figure Esu-Elegbara is the central figure in this system, it could be said that the Signifying Monkey is the central figure in the Signifyin(g) system itself (1988: 44). The tales of the Signifying Monkey provide an understanding of what the tradition of Signifyin(g) entails. According to Gates, the Signifying Monkey proves himself to be the king of the jungle by outsmarting the Lion and Elephant - both extremely intimidating animals which conventionally signify power and dominance - through his "play on language" and rhetorical tricks of mediation between the two animals (1988: 57). The relevance of this tradition to the oppressive historical context in which it originated is made clear when Gates states that Signifyin(g)
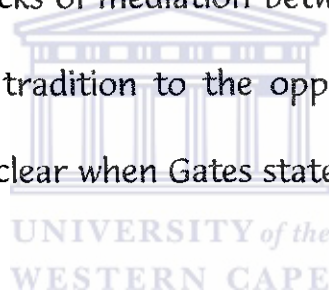
> turns on the play and chain of signifiers, and not on some supposedly transcendent signified . . . . [The] Signifying Monkey is often called the Signifier, he who wreaks havoc upon the Signified. One is often signified upon by the signifier (1987: 238).

Therefore, to engage in the practice of Signifyin(g) would be to take up the position of the Signifying Monkey, to be the Signifier "who wreaks havoc

upon the Signified", and be the "real" king of the jungle in a subversive sense. Such a tradition could thus be empowering.

However, such a simplistic overturning of the relations of power in colonial America could not occur overtly and, instead, took place at the level of signs. Gates argues that Signifyin(g) is a double-voiced discourse (1987: 247). A sense of this double-voicedness is conveyed in the very name given to this practice: Signifyin(g). Gates refers to Signifyin(g) with the *g* in brackets and writes the *S* in the upper case in order to distinguish it from the standard English word "signifying". He also does so in order to "recall the fact that whatever historical community of Afro-Americans coined this usage did so in the vernacular as spoken" and he argues that the bracketed *g* "stands as the trace of black difference" (Gates, 1988: 46). Gates discusses the creation of this pun or double-voiced word in the following way:

> Some black genius or a community of witty and sensitive speakers emptied the signifier "signification" of its received concepts and filled this empty signifier with their own concepts . . . . [By] supplanting the received, standard English concept associated by (white) convention with this particular signifier, they (un)wittingly disrupted the nature of the sign = *signified/signifier* equation itself (1988: 46).

Along with this disruption of the nature of the sign we find that semantics is displaced by rhetoric (Gates, 1988: 47). There is therefore a shift from the syntagmatic axis to the paradigmatic axis where we encounter the "chaos of what Saussure calls 'associative relations', which we can represent as the playful puns on a word that occupies the paradigmatic axis of language and which a speaker draws on for figurative substitutions" (Gates, 1988: 49). This displacement from one axis to another does not mean that white discourse is completely overturned by black vernacular discourse. The free play of meaning or the chaos of associative relations which the paradigmatic axis allows, instead, opens a "simultaneous, but negated, parallel discursive (ontological, political) universe within the larger white discursive universe" (Gates, 1988: 49). Furthermore, Gates points to the fact that the black vernacular word "Signifyin(g)" is a homonym of the standard English word "signifying" (1988: 49). The standard English word exists already and the subversion is one that situates itself within the dominant white discourse. Signifyin(g), as discussed by Gates, therefore amounts to a form of deconstruction as it both inhabits and subverts (or critiques) its subject. In the case where the standard English sign "signifying" is subverted we find that

Signifyin(g) provides a critique of the "nature of (white) meaning itself" (Gates, 1988: 47).

Schumacher's contention that rap music forms a part of the tradition of Signifyin(g) is supported by Gates' claim that "marking, loud-talking, testifying, calling out (of one's name), sounding, rapping [and] playing the dozens" are subsumed under Signifyin(g) (Schumacher, 1995: 264; Gates, 1987: 237). Rap, which involves using the "vernacular with great dexterity", and "playing the dozens" (verbal duelling) is therefore a part of Signifyin(g) (Gates, 1988: 72). However, Gates points out that the dozens are "structured to make someone feel bad", and that Signifyin(g) gives you the option of either making a "cat feel good or bad" (1988: 73). In his discussion of H. Rap Brown's work he also points out that Signifyin(g) is a discourse in which one could express one's personal feelings (1988: 73). Signifyin(g) therefore provided slaves with a medium in which they could express themselves within an extremely repressive political climate. It is this double-coded means of articulation which bears a resemblance to POC's sampling and rhymes.

"Blast From Da Past" and "United We Stand" are examples of the extent to

which one could take postmodern parody or what Gates calls critical

Signification (Hutcheon, 1989: 94-94; Gates, 1987: 247). The sampling on

both tracks is a rather unsubtle means of critiquing the history of racism and

colonialism. "Blast From Da Past", in particular, is overtly aggressive as well as

loud. The notion of noise will be addressed at a later stage. As suggested

earlier, this parodic track forms a part of the group's attempts to challenge

the old censorship laws of the country at that time as well as the S.A.B.C. and

record companies' suppression of free speech. The discursive strategies which

POC employ in these tracks correspond with those employed within the

practice of Signifyin(g). Gates holds that this practice operates inside the

dominant discourse, which is always already there (1988: 49). In both texts

the group articulates the rejection of neo-colonialism from within the

dominant colonial discourse. Because it is impossible to negate the dominant

discourse completely, what POC does is to create "a simultaneous, but

negated, parallel discursive universe . . . within the larger discursive universe"

(Gates, 1988: 49) through a double process of inscription and subversion

(Hutcheon, 1989: 93-94).

Boom Style provides us with clearer examples of double-voiced articulation

because the album was released before POC were in a stable enough position to challenge political repression. During the course of my interview with the group, they pointed out that the censorship laws were more strictly enforced when their first two albums were released and that, as a result, they compromised a great deal with regard to the ways in which they represented themselves. They also pointed out that, at the time, they were not experienced enough in the music industry to make informed artistic decisions.

POC's attempt to articulate their resistance to Apartheid does however rear its head on this album in subtle and somewhat restrained ways. "Bass Drive" provides us with an example of the degree of subtlety to which they are able to Signify. This track is double-voiced because the conventional understanding of what bass signifies is Signified upon. It presents itself as a dance song which is meant to appeal to people on the dance floor of a club. The song's bassline therefore becomes the focus of the lyrics: "So don't waste time when u hear the bassline goes in time with the rhyme" (POC, 1991). We find that the words "time" are repeated and that they are rhymed with "rhyme". The word "bassline" roughly rhymes with "time" and "rhyme" as well

and we find that these words are linked aurally. If the rappers' rhymes are "in time" with the bassline, it would mean that they are in sync with the timing signature which the bassline sets for the track and the dancers on the dance floor are therefore instructed to keep up with the pace which has been set. A challenge is thus implicitly made to their audiences to keep up with the times. The bassline is therefore a powerful tool to move the dancers on the dance floor and for this reason the group repeats the following chorus line: "P.O.C. is pumping bassdrive" (POC, 1991). This repetition therefore implies that POC possess the tool which 'moves the masses'. Whilst it is true that this essentially dance song is aimed at 'declaring' the group's skillful entry onto the hip hop scene, there is also a subtle political agenda at work. A sense of the power which the bass in this track is meant to have is conveyed by the following lyrics:

> We drop bass on the dance floor and leave it full of potholes
> the only ones who survive r the ones who got soul (POC, 1991).

In these lyrics we are able to access an aspect of the double-voicedness which operates in Signifyin(g). The key word on this track is "soul" which, on one level, alludes specifically to black culture   and functions as a code which

excludes audiences who do not identify with black culture. Within this track's narrative we find that the exclusion of those audiences without "soul" could be read as a racially coded message. It could also be read as a message not merely to those who are black, but to anyone who supports the anti-Apartheid cause. Such a broad interpretation of this word becomes possible if one reads "soul" as a synonym for spirituality. Those who are not in sync with POC's "bassline" and "rhyme" are not in sync with the times. Being out of sync with the group's rhymes, the lyrical content of their work, would suggest that the implied audiences are not in support of the album's anti-Apartheid and anti-violence stance. Such a reading is supported by the message on "Jabulani", *Boom Style*'s single performed with P.J. Powers, which calls for an end to violence and the commencement of reconciliation between all South Africans. Needless to say this stance differs remarkably from the skeptical position articulated by the group on *Age of Truth* which set out to make people to think critically before casting their votes.

"Ons Stem", an Afrikaans track off *Boom Style*, provides another example of how POC empty signifiers from the dominant white discourse and fill them with their own overtly political meanings. This track's success relies upon the

inscription and subversion of the previous regime's national anthem, "Die Stem", and motto, "Eendrag maak mag." No direct reference is made to the anthem on the track, except for a sample of the anthem before the first stanza commences. Whereas the title of the anthem, "Die Stem van Suid-Afrika", conventionally signifies the unity of those who pledge allegiance to the Afrikaner Nationalist state, the track's title represents the voice of the oppressed masses. The shift from the definite article "Die" to the possessive "Ons" signals that the noun "Stem" has been relocated within another context and therefore takes on another meaning. "Die Stem" is thus appropriated and, within this narrative, the "stem" belongs to those who oppose the Apartheid state. In the second stanza the motto is quoted and we find that the second syllable in "Eendrag" rhymes with "mag". We also find that the group creates lyrics which rhyme with these words:

> Eendrag maak mag, ek wil lag
> want 'n hele ras, ongeag van geslag wag vir vryheid
> (POC, 1991).

We find that this motto is subverted by the word "lag" because it rhymes with "Eendrag" and "mag". These words are implicitly equated with each other

through their rough equivalence on an aural level. The statement "ek wil lag" sneers at the Afrikaner Nationalist brand of patriotism and the subsequent lyrics, through a series of rhymes, allude to the injustice of the Apartheid system to support this sneer. What was thus meant to be a statement about patriotism and unity is appropriated by POC to reveal the contradictions and tyranny within the Apartheid state. Linda Hutcheon's description of postmodern parody as inscription and subversion (1989, 93-101) seems to convey a clear sense of what POC set out to do here. Furthermore, Hutcheon's theorisation of parody and the group's discursive strategies appear to coincide with Gates' vision of formal Signifyin(g) as repetition and inversion (1987, 247). In "Ons Stem" we encounter a "disruption at the level of signifier" and the disturbance is "effected at the level of the conceptual, or the signified" (Gates, 1988: 47). In this sense, the "nature of (white) meaning is critiqued" (Gates, 1988: 47) and here, as with "Blast From Da Past" and "United We Stand", we encounter the subversion of the dominant discourse which is already there.

5. Notions of rupture (or noise) in subculture

POC regard their rap performances as part of hip hop[2], which Tricia Rose classifies as subculture in her study of American rap music in a book titled *Black Noise. Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. During the course of her analysis, Rose refers to Dick Hebdige's study of punk subculture in *Subculture. The Meaning of Style* in order to argue that "style can be used as a gesture of refusal or as a form of oblique challenge to" hegemony (Rose, 1994: 36; Hebdige, 1979: 17). According to Hebdige, subcultural style interrupts the process of 'normalisation' and, thereby, contradicts the myth of consensus:

> The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed . . . at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs (1979: 17-18).

Hebdige claims that subculture represents "noise" as opposed to sound because it interferes "in the orderly sequence which leads from real events

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[2] This includes rap, graffiti and fashion.

and phenomena to their representation in the media" and is thus a

"mechanism of semantic disorder" (1979: 90).

Rose and Hebdige concur in the view that subculture speaks through

commodities (Rose, 1994: 40; Hebdige, 1979: 95) and Hebdige employs the

notion of bricolage to explain how subcultural style operates. In his

discussion of bricolage, he links subculture to my earlier discussion of

sampling as bricolage or postmodern parody (or simply deconstruction):

> [W]hen the bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a
> different position within that discourse, using the same overall
> repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a
> different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a
> different message conveyed (Hebdige, 1979: 104).

Linda Hutcheon's notion of postmodern parody as both inscription and

subversion of its subject is echoed here (1989, 93-101). Furthermore, Levi-

Strauss's notion of the bricoleur using the "means at hand" and Derrida's

claim that one needs the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake

metaphysics is echoed by Clarke as well (Derrida, 1978: 280-285).

Subculture or, more specifically, hip hop can therefore be viewed as a form of cultural deconstruction. Ben Agger claims that cultural deconstruction *"seeks the aporias* in every work or text" (1992: 102) and he goes on to define the Derridian concept of aporia as

> the ways in which works and texts at some level contradict themselves or leave a vacancy of meaning that needs to be filled. The aporetic nature of texts ensures their undecidability- their reduction to single, simple codes of meaning (1992: 102).

Cultural deconstruction therefore sets out to challenge hegemonic practices by rupturing or creating noise within official or dominant discourses and its overall aims are in concord with that of hip hop subculture in general. Of course, hip hop itself is fraught with aporias and often self-consciously draws attention to the constructedness and limitations of that which it sets out to represent. However, one area in which hip hop does not express an awareness of its contradictions is (with the exception of North American rapper Queen Latifa) the representation of female subjectivity. This issue is addressed elsewhere in my thesis.

The attempt to challenge hegemonic practices is embodied by the very form which hip hop assumes. Rose states that hip hop's "visual, physical, musical and lyrical lines are set in motion, broken abruptly with sharp angular breaks, yet, they sustain motion and energy through fluidity and flow" (1994: 38). During the course of her discussion, Rose calls this ruptured practice in hip hop "flow, layering and ruptures in line" and claims that the aim is to create styles which "nobody can deal with" (Rose, 1994: 38). The 53 second "Blast From Da Past" is an example of a text where fragments of different media texts are pasted together in an extremely disjointed manner. We have to pay close attention to it in order to make sense of it, but, ultimately, it is possible to discern a narrative which is woven throughout the track. This ruptured means of representation is deliberate as it functions "as a blue print for social resistance and affirmation" (Rose, 1994: 39). Rose states that in hip hop the objective is to

> create sustaining narratives, accumulate them. However, be also
> prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, in fact, *plan on* social
> rupture (Rose, 1994: 39).

Ruptured presentation in hip hop also, more directly, coincides with its discursive aims to challenge hegemony   and it self-reflexively signifies

the limits of representation. This sort of rupture is thus that which attempts to unsettle the hegemonic practice of controlling polysemy or play in the signification process which, ultimately, violently suppresses any attempts by those on the margins to articulate difference. In addition, Rose contends that rap's hidden politics are constituted by "the struggle over access to public space, community resources, and the interpretation of black expression" (1994: 145). This contention brings us closer to speaking about rap as "noise", a term which amplifies one's understanding of rap as rupture. This term is commonly used by many rap artists and literally refers to aural dissonance. The notion of "noise" in rap could be seen as a metaphor for attempts by rap artists to assert their presence and difference in their own terms. "Noise" in rap music can be seen as a literal attempt to challenge the myth of consensus about what is aesthetically, culturally and even politically acceptable within systems of representation.

A clear demonstration of the claim that rap, with the concept of "noise" as one of its strategies, involves a contest for public space and self-representation can be found in Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*, a film about racial tensions in the New York suburb Bed-Stuy during a particularly hot

summer (1989). Lee employs a variety of musical styles as a part of his cinematic apparatus in order to develop certain themes which are central to the understanding of the film. Victoria Johnson observes that "string-orchestral strains of music suggest a communal ideal" and that this music is usually associated with the "time-tested wisdom of Mother Sister and Da Mayor's generation" (1993-94: 22-23). Johnson claims that the suggestion of a communal ideal is supported by "long tracking shots which enable visualisation of the entire block" (1993-94: 22-23). Jazz music, on the other hand, is associated with Mookie and Sal and Johnson contends that it hints "at a barely repressed undercurrent of turbulence and unrest" which is unresolved (1993-94: 22-23). Both musical styles, however, are largely tonal as well as melodic and seem to blend seamlessly into the narrative landscape which Lee depicts. His use of Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" therefore stands out as something which is exceptional due to its sheer volume and abrasive delivery. We hear the song during the film's opening credits as Rosie Perez B-boy dances to it and within the narrative whenever Radio Raheem makes his appearance. We always see Radio Raheem with his large boom box as he walks in the neighbourhood and plays "Fight the Power" at full volume. Raheem's presence and his choice of music is not incidental. Johnson claims
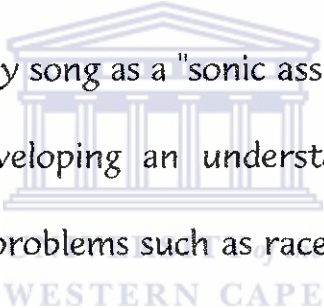
that Lee's use of rap music challenges convention by

> insisting on spectator attention to its consuming presence, which
> drowns out any competing dialogue and seems to guide framing
> and camera work . . . . Visually, Lee has enhanced the notion that
> Raheem and rap are physically powerful and aurally threatening
> by using sweeping camera movements which start on Raheem's
> gargantuan box - exaggerated in close-up - and travel rapidly up
> his body to reveal his massive frame (Johnson, 1993-94: 24).

Consider the boom box duel which starts when Raheem encounters a group
of Puerto Ricans who happen to be 'hanging out' on a stoop as they listen to
Puerto Rican music, emanating from a boom box on the roof of a parked car.
Raheem stops and turns up the volume on his boom box. They protest and
tell him to turn it down. He silently refuses. The owner of the boom box
approaches Raheem confrontationally and turns the music on his boom box
louder. A boom box duel develops and it is the music from Raheem's boom
box which wins the 'noise contest'. The Puerto Rican concedes to defeat as
Raheem's large and expressionless body stands unmoved. Raheem then leaves
with his fist in the air as if he had just won a boxing match. The aural power
of "Fight the Power" therefore speaks for Raheem and, along with Lee's visual
cinematic techniques, places him in a position of dominance during the

moments that we see him walking the streets of Bed-Stuy. Johnson suggests

that the association of Raheem with rap music,

> its aggressive political message (here), and its capacity to set the
> entire neighbourhood at attention (aurally and spatially) imply
> that his generation of black youth is allied with change, in
> contrast with Mother Sister and Da Mayor's accommodationist
> stances (1994-94: 24).

Lee's use of the Public Enemy song as a "sonic assault" (Johnson, 1993-94: 24)

is therefore crucial to developing an understanding of the generational

differences in approach to problems such as race and class conflict. It is also,

more importantly, crucial to an understanding of racial conflict in the film.

When Raheem enters Sal's pizzeria, Sal demands that he turn the 'noise' from

his boom box off before he can be served. Sal constructs the ethnic narrative

of his choice by hanging pictures of Italian-American heroes on his walls and

by outlawing music (in this case, specifically rap music) from his pizzeria.

Buggin Out, who gets thrown out of the pizzeria for requesting that African-

American heroes also be represented on his walls, uses Raheem and his rap

music in his attempt to invade Sal's narrative and demand that black

achievement and history be represented on his wall. Here, rap music is used

as a weapon in a racial confrontation in which the demand for black representation is presented. The aural, physical and aesthetic intrusion which rap music makes into Sal's pizzeria thus symbolises the aims of rap to challenge hegemonic practices and to clear a space in which it is possible for the black subject to represent and interpret itself on its on terms.

The song's title, which is often repeated in the chorus, is therefore exploited to the full in this scene. We also find that Public Enemy's dismissal of white male heroes in American culture in favour of a Black Consciousness stance is linked to Buggin Out's demands:
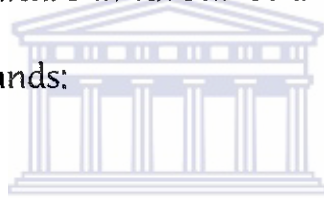
> Elvis was a hero to most
> But he never meant shit to me, you see
> Straight up racist sucker was simple and plain
> Motherfuck him and John Wayne
> 'Cause I'm black and I'm proud
> . . .
> Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps
> (Public Enemy, 1990).

In this scene we find that the aural and visual support each other thematically so that much is revealed about the politics of rap and the

contest for public space.

It is significant to note that Raheem, much like Friday in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, is silent in most of the scenes in which we see him. As Johnson notes, he is spoken by the language of rap:

> Communication, for Raheem, is enacted by both the aural dominance of rap and the visual symbols of hip-hop culture (1993-94: 24).

Hebdige's claim that subcultures communicate through commodities becomes significant here (1987: 95). Not only do Sal's pizzeria and Public Enemy's loud song become mediums through which a political battle is fought, but Raheem himself speaks through the rap song (which is a commodity). His use of this commodity sets him apart from Friday in *Foe*, whose silence reminds us of his present absence and self-consciously signifies an aporia within Coetzee's text (his inability or refusal to speak for the Other). Raheem thus constantly attempts to assert his presence in a narrative created by and about the racial Other. But even here the tension between absence and presence is left unresolved through Raheem's silence, the destruction of his boom box and his death.

We also find that because Public Enemy's song is a commodity, it always faces the danger of being recuperated into the mainstream. However, the abrasive tone of the rap song and its "casual blasphemy of the most sacred icons of American culture", says Thomas Doherty, ensure that it will not slip into the mainstream and be depoliticized (1989-90: 38). This claim does not, I believe, hold true for hip hop in general. Spike Lee's use of Public Enemy therefore provides a perceptive insight into the politics of hip hop.

POC's own experiences in the music industry with the release of *Age of Truth* provide a good case study of the amount of restriction and conservativism which exists in the S.A.B.C. and the recording industry. This album, which, as I have already suggested, was banned by the censorship board and under-promoted by Tusk Record Company, expressly articulated its anti-National Party stance and warned the electorate to exercise its discretion during the elections. The group went through great pains to dissuade the black electorate from believing N.P. politicians' election promises as well as challenging most politicians' calls to "forgive and forget." It could therefore be said that POC attempted to create "noise" within a discursive formation

which was aimed at pacifying the black electorate whilst attempting to calm any fears which the white electorate may have had about the country's future.

Tracks such as "Blast From Da Past" therefore recall South Africa's colonial past and the history of resistance. As mentioned earlier, samples on "Blast Form Da Past" are presented in an extremely ruptured manner. The manipulation of sound becomes an important strategy here because we find that any references to South Africa' colonial past are followed by an extremely loud "FUCK OFF!" The sheer rhetorical violence of this response and its volume turns this track, in Johnson's words, into a "sonic assault" (noise) which "drowns out any competing dialogue" and demands an audience (Johnson, 1993-94: 24).
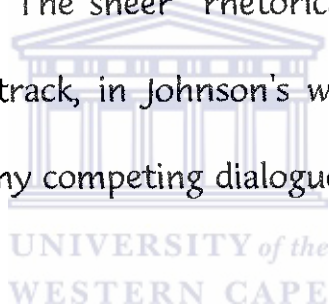
Tracks such as "Dallah Flet 2", one of two variations of the original "Dallah Flet" off *Our World,* provide another example of POC's attempts to create noise within the official discourse about the South African reality. On this track the instruments and backing tracks are somewhat distorted, the rap is performed in the Afrikaans vernacular, and it is punctuated with rhymes

which create a staccato effect. These hard-sounding rhymes suggest the violence of the scenario which they construct and the use of the vernacular situates this discourse within a working class environment:

> My broertjie kry 'n skoot dwars deur sy kop
> want daar was 'n gang fight op onse blok.
> Die fight het gekom deur 'n gestreiery oor dop en 'n stop
> All of a sudden gryp iemand 'n stok
> 'n borrel word gebriek, 'n jong word gestiek,
> sonder dat hy wiet is 'n nogge een geskiet sommer binne die gevriet en skouer (Prophets of da City, 1993) (my own emphasis).

During the rap an emphasis is placed on the words which rhyme and this interrupts the flow of the performance so that the narrative is delivered in an arhythmic and atonal manner. Once again, a sonic assault is presented along with a scathing attack on the N.P.:

> Don't let F.W. puzzle you
> Hy maak jou kop vrot in sy oe is jy nog altyd 'n kaffer en 'n hotnot
> Hulle sponsor township violence en gee vir smokkel huise license
> want hy weet die wyn fok op die brein
> dan vang jy kak aan dan word jy geblame
> (Prophets of da City, 1993).

Noise is not only created by the rap song's oppositional message, but by the rhetorical violence of its expletives and character assassinations. Noise is also created on a literal level due to the fact that POC emphasise certain rhymes by having a single rapper lead the rap and by having everyone join in where words or syllables need to be emphasised. POC's use of the vernacular and code-switching is deliberate and attempts to position their work within youth subculture in order to reach who they consider to be their target audience. Shaheen expresses his views about the rhetoric they often employ in their raps and interviews:

> 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 the ghetto to think, "Naa, we can relate to that." (POC Interview, 1994).

"Gamtaal" or "skollietaal" translates roughly into English as ghetto language. Whilst "skollietaal" refers generally to gangster dialects used in

townships, "gamtaal" refers almost exclusively to the Afrikaans vernacular from the Cape Flats. However, Shaheen insists that their use of this dialect on tracks such as "Dallah Flet" have national appeal in an apparent attempt to dissociate it from "coloured" identity. In an attempt to steer away from being interpellated as "gam" or "coloured" and thus be recuperated into Afrikaner Nationalist conceptions of ethnicity and racial identity, POC have increased the number of languages which they rap in by accepting Ishmael and Danisa into their group.[3] Their attempts to assert their identity as black, as opposed to "coloured", are often undermined. For instance, in a Radio Good Hope interview with Shaheen and Dion, D.J. Mark Gilman assumes the persona of someone from the Cape Flats who speaks the Afrikaans vernacular (The Mark Gilman Show, Radio Good Hope: 26 January 1995). Here Gilman uses a caricature which is reminiscent of comedian Pip Friedman's sketches of different 'ethnic' groups in South Africa. During these moments Gilman seems to reinscribe the sorts of stereotypes which POC's performances and texts attempt to steer clear of.

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[3] The image which they attempt to construct of themselves is thus connected to black nationalist ideals which attempt to break free of Afrikaner nationalist notions of race and ethnicity. At the same time, the group asserts its difference from American rappers on the basis of their South African accents and set out not to mimic American rap styles too much. This, it seems, is a selling-point which they have tried to exploit in their attempts to break into the British music world over the past year. According to Dlamini, a British critic wondered "if anyone could rap in anything but an American accent." After seeing a POC show, he came to the conclusion that "South African accents actually suit rap" (Dlamini, 1995: 25). Their use of American cultural forms therefore seems to be quite selective.

Shaheen's desire for POC to appeal particularly to black working class youth therefore seems to point to his desire for the group never to slip into the mainstream and be depoliticized, a fate which has befallen many subcultures before rap. Whilst it is debatable whether they can continue to survive economically without forcing their way into the mainstream, it is clear that the censorship board, the conservative musical industry and broadcasting industry have managed to censor the POC's rhetoric and political message to a significant extent.[4] In this regard, the "noise" which they have attempted to make has been stifled somewhat and kept on the periphery of South African culture. With such a consideration in mind it is perhaps essential for them to slip into the mainstream and become commercially successful. During her discussion of Lee's *Do the Right Thing*, Johnson refers to a view expressed by Lee which supports the black artist's attempts to invade commercial cultural production:

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[4]Consider the irony that most of the tracks off *Age of Truth*, an album released during a period of political transition, were banned. The album's single "Understand Where I'm Coming From" was banned as well. This song's video was aired on the Toyota Top Twenty once and was taken off the air most probably because of its use of 'unrest' material in which we see at least three corpses in township violence scenes as well as police shooting at crowds during protests. This song, lead by Ishmael, expresses reservations about promises of a 'new' South Africa. POC point out that their manager, Lance Stehr, approached the S.A.B.C. after the elections about the possibility of them giving the tracks and video off this album some air time. According to Dion, their response was that they no longer ban tracks but that they simply do not play them (POC Interview, 1994).

[F]or Lee, commercial popular cultural artifacts which are produced by blacks . . . are *inherently* political, as they emerge from a position marginalised by dominant control of capital and communication (Johnson, 1993-93: 21).

Whilst Lee's view may seem rather simplistic, POC's successful entry into mainstream popular culture would be a sign of true political change for black South African artists.

6. Nation vs Gender / Public vs Private / Male vs Female

POC's entry into the mainstream would have precious little political value if its gender discourse is not revised. An analysis of "Dallah Flet 2" would be incomplete without considering the second stanza which leads up to the song's anti-National Party climax. In this stanza Shaheen denies a paternity claim:

> Ek issie vaakie 9 maande geleede was ekkie eens in die Kaapie dis
> 'n haatie,
> Jy't nie 'n saak nie hou jou mond, moenie eers praat nie want jy
> kan niks maak nie
> Genoeg van daai ek praat van 'n meit wat dink sy is kwaai
> By sy is hard deur die (naat ek gattie se nie)
> (Prophets of da City, 1993).

Here we find that POC internalise racist interpellation by referring to the woman as a "meit". This word is defined by the *Beknopte Verklarende Woordeboek* as a:

> Kleurlingvrou, vroulike Bantoe; *jy is 'n* ~, papbroek,lafaard
> (Kritzinger, 1980: 312).

This dictionary was first published in 1960 and was widely in use in black schools during the 70s until pupils objected to its racist content. POC's inability to position themselves critically against such abusive language suggests that they have not yet realised that factors of race, class and gender are inseparable.[5] In a discussion of racist and sexist oppression in America, Murray Forman recalls bell hooks' claim that

> racism is fundamentally a feminist issue because it is so interconnected with sexist oppression. In the West, the philosophical foundations of racist and sexist ideology are similar (Forman, 1994: 36-37; hooks, 1984: 52).

The denial of paternity in the second verse and its rhetoric thus dooms its political aims to failure because POC do not steer clear of sexist ideology. Instead, they undermine the attempts by students of the late 70s and early 80s to do away with the institutionalised discourse of apartheid.

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[5] In all fairness to POC, it should be pointed out that they do speak out against misogyny in, particularly, gangsta rap. In his criticism of the music industry, Dion points out that the "industry encourages that kind of rap because it sells, but we [POC] have deliberately steered away from the gangsta route. That's not what we are about" (Dlamini, 1995: 25). The problem we encounter in POC's texts with regard to gender discourse therefore points to the presence of the aporia to which I referred earlier in my discussion of rap as subculture.
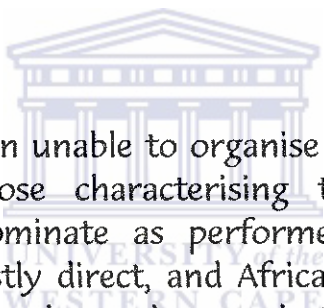
The rhetoric with which the woman (who remains anonymous and may very well not be a fictional character in the song) is addressed is thus sexist as well as racist and what is also significant here is that she is not afforded the opportunity to speak. In fact, the speaker violently silences her by claiming that she does not have enough power to do anything about the situation. Shaheen absolves himself from parental responsibility by stating that he was not in Cape Town nine months ago and therefore relies upon his status as a musician who is always on the road. His claims therefore rely upon what Hazel Carby calls the myth of the lone wandering male, which conventionally refers to the notion of the blues performer who travels from town to town without fixity or responsibilities (Carby, 1992: 755). Whereas the anonymous woman is spoken to and about in the song, she does not speak and any possibility of hearing the female voice is therefore foreclosed. It is thus merely the male voice which is to be associated with the political position which POC take in the final section of the rap song. The sphere of political action is therefore gendered male by the rhetorical and discursive violence of the second stanza, which effaces the role which women play in the political sphere.

The video of *Age of Truth*'s single, "Understand Where I'm Coming From", executes this effacement on a visual level in a more subtle manner. In line with the album's overall attempts to advocate critical awareness in the minds of the electorate, this music video aims to shock viewers by presenting video material about township violence and police brutality during 'unrest' situations. The S.A.B.C. would not ordinarily have broadcast this sort of material during the apartheid years. For example, shots of corpses and mass funerals are shown with shots of right wing political figures and we see scenes where the police fire at crowds which are followed by scenes of an A.W.B. meeting. The visual clips thus support the anti-National Party message which this rap song, along with others on the album, contains. Various left wing political figures are shown as well during the video, but all of them are male. In fact, the entire focus of the video is on men, regardless of their political positions. At the beginning of the song we see Dion on stage as he addresses his audience:

> This is a song I'd like to dedicate to Nelson Mandela. I'd like to dedicate this one to Oliver Tambo, Chris Hani, Steve Biko (Prophets of da City, 1993).

The group therefore strongly ally themselves with the A.N.C. as

well as Black Consciousness ideology. They also identify with Black Consciousness explicitly on "Black Thing" off *Phunk Phlow* in response to being labelled as "coloured" by the N.P. government. In this video we see merely one shot of protesting women and no female political figures and the active role which women have played in political transformation is once again effaced. It is therefore men who are presented as the active figures in the South Africa's public sphere. Bhekizizwe Peterson makes a similar observation about black theatre in the apartheid state. She states that

> black theatre has been unable to organise its internal structures differently from those characterising the social formation. African males predominate as performers, whites as 'skilled technicians' who mostly direct, and African women are reduced to the periphery in both numbers and status (Peterson, 1994: 52).

POC's tendency to place black women on the periphery thus does not differ significantly from the way in which black theatre was organised during the apartheid years. This is especially true when one considers that the voice of the black female subject is absent from all of the rap songs, except when it features in the chorus of a song such as "Phunk Phlow" (off *Phunk Phlow*).

Michele Wallace observes that much the same happens in Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing*. Wallace expresses a reluctance to provide negative criticism of the film because of the serious effects which conservative economic and political policies have had on the urban black population of the U.S. Also, she does not want to be associated with conservative critics such as Joe Klein of *The New Yorker* whose sympathies were with the police, and she believes that "the film was made by a young black filmmaker whose mission is to demystify and reclaim the process of filmmaking for blacks" (Wallace, 1994: 107-108). However, she feels that it is important to observe that in Lee's film "'racism' is artificially purified of sexual difference" (Wallace, 1994: 109). Throughout the film the racial conflict is narrativised through male characters: Buggin Out confronts Sal about having "brothers" (as opposed to brothers and sisters) on his "Wall of Fame"; Radio Raheem engages in a macho Boom Box duel with a Puerto Rican; and Sal gets into fight with Radio Raheem after he breaks Raheem's boom box. The focus is thus constantly on male characters as the active participants in the development of the film's concerns. Wallace states that the exception is to be found when Mookie's sister, Jade, enters Sal's pizzeria and Sal comes on to her (1994: 109). Mookie become annoyed, takes Jade outside and asks her not to return to the pizzeria. Wallace

contends that it

> is almost as if Lee/Mookie were warning Jade (played by Lee's real
> sister in real life), as a representative of black women in general,
> to stay out of the focus of his film (1994: 109).

The sphere of action, the public sphere, is thus reserved for men in this film and it seems to be committing the same error which POC commit in the "Dallah Flet 2" and the video of "Understand Where I'm Coming From". Representations which attempt to address racism by effacing the oppression of women "entirely miss their mark" and "reinscribe the very thing they attempt to dislocate" (Wallace, 1994: 109) because they fail to recognise that the ideologies of sexism and racism share similar foundations.

In our analysis of POC and Spike Lee's texts we have encountered the demarcation of the public sphere, the sphere of action, as one which is reserved exclusively for the male subject. The demarcation of the public sphere as male and the private sphere as female is one which can be traced to the birth of modern civil society. In her discussion of the social contract, Carole Pateman holds that civil freedom is not universal, but is a "masculine attribute" (Pateman, 1988: 2). Pateman explains that civil society

is not structured by kinship and the power of fathers; in the modern world, women are subordinated to men as men, or to men as fraternity. The original contract takes place after the political defeat of the father and creates modern *fraternal patriarchy* (1988: 3).

It is for this reason that civil society is divided into two spheres and merely the public (male) sphere is regarded as relevant (Pateman, 1988: 3). This gendered division of the public and private sphere, which commenced roughly during the eighteenth century, coincides with the rise of the "domestic woman" of the middle-class in an emergent capitalist world order (Armstrong, 1987: 59). Pateman argues that as capitalism and its sexual and class division of labour developed, "wives were pushed into a few, low status areas of employment or kept out of economic life altogether" (Pateman, 1989: 123).

The rise of the new domestic woman of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a crucial part of emergent capitalism and the male dominated imperial world depicted by Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness*. Consider the fact that the space that Kurtz's Intended occupies is a domestic one in the metropolitan centre (Conrad, 1974: 156-162). She never sees Kurtz's

world, the public sphere of action, and is devoted to him. Jeremy Hawthorn

suggests that the

> Intended's sterile isolation depicts realistically the separation of
> those in the domestic culture from full knowledge of what was
> being done in their name . . . . It is European men who are sent
> to Africa to further the aims of imperialism; but we see European
> women - ignorant of what their menfolk are really doing for
> imperialism - offering powerful ideological support to them
> (1990: 187).

It is thus arguable that the distinctions between male and female forms of

authority and action as well as the construction of a new female identity

make it possible for the 'horror' of imperialism to be concealed by Marlow's

lie to the Intended. Marlow is then also able to project his desire to believe in

Kurtz's eloquence upon her almost masochistic devotion to Kurtz. In this way

the narrator's faith in imperialism is restored somewhat and British

nationalist interests are not challenged to any significant extent.[6] This is

achieved through the domesticity and passivity of the female subject

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[6] It is important to bear in mind that Conrad actually attempts to criticise imperialism in this novel. Whilst his attempts are successful in many respects, my discussion of Marlow's meeting with the Intended reveals an aporia in the text.

A similar dynamic seems to operate in black nationalist texts because such texts often require the domesticity or passivity of the female subjects. In his discussion of rap music and black nationalism, Jeffrey Louis Decker contends that hip hop nationalism

> follows in the steps of sixties black militancy by positioning black women who do not conform to the ideals of the patriarchal family structure as ungrateful wives or gold-digging lovers (1993: 68).

Much like black nationalism in general, hip hop nationalism attempts to position women within the confines of patriarchy and the struggle against racism is seen as a confrontation between black men and white men. This view is consistent with the patriarchal belief that the public sphere, the sphere in which the aims of imperialism and colonialism are furthered by men, is an exclusively male sphere. Pateman's claim that civil freedom is not universal, but is a "masculine attribute" (1988: 2) is thus supported because black nationalist texts such as "Dallah Flet 2" and *Do The Right Thing* foreground black masculine activity and interests in their articulation of political resistance.

Despite the fact that hip hop nationalism has largely placed women on the periphery, Decker singles out New Jersey rapper Queen Latifa as a rap artist who has managed to balance the interests of the black female subject with that of black nationalism. He analyses her 1989 debut music video "Ladies First" (off *All Hail The Queen*) in order to argue that the video is "simultaneously woman-centered and pro-black, feminist and Afrocentric" (1993: 77). He states that Queen Latifa restates the contention that black cultural practices such as Signifyin(g) and playing the dozens "were fundamentally not male" (1993: 79). By asserting her position as a female rapper within the largely masculinist hip hop subculture,

> Latifa not only reveals the severe limitations of nationalism as a language of equality for women in general; she also clears a space within hip hop nationalism for the empowerment of black women (Decker, 1993: 79-80).

On a later album titled *Black Reign* (1993), Latifa largely addresses the misogyny in gangsta rap and female rapper Da Bratt's internalisation of gangsta rap's rhetoric. On the album's single, "U.N.I.T.Y.", she speaks out against the physical, emotional as well as rhetorical abuse of women and on "Listen To Me" she situates her feminist concerns within Black Consciousness

ideology:

> Momma taught me black was beautiful when I was young
> And told me all about where babies really came from
> So you can hit the door with the theory that all black women are
> ho's (Queen Latifa, 1993).

Here Latifa appropriates the positive elements of Black Consciousness, conventionally perceived as a discourse of race which is separate from gender politics, in order to support her attempts to challenge dominant representations of black women in work by gangsta rappers such as Snoop Doggy Dog, Da Bratt, Dr Dre or Ice-T and nationalist rappers such as Public Enemy. Decker's claims about "Ladies First" thus seems to hold true for "Listen To Me" as well and Latifa's work seems to indicate the extent to which rap artists such as POC could take rap as an expression of political resistance as well as a vehicle for change within the cultural sphere.

In this thesis I have explored the ways in which POC articulate their resistance to apartheid and, in particular, the ways in which they attempted to intervene in politicians' attempts to pacify the black electorate during the build-up to South Africa's first democratic elections. Initially, I cleared a space from which one could discuss POC's work as postmodern as well as postcolonial, in the sense that it situates itself in opposition to colonialism. I was particularly interested in theorising POC's use of sampling as a postmodern strategy whilst, at the same time, pointing out that rap has its origins in the African-American vernacular tradition of Signifyin(g). Rap music cannot thus merely be seen as being peculiar to the postmodern condition, but has a rich black cultural and political history which is tied to the diaspora. Through my discussion of sampling, I also suggested that rap, as postmodern cultural practice, challenges concepts of originality as well as uniqueness and places legal notions of authorship into crisis.

I also discussed POC's work as a part of hip hop subculture and analyzed Spike Lee's *Do The Right Thing* in order to explore the black artist's struggle

for space within the public sphere. I pointed out that both POC and Spike Lee's attempts to address issues relating to racial oppression are fundamentally flawed because they marginalise gender politics and the importance of the female subject from the black experience. At this point I briefly explored a possible reason for this effacement by considering the gendered division of the public and private sphere during the birth of modern civil society. Lastly, I briefly considered female rapper Queen Latifa's feminist and black nationalist stance in order to suggest a progressive option which rappers such as POC should explore if they wish to make meaningful changes in the South African cultural sphere.

Whilst POC is largely reflexive about the country's political situation and about representations of the South African reality, they should perhaps become more self-conscious about the methods they employ in their music. The silence of the female subject in their texts reveals much about the patriarchal nature of the apartheid state as well as the mass democratic movement. If significant changes are to be made in the cultural and political spheres, simplistic binary oppositions between discourses such as race and gender need to be deconstructed.

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