An autoethnography of Scottish hip-hop: identity, locality, outsiderdom and social commentary

Dave Hook

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Edinburgh Napier University, for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2018

Declaration

This critical appraisal is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text. It has not been previously submitted, in part or whole, to any university or institution for any degree, diploma, or other qualification.

Signed:_____

Date:_____5th June 2018 _____

Dave Hook BA PGCert FHEA
Edinburgh

Abstract

The published works that form the basis of this PhD are a selection of hip-hop songs written over a period of six years between 2010 and 2015. The lyrics for these pieces are all written by the author and performed with hip-hop group Stanley Odd**.** The songs have been recorded and commercially released by a number of independent record labels (Circular Records, Handsome Tramp Records and A Modern Way Recordings) with worldwide digital distribution licensed to Fine Tunes, and physical sales through Proper Music Distribution. Considering the poetics of Scottish hip-hop, the accompanying critical reflection is an autoethnographic study, focused on rap lyricism, identity and performance. The significance of the writing lies in how the pieces collectively explore notions of identity, 'outsiderdom', politics and society in a Scottish context. Further to this, the pieces are noteworthy in their interpretation of US hip-hop frameworks and structures, adapted and reworked through Scottish culture, dialect and perspective. Reflecting the multi-disciplinary nature of hip-hop studies, an autoethnographic framework (Monaco, 2010; Munro 2011) is combined with poetic analysis, musicological discussion and social and cultural studies to examine the pieces that comprise the published works. Through a consideration of poetics, linguistics, sociological issues and cultural considerations, a schematic emerges, describing a construct of lyrical techniques, signifying practices, social interactions and outsider narratives that speak to (re)imagining, (re)creating and (re)constructing local culture by expressing it through hip-hop and vice versa. This study demonstrates new knowledge regarding global and local intersections in Scottish hip-hop, identity construction and negotiation, and creative approaches to rap storytelling.

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Appendix A: A reflection on the literary mechanics of the first verse of "Let Ma Brain Breathe"

Songs Submitted as Thesis

The thesis comprises the following pieces (in order of appearance in the text):

Chapter One
Let Ma Brain Breathe (2014), Stanley Odd
Pan Breed (2013), Louie x Solareye x Scatabrainz *

Chapter Two
The Pageant (2012), Solareye *
Chase Yirsel (2014), Stanley Odd
Ten to One (2010), Stanley Odd
By Way of Explanation (2011), Stanley Odd
The Numbness (2010), Stanley Odd

Chapter Three
Ten to One (2010), Stanley Odd
Will the Last One Out Please Turn Off the Light (2012), Stanley Odd
Draw Yir Own Conclusions (2014), Stanley Odd

Chapter Four
Winter of Discontent (2011), Stanley Odd
Antiheroics (2012), Stanley Odd
Marriage Counselling (2012), Stanley Odd
Son, I Voted Yes (2014), Stanley Odd
The Man with Many Names (2013), Stanley Odd *
Princes on the Pavement (2014), Stanley Odd *
Who Am I? (2014), Stanley Odd
To Be This Good Takes Stages (2014), Stanley Odd

Chapter Five
Day 3 (2012), Stanley Odd
Put Your Roots Down (2014), Stanley Odd
Carry Me Home (2012), Stanley Odd

The audio for these songs is available on the following Stanley Odd albums included in CD format with this submission*:

Oddio (2010)
Pure Antihero Material (2011)
The Day I Went Deaf (2011)
Reject (2012)
Chase Yirsel (2014)
A Thing Brand New (2014)

The songs can also be downloaded from the following link:

http://bit.ly/DHSongsForThesis

* Songs marked with an asterisk (*) are only available via download

Introduction

Scottish hip-hop is, for some, a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron (with emphasis on the 'moron'), a laughing stock, an impossibility, at best a novelty. Those that do chronicle its output have regularly observed the tendency of the general public to condescend and ridicule, while making assumptions about its creators' social, economic and cultural backgrounds (Gallogly-Swan, 2016). Concurrently, Scottish hip-hop has seen an increase in visibility and credibility in recent years, that disproves these assumptions while challenging lazy stereotypes regarding its content and cultural worth (Rimmer, 2016). During this process, what becomes apparent are the unique ways that hip-hop artists in Scotland interpret and adapt global hip-hop culture, making it compatible with Scottish culture and believable in Scottish society, while still representing global hip-hop values. Hip-hop exists within a set of contradictions and dualities (Rose, 1994). It operates as mass culture that critiques and parodies mass culture. It is a mainstream, global culture that also allows for stories to be told from the margins. In Scotland, it is simultaneously a mainstream musical genre (US hip-hop) and a marginalised subculture (Scottish hip-hop).

This critical appraisal for PhD by Published Works is an autoethnographic study, focused on rap lyricism, identity and performance, considering how I, as an individual, interpret global hip-hop and filter it through local culture to create something original, believable and authentic. This is a study of the poetics of Scottish hip-hop from a personal perspective; of how the local, global and individual intersect to "devise unique ways of communicating thoughts, emotions and everyday realities" (Alim, 2003: 62). Furthermore, the critical appraisal also considers how Scottish cultural attributes create alternative strategies in expressing established hip-hop formats, contributing to new remixes and hybrids of cultural interpretation.

As primary songwriter, mixer and producer with hip-hop group Stanley Odd, I provide comment regarding the musical elements of the songs that comprise the thesis where appropriate and useful. For example, during a discussion on how music contributes to identity and authenticity it makes sense to consider the musical aesthetics and production. However, the main focus of this critical

appraisal is the lyrics, and the poetics involved in writing and performing them. Through a consideration of poetics, linguistics, sociological issues and cultural considerations, I describe a framework of lyrical techniques, signifying practices, social interactions and outsider narratives that speak to (re)imagining, (re)creating and (re)constructing local culture by expressing it through hip-hop and vice versa. This work is concerned with the spaces and places where boundaries and intersections in society meet boundaries and intersections of genre.

The published works that form the thesis are a selection of hip-hop songs written over a period of five years between 2010 and 2014. The critical appraisal takes the form of a retrospective reflective and analytical review of creative practice, placed in the context of academic frameworks, to reveal the knowledge that can be extracted from the artefacts. The original contribution to knowledge can be found in how the pieces collectively explore notions of identity, 'outsiderdom', politics and society in a Scottish context. The pieces are also noteworthy in their interpretation of US hip-hop frameworks and structures, adapted and reworked through Scottish culture, dialect and perspective.

Research Themes

From initial analysis of the thesis materials and review of current literature, research themes were formed around the following questions:

> How is global hip-hop interpreted and translated (localised) through Scottish culture?

> What is the process of constructing a rap identity in Scotland?

> What creative approaches can be applied to expressing outsiderdom in Scottish hip-hop?

> How did Scottish hip-hop and my work in particular reflect and shape discussions around Scottish independence 2011-2014?

> How does one mature, show emotional sensitivity or weakness within a genre known for its hyper-masculinity?

These questions form the basis of the five chapters that make up this document. There follows a brief summary of each chapter's content and thematic approach.

Structure

Chapter one is focused on identifying key terms and techniques in hip-hop lyric writing. Through discussion of academic writing and practical examples I present these techniques and demonstrate my continuation and extension of the musical practice through local filters. Chapter two is concerned with identity construction and authenticity. Analysis is carried out regarding various factors contributing to identity and authenticity and how these intersect with Scottish culture. Consideration is given as to how these factors converge with the techniques and devices discussed in chapter one. Combined, chapters one and two provide a suitable lexicon for addressing the content in chapters three to five. Chapter three addresses themes of marginalisation and 'outsiderdom' in my work, discussing how images and people from outside of the mainstream are represented. The chapter reflects on how outsiderdom is represented in hip-hop in the US and how it manifests when localised in Scotland. The second section of this chapter comprises the close reading of two pieces of my own work that demonstrate different approaches to expressing or narrating outsiderdom in rap. Chapter four chronicles and dissects a creative engagement with Scottish politics and the 2014 independence referendum over the period from 2011 – 2014. Considering hip-hop as social commentary, this chapter examines how Scottish hip-hop has embodied the social and political elements of hip-hop culture and traces a line through my creative output from early 2011 until the end of 2014 regarding political and cultural commentary relating to the Scottish independence referendum. Chapter five is about how to frame creative reflective practice and aging within existing generic structure; the idea of going from growing up *with* hip-hop to growing up *in* hip-hop. Taking examples from my writing that involve personal, reflexive commentary as opposed to cultural or social commentary, the chapter analyses my approaches to expressing universal themes such as love and fatherhood within the established confines of a genre. Consideration is also given to pervading issues of hyper-masculinity and how to negotiate these restrictions while trying to be honest, original and maintain authenticity.

Methodological Approach

The critical appraisal takes a multi-method perspective, drawing on autoethnographic data, lyric analysis by way of techniques from poetic analysis and formal/ analytical musicological discussion.

Munro (2011) writes that autoethnography for academic writing on creative practice requires its ethnographic dimension to be considered in relation to three separate cultural groups – idiosyncratic, practice and gate-keeping. It is in the interaction between these three groups, he argues, where epistemological discoveries will be found. He states that new knowledge comes from documenting the processes of creative practice as opposed to the finished product and its effect on the environment. This model can be applied in relation to hip-hop composition, whereby the creative process of hip-hop writing grows out of the interaction between the culture of self, the culture of hip-hop practice (boundaries of the field) and the cultural gate-keepers, in this case, consisting of established artists, press and consumers.

Monaco's work (2010) in the autoethnographic study of fandom and, in particular, her use of memory work can be effectively applied to my own work as it is concerned with identity creation and a "persistent interrogation" (121) of the self to break down existing biases when researching. Kuhn (2010: 6) observes the difference between considering a photograph as "evidence" and as something to be "interrogated," highlighting the need for reassessment of 'truth' in memory. Munro and Monaco also refer to the importance of self-interrogation for critical reflection and interpretation. In terms of hip-hop, this is relevant as a hip-hop lyricist is, from the outset, intentionally involved in a process of myth building and self-definition (Holmes Smith, 1997). As such, I would argue that a successful hip-hop writer must have already gone through a process of honest self-evaluation in order to understand their strengths, weaknesses and ideologies. They can then decide to highlight and accentuate or mask and replace these characteristics when constructing their hip-hop persona. From this starting point, I utilise autoethnographic sources such as memory work, composition notes, lyrics and published interviews as source material for further investigation.

Monaco also highlights the importance of constructing an organised framework for autoethnography in order to yield academically rigorous results. Her discussion regarding "expectations for good reflexive practice" (104) is important to ensure that autoethnographic work goes beyond confessional recollection to reflexive critique. As Munro observes, the means by which creative works come about are often "messy" (156) processes borne out of a range of stimuli, sources and practices. It is therefore important that the framework through which these works are assessed is organised and academically sound.

Autoethnography has historically been criticised as "self-indulgent" and "narcissistic" (Coffey, 1999: 133). However, Duncan (2004) argues for its validity as a form of self-analysis that enables us to improve design practice, noting that, when combined with explicit research protocols it can provide unique possibilities for insight. Holt (2003: 26) engages with academic reviewers' criticisms of autoethnography directly, proposing that, within an organised supporting framework, there is a "place for research that links the personal with the cultural." Hip-hop culture can be reflexive and self-analytical (it can also be narcissistic and self-indulgent). It lends itself to this form of study provided the academic approach is well organised and rigorous. Autoethnography requires an honest, deep study of the subjective. This is then supported and enhanced by the other theoretical aspects of the study; i.e. poetic analysis to consider lyrics, content analysis to consider reception, and musicological analysis to consider musical meaning. By this means the inherently personal elements of autoethnography can still maintain the robust interrogation required to prove academic rigour. In this document, a series of other academic frameworks are utilised to compliment the autoethnographic content. This combinational approach reflects the multi-disciplinarity of hip-hop studies.

Alim observes the irony that "Language… is perhaps one of the least analyzed aspects of Hip Hop Culture(s)" (2009: 5). Considering rap lyrics are such a core element of hip-hop it is interesting that more time has been focused on framing hip-hop socially and culturally than on analysing hip-hop lyrically. Alim (2009) makes a strong case for stylistic and linguistic criticism complementing

sociological research. Peplow (2010) suggests the initial reticence to address rap from a stylistic perspective lies in a question as to whether rap is 'literature', noting that Alim (2003) made a good case for this. Bradley (2009) places rap within a classical poetic framework, defining it as the latest evolution of western poetics and therefore subject to the same rules and tools of analysis. Crossley (2005) presents rap lyric analysis using metaphor as his framework. His work yields interesting results but is also criticised by Pelow (ibid: 18) for its failure to recognise the "textually-embedded multiplicity" of hip-hop writing. As such, a case becomes clear for utilising literary and poetic analysis *in conjunction* with other forms such as the autoethnographic, sociological and musicological.

Musicological work from scholars such as Krims (2000) and Williams (2013) is useful in demonstrating the links between music, culture and society. Williams' study of borrowing in hip-hop – a core cultural element – is illuminating in the way that it demonstrates the complex layers that exist and conversations that take place between artists and pieces of music through a hip-hop sampling ethic. Krims' theories on the poetics of identity are foundational in providing starting points for discussions on topics such as sub-genres and identity construction, both of which will be addressed in this document. Hess' (2005) consideration of persona artists in relation to identity and resistance is also relevant here. New work from UK scholars such as Laura Speers (2017) considers identity and authenticity from a sociological perspective, researching how rappers 'live out' their authenticity in their day-to-day lives. Definitive texts such as Tricia Rose's Black Noise (1994) and The Hip-Hop Wars (2008) still hold great significance in providing the language, frameworks and core points of discussion for much of current hip-hop analysis through ethnography and culture studies.

From these reflections, a more rigorous academic framework appears; utilising the range of theoretical perspectives discussed to form a supportive structure of research methodologies that complement each other. The field of hip-hop studies is already established. The areas of study – autoethnographically, sociologically, musicologically and poetically already exist. My creative work has been recognised in terms of esteem through awards, national and international recognition and other academic studies (Williams, 2015). Therefore, the

academic frameworks are already validated and the content of the creative work is already validated. I argue that (with support from the research frameworks discussed) I am well placed to provide an in-depth study of the creative, cultural and social ingredients that underpin my own creative output. A review of current hip-hop literature is embedded throughout each chapter where appropriate and necessary. This is more prominent in chapters one to three, where knowledge of the concepts, arguments and underpinning theory must be evidenced prior to allowing more analysis-focused work in chapters four and five.

To conclude, the global significance of hip-hop as a means to narrate, reflect and challenge society, culture, politics and many other elements of 21st century life is long established and has been well documented in the works of a wide range of academics. What follows is an autoethnographic study of Scottish hip-hop, exploring notions of locality, identity, 'outsiderdom', politics and society.

Chapter 1 – Hip-Hop Rules and Techniques, Global and Local

I got intae hip-hop, light years fae the South Bronx
And got lost, in amongst the wordsmiths and outlaws
Remixing and dismantling the contents of the novel
Making something new from the rubble

<div align="right">Hook, 2017</div>

Introduction

In the forty years since its inception, hip-hop has gone from a local subculture to a global commodity. In doing so, it has amassed a range of mainstream stereotypes that are used as indicators to denote hip-hop culture. Some of these indicators (e.g. lyrical terminology such as 'yo, yo' and generic gangsta-rap quotes) are as likely to signify inauthenticity within hip-hop culture as they are to identify hip-hop in mainstream culture. As such, hip-hop exists in a perpetual conflict between the commercial and the authentic. Authenticity and 'realness' have become core values within hip-hop culture. From one perspective, 'commercial' and 'authentic' could be considered synonymous with 'global' and 'local' respectively. Others argue authenticity along lines of ethnicity, class, economic privilege or gender. This critical appraisal analyses hip-hop writing from a Scottish perspective, considering how the local and the global converge in this creative practice. Chapters one and two are concerned with the tools required of a rapper to achieve hip-hop authenticity. The aim of the first two chapters is to identify key terms and techniques in hip-hop writing, discuss the way these techniques are filtered through Scottish culture and consider how a rapper's identity is formed. I argue that it is the combined knowledge of the technical and the local, presented by a coherent and believable persona that qualifies a performance or recording as being 'authentic' hip-hop. Chapter one is focused on identifying key terms and techniques in hip-hop lyric writing. Through discussion of academic writing and practical examples I will present these techniques and demonstrate my continuation and extension of the musical practice through local contextualisation. This will then lead on to an analysis of identity creation, authenticity and Scottish cultural filters in chapter two that should, combined, provide a suitable lexicon for addressing the content in chapters three to five.

Global to Local

Jeff Chang's "Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-hop Generation" (2005) chronicles the origins and evolution of hip-hop from its beginnings in 1970s New York to its current worldwide form and status. In doing so, he acknowledges its representative movement to "first all-city and then all-global." Krims (2000: 16) asserts that "locality intersects with history in the poetics of rap." Bennett observes the significance of locality to Turkish and Moroccan rap artists in Frankfurt (1999a) and white British youth in Newcastle (1999b) from a sociological perspective. From a linguistic perspective, Pennycook describes hip-hop's focus on authenticity as "a discursively and culturally mediated mode of representing and producing the local" (2007: 112). From these studies alone, historiographically, musicologically, sociologically and linguistically, each academic discipline observes that local, marginal and 'other' voices are central to hip-hop's authenticity. Hip-hop's export, practice, appropriation and repurposing can be found in cultures around the globe from Indigenous peoples in Australia to Palestinian hip-hop in the Middle East. Bramwell (2015: 256) notes that UK hip-hop "remains relatively under explored." While some academic works do already exist examining the development of hip-hop music and culture in the UK, this research is predominantly focused on England and particularly on London. Scottish hip-hop and rap have been in existence since the 1980s but have remained historically 'underground', much less regularly crossing over into wider culture than its English counterpart. Reasons for its continued underground status can be attributed to a number of social and cultural factors that will be addressed at various points in this critical reflection.

Frameworks and Perspectives

Through an autoethnographic framework, consideration will be given to how I make hip-hop and to some of the aspects of hip-hop composition that I consider when writing. On contemplation, it has become clear that some of these aspects are things that I know explicitly and some are things that I know intuitively (and have now sought to analyse). Bradley (2009: 21) alludes to this when discussing the use of ballad form in modern music from "Gilligan's Island" (1964) to "Rapper's Delight" (1979), noting that the composers of these works knew "either explicitly or intuitively" that ballad form was well suited to storytelling in rhythms close to natural speech patterns. Similarly, from an

9

autoethnographic perspective Munro describes the creative process as "messy" (2011: 160), referring to the range of stimuli and level of intuitive activity taking place due to expertise in the area. This chapter is about filtering the global through the local and how that is then interpreted by the personal. Therefore, this is not a 'how-to' guide on rapping in Scotland but rather a documentation of how *I* rap; an analysis of what I think about when I write and perform.

The analysis will be achieved through a review of current literature, consideration of the various concepts and perspectives uncovered and discussion as to how they relate to Scottish culture and my own work. In addition to autoethnographic reflection, consideration will be given to other academic frameworks such as poetic analysis and musicological perspectives. To summarise, this chapter is concerned with my interpretation and application of the techniques, lyrical construction and subject matter that combine to create rap lyrics in hip-hop. By identifying a range of techniques and devices, this chapter will also provide the toolkit required for the analysis in subsequent chapters.

Rap vs Hip-Hop

Already in this chapter I shift between use of the word rap and hip-hop. As such – and as is the case with many texts in hip-hop studies – I will try to define the terms as I am using them throughout this critical reflection (sometimes interchangeably and sometimes very separately). I am a rapper. I am a hip-hop artist. Rap is a style of vocal technique. Hip-hop can refer to a musical genre and a wider cultural movement (Hess, 2007: 22). Rap alone does not define the output as hip-hop. Many hip-hop artists make a distinction between rappers and emcees (the phonetic pronunciation of MC – Master of Ceremony). Within hip-hop culture, anyone who raps is a rapper but only those demonstrating a specific skill set are designated the title of 'emcee'. This is what Big Daddy Kane is referring to when he states: "an emcee is someone who either has that party rocking skill or that lyrical skill" (2012: 15.30-16:30). Therefore, all emcees are rappers but not all rappers are emcees. Already it is becoming clear that there exists a complex collection of checkboxes to be ticked for a piece of music to be considered 'hip-hop'. As Krims (2000) explains, these abstract parameters shift and differ over time as well as between individual listeners, practitioners

and sub-cultural groups. Due to the level of fan, artist and critical analysis of the hip-hop genre, ideas of what constitutes hip-hop vary greatly from person to person and from social group to social group. As a result, both Rose (1994) and Krims (2000) used the broader term of rap music as a genre. Following this, in her study of authenticity in London's hip-hop community, Speers (2017: 14) explains that she uses the terms "rap music and hip-hop synonymously and interchangeably." Alim (2009) acknowledges the interchangeable usage of 'rap' and 'hip-hop' in some cases but highlights the use of 'hip-hop' by practitioners to denote all cultural practices (rapping, DJing, graffiti art, breakdancing) and cultural domains (such as fashion, style, politics and language) that form hip-hop culture. Alim elaborates that hip-hop culture in its multifarious manifestations around the world constructs the "Global Hip-Hop Nation" (3). This critical appraisal concerns my work as a rapper and the focus of the study is on rap lyrics, as such, for the majority of the document 'rap' and 'hip-hop' can be considered synonyms. At points where their meanings diverge, this will be clearly stated.

Technical Writing and Lyrical Devices

The ill somniloquist, spill infinite quips
I skilfully spit split infinitives that kill lyricists
"The Ill Somniloquist" (Hook, 2017)

The analysis of rap lyrics from a poetic perspective can be carried out quite effectively using standardised tools of poetic analysis. This is partly due to the fact that, as Bradley (2009: 24) notes, rap takes its foundations from "Western poetic tradition." However, that is not to detract from it being, very clearly, an African American musical practice. Rather, this is an example of an established form being subverted and repackaged into something new. Thus, even the process of creating the tools with which to make hip-hop was one of subversion and repurposing; of "rupture and flow" as observed by Rose (1994). This can be likened to the emergence of jazz in the early 1900s, where standard brass band instrumentation such as trumpets and saxophones were used to make a new and exciting musical form. On rap's origins in spoken word, Price-Styles (2015: 11) notes: "Just as the boundaries between genres of music ebb and flow, the lines and limits between rap and poetry are likewise fluid and open."

Attempts to define rap, categorise it and trace its origins range far and wide. Baraka (2010 from Price-Styles, 2015) goes as far as to state that "Rap is nothing but a modern blues." While his point here was to emphasise the lineage in song forms and African American musical tradition, it is at odds with Bradley's (2009) contention that rap is a new form. Whereas wordplay, the cultural tradition of humour, commentary and signifyin(g) (Gates Jr, 1988) might have already existed, the specific relationship of spoken words and rhythm that categorises rap did not. Bradley describes rap's dual rhythmic relationship between the beat and the voice, stating this as the clear difference between rap and lyrical poetry. The core of his argument is that: "the beat in rap is poetic meter rendered audible" (2009: xv). Thus, he argues that the stability that an audible beat gives to the metre allows for wide and varied movement away from the metre lyrically, providing the opportunity for a vast range of unusual and exciting rhythmical components within the lyrics. Therefore, while the historiography and origins of rap come from African American tradition of inheritance and innovation, the fact that it was a subversion of Western poetic form allows for these pre-existing poetic terms such as metre and accent to be applied to its study.

Alim (2003) argues that rap is the evolution and expansion of American poetic tradition in his article, "On Some Serious Next Millennium Rap Ishhh." Published in the Journal of English Linguistics, this paper is a manifesto for the complex linguistics, intertextuality, innovation and myriad literary techniques employed by hip-hop emcees. His approach makes a case for a new set of hybridised techniques and terminology to study "Hip Hop poetics" (81). From this discussion, it becomes clear that there are academically sound reasons to study rap lyrics from linguistic and poetic perspectives and that existing poetic tools of analysis can be used to do so. The following short sections discuss a range of techniques and concepts pertaining to rap lyric construction, followed in each case by an example from my own work and discussion of any issues relating to local interpretation.

Flow: The Evolution of Rhythm and Rhyme

Rapping can be defined as the combination of rhythm and rhyme. In rap, rhythm and rhyme scheme are intrinsically linked, with each feeding into and

growing out of the other. The notion of rap's "dual rhythmic relationship" (Bradley 2009: 7) between the rhythm of the words spoken and the rhythm of the beat forms the basis of what is referred to as flow: the way that a rapper negotiates the beat; where they place their words. A range of texts exist looking at the technical process of flow or lyrical delivery. Kautny (2015) summarises the evolution of rap delivery from its beginnings landing predictably on the downbeats of a 4/4 rhythm, with the words and syllables generally breaking up into 16ths, to more complex arrangements of wide-ranging rhythmical patterns combined with a vast number of poetic techniques from caesura and enjambment to alliteration and assonance. Bradley (2009: 23) is keen to emphasise that although early rap flows may seem rudimentary now, they were "necessary and revolutionary poetic acts," subverting entrenched traditional rhyme forms with no pre-existing template on how to build the rhythmic relationship between beat and rhyme. He argues that the foundations set by early rap pioneers allowed their successors to develop more complex styles and techniques. Krims (2000) notes these developments and separates them into three distinct definitions of rhythmical style or flow: sung, percussion-effusive and speech-effusive. The first early rap form Krims calls "sung" rhythmic style. Kautny identifies this style as having rhymes predictably placed on the beat, generally formed of clear rhyming antecedent/ consequent couplets with a caesura on the last beat in every phrase. An example would be Run DMC's 1985 "King of Rock":

Beats:		1	and	2	and	3	and	4	and
Lyrics:	I'm the	king	of	rock		there-is	none	higher	
		Sucker	em -	cees		should-call	me	sire	
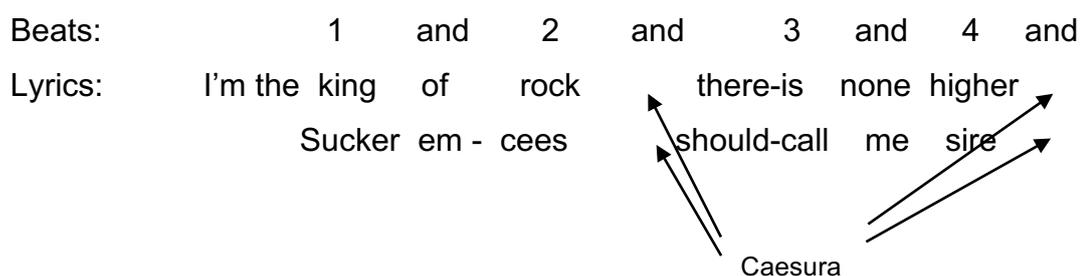
Caesura

Figure 1: Rhythmical analysis of Run DMC's "King of Rock" opening lines

This couplet is a perfect example of matching beat-class end-rhymes on the last beat with a caesura on the following sub-beat. Evolving from this rap style, Krims divides more complex flow into "percussion-effusive" and "speech-effusive" rhythmical styles. The common denominator here – effusive – basically means that Krims is separating more evolved rap flows into more

lavish, expansive, complex construction, divided with the emphasis being either on rhythm or speech. "Effusive" is a direct synonym for 'gushing', making his choice of word suitable, since 'gush' is a synonym for 'flow'. As such, Krims academic lexicon for analysing flow could actually translate to 'speech-emphasised flowing' and 'percussion-emphasised flowing'. Further to this, Krims use of "effusive" implies overly gushing therefore this would be translated to complex flowing or extreme flowing. In reality, although rappers tend toward one particular rhythmical style as proposed by Krims, they more generally make use of all three flow styles to add variety, punctuation and signification to their vocal delivery. The opening lines of Stanley Odd's "Let Ma Brain Breathe" (2014) provide an example of how metre is provided by the music (as suggested by Bradley) while the rhyme scheme and rhythm of the lyrics become more complex. This is a particularly interesting example because the beat does not appear until the second verse. In this example at the start of the first verse, the rap is set only against a bassline, creating points where neither the lyrics, nor the bassline are on the downbeat, with the only anchored rhythm being the space where the beat is not. The notation of delivery and table format is based on Krims (2000) and Kautny (2015).

Last beat of intro   Beginning of Bar 1

Beats	4				1				2				3				4			
Notes					X		X		X											
Rap			x x **x**	x x x **x** x x							**x**		x		**x**			
Lyrics			Outman- oeu - ver - ing me cha - ni -cal							main -	stream		fads					

Beginning of Bar 2

Beats	4				1				2				3				4			
Notes					X		X		X											
Rap										x	**x x x**	**x x x**	**x**		x x				
Lyrics										Mag-	nanimous	megalo	ma		ni ac				

(Triplet markers "3" and "3" appear beneath the "nanimous" and "megalo" groupings.)

Beginning of Bar 3

Beats	4				1				2				3				4			
Notes					X		X		X											
Rap					**x** x x			**x**	x	x **x**	x x	x **x** x								
Lyrics					Forg- in' steel	bars			with the an-	vil and	the furnace									

Beginning of Bar 4

Beats	4				1				2				3				4			
Notes					X		X		X											
Rap					**x** x x	x **x**	x x	x **x**	x x	x **x** x										
Lyrics					Hamme-rin' ma grammar while disman-	tl-	in' the wordsmith													

Figure 2: Stanley Odd "Let Ma Brain Breathe?", first four bars, notation of delivery

In the above analysis of the delivery, the bold **x**'s show main accents in each bar and the arrows indicate pushed or swung syllables. As such, it becomes clear that in the absence of an actual drumbeat, the accents fall on the beats in each bar with swung rhythmical interplay from the remaining syllables. In terms of technical construction, the first two bars utilise alliteration for euphonious effect and rhythmical impact in addition to three-syllable end-rhymes, extended backwords by assonance from the words "mechanical" and "magnanimous" in bars 1 and 2 respectively. As such, these opening lines demonstrate a range of simultaneously employed rap techniques constructing what Alim (2003: 63) refers to as "a multirhyme matrix." In my example, the end-rhymes are not of matching beat-class, instead there is a long caesura at the end of the first bar, pausing all the way until the sub-beat of the second beat in bar two. The three syllables of "mainstream fad" rhyme with the three syllables of "maniac" but where the first line fits the syllables over three beats, the second squashes them into two. This rhythmical play is designed to create tension and disquiet by moving from predictable quavers in bar one to space followed by more complex rhythms in bar two. This rhyme-type is what Steele (1999: 24) refers to as "mosaic rhyme," where compound rhyme is created by combining more than one word. The wordplay of line three puns on the dual meaning of bars of music and steel bars. The hard-edged imagery of steelworks and blacksmith implies an industrial element to lyric writing and a physical prowess. Further internal

15

rhyme of "hammerin'" and "grammar" speaks to the act of writing being anything but a gentle activity as well as being tied by internal rhyme to "bars" and "anvil and" in the previous line, creating a repetitive loop in the build-up to the end of the four-bar section. The full phrase of "anvil and the furnace" forms a six-syllable compound rhyme with "(dis)mantling the wordsmith". The phrase "dismantling the wordsmith" also has dual meaning of taking apart opponents and deconstructing what it is to be a writer, as well as completing the blacksmith/ wordsmith metaphor. This example demonstrates both the ability to shift rhythms due to the stability of a beat and the evolution of rhyme schemes in rap to encompass complex syllabics, internal rhyme and other poetic techniques such as alliteration, enjambment and caesura.

'Multis' – Compound Rhyme in Rap

In modern rap lyrics one of the simplest and most common barometers of lyrical quality is the use of compound rhymes, known as 'multis' (multiple syllables). The level to which multis are used may vary but since the early 1990s simple, one syllable rhymes have seldom been sufficient in hip-hop writing. This is most probably due to the vast wealth of possibilities in assonance and half-rhyme once several syllables are joined together. Almost universally, rapper Rakim is credited with evolving rap lyrics to include more complex rhyme schemes including internal rhyme and compound rhyme. Masta Ace (in Edwards, 2009: 105) observes:

> Up until [Rakim], everybody who you heard rhyme, the last word in the sentence was the rhyming [word], the connection word. Then Rakim showed us that you could put rhymes within a rhyme…

Rather than confining an artist in a complex rhyme scheme, rhyming multi-syllables allows an artist to be more creative with their rhyme structure. Examples such as Biggie Smalls' (1994) hilariously self-deprecating, then immediately egotistical:

> Back to the black rhinoceros of rap
> Big took a loss how preposterous is that?

This couplet is an interesting point along the way of rap flow evolution as Biggie's delivery and content is rooted here in "party rap" semantics (Krims,

2000) with "sung"-style delivery. The couplet conforms to on-beat rhyme emphasis and caesura at mid-point and end-point of each line. However, the vocal delivery is less sung, more spoken, and the relaxed nature of the enunciation masks the complexity of the five-syllable end-rhyme with additional internal rhyme ("loss"). This complexity mixed with smooth delivery is a feature of Biggie Smalls', arguably one of the most natural and musical rappers in history. So, the technicality of the rhyme construction and "speech effusive" (Krims, 2000) nature of the delivery speaks to a more modern rap style, while the content and underpinning rhythm ties to an older form. In some ways this is the ultimate success for a rap lyric: to be new and cutting edge, while assuring authenticity through historical reference. It is also an example of layered referencing as it is the style and semantics that refer to earlier work rather than the content overtly.

Following on from this, Eminem's (2001) complex tongue-twisting lyrics demonstrate multis taken to the extreme:

> Now, who's the king of these rude, ludicrous, lucrative lyrics?
> Who could inherit the title, put the youth in hysterics
> Usin' his music to steer it, sharin' his views and his merits?
> But there's a huge interference
> They're saying you shouldn't hear it

It is the combination of rhyme complexity with coherent narrative that makes Eminem's verse so impressive. He employs classic examples of Alim's "multirhyme matrix" (2003: 73), demonstrating mosaic rhymes, internal and end-rhyme, alliteration and assonance, while continuing the same five-syllable rhyme scheme six times across four lines. Writings such as these exemplify the degree to which the multisyllabic repetition adds to the rhythmical elements of the lyric while also demonstrating a high level of creativity in finding words that both continue the rhyme scheme and maintain the narrative.

An example of advanced multisyllabic rhyme schemes in my own work can be found in another excerpt from 2014's "Let Ma Brain Breathe":

> Crushing resurgence with murderous urgency
> Stuttering gurners can suffer in Purgatory
> I'm a havering switherer
> Competition get labelled as sinister
> And tinnitus from the first aid I administer
> Headphones sound a visit from David in miniature

In this instance, every syllable of the first bar rhymes with that of the second, essentially making a twelve-syllable rhyming couplet. From bar three onward, six-syllable rhymes are passed through the remaining four lines. "Havering switherer" is rhymed with "labelled as sinister," "aid I administer" and "David in miniature" as well as a three-syllable internal rhyme with "tinnitus" appearing in the fifth line that connects the end-rhymes while additionally linking to "visit from" in line six. These are generally imperfect rhymes at best. In some forms of poetic analysis they would perhaps be referred to as assonance as opposed to rhyme at all, but in hip-hop terms, this is where interesting rhymes come from. Perfect rhyme vastly reduces the range of words and phrases that can be used. The use of multi-syllable imperfect, mosaic rhymes provides scope for much more inventive and unusual rhymes and rhyme schemes as evidenced here. This relates to Steele's (1999:24) observation that:

> Since rhymes please most when the words included make unexpected yet persuasive connections between ideas, objects, and qualities, good rhymers often match different grammatical categories—nouns with verbs, verbs with adjectives, adverbs with nouns, and so forth.

Rhythmically, each six-syllable rhyme is grouped into triplet pairs. In terms of vocal delivery, in-keeping with my rap style, this would fall under Krims' definition of "speech effusive" flowing, where the emphasis is on speech patterns as opposed to percussive patterns. From my perspective, the delivery was about displaying verbal dexterity while attempting to make it appear effortless. On the ability to combine complex hip-hop poetics with seemingly effortless delivery, Bradley described rapper Pharoahe Monch's writing as:

> the work of a poetic technician for sure, but what makes it also the work of a virtuoso is that the lyrics are completely unburdened by the ponderous weight of this intricate structure… almost offhanded eloquence (2009: 63)

Both Bradley and Alim make Pharoahe Monch the focus of their work when evidencing the multilayered complexity of virtuosic rap lyricism. It is not a coincidence that later in this verse I both quote and reference Pharoahe Monch directly while attempting to display my own interpretation of hip-hop poetics.

Punchlines

Punchlines are a core element of hip-hop writing. Kautny describes them as "the most funny and insulting lines of battle rap mocking at other personas" (2015: 103). A number of interesting points can be divulged from this description. Firstly, punchlines (as their joke-related etymology would suggest) should be amusing and this humour is often (though not always) derived from abusing perceived opponents. Just as interesting here though, is the use of the word *persona*. This highlights what is a common misconception by outsiders looking into hip-hop culture to do with taking the words at face value. Ideas of identity and self-definition run consistently throughout hip-hop's history and an understanding of rap identity and persona will be discussed further in chapter two. Punchlines generally take the form of rhyming couplets that fit within a larger piece but can stand up – taken on their own – outside of the entire verse. The most important element of punchline rap is to be original within a long establish format. To look at an example of this, KRS-One's "Step Into A World (Raptures Delight)" (1997) (demonstrating intertextual referencing in the title) contains the lines:

> I'm not saying I'm number one… uh I'm sorry I lied
> I'm number one, two, three, four and five

The rhyming couplet construction is designed for a set-up and a punchline. This form of writing is often written in reverse, with the punchline being arrived at first and then the rest of the couplet constructed backwards from it. Following on from this, within hip-hop culture the key is to be continually finding new and inventive ways of claiming dominance and mastery, while adhering to the cultural traditions. This results in Aesop Rock's (2014) verse containing:

> Every couple summers, me and a couple hunters
> Like to row in from the Isle of Astonishing Motherfuckers

It is the combination of outlandish bragging, original imagery and layered metaphor that make lines such as this successful application of the punchline rap concept. Here the comedic idea of an island of "Astonishing Motherfuckers" where the people who are greatest at life in general reside is the wonderfully original means by which Aesop Rock proclaims his excellence. The metaphor that makes it also a threat to other rappers is in the phrase "every couple

summers," which can be taken to mean the rough release schedule of an album with the "couple hunters" being him and his rap associates. Therefore, as well as residing in a place where only the best exist, he is stating that they come out of there into the real world to release a record every two years and of course hunters catch prey, so that would be the rest of the hip-hop community.

In terms of punchline-style writing in my own work, to continue with the analysis of "Let Ma Brain Breathe," the second verse begins:

> If hip-hop's been dumbed down, here's the upshot
> Shining over this lot is like robbin' babies at the tuck shop
> I heard you were sick son…
> Mmm… seems there's been a 10p mix up

Written in rhyming couplet format, the first two lines address the commercialisation and commodification of hip-hop while also asserting lyrical dominance over it. Doing so with a known phrase – taking candy from a baby – morphed with specifically Scottish terminology – "robbin' babies at the tuck shop" – allows me to address hip-hop commercialisation, claim dominance and locate the claim in a distinctly Scottish voice. The following two lines continue this approach, with the punchline – a 10p mix up – playing on the suggestion that there must be some mistake (a "mix up") for an imagined contemporary being considered good (sick) while also referencing a bag of assorted sweets from the aforementioned tuck shop ("a 10p mix up").

Quotation

On the ethics of borrowing in hip-hop, Williams (2013: 3-5) talks about quotation, defining two separate approaches as autosonic and allosonic quotation. Autosonic is defined as a direct sample, i.e. taking an existing mechanical recording and using it in another song. An example of this would be the use of Nas' voice in Jay-Z's 1996 "Dead Presidents," where the vocal from Nas' 1994 "The World Is Yours" is sampled and looped in the chorus. Allosonic quotation refers to an artist mimicking an existing piece of work as opposed to using the original recording. In hip-hop, Williams explains, this is utilised for a number of reasons ranging from paying homage to those who have been historically important in the genre, to providing a level of authenticity to the

current artist's work by association. Further to this, Williams links this allosonic form of quotation to signifyin(g) as defined by Henry Louis Gates Jr (1988), in that its repetition *with a difference* is a form of referencing while adding to the conversation taking place across time, place and different pieces of music. Linking quotation, sampling and referencing practices in hip-hop to signifyin(g) allows us to decode the revisiting, reinterpretation and repurposing of textual meaning in music and lyrics.

Continuing with the concept of viewing life through a hip-hop lens, Williams (ibid: 7) discusses the concept of textually signalled borrowing, noting that much hip-hop "pre-supposes an unconcealed intertextuality." Heather Dubrow (1982) speaks of a "generic contract" noting that within any genre there is a contract between the reader and author, whereby they already understand the rules of the genre. This identifies that hip-hop listeners are tuned-in to these masked conversations and references to earlier works and artists. A multi-layered dialogue is understood by those listening on that level but can easily be misconstrued by those who are not familiar with it. Holmes Smith (1997:352) writes that "rap's prolific practice of juxtaposition and intertextuality falls squarely within a rich African-American legacy of creating a culture based upon tactical appropriation." Hence, in hip-hop the practice of borrowing, sampling, quoting and reworking is a core element of genre creativity.

In terms of textual signifying, Williams uses the example of Snoop Doggy Dogg's "Who Am I?" (1993) not being textually signalled as it is not clear that the music has been sampled and reworked. An example from the same record of a lyrical nature would be "Lodi Dodi" which is a reworking of Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick's "La Di Da Di" (1985). Although Snoop mentions at the start of the track "Gotta say what's up to my n*gga Slick Rick" – textually signalling for those who are aware of the signals – it is not overtly clear that the entire song is a reworking of Slick Rick and Doug E. Fresh from 1985. In fact, this song is an excellent example of the degree to which some tracks are referenced throughout hip-hop history, with a lengthy dialogue taking place over time. From Biggie Smalls' (1997) reworking the chorus to "Biggie Biggie Biggie, can't you see," to Mos Def noting, "cause this type of shit happens every day" in "Perfect Timing" (2006), to Earl Sweatshirt, "la di da di back in here to fuck up the party,"

21

on "Oldie" (2012), there is a remarkable fixation with referencing this track across a 30+ year period. The song appears as having been sampled in 856 songs on sample-tracking website WhoSampled ("La Di Da Di by Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick", 2017).

Slick Rick even samples himself saying "stop lying" and uses it at the start of his 1991 release "The Ruler's Back," a song that itself was then lyrically quoted by Jay-Z in his 2001 track by the same name. Jay-Z begins:

> Yo, gather round hustlers that's if you still livin'
> And get on down, to that ol' Jig rhythm

And ends:

> So off we go, let the trumpets blow
> And hold on, because the driver of the mission is a pro
> The ruler's back

This is clearly quoting from Slick Rick's version:

> Gather 'round party goers that's if your still livin'
> And get on down to the old Slick rhythm
> …
> And off we go, let the trumpets blow
> Well hold on, because the driver of the mission is a pro
> The ruler's back

This level of quotation, as Williams discusses, pays respect to that which has come before, authenticates the writer's own work and continues a dialog and a thematic movement over time within the genre. Perhaps in the case of Jay-Z he is doing what Krims (2000: 51) notes KRS-One does when he affects a party rap style, which is denoting his longevity in the game by affecting a style that relates to an earlier time period.

Quotation in My Work

An example of quotation in my work can be found in Stanley Odd's "Let My Brain Breathe" (2014) where the song begins with a four-line phrase that quotes and reworks an earlier song by KRS-One. The song has been reworked several times in the last 25 years by various hip-hop artists and in knowing this I was intentionally continuing that dialogue. Two separate social media comments on

the song exemplify the difference between being aware of all the internal cultural references and recognising that the words had been used before. The first response, a Tweet from the Books Editor for *The Skinny* magazine is as follows:

> Holy shit, new release from @StanleyOdd, top words, music & production, & dropping in a cheeky Black Star opening (Bett, 2014)

This comments on the quality of the release and acknowledges that the beginning is a reference to "Definition" by Black Star (1998). The second example is a post by an individual on a link to the video from Glasgow-based music site Podcart (2014):

> The beginning of this is ripped from the Fugees. Still good though!

When asked to clarify by the music site, the poster explains:

> Ripped off? A play on the original? I don't know the right word for it. It's like an iconic intro Lauryn Hill does in the Fugees

This time the poster is referring to the Fugees version of the song from 1994. Neither of the versions referred to were the actual original by KRS-One but both implied that the version they knew was the definitive part. While neither post is entirely critical and the person posting in the second instance is asking the question whether it was 'ripped off' i.e. stolen or whether it was conversing with the original, there is an obvious discomfort with or questioning of the authenticity of using lyrics from an earlier song that comes from not being fully immersed in the culture of hip-hop writing. A comparison of the lyrics as they evolve between songs reveals my approach to the process of borrowing here:

> One Two Three
> The crew is called BDP
> And if you wanna go to the tip top
> Stop the violence in hip-hop Y-O
>> Opening lines from KRS-One, "Stop the Violence" (1989)

> One Two Three
> The crew is called Refu-gee-ee-ees
> And if you come for test the rap style-ee
> Stop the violence and just bring it on Y-O
>> Opening lines from Fugees, "Vocab(Refugee Hip Hop Remix)" (1994)

One Two Three
Mos Def and Talib Kwe-li-i-i
We came to rock it on to the tip-top
Best Alliance in hip-hop Y-O

<div align="center">Opening lines from Black Star, "Definition" (1998)</div>

One Two Three
The crew is call O-D-D-ee-ee
Transmitting all frequencies
Turn the dial an' let ma brain breathe Y-O

<div align="center">Opening lines from Stanley Odd, "Let Ma Brain Breathe" (2014)</div>

Firstly, KRS-One, Mos Def, Talib Kweli and the Fugees are collectively some of the most respected and credible artists in the hip-hop canon. My thematic and lyrical referencing of these artists is an attempt to authenticate my work by association. Secondly, the lyrics display a party rap-style, sung delivery and content that links to hip-hop's earlier form as noted by Krims (2000). Finally, the overall message is one of lyrical contest as opposed to violent posturing. My version of this introduces the concept of the song prior to the rap starting with the line "turn the dial and let ma brain breathe" implying it is time for something else, something new, something different from what is currently being listened to. My final line attempts to directly interact with the earlier versions by rhyming "dial an'" with the previous versions "violence" thus creating a historical rhyme with earlier songs rather than any rhyme in my own piece.

Topics and Themes

As with any musical genre, there are a range of broad topics and concepts that are generically recognised within hip-hop. At all stages, it is finding new and innovative ways of expressing established topics or concepts that makes good writing and original contribution to the genre. From amongst these established topics, in this section I aim to introduce two particular themes common to both hip-hop and my own work. Kautny (2015: 102) states:

> Rap lyrics have incorporated numerous themes, from political storytelling to self-reverential braggadocio, strongly depending on the individual approaches of the rap artist and the socio-cultural, historical, and generic context in which his or her work originates.

This is true but to put this in a less binary fashion, rap lyrics can often encompass *both* of these themes that he sets at odds as well as a wide range of others all contained within a verse of 16 to 24 bars. Being such a core element of hip-hop writing, and quite unique in that manner, braggadocio might be a good topic to start with when looking at rap content.

Braggadocio

Edwards (2009: 25-27) acknowledges the place and importance of bragging and boasting in hip-hop, explaining that they are "an art form all of themselves." This is demonstrated in the complexity of Rakim's lyrics in *No Omega*:

> I'm the Alpha, with no Omega,
> Beginning without the end, so play the…

The meaning here is that without a last letter of the alphabet to end it, Rakim can flow indefinitely. While bombastic rhetoric can contribute to hypermasculinity in hip-hop (as discussed in chapter five of this document), Bradley (2009: 189) highlights the raised level of quality in rap's braggadocio as opposed to generalised boasting, noting that it demands: "something new: in poetry, eloquence, and artistry." Clearly, in hip-hop, braggadocio is understood to be an established rhetorical device within a culture that has always had a strong competitive element. Kautny (2015: 102) talks of the deeply ingrained competitive nature of hip-hop, referring to this writing form as "aesthetic forms of dualling" and identifying "verbal strategies of rap battling." Having been born of and evolved through African American culture, it is of little surprise that each of these elements of the rap construct can be found relating to pre-existing African American cultural practices. Although braggadocio in hip-hop has developed and its complexity grown, parallels can be found in blues lyrics and in the signifyin(g) practices theorised by Henry Louis Gates Jr (1988).
Further parallels can be drawn with the African American cultural practice of "playing the dozens" (Smitherman, 1997: 13) whereby the aim is to talk yourself up while putting your opponent down. The most direct way to achieve this in hip-hop is through punchline rap. Noting the cultural complexity at play in braggadocio, Smitherman explains the need to look beyond the literal, to the symbolic significance of "new perspective," "self-empowerment" and "accomplishment against the odds" (ibid: 12-13). This form of boasting can

sometimes feel at odds with Scottish culture. Francesconi (2010: 1) notes the combination of "stereotyping, self-stereotyping, mockery and self-mockery" that takes place in Scots humour, suggesting that "Scottish humour and self-derogation are widely recognised as peculiar ethnic traits." As such, the global element of braggadocio within hip-hop culture has to be filtered through the local. To illustrate this, consider the final eight bars from my verse on a collaborative track with Scottish emcee, Louie and producer Scatabrainz from 2013 called "Pan Breed":

> But don't start acting like this was impressive
> I've spat for two minutes and still haven't said shit
> And the best bit, weak heads think I've a masterful mind
> 'Cause I talk in patterns and lines that all just happen to rhyme
> You're thinking 'Damn did I mention this dude flows?'
> I'm thinking 'scam', this is Emperor's New Clothes
> It's a bad look if you've been thinking that's good
> If you could do what I do then you'd be thinking that too

This verse displays the complex "rhyme tactics" (Alim, 2003: 63) discussed earlier, ranging from multis of up to eight syllables, assonance, mosaic rhymes such as "masterful mind" and "happen to rhyme" and compound internal rhyme schemes. Coming at the end of a technically proficient verse, the approach that I've taken here is to criticise my own lyrics while maintaining the technical skills of flow and multisyllabics. In doing so, I essentially criticise anyone who has in any way enjoyed the verse that I have just recited, claiming that if you were as good as I am you'd realised that the verse wasn't that good. This is an effective example of using the peculiarities that Francesconi refers to in Scottish humour to interface with the hip-hop cultural practice of braggadocio. The Scottish trait of self-derogation has become the basis of the braggadocio, thus self-ironically undermining the concept.

Social Commentary

As stated above, there is significant blending of topics in hip-hop with one specific theme of braggadocio or social commentary seldom being found solely in a rap verse. Instead, while the lyrical content of a rap verse might lean toward one topic in particular, it will generally display a range of wider influences through its content. Krims (2001) acknowledges this process of topic and style-bleed while creating his rap genre classification system. Even from its early

roots as a party culture, hip-hop has carried overt and hidden layers of political and social commentary. O'Neal Parker (2006: unpaginated) discusses how as a 12-year-old in Hazel Crest, Illinois hip-hop began to shape her "politics and perceptions and aesthetics." Lusane (2004: 381) describes hip-hop as "the voice of the alienated… black youth." Rose (1994: 18-19) notes that "rap offers alternative interpretations of key social events such as the Gulf War, The Los Angeles uprising, police brutality, censorship efforts and community-based education," going on to describe it as the "central cultural vehicle for open social reflection." Price-Styles (2015: 17) traces its lineage back through 1970s political poetry, the Black Arts Movement and the Civil Rights movement, to the "various subversions to form" of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance and beyond.

From these observations, and an abundance of similar views, it is clear that social commentary, political viewpoints and radical identity have been core to hip-hop culture throughout its history. As a force for social and cultural commentary, hip-hop lyrics can be politically overt, from the work of artists such as Public Enemy who called for social change, reflected injustices and provided a voice for the underrepresented, to Black Star in the late 1990s, through to Kendrick Lamar's "Alright" (2015) becoming an anthem for the Black Lives Matter movement. Hip-hop lyrics can be equally impactful and important by simply documenting lives that would otherwise be invisible. Across my work there are examples of the explicit political writing referred to above and of the wider range of topics and references contained within one song. Returning to "Let Ma Brain Breathe," it encompasses braggadioco, wordplay, lyrical dexterity and elements of social and political comment. Verse two includes the lines:

> How's Edinburgh Uni banning Robin Thicke
> But it's OK for Snoop to pimp hoes and clock a grip?
> Nothin' but a G Thang's worth a million Blurred Lines
> But that's still some hypocritical, knee jerk hype
> Meanwhile, rich men waging a war against benefits
> Is as sincere as a sermon from the Crystal Methodist
> While Muslims and Christians are being beaten and dismembered
> I'm hearing on the TV about witches getting burned
> And babies being aborted based on their gender
> Now Madge and Gwinny think it's OK to use the N-word?
> Nope.
> Let me spraff some more
> Pick yir jaws up aff the floor
> Delusional outlaws in the wilderness
> Become ghost stories to scare the children with

This section of verse was preceded by the purely braggadocio lines regarding robbing babies at the tuck shop, yet here they segue into a critique of the University of Edinburgh Student Association's decision to ban a song by Robin Thicke for its sexist lyrical content when such a wide range of similar songs have not been an issue in the past. My criticism was of reactionary, media-led behaviour as opposed to being support for the song in question's lyrical content. The lines following make reference to demonisation of the poor, hypocritical religious rhetoric and the issue of white people of extreme privilege (Madonna and Gwyneth Paltrow) being so far removed from ordinary society as to feel it was OK for them to use the N-word in public (Madonna apologises, 2014) (Weiner, 2012). In response to Kautny's statement on themes in rap lyrics, this section and the other parts of "Let Ma Brain Breathe" already discussed illustrate my point regarding the blending and inclusion of a range of themes within one hip-hop verse. This is an example of the "web of intersecting texts" that Holmes Smith refers to in describing "rap's prolific practice of juxtaposition and intertextuality" (1997: 352-353). The section of verse above is both global and local. It follows established hip-hop rules for quality control in terms of rhyme schemes, flow and rhythm. It is braggadocious *and* socially observant. It contains macro observations about religion, global crises, world media and racism but also reflection on local issues (both local to Edinburgh and local to the UK). It also embeds regional dialect and terminology. For further consideration of metaphor, referencing and intertextuality, a reflection on the literary mechanics of the first verse of "Let Ma Brain Breathe" can be found in Appendix A.

Conclusion

The purpose of this first chapter was to consider some of the established rules and structures that exist within the hip-hop paradigm and how they are interpreted and translated through Scottish culture to become localised and authentic at source: a personal account of rapping in Scotland. For some of the features discussed, the Scottish interpretation of hip-hop translates perfectly from its global counterpart and my application of them is about continuation and extension of global practices. This is evidenced in many of the technical aspects of rap writing, encompassing multis, caesura, assonance, alliteration and rhythmical interplay to demonstrate lyrical ability. It becomes clear that through

40 years of rap evolution, to the trained ear hip-hop poetics can tell a story within the rhythm of the lyrics as well as from the words themselves. The importance of understanding the "generic contract" (Dubrow, 1982) between writer and audience is further highlighted in the example of quotation. As Williams (2013) demonstrates, the degree of quotation within hip-hop culture as a means to continue a long-term dialogue between practitioners is significant and this can lead to the confusion demonstrated in the example of quotation at the start of Stanley Odd song "Let Ma Brain Breathe" (2014). The competitive nature of hip-hop culture is reflected in the techniques discussed as well as in the practice of punchline rap and braggadocio. However, it is in these areas that local sensibilities start to manifest. Punchlines can be much more effective if written for their intended audience as opposed to a generic audience, hence the example of "a 10p mix up" at the "tuckshop" provides an opportunity to embody global hip-hop values of punchline rap with local representation of language and culture. Similarly, Scottish cultural sensibilities come into play in acceptable forms of braggadocio, where the "self-derogation" of Scottish humour requires a new approach to boastful content. In some instances, Scots' culture, language, dialect and slang provide new and alternative approaches, rhymes and rhythms, as is the case with any individual culture, dialect or language. Finally, hip-hop's pedigree of protest and social commentary is such that it lends itself to political content, either overt or hidden. This is evident from the academic literature and creative output considered but I argue that it is the observational, scattershot nature of hip-hop lyricism that allows lyrical content to be a wide range of things all at once: political, social, boastful, introspective, humorous and more all in the space of 16 bars.

This initial chapter touches on some of the concepts and tools required to analyse rap lyrics in hip-hop. Examples have been given in each area of the evolution of the relevant technique or concept and how they were applied in my own work. Having created this toolkit, the content of this chapter can be applied to a range of aspects of hip-hop lyricism in the coming chapters.

Chapter 2 – Identity and Authenticity, Global and Local

I'm a cyborg superhero with a chipped brain
Shit-faced in a sick-stained costume and a ripped cape
Hook, 2010

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with identity construction and authenticity. Rappers define themselves continually (Kajikawa, 2015: 134). They paint self-portraits with almost every verse that they write. Self-definition and the hip-hop identities it creates are core to creating credible, authentic hip-hop. It has long been established that hip-hop culture and music is hyper-sensitive to authenticity and to honest representation of an artist (McLeod, 2012: 165). This combined with a high level of self-definition, plus core elements such as braggadocio and hyperbole, make for a wide range of contradictions and confusions regarding identity, reality, persona and authenticity.

Having discussed the tools used to write and perform as a rapper in chapter one, this chapter considers the process of identity construction and how that combines with composition to create authentic work. The concepts discussed will be explored through the analysis of a piece of my work that demonstrates their practical application. The approach adopted considers the process of creating a personal rap identity, whereby the artist (i.e. me) takes on hip-hop rules (the global), filters them through proximity (the local) and makes something unique (the personal). The chapter will first address a discussion of identity and authenticity as they are being used here, giving consideration to a range of academic viewpoints. Following on from that will be a discussion on issues relating to Scottish culture before an analysis of a range of factors contributing to identity and authentication. Finally, through a close reading of the first verse of "The Numbness" (Stanley Odd, 2009), I will look at the ways that these viewpoints converge with the techniques and devices discussed in chapter one: how they intersect and blend during the process of writing, recording and performing hip-hop. This chapter takes an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on ethno- and autoethnographical data, poetic analysis and musicological discussion, as well as taking into account ethical philosophical perspectives of identity.

On "Public Service Announcement" in 2001, Jay-Z, begins "Allow me to re-introduce myself." In this example, he explicitly refers to his reintroduction and updated image definition. Jay-Z's successful updating and rewriting of self-image allows him to maintain authenticity as his circumstances change. Unlike other genres where artists perform under a group name but retain their own given names, hip-hop is characterised by the fact that artists rename themselves. This is an overt example of how hip-hop is about redefining who you are; rewriting your story; and repositioning yourself contra to the position life has given you. It is about control, through controlling the facts. As a rapper, hip-hop allows for a process of myth-building to create a new persona, emphasising the aspects of your character that you want people to see and masking those that you want to remain hidden.

Identity in Society and Music

Appiah (2007) discusses social identity from an ethical perspective, noting the fluidity and difficulties in categorising specific social identities. He defines a general rubric for social identification that involves ascribing characteristics to a specific social label (e.g. Scottish, white, female, gay etc), identifying someone as having those characteristics and thereby treating them a certain way. The process of social identification could be considered synonymous with stereotyping. In making this link it highlights the conflict between the human need to categorise things to make sense of them and the oversimplification that must take place in order to do that.

Rose (1994) and Krims (2000) observe the connection between an artist's identity and their credibility or authenticity. Hess (2005: 297) discusses the "performance of authenticity" and its relation to a need for hip-hop artists to reflect their real-life experiences. Such discussions highlight the performative nature of identity. This raises the question of identity versus persona. From Appiah, the argument can be made that while a persona is a conscious daily performance of the way we wish to appear in public, identity can also be a conscious choice as to how we choose to be identified by others and to identify ourselves. Where hip-hop identity becomes particularly exciting for me is that one of its core features is this process of overt self-definition.

Krims' (2000) discusses Ice Cube's creation of a radical black identity, noting that the degree of detail and success with which Ice Cube created his "revolutionary" gangsta rap persona made subsequent attempts to express other aspects of his own identity difficult. Krims describes how the "collapsing of persona and artist" (ibid: 94), can be restrictive in expressing character traits that are at odds with the established identity. The difficulty comes from the fact that, as Appiah explains, social identity carries with it an expectation of actions – from "norms of identification" to "norms of behaviour" (2007: 29). In this way, the same rules of social identity can be applied to artistic identity and persona. Also relevant to Krims' work on identity creation, Frith states:

> …identity is mobile, a process not a thing, a becoming not a being…
> [and] our experience of music - of music making and music listening - is
> best understood as an experience of this self-in-process. (1996: 111)

Frith's work on identity and identity construction highlights the active and evolutionary elements of identity – that it is made, not reflected and variable, not fixed.

In response to Krims (2000), Hess (2005) explores rap persona and identity, arguing that through the work of a 'persona artist' such as David Bowie (Ziggy Stardust) or MF Doom it is possible to avoid the issue of identity collapsing between persona and artist. He argues that through creating clear split-identity heroes and anti-heroes it is possible to sidestep criticism regarding artistic authenticity. While Krims and Hess demonstrate two different perspectives on artistic identity, it is the reality element of Ice Cube's performance that links his identity and his rap persona so intrinsically. MF Doom in comparison, exploits the pre-existing cultural notion of split identity in comic book superheroes to allow distance and conflict between the artist and the persona. Doom's ludic engagements with cultural and social identity allow for forms of cultural subversion, social critique and resistance. Creating characters that draw from contemporary cultural artefacts and repurposing them allows simultaneous critique with and participation in mainstream culture and commerce. This duality of engagement and criticism is at the core of a conflict between cultural authenticity and commodification that runs through hip-hop.

In addition to the forms and practice of *personal* identity work inherent in rap, hip-hop is, as a global culture (Rose, 1994), also an imagined *community* (to borrow Anderson's term (2006)). As such, hip-hop can be compared to other forms of nationalism; "the hip-hop nation" (Forman, 2012: 248) can be found to exhibit all the same traits as nationalist identity e.g. national pride; gatekeepers; origin stories. Thus, when a hip-hop artist writes their public persona into their lyrics they do so with the knowledge that it must fall within certain delineations of collective, cultural identification. Further to this, the identity that they create must be believable to its 'national' audience. By this I mean that the identity must fit within the bounds of what is considered authentic within the genre. This speaks to authenticity, cultural perceptions and generic contracts.

Authentic Identity

If identity must be believable, the question then becomes: how do you create a believable identity? If the answer is that identity must be authentic, then authenticity too must be unpacked. Authenticity and 'realness' are core to hip-hop culture (Rose, 1994; Krims, 2000; Kahf, 2012). Often where the difficulty arises is in defining what makes someone authentic. Pickering highlights that "authenticity is a relative concept which is generally used in absolutist terms" (1986: 213). This is where a lot of issues with authenticity arise, as its defining elements are subjective and changeable but are often portrayed as absolute. Peterson states that to be authentic, a performance or artist must be "believable" and "original" (1997: 220). He goes on to note the evolutionary nature of authenticity within a genre, observing its fluidity and how the definition of authentic can change over time. This fluidity chimes with Frith's definition (1996: 115) of identity "becoming, not being." Bennett (2002) and Speers (2017) observe that geographical difference can also affect the local markers of authenticity. Kitwana (2005) argues that hip-hop is a black culture and that any other ethnicity making use of the culture is an act of appropriation. This is similar to Bynoe's assertion that "technical aspects of rap music can be learned by foreigners but the central part of hip-hop culture is the story-telling and informing that imparts about a specific group of people" (2002: 77). Therefore, for some, authenticity comes from ethnicity. In contrast, Gilroy (1993) is critical of what he describes as "nationalist," essentialist viewpoints that claim only African-American hip-hop can be legitimately authentic. This critique of

essentialism can be expanded to include class, gender and other exclusive forms of identification and authentication.

Expanding on Frith (1996), Speers (2017: 2) takes a view of "lived-out" authenticity, considering how artists negotiate hip-hop culture and everyday life in order to construct authenticity. Making the link between individual and cultural identity, Frith observes that music is less an accurate reflection of society than a construction of experience. From this, he suggests that making music is the processes of creating a 'self' or identity. This is a powerful idea, as it highlights the performative and narrative elements of music and identity.

From Frith's notion of music constructing identity, the concept would extend such that a songwriter can recreate a place in song and that, for the audience, the song's version of the place becomes more 'real' than the actual place itself. Examples of this in practice abound in music. From The Proclaimers' "Sunshine on Leith" (1988), to Nas' "NY State of Mind" (1994), the artists in question create a space that represents a physical location but is their own vision of it. The artist's constructed version then becomes the real version of the space to their audience. In this scenario, the musician and the song are not holding up a mirror to society but are, instead, creating a new vision of society itself, defining culture rather than or as well as reflecting it. In this way identity becomes fluid and can be changed by music. Thus, music becomes the aesthetic process for expressing identity both as a reflection of how things are and a construction of how they could be. These two images are superimposed on top of each other, creating a world that is both representative of the society in which it is located and a world constructed as the writer would like it to be seen.

Audience perception and reception means that identity starts to take into account not just what I say about myself, not just the world that I construct, but how others see me. Appiah argues that self-identity is secondary to cultural identity: "what I appear to be is fundamentally how I appear to others and only derivatively how I appear to myself" (1992: 76). Addressing the combination of self and culture in identity construction, Moore (2002) divides authentication into first, second and third person authenticity. This trinity of authentication identifies the artist telling the truth either of themselves, of others or of the culture that

they represent. First person authenticity requires the artist to project truth and integrity in their self-image. Second person authenticity follows the premise that musical output represents the thoughts or feelings of others and provides the listener with a cultural identity or "place of belonging" (ibid: 219). Third person authenticity requires the representation of the musical culture. In the case of hip-hop culture third person authenticity might be demonstrated through a range of the methods covered in chapter one from reference and quotation, to the demonstration of lyrical techniques discussed such as wordplay and rhyme construction, to the musical structure and content of the material. So, one says "believe me I am true," two says "I represent you truly" and three says "I represent the genre truly."

Authenticity and Fluid Identity

The work of Philip Auslander is useful at this stage, particularly his assertion that "authenticity is performative" (1999: 72). As a performance studies scholar, Auslander has a long-established perspective of challenging 'truths' in order to demonstrate where essence is actually construct. In his 1999 book, "Liveness", he challenges the essentialist viewpoint of contemporary live music authenticity by unmasking the layers on which performance as truth is constructed. This both reveals the mechanics of constructed 'liveness' and highlights the possibilities for reorder and reworking through modern technology, making it fluid rather than fixed. For Auslander, a musician's performance is never simply a representation of their 'true self'. Rather, he focuses on the process of identity construction through interaction between audience and performer; the projection, reception and mediation of a persona. Auslander's rooting of his research in performance studies allows him to analyse a range of phenomena relating to music, performance and identity, from interpretations of authenticity, to persona, to the concept of liveness. Following Frith's (1996: 211) reflection that he experiences recorded pop and rock music as 'live' events, these observations on live performance can be extrapolated more broadly for musicians in relation to persona, identity and authenticity. Auslander's discussion of persona from a performance studies perspective is particularly useful for challenging some of the more fixed, essentialist-leaning concepts discussed so far in this chapter. His argument is an extension of Goffman's (1965) study of human social interaction, starting from a perspective of

considering musicians as "social beings". From this perspective, he argues that when musicians play a song they primarily perform an identity rather than the piece of music itself. In Auslander's words, "to be a musician is to perform an identity in a social realm" (2006: 101).

Following Graver's approach and using acting as an example, Auslander observes that Jack Nicholson can be three personae at once: celebrity movie star, actor playing a role, and real person. His core point is that in musical performance, the performer's presentation of themselves is not a "foundational reality" but a presentation of themselves within a "discursive domain" (1997: 227).

This is indeed the case, although without wishing to get too far lost in a rabbit-hole of identity deconstruction, the concept of "foundational reality" itself could be argued to be a construct, with almost all of our life experiences involving some mediated interaction and level of performance. Further to this, even when on our own, our ways of thinking and being are affected by our understanding of social and cultural construct. Having said this, without some fixed point to anchor a concept, it is very difficult to make any useful contribution regarding that concept's relation to anything else. As such, a "foundational reality" provides the necessary fixed point, from which to discuss the fluidity of identity.

Auslander's use of Graver's three layers of Jack Nicholson – star, actor and human being – can be related to Frith's idea of "double enactment" (1996: 212) where he acknowledges that in addition to portraying their 'true' selves, singers also portray themselves as musicians (or stars) and as the character of a song itself. Auslander (2004: 6) describes these three layers as "the performer as human being," "the performance persona" and "the character". Auslander has spent some time considering and linking a range of works relating to performance, persona and social interaction in an attempt to construct a schema that can account for the complex process of identity creation and recognition.

In building this schematic, Auslander (2006) combines his observations about layers of performer identity with Goffman's (1965) research concerning the way

that human beings perform different versions of themselves in different routines (or situations). Taking these routines to include how we present ourselves at work, home, with friends, acquaintances and partners, Auslander proposes a musical persona, as a separate routine or context to perform the self. Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), attempts to outline the basic frameworks through which we make sense of the world around us. These he splits into "natural frameworks" such as weather or geographic surrounding, and "social frameworks", relating to rules and guidelines dictated by any form of social construct. It is into this list of social frameworks that Auslander inserts music as a "primary social frame" (2006: 104).

Having established the idea of human social life being understood through a series of frames, Auslander goes on to demonstrate how musicians attempt to manipulate these frames in order to convince an audience of their persona, and subsequently, their authenticity. This can be signified prior to any music being played through indictors such as location, stage set up, clothing and demeanour. These visual cues can prepare an audience for what to expect from the musician. From a personal perspective, I don't like to be seen by the audience before the start of a live set. A performer interacting with the crowd prior to a performance can be seen as more 'true' or 'real', collapsing the distance between themselves and the audience (Auslander, 2006). For example, rapper Homeboy Sandman is often described in terms such as 'humble' and more 'real' due to his walking around and interacting with the audience before performing, thus demonstrating the interpretation of authenticity through proximity (RESPECT.Staff, 2013). Contrastingly, I always feel that the impact of an opening performance is amplified when it is possible to remain separate from the audience until the moment the performance begins. To me, this is not about arrogance or seeing myself as apart from the crowd, it is about building tension and creating drama in order to heighten the experience of the performance for myself and the audience.

Considering audience reaction and interaction is useful at this point as it helps to emphasise this importance of the role that audience plays in identity construction. Goffman refers to the way a person presents themselves in a situation as a process of "impression management", attempting to convince a

person or group of people that you are what you say you are. Auslander applies this to musical performance, stating:

> the performer seeks to create a certain impression on an audience, and to have the audience accept that impression as part of the operative definition of reality for the interaction. (2006: 106)

When Auslander discusses a "genre frame", he is referring to a shared perspective between a group of people that are viewing a musical activity through the same set of rules and filters. This is similar to Dubrow (1982) discussing the "generic contract" that takes place between a writer and a reader in relation to literary genre. Auslander notes of genre frames, that there are "idealizations at work here: audiences and musicians are aware of a set of emotions and attitudes (and corresponding facial expressions) deemed appropriate within the genre frame" (2006: 112). In relation to Scottish hip-hop, the genre frame itself needs to be laminated, to use Goffman's term, or filtered, through a Scottish cultural lens in order to be acceptable locally. For example, over emphasis of hand gestures or stylised actions considered to be overtly 'hip-hop' can be considered inauthentic in this context and must therefore be mediated by local culture.

Auslander goes on to note that a musician's projection of their persona is a demand to be treated a certain way. This ties to Appiah's "norms of identification" and "norms of behaviour" (2007: 29). Finally, Auslander observes that how the audience perceives the relationship between the actual music the musician plays, and the persona they project will either confirm or dismantle their constructed identity. Identity construction then becomes about consistency and continuity in the process of persona projection. Repertoire, style and persona require a consistent connection in order to construct an authentic identity.

Auslander notes that within the restrictions of genre rules (or genre framing) "personae are always negotiated between musicians and their audiences" (2006: 113). This negotiation can also be highlighted in the appearance of "flexible personae" that are able to cross traditionally distinct genre boundaries, and in "meta-personae", where a performer has a repertoire of multiple

personae from which to choose, depending on the context. In my own case I work with both meta-personae and with relatively flexible personae, where the boundaries between each persona blur. I release music, record and perform under the names "Dave Hook" and "Solareye", as well as with the group Stanley Odd (which is sometimes mistaken to be me, rather than the band name). Broadly speaking I arrange these different projections as Dave Hook relating to poetry, spoken work and academia, Solareye relating to a solo hip-hop artist and Stanley Odd relating to band work. Solareye as a character performs in Stanley Odd the band but his character is mediated slightly as being more laid back and approachable in a group context and more angular or slightly harder-edged in a solo context. Further to this, I do community and prison workshops as both Dave and Solareye, as well as each of those personae both rapping and reciting poetry on occasion. Already it is evident that there is a high degree of similarity between each identity construction and that the social environment has an effect on what persona takes root. Again, this is agreed through performance and negotiation with the audience. All of this contributes to a contraflow of projection and reflection; the blurring, transmission, reception and mediation that takes place between performer and audience in the process of identity creation.

Through a series of analytical processes, I shall now go on to discuss autobiographical identity construction in lyrics, construction of 'space' in lyrics, musical and generic authenticity, reception constructing identity and finally a close reading of a piece that demonstrates much of this practice in action.

Please Allow Me to Introduce Myself: A Rap Introduction

Analysis of the opening rap lyrics from an album can demonstrate how fully formed rappers' identities are and how quickly they convey those images to their audience. Considering the opening lines from a song of mine, "The Pageant" (2012), demonstrates a process of explicit identity construction and myth building:

> Welcome to the pageant, I'm fine thanks for asking
> Waving the ratchet, bumping Belle and Sebastian
> The last bastion, full body cast sat laughing
> Dancing with flashbacks from full metal jackets

Here, a range of the rap tactics are combined with cultural referencing and my own elements of individual identity to create a distinct, complete identity. In terms of lyric construction, the verse displays multi-syllable end- and internal rhymes, with the same rhyme repeated ten times in four lines. By opening with the line "Welcome to the pageant," I instantly set up the idea of life being a carnival, spectacle and a show. The idea of putting on a mask in public is raised more directly by acknowledging this and comparing it to pageantry. Line two is typical of my lyrical approach, it references "waving the ratchet" (US hip-hop slang for either a gun or a knife) and "bumping Belle and Sebastian." Here, it is the absurdity of combining a parody of generic hip-hop violence, with the image of publicly blaring delicate Scottish folk-pop that allows me to challenge preconceptions about hip-hop content and stereotypes. In doing so I also create a self-image of outcast and geek with a harder more challenging edge through the inclusion of violent imagery. These contrasts continue into lines three and four, laughing in the face of injury and claiming to be "the last bastion," i.e. the final hope or charge. Here, as with "the pageant" referencing, it is not clear whether I mean musically or in wider culture, allowing me to imply this level of awareness and cultural significance, which is generically accepted through the braggadocio element of hip-hop culture. Essentially, in four lines I aim to create an identity of a lyrically capable, challenging comedic outcast.

Following on from the African American tradition of "playing the dozens," hip-hop maintains a historic tradition of combining self-definition, wordplay and braggadocio. This cultural practice has become a global phenomenon due to the worldwide export of hip-hop culture. How each artist performs the process, speaks greatly to the way they form their local identities.

Connecting the Global and the Local

As already discussed, the significance of the local being represented in hip-hop has long been established. As such, it is easy to view each global instance of hip-hop culture taking root in a new geographic location as simply local appropriation and interpretation of a global culture. Pennycook and Mitchell

(2009) help to challenge this view, bringing into focus the more complicated, messier reality of dual or multi-directional flow. They argue that the process of localisation is more complicated than a one-way expansion and uptake of a global culture, observing:

> when local practices of music, dance, story-telling, and painting encounter diversifying forms of globalized Hip Hop, they enable a recreation both of what it means to be local and of what then counts as the global. (ibid: 2009: 28)

This perspective describes a situation where historical, indigenous culture is expressed in a new way, as well as hip-hop culture being expressed in a local way: two-way traffic.

Considering global flows from a linguistic perspective, Pennycook and Mitchell first highlight that if we are to talk linguistically of a multiplicity of 'World Englishes' to emphasise their differences across differing cultures, then by that rationale there would also be 'global hip-hops', plural, for similar reasons. This first rationale is then dismissed as *still* lacking the necessary depth to fully explain the complex interaction between local and global. Pennycook and Mitchell claim that hip-hop has always been local. Making a distinction between hip-hop always being local and hip-hop reflecting local characteristics in a global form, they state that:

> entrenched oral traditions of storytelling and poetry stretching back thousands of years have incorporated hip-hop into their cultures rather than the other way around (2009: 30)

From this vantage point, the view is of local cultures being represented through a new global interface (hip-hop) as opposed to (or as well as) a global culture being expressed with some local referencing. The distinction is significant in terms of how hip-hop is perceived in relation to globalisation and appropriation.

Through this process, what begins as imitation and grows into adaptation can develop into something even deeper and more multifaceted, not just continuing local traditions but also revising and even reinventing them. Many of the

41

worldwide studies of hip-hop report similar stories of indigenous cultures claiming ownership of hip-hop. In examples ranging from Senegal, to Mogadishu, to Aboriginal Australia, hip-hop creators are recorded declaring their right to and their embodiment of hip-hop culture. While claims to embody hip-hop culture can be found in my writing, they are normally directed at other Scottish artists, where I am declaring or displaying a range of rap skills that I believe to evidence hip-hop credentials. This is part of hip-hop's intrinsically competitive culture. On a wider global scale, I feel it is more complicated from a white European perspective. In this case, my feeling is that claims to hip-hop credibility should be more of a dialogue than a given.

McCann and Ó Laoire (2003: 234) refer to the "simplistic nature of the binary opposition" between Gaelic and English-language music in Ireland, referring to its construction of a fixed notion of tradition, obscuring "social context and personal meaning". Similarly, from a Scottish hip-hop perspective, some difficulties arise in the concept of existing cultural tradition and heritage simply being expressed through a new medium. One such social complication would be the Scottish "cringe" – the historical discomfort associated with overtly Scottish culture and tradition (Krusenstjerna, 1989). This relates to a complicated phenomenon observed as being part of a national psyche of embarrassment at the representation of Scottish culture, accent and society (and hence self) in the media. This is combined with the tourist industry representation of Scottish culture centred around tartan and shortbread; the "stereotypes of romanticism and provincialism" (ibid: 169). Furthermore, as discussed later in this chapter, Scottish accent in music sometimes jars on Scottish ears. Therefore, the idea of simply taking "entrenched oral traditions" and repackaging them within a hip-hop paradigm is not as straight forward as might be imagined. What seems to emerge instead, is a strong representation of contemporary Scottish culture in rap, where traditional Scots language or Gaelic is absent in favour of current localised Scots dialect and vernacular. This ties to the observations from Aboriginal emcee, Wire MC, who notes that it would be inauthentic from him to rap in Maori when it is not a language that he grew up speaking or that represents where he is from. Considering forced indigenous language to be "tokenistic" (Pennycook & Mitchell, 2009: 37), he

prefers current indigenous slang, and localised interpretation of language, thus being more truly representative of himself and the culture he associates with.

It is in ways such as these that "Hip Hop makes it possible for the local to be put on a global stage, not as the dusty feet caught through the lenses of a camera intent on depicting poverty, but rather as the dusty feet that are grounded in local philosophical and poetic traditions." (Pennycook and Mitchell, 2009: 34). Following Inoue (2004), Pennycook and Mitchell argue that there is no final point in this trajectory; that it is unhelpful to think of history and culture in a singular, linear fashion. Instead, it is useful to consider the conflicts and crossovers that move beyond globalisation and localisation to transform both. These transformative elements are a constantly fluctuating, evolving process with fluid, multi-point origins and destinations. This is the "self-fashioning of the already local" (2009: 40) that they refer to, implying a reimagining but also continuation of local cultural history and ideology. If globalisation is the world-wide spread of one cultural vision, and indigenisation is the local cultural adaptation of a global practice, then the fully successful uptake of a culture so focused on local representation (hip-hop) is the transformation into something new that represents the global-new and the indigenous-old though an explosion of syncretism and hybridisation.

When working in community and youth projects, I often start by pointing out to participants that the language they use when they talk to their friends in the playground, the wordplay and dialogue they exchange *is* writing. This is a useful point when developing initial relationships and encouraging those that might not have any prior experience of writing. The point I am making is that expressing themselves in their own voices and language is representing their stories and that virtually everyone has experience of doing this orally among their social groups. In this way, hip-hop's focus on local representation is an obvious fit as a contemporary vehicle for local, personal and cultural creative expression.

Trying to discuss national culture as one cohesive consensus is problematic. However, doing so can be useful in order to emphasise the fluid, muddled, multifarious nature of identity and locality. Scotland has a complicated relationship with its cultural heritage. Central Scotland's recent history (the last

50 years) has involved the collapse of industry and a dearth of employment opportunities, resulting in many communities descending into an economic vacuum of unemployment and social deprivation. Parallels can be drawn between some of these social conditions and those found in the South Bronx in the 1970s. Scotland's history as part of the UK (the last 300 years) involves the invasion and colonisation of huge areas of the planet and the cultural, social and humanitarian atrocities that go with that. Sectarianism further complicates matters where sections of Central Scottish society are still divided by historical ties to Catholicism and Protestantism. Scotland's own national identity is confused by historically (sometimes) enforced anglicised culture and language, while being uncomfortable with the commodified stereotypes of Scottishness. Despite this, Scottish traditional ceilidh and folk music is still very popular within Scottish culture but often for social events as opposed to as a means to express or critique contemporary culture. These issues (and others) do not provide an easy, straightforward national heritage to draw from in terms of expressing cultural history. From these points, it becomes clear why there is something of a disconnect between the past and the present in the way that my identity as a Scottish rapper is constructed (and much of the Scottish hip-hop community's identities). In constructing an identity of challenge (in-keeping with global hip-hop's outsider narrative), Scottish rappers often stand in opposition to their own national cultural history of complicity in imperialism, and the current neoliberal geopolitics of globalisation. This occurs, while also interfacing with the actual process of globalisation by adopting global hip-hop culture and adapting/ mutating it into a hybridised new local/ global form. The combinational and contradictory nature of these processes calls to mind Rollefson's assertion that hip-hop has "evinced the postcolonial realities of asymmetry, hybridity and paradox" (2017: 3). In this way, a new image of Scottish culture is constructed that reflects contemporary issues and attitudes, while also reimaging and reviving traditional cultural elements through a new form (in this case hip-hop).

To summarise, Pennycook and Mitchell provide an alternative to the fixed image of globalisation as a constant, unstoppable spread around the globe of one cultural viewpoint, vision or image. Instead, local, historical cultures are seen to grow upwards and evolve into new forms through interaction with global culture(s). From this perspective, numerous local and global sensibilities are

44

multiplexed along a complex interchange of bidirectional cultural pathways. Thus, through the consideration of local cultural identity, global cultural rules, and the ebb and flow of cultural hybridity, a more profound understanding of local and global relations can emerge reflecting the "multiple, copresent, global origins" (2009: 40) that make up global hip-hop.

Scots Accent and Language in Music

I've been doing this since back when
And back then, people couldnae see past the accent
"The Bleakest Blues" Hook, 2016

When considering Scottish accent in rap it is useful to first consider Scottish accent in a wider musical context. Over the last thirty years, Scottish popular music has gone through a process of transition in terms of the acceptability of Scottish accent. This can be traced from the Proclaimers (1988) being virtually alone in terms of displaying overtly Scottish accents in popular music, through the 1990s where the rise of Glasgow Indy bands such as Arab Strap, Belle and Sebastian, and The Delgados saw a rise in popular sub-cultural artists, to the present day where nationally and internationally renowned artists like Paulo Nutini, Frightened Rabbit and Twin Atlantic all sing in clearly recognisable Scottish accents. This transition in popular music trends can be linked to a broader cultural shift in Scottish culture away from the "cringe" associated with overtly Scottish identifiers that existed in the 1960s, 70s and 1980s (Krusenstjerna, 1989). It has been argued that the move to Scots being more comfortable in our own Scottish national identity could be related to a gradual shift in self-image and self-determination, linked to the reinstatement of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 and a stronger sense of capable national identity. (McIllvanney, 2013)

The established focus on authenticity, the need to represent the local and the narratives of reality that permeate hip-hop culture mean that Scottish rappers have always known that speaking in their own accents is the only option. The habit (from the 1980s, 90s and still evident in some areas) of singing in a mid-Atlantic, location-free accent is not possible for a genre that demands authenticity and for thematic content that centres around the local. As such, the increased recognition of Scottish hip-hop over the last five to ten years could be

seen to bear some relation to a more accepting outlook in Scottish (and British) culture towards Scottish accent in music.

Much of this issue, I would argue, is about the listener's ear acclimatising to alternative accents. I am quoted in an interview on hip-hop in Scotland as saying:

> Around 1999 I actually got Roots Manuva "Brand New Second Hand" from HMV in Buchanan Street, listened to it then took it back the shop like "nah this isn't for me", then a pal burned me a copy again six months later and I realised that it was amazing. It took me that wee period of time to adjust my ear to hearing English voices instead of American voices in rap (Sutcliffe, 2017).

This quotation highlights a recognition that any accent deviating from the established norm can take some personal reconfiguration to accept. The following social media exchange highlights the issue of Scottish accent in rap and relates directly to my own work. This online conversation was taken from a post by a Stanley Odd fan in southern England of the song "It's All Gone To Fuck" (2016) on Facebook in December 2016:

> Original Poster (OP): Pretty much sums it up. Great tune from a great band from north of the border
> Reply: I hate it when the singer tries to be overly Scottish, it just sounds fake.
> OP: damn these bloody scots trying too hard to be scots
> Reply: I only got upto (sic) when the male started singing, then it became to (sic) cringeworthy for my tastes (McCarty & Johnson, 2016)

In this exchange, it becomes clear that performing in my own accent is perceived by some as overemphasising my accent. This dialogue encapsulates some of the issues that exist around accent in Scottish hip-hop. Namely, it would be impossible to use anything other than your own accent and tell authentic stories or maintain a credible rap identity but at the same time having a Scottish accent means that it creates some degree of discomfort or dislike in a listening audience that are unfamiliar with it.

Gates Jr (1988)'s theory for African American literary criticism is based on "signifyin(g)" practices whereby the explicit and figurative meaning of language is intentionally displaced. This practice, of wordplay subverting dominant rhetoric to create hidden meaning within subcultures or minorities can be found

in Scottish cultural practice of Scots English. An example of wordplay in everyday Scots language – derived from a subversion of the dominant ('proper' English) cultural meaning of words by replacing its usage with that from local dialect or accent – can be found in the very simple joke:

> Did yi hear about the lonely prisoner? He was in his sel' (anon)

Here the play on Scottish west-coast pronunciation of "self" being identical to the word "cell" allows a pun. Examples of duality abound in Scots humour, where local dialect allows for double-meaning. Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, recognised as the first scholar to interject African American women's signifying practices into broader linguistic discourses, recorded the following example (1999: 317):

> Grace is pregnant and beginning to show, but has not informed her sister yet. Her sister, seemingly unaware of the situation, comments on her weight gain:
>
> Grace (noncommittally): Yes, I guess I am putting on a little weight.
>
> Rochelle: Now look here, girl, we both standing here soaking wet and you still trying to tell me it ain't raining?

This example of signifyin(g) calls to mind another West-of-Scotland-specific phrase: "If you fell in the Clyde you'd come oot wi a fish" (anon). The phrase here, meaning to imply a person is predisposed to good luck, has a similar semantic construct in that it uses metaphor and is linguistically built around an incident and outcome i.e. falling in the river (incident) catching a fish (outcome); being soaking wet (incident) claiming it's not raining (outcome).

Scottish poet and author Tom Leonard's piece "Unrelated Incidents 3" (1976) similarly plays on the dual meaning of 'unrelated', meaning either being unconnected or untold. Delivered in the form of a news broadcast in broad Scots, his piece draws attention to the messages that are conveyed by language and culture in the way they are presented as well as by their overt meaning, and the effect that different circumstances have on how these messages are received and interpreted. Leonard's poem highlights how issues of nationality, regionality and class affect the perception of truth, in this case from a national broadcaster (the BBC). This process can be directly linked to

the observation by UK hip-hop artist Ty, who notes on the documentary "Rodney P Presents.. the Hip-Hop World News" (2016: 11.30) that hip-hop culture taught him to look for "what I'm not being told as well as what I am being told." This speaks to the idea of implied narrative and underlying truth.

Returning to "The Pageant" (2012), the position of Scots language, accent and translation can be found at various points:

> Man, I tuned out for 2 secs
> To contemplate the creases in ma bruised crepes
> Up here we call 'em sannies, as in sand shoes
> Either way they're falling apart right now as I stand dude
> The opposite of brand new. Stuck on these sand dunes
> I'm not from the highlands but watch how ma clan moves
> Not impressed with this 'I can't understand you'
> I spend ma days tryin' ae discover things I can't do

Verse One, Lines 8-16 of "The Pageant" (2012)

In the above section, a process of overt translation from London-based slang to the Glasgow equivalent is used, first to frame the lyrics in a context and vernacular that is in keeping with the genre, then to introduce the Scottish equivalent. "Crepes" is a word used for shoes in UK hip-hop, derived from crepe-soled shoes. The phrase appears in abundance across the UK hip-hop canon as trainers are a common topic or reference. I first introduce the image with the standard UK terminology, then use the opportunity to inform, using the word "sannies", which as explained in the verse is the Glasgow equivalent, derived from sand shoes. One difference from global hip-hop form here is that rather than boasting about having expensive, well-presented footwear, I describe mine as "bruised," "falling apart" and "the opposite of brand new." This helps to shape an outsider identity and highlights the contrast between mainstream hip-hop and the less explored, fringe frontier of Scottish hip-hop that we inhabit. Hence the phrase "stuck on these sand dunes," again implying outsiderdom, existing in a waste ground beyond the boundaries of wider UK or global perspectives of the genre. The remaining lines of the verse continue to build on cultural stereotypes and counter perspectives with the final couplet challenging the idea of accent being a barrier to a wider audience and the line "I spend ma days tryin' ae discover things I can't do" as a defiant response to potential detractors. This verse demonstrates an alternative to the situation

Speers (2017) describes from the documentary "The Great Hip Hop Hoax" (2013), where two Scottish rappers pretended to be American and got signed to Sony in London, until the truth came out and their plan fell apart. In the documentary Gavin Bain, one of the two rappers, explains that putting on fake American accents and creating American personas was their response to being laughed at as rappers with Scottish accents and that "if you want to get signed you have to be marketable." In contrast, my approach in this verse demonstrates an attempt to engage with hip-hop culture, display my skillset and knowledge of the genre, while also challenging geographic or cultural boundaries and representing my own background. Returning to the idea of Scots language wordplay to create dual meaning, the most overt example appears in verse two of "The Pageant":

> Come on kid, you don't want this so stay at home
> I call these aggie cats 'Nike' 'cause they're erseholes

Here the use of Scots pronunciation allows me to swear uncensored while creating a play on words. The Scots pronunciation of "arse" becomes "erse" allowing the phrase "ersehole" to sound the same as 'air sole'. To translate the remainder of this line, "aggie," meaning aggressive, comes from UK (or London)-based hip-hop slang. As such, this is an example of tiered global and local hybridisation: the one line contains elements of global hip-hop form, global corporate referencing (Nike), UK-established language and local vernacular, as well as a play on words that subverts/ hides its meaning. This line allows me to critique overly aggressive rappers, calling them "Nike" because of the dualism of air soled shoes sounding the same as the Scots pronunciation of 'arsehole'. Thus, there is a significant amount of translation and duality in the line, "I call these aggie cats 'Nike' 'cause they're erseholes", ranging from critique of aggression, subversion of dominant language and metaphor, to renaming a person "Nike" with the multi-layered meaning that conveys. Finally, this song was played on UK-wide BBC Radio One uncensored due to the fact that the Scots language element meant it wasn't recognised as using explicit language.

All of these observations about Scottish linguistic and cultural practices feed into the practice of rapping in Scotland. Perhaps the parallels of having a language and correct way of speaking imposed always results in the ludic

subversion of what is 'correct'. (From an autoethnographic stance, my mother relays how when she was growing up she was repeatedly told that many Scots words or phrases were 'slovenly'. Thus, Scots becomes associated with negative connotations of being untidy and dirty.) Certainly, in Scottish culture the misuse and redefinition of words abounds. This rhetorical playfulness bears strong similarities to the African American acts of signifyin(g). Phrases as diverse as the metaphor for a refundable bottle of juice being called "a glass cheque" due to it being exchanged for cash, to the phrase "there's yir dinner" being used to mean "how about that," and the simile "as wide as the Clyde" to imply a person's cheeky nature, all exemplify the creative nature of local language play. From a rapper's perspective, these phrases are the fertile ground that provides interesting and original phrases, while embedding locality into lyrical content.

Constructing Spaces, Creating Identities

In keeping with Firth's (1996) proposition that music constructs society, Stanley Odd's "Chase Yirsel" (2014) is a good example of how society is reconstructed by the writer, with this construct then being superimposed on top of existing culture, resulting in a syncretism of how things are and how the writer re-creates them. The idea of duality between the reflected and the constructed world is exemplified here, while also allowing me to demonstrate all three tenses of authenticity as identified by Moore.

1   It goes born, school, work, death
2   Humans with glaiket coupons let the bookmakers purse stretch
3   As false hope leaks from a burst pen
4   And yi place yir first bet before you take yir first breath
5   Decomposing croupiers looking hopelessly depressed
6   With the swagger of an old lady at a church fete
7   Deal eternal torment to jokers from a rigged deck
8   In a tobacco stained casino fulla extras from the Sixth Sense
9   Neon signs flicker over rotisserie turned heads
10   City fogged up from furnace smoke and burned flesh
11   Friends trade in their souls for pieces of gold to make them hurt less
12   Then sleep in the earth beneath their own turf feeding the worms in their dirt bed
13   I react like a bull to a red rag
14   'Til I glow around the edges like the Ready Brek man
15   With the heavyset slang to make many heads bang
16   And yi can chase yirsel for that bed tax

Verse One of "Chase Yirsel", Stanley Odd (2014)

This piece contains a wide range of cultural references from imagery of bookmakers and casinos, the under-occupancy penalty (bedroom tax) and Ready Brek (breakfast cereal), to a reimagining of the world through the lens of a dystopia netherworld drawing on the film the Sixth Sense (1999), in a post-industrial city inhabited by the undead. The piece tackles the real-world idea of being born into debt, working until death and a society structured such that survival is the best that one can hope for, turning the bleak viewpoint on its head at the end of the verse by injecting rebellion, humour and local vernacular into what, until then, is a picture of hopelessness and despair. It suggests that locality and challenge will champion over drudgery and oppression. More than that though, the verse is a good example of the combination of the constructive and the reflective. There are sufficient cultural references to allow recognition, while the scene created is one from my imagination.

Realistically, songs and sections of song shift between demonstrating Moore's three tenses of authenticity at different points. These elements, combined with my own accent help to project the image of honesty in representing myself using my own language and cultural indicators. Concurrently, the rhyme scheme, wordplay and use of compound rhyme contribute to authenticity in terms of hip-hop credibility. The same two-syllable end-rhyme scheme is continued for 12 bars with a wide range of compound internal rhymes, chain rhymes and assonance throughout. This culminates in lines 11 and 12, where four-syllable compound internal rhymes are chained together twice in line 11 (trade-in-their-souls// pieces of gold) and three times in line 12 (sleep in the earth// (be)neath their own turf// feeding the worms). These lines still end with the same rhyme scheme continued from the beginning of the song (from work, death// purse stretch, to hurt less// dirt bed). The rhyme scheme then changes for the final four lines at the point that I inject 'me' into the song, providing the 'antidote' in challenge and locality. The technical construction of the verse contributes to first person authentication and third person authentication by representing elements of hip-hop culture. The overarching theme of the lyrical content is of resistance and opposition to social and government oppression. As such, this serves to provide an alternative outsider identity for the listener, opening up the prospect of second person authenticity. This message of resistance is also a core element of hip-hop culture and as such can be argued

to be a further cultural representation therefore strengthening ties to third person authentication. There is additionally the duality of cultural representation to consider here, where hip-hop culture and Scottish culture are both being signified, therefore there is the potential for two separate groups to identify and authenticate the work. In fact, this is often the case with Stanley Odd, where the fanbase comes from both existing hip-hop fans and from more broad music fans with little previous knowledge of hip-hop. The sampled-style instrumental parts and programmed feel of the drum pattern with an Akai MPC swing groove on the kick drums also contribute to cultural authenticity.

Musical Identity

Krims' (2000) rap music genre classifications assist in understanding the boundaries within hip-hop that help to define stylistic and cultural sub-categories. These classifications range from "party rap" to "mack rap," to "jazz/ bohemian," to "reality rap," with further blending and sub-headings being evident inside each. Through these categories Krims proves the subjectivity of true authenticity within the genre, where fans attach "historicity and verisimilitude" (ibid: 62) to the components evident in their particular sub-genre.

As Krims demonstrates, it is sometimes easiest to define what category an artist inhabits by discussing what areas they do not. Stanley Odd is not "jazz/ bohemian." This is relatively unusual for a live hip-hop band. Marshall (2006: 868) draws attention to "sampling's status as essential to the production of *real*, or *authentic* hip-hop", observing that live hip-hop group The Roots had to work to gain a credibility that was easier for many conventional hip-hop outfits to attain. As the most well-known and successful live hip-hop group in the world, The Roots are a sort of template for acceptable live hip-hop. That is to say it is generically predisposed to conform to a jazz/ bohemian/, knowledge/ didactic template of protest, commentary and resistance music informed by the jazz, soul, neo-soul and funk styles sampled by artists such as A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul and the Native Tongues collective in a process of hip-hop intellectualisation in the late 1980s/ early 1990s (Williams, 2013). Consider lead members of The Roots – QuestLove and Black Thought – their very names and the band's name speak of search, intelligence, race and resistance. In the UK this style is excellently executed by bands such as Mouse Outfit (Manchester)

and Granville Sessions (London). The bands normally consist of a rhythm section, horn section and several emcees with laidback, spacious live grooves in a jazz-style format.

Stanley Odd's music isn't based on the same foundations. If The Roots were musically intellectualised by their associating with jazz and Native Tongues-style 'conscious' rap, then Stanley Odd were intellectualised by Skunk Anansie (Intellectualise My Blackness, 1995). Stanley Odd's root has a decidedly more rock music base, with musical elements coming from Skunk Anansie and Rage Against The Machine rather than Donald Byrd and The Meters. Thus, while my lyrical influences envelope twenty years of hip-hop fandom from Nas, to Black Thought, to Jehst, the musical counterpart is decidedly more rock-orientated and this is one of several reasons that make Stanley Odd difficult to categorise, creating barriers to acceptance and authentication. Just as Williams (2013) is able to identify rock-style content in Eminem's production, ours is less the sampling of 1970s soul and more the grouping of and growing up in 1990s rock.

In terms of authentication, a rock-base for hip-hop presents some problems due to the inauthenticity associated with rock-rap and nu-metal.

This acknowledgement of a background growing up with rock music is not to oversimplify musical influences but, rather, to note that I knew rock music before I knew jazz or funk. Hip-hop music introduced me to a more diverse range of genres through its sampling ethic. I met Herbie Hancock through Kool G Rap, Gene Harris through Guru, learned of scat from The Roots, "Datskat" (1995) and James Brown and The Honey Drippers via innumerable loops and samples built from their breakbeats. Thus, rather than these historical listening practices being embedded in my hip-hop, my hip-hop listening practices introduced me to genres that were embedded in the songs via sampling and reworking. Further to this, the other members of Stanley Odd are not huge fans of hip-hop, each with a diverse range of musical tastes. The resulting musical content calls to mind Kristin McGee's discussion of hybridised collectivism and mixed-genre creativity (2015).

This approach also reflects Speers' (2017) observation about London-based hip-hop artist Disraeli and how if he made "boom bap-style" hip-hop it would be inauthentic because it doesn't represent where he came from. Therefore, as an artist you have to make the decision whether you will be true to self or to genre. Speers describes this as "rapper authenticity" versus "hip-hop authenticity." The discussion here also highlights how genre classification systems need to be adapted or rewritten for different people and places. The classification system that Krims created is, by his own admission, designed to be applied to US hip-hop and as such, a different system would be required to accurately sub-divide hip-hop styles in Scotland.

Identity Crisis: Mixed Musical Messages

On paper, Stanley Odd should never be able to achieve its two concurrent and opposing aims: to achieve a profile in the wider Scottish music community and to earn the respect of the Scottish hip-hop community. According to the generic rules and cultural indicators, Stanley Odd shouldn't be considered authentic hip-hop.

An early Stanley Odd biography reads:

> Music for people that get tongue-tied talking to girls; clumsy people that dance awkwardly in their bedrooms; people that are generally uncomfortable in social situations; those for whom fashion-sense is an oxymoron; avid readers of science fiction and comic books; girls who drink tonic wine; anyone who prefers literary figures to viewing figures; disciples and architects of counter-culture. Stay Odd.

The above describes a wide demographic and speaks to the aims of the group as well as the identity that the words construct. Part of this had been my mission from the start. I am a huge fan of hip-hop but I am also aware that many hip-hop events tend to be performances only attended by other hip-hop fans and performers, often resulting in a small audience of likeminded, all-male late-teen to early-thirties rappers performing mainly to each other. Speers (2017: 6) observes that "female artists are significantly underrepresented in UK hip-hop… and more broadly speaking US and global rap music." Her ethnographic research into the London hip-hop scene reflects a similar demographic, where she states:

> I notice I am one of only five females amidst 30 or so people present.
> The men are varying ethnicities and age ranges from very young
> (possibly under 18) to mid to late 30s (ibid: 34)

This description is very similar to that of the Scottish hip-hop core audience,
except that ethnicity is probably less diverse due to Scotland as a whole being
less ethnically diverse than London. Additionally, the DJ/emcee format of the
performances needs to be well sound-checked and mixed or it results in hours
of men shouting incomprehensibly into a microphone over a repetitive beat.
Personally, I can enjoy this as I am a fan of the style but I am aware from many
discussions that it is off-putting to people who might be interested but unfamiliar
with regular hip-hop nights. This is not a criticism of other people's content or
musical aesthetic, rather it is indicative of the typical PA quality and
uncompromising nature of hip-hop music bills when they allow the generic
boundaries of a certain time-period to define what is authentic.

Issues such as these had brought me to the point where I was consciously
trying to do something different with Stanley Odd. I was actively attempting to
engage an audience that might not consider themselves hip-hop fans at all.
Contrary to this being an easier or 'softer' target, I would argue that the distinct
choices I made and direction I chose, in some ways made success more
difficult. Essentially, I was aiming to market hip-hop to a non-hip-hop audience,
while I also cared about convincing a hip-hop audience of the band's credibility,
even as I was aware that there were obvious reasons why the band did not
conform to hip-hop rules regarding authenticity. I was between two different
cultural groups both of whom were potentially hostile or at best in a default
position of being ambivalent about what I do, both of whom would take
validation by the other as further evidence of my lack of authenticity in their
eyes; and I wanted to convert them both. The payoff was a larger audience,
wider demographic and access to more cultural commentators.

In addition to the issue with authenticating live hip-hop bands and the question
of referencing less authentic genres (rock rather than jazz), there are other
significant barriers to easy authentication within hip-hop culture. One of the
most significant issues is that of gender. Having a female vocalist who sings
virtually every chorus and is present on all songs is another barrier to hip-hop

authenticity. Gender inequality and portrayal is a problem in society and, as with many wider cultural issues, hip-hop presents this embedded and amplified. Keyes (2012: 408) talks of the "overt sexism" in rap music and the need to "chisel away at stereotypes about female artists in a male-dominated tradition." Of his reality rap genre, Krims explains:

> Singing, not to mention a substantial female presence of any sort, had been the mark of "softer" styles [that] served to threaten the masculine-identified reality rap authenticity

The male-dominated elements of reality rap tend to shape local underground hip-hop scenes, with their entrenched notions of local representation and strict authenticity codes. Edinburgh turntablist, DJ and producer with hip-hop crew *Penpushers*, Bryan Jones (2017) states in an interview:

> I know at a certain point if I picked up a record and it had a female singing on it, it was R&B, simple as that. That's changed now.

This is in keeping with Chester P from the hugely influential underground UK hip-hop group Task Force, quoted from Speers (2017: 66):

> I know once upon a time if you had a singer on your track or something, you weren't real no more. You weren't allowed to have singers and shit once.

Both of these quotes suggest a change in this belief, although in reality the presence of female sung vocals for some still proves inauthenticity. Finally, even song structures that are based around verse/ chorus/ bridge structure denote an accessibility that is at odds with the image of 'hardcore' reality rap.

The question then becomes, how did Stanley Odd achieve authenticity? I will now consider a number of factors that contribute to the band's authentic status. Firstly, it should be noted that there are still areas of the Scottish hip-hop (and wider hip-hop) community that would not consider Stanley Odd authentic or 'real'. As discussed by Krims (2002), generic rules and considerations for authenticity differ from sub-genre to sub-genre and many of the reality-rap, underground hip-hop community are still very fixed in their interpretation of hip-hop. I aim to demonstrate a multiple perspective view of the process of gradual

authentication that took place over a number of years to establish credibility. Consideration will be given to live performance, music production, association and reception to build up a picture of how identity and authenticity are constructed from multiple sources.

Live Performance of Authenticity

By gaining credibility with an audience who listened by different generic rules (non hip-hop fans) Stanley Odd was able to build a fanbase that based their opinions of authenticity on the quality of live performance, musical and lyrical content.

> According to the much discussed notion of 'authenticity', for example – the central value term in rock, folk and jazz music (see Moore, 2002) – the live show is the truest form of musical expression, the setting in which musicians and their listeners alike can judge whether what they do is 'real' (Frith, 2007).

These markers of authenticity exist within the hip-hop genre but are judged slightly differently e.g. conventional live musicianship is replaced with DJing or production skills. Speers (2017: 51) explains:

> Performing live and attending gigs constitutes everyday life for a rapper and therefore 'lived authenticity'. Rappers want to be authentic in terms of being able to perform well, move the crowd and have strong lyrical content.

Stanley Odd's live show is consistently reviewed as impressive musically, lyrically and in terms of performance. This can be seen as a constant throughout reviews over time. (Local Buzz, 2012) (Jupp, 2014) (Dawson, 2016). As such, an element of authentication would take place when playing live as direct evidence of credibility and capability.

In addition to the live band component of the Stanley Odd performance, I incorporated a number of hip-hop-specific elements such as call-and-response sections, a cappella breakdowns and freestyle. In this way, the band was able to represent part of hip-hop culture within a live-band aesthetic. It is also of note that by the early 2000s worldwide hip-hop artists such as Jay-Z, Kanye West

and Eminem began touring with a live band. Thus, the inauthenticity implied by live band performances was becoming less of a definitive indicator.

Music Constructing Authenticity

Musicological analysis of the first track from 2010's *Oddio* versus the first track of 2011's *The Day I Went Deaf* reveal a significant development in production and stylistic development. 2010's "Ten to One" opens with a two-beat count-in on the hi-hat – denoting live instrumental performance. The song begins with my voice scratched over a guitar-driven, live bass, drums and guitar groove. The overall production of the instrumentation is good quality in terms of mix but focuses on making each instrument sound representative of what they are like live as opposed to processing them in some way that might make them sound sampled or 'other'. The drum-kit is clearly played live with musical variation and fills throughout the performance. Additional percussion, keyboard parts and the sung chorus vocals further confirm the 'band' feel of the recording. The drum beat is prominent but the groove is relatively straight and in terms of mix is part of the rhythm section as opposed to the main driving force of the track. In terms of song structure, the piece follows a conventional verse/ chorus pattern.

In contrast, "By Way of Explanation" from 2011, opens with a distorted, processed drum loop. It is conformist in that it loops a 4/4 beat, the most common of instrumentation and time signatures to hip-hop production (signifying hip-hop authenticity) but the beat itself is less conventional, being made out of a snare roll as opposed to kick and snare patterns. From this the main drum beat appears after four bars. It is louder, more distorted and more central to the mix than in "Ten to One." It is also a sampled drum loop created from recording a live drum part as opposed to a live performance. The song comprises a layered, bricolage approach, with new elements added every four or eight bars, starting with a descending synth bassline. Rather than being based around a guitar riff, this piece is based on a chord progression, with gradual layering being the overall sonic aesthetic. Vocal loops of Veronika Electronika saying "put the odd crew on it" and "Stanley Odd because I want to be" are repeated while additional keyboard and guitar layers build to create an electronic choral effect. This builds continuously until the layers are ruptured by the rap verse, where instrumentation is cut back to percussion and filtered bass.

The lyrical content (analysed below) is challenging and darker than on the song from the previous year. The rap verse ends with a record scratch and leads back into the growing, brooding choral parts built out of a range of layered instrument samples, which build until the end of the piece. Production-wise and content-wise there is a stark contrast to the live instrumentation of "Ten to One" a year earlier. Although both songs were made by recording the same musicians, "By Way of Explanation" employs a recording-then-resampling approach that creates a more aggressive and progressive sound, managing to fit more with the hip-hop aesthetic of creating something new through interaction with technology.

To address the lyrical content, the verse begins:

> Let me cast away from this masquerade
> It's an average day, pass me a topic to masticate
> Of late I flit between annoyed and depressed… with
> Beautiful words and poisonous text… if
> Beauty is deadly, I'm ugly and harmless
> Trying to project a struggling artist
> I'm a socialist or if anarchy is the real solution
> Then my advice is to steal this music

Here the lyrics point to struggle and rebellion, indicating a dissatisfaction with both myself and the place I inhabit. The overall effect of the lyrical content is to move from the light-hearted challenge of 2010, to a more embedded image of struggle in 2011. The wordplay and general outsider perspective is still evident but the lens through which it is being captured seems darker and more angst-laden. The latter part of the verse references a number of Scottish hip-hop artists paying tribute and acknowledging their inspiration:

> Don't blame me, I'm just working on ma own sair heid
> Behind a wall that says I'm so carefree
> And why not? I flip through ma Solareye-Pod
> Trying to see what's been shaping my thoughts
> Dot dot dot…
> It took 'Brainz to eclipse this
> And drove Hector Bizerk as the weans got enlisted
> This is who I am – I'm feeling Less than Human
> A Vagabond in Space and for my next illusion
> If you're Trying to Sell a Bridge you should be Konchis of the Physiks
> There's a Vulgar Eloquence and yet I'm haunted by the visage
> Practice gave me Food for Thought over the Paranoise
> Of voices orbiting ma virtual planetoid
> These were all in ma headphones getting played to death
> So I guess they're to blame for The Day I Went Deaf

Over the course of ten lines I reference eight different contemporary Scottish hip-hop artists or albums, beginning with "Dot, dot, dot," a literal description of the title of Scatabrainz 2009 EP – *Ellipsis* – and ending by referring to the fact that I've been listening to them all therefore they are responsible for any hearing damage but with the dual meaning of recognising their inspiration in the creation of the *The Day I Went Deaf* EP. It also becomes clear here that I use quotation and referencing across my writing of both local and global (American) hip-hop artists.

As per Williams (2013), these references serve to authenticate my work in a number of ways. The worldwide rap references pay respect to its origins and demonstrate my knowledge of hip-hop's history. The local references do the same thing on a local level – showing respect to other artists and associating myself with them in terms of quality and authenticity. The referencing of artists and links to authenticity can also be found in other aspects of Stanley Odd's authenticity construction. In 2011, we set up a series of online free releases of hip-hop remixes of Stanley Odd songs. Doing so strategically aligned Stanley Odd with producers with credibility in Scottish hip-hop. This created a cross-pollination of fan-bases between the band and the producers involved. These and other collaborative activities were intentional, strategic moves and discussed as such via email with the producers.

Reception Constructing Identity

If an artist's identity is constructed by their musical and lyrical content, it is also constructed in the public sphere by how they are perceived by others. An analysis of some Stanley Odd reviews helps to create a picture of how my rapper identity is constructed by the media.

> …witness Edinburgh hip-hop troupe Stanley Odd, whose rapper Solareye eloquently spits out his philosophies and diatribes in his own Edinburgh brogue and native tongue. If hip-hop is in essence the music of black America, then a group like this give it a definite "Celtic" twist (Galloway, 2013)

Galloway describes authenticity through locality, focusing on accent and language. Further to this, the inclusion of "philosophies and diatribes" implies

thoughtfulness, engagement and critique. Finally, the acknowledgement of hip-hop's origins in black America and reference to Celtic culture authenticate by linking the cultural expression in Stanley Odd's music to its established 'authentic' US origins. Galloway's linking music to cultural commentary is significant in relation to how musical authenticity is conceived. Middleton (1990: 127) observes that if music it to be contextualised as expressing culture, then authenticity becomes central and "honesty (truth to cultural experience) becomes the validation criterion or musical value."

The fact that Stanley Odd's music is being overtly identified as expressing culture means that perceived honest expression of this is a core element, contributing to authentication. This combination of cultural commentary and honesty are evident across a number of reviews ranging from "there is a refreshing honesty about Stanley Odd" (McLuckie, 2013), to "the true pleasure of this song is the quick-witted verses and striking delivery of Solareye who creates entertainment at every turn of truth" (MacDonald, 2016). Again, directly linking cultural commentary to honesty, Donaldson (2014) writes: "But for Hook, embracing your heritage is at the heart of the truths he and his band are pursuing." The following review from McCall (2014) is pertinent where every sentence seems to deepen the idea of truth and sincerity:

> Stanley Odd MC Solareye is known for a refreshing lack of pretension in a hip-hop world still associated with big egos and outlandish boasting. He exudes a laid-back confidence based on a firm moral code; empathy for others flows from A Thing Brand New, the Edinburgh collective's third album. The honesty of closing track I Voted Yes has already proved an internet hit in the raw weeks following September 18. Hook candidly explains his reasons for backing independence but never blames those who chose not to follow the same path.

In this short excerpt, the reviewer describes "a refreshing lack of pretension," "a firm moral code," "empathy for others," "honesty" and observes "Hook candidly explains." It is quite striking when looked at in this context the level to which the language signifies integrity and truth.

My Identity Analysed

Having considered a range of theories and perspectives for sub-categorising hip-hop, it is useful to apply these tools to the categorisation of my own work.

Williams (2016: 99) is quoted classifying Stanley Odd as falling within a group he describes as "Celtic fringe marginalities." My lyrical content has been described as "cerebral" and "socio-political" (Meighan, 2012), "defiant, yet vulnerable" (Is This Music?, 2014), and as the "voice of a generation" (Morrison, 2012). According to its reception then, my work would likely fall into the reality rap genre classification system devised by Krims (2000: 70). Krims notes at the beginning of his rap genre classification system that it is designed for North American genres of rap music and, as such, the difficulty with easy classification recalls the issue of filtering global cultures through local lenses.

For example, as discussed in chapter one, in the Scottish cultural integration of hip-hop culture self-deprecation and derogation is taken on board for humorous lyrical content (Davies, 2010). Humour is used repeatedly as an antidote to balance 'heavy' subject matter. In my own case, a sort of 'rap geek superhero' persona is developed but again Scottish cultural references provide it with a harder edge, encompassing Scottish drink and drugs culture, and everyday Scottish life. Thus, it becomes a case of filtering the academic frameworks through local lenses in the same way that the culture itself is localised.

To continue addressing sub-genre classifications, I'm a "reality" rapper with more of a didactic/ knowledge format but without the musical "jazz/bohemian" semiotics associated with that in Krims' definition (2000: 65). The cultural referencing combined with political, social commentary and protest music that characterises my work combine with regular tongue-in-cheek braggadocio and self-effacing humour. "Party rap" (ibid, 2000: 55) is filtered through Scottish culture and takes the form of drink and drug-fuelled excess with real-life imagery of cans of Tennent's lager and bottles of Buckfast tonic wine, cigarettes and council flats as opposed to expensive champagne, glitz and glamour. The "mack-rap" (ibid: 62), glamorous, money-orientated success story image in hip-hop doesn't exist in Scotland (although is being portrayed more of late) because Scottish hip-hop as a genre has never moved out of the margins culturally or financially. I have no examples of mack rap or gangsta rap in my back catalogue.

As a rapper, I aim for the "understated complexity" that Bradley (2009: 20) attributes to Jay-Z more than the overt "verbal acrobatics" (ibid) of Eminem. I want to adhere to the beat but to sound "unforced and natural" (ibid). This is true but the very truth of it makes it possible for artists such as Jay-Z to break those rules and display verbal dexterity or non-speech pattern delivery at times for punctuation, so these terms or categories are broad but not definitive for each artist. This is where Bradley's assertion that rap is modern poetry is interesting. Bradley describes the beat as "meter made audible," drawing parallels between a drop in public interest in poetry with a disregard for regular metre in poetic circles. My flow style has a speech-effusive base that makes use of sung-style at times (particularly to punctuate beginnings, ends or other significant points in a song) and is percussion-effusive on rare occasions. It is based around speaking in my own voice in a way that adds authenticity to the stories and is credible to a Scottish listening audience who would pick up on insincere or abnormal speech patterns that simply mimicked hip-hop culture as opposed to representing Scottish culture. This ties back to reality rap as a general generic home for my style.

Close Reading: First Verse of "The Numbness" (2009)

The first verse of the first song Stanley Odd released (October 2009) is an exercise in self-definition. A wide range of the concepts covered in chapter two regarding identity and techniques covered in chapter one pertaining to lyric construction can all be identified in these 16 bars:

> It's that half-jaked, math brain
> Poppin' pills quoting Jeru to ma class-mates
> I developed gills and ma DNA strands changed
> Since I started swimming at Faslane

<p align="center">First four bars: "The Numbness" (Stanley Odd, 2009)</p>

This is a fruitful place to start on the road to analysing my own process of identity creation and myth building. As an introductory four bars in the first single and first ever Stanley Odd release it says a lot about my aspirations and how I attempt to frame myself. The rap starts sung-style (in Krims' classification) then develops into speech effusive. This is a common rap technique, to begin in a rhythmically straight forward fashion and in a sung/spoken style, developing a

memorable rhythm or phrase at the start of a verse. Edwards (2013: 139) notes that "half-sung" rap parts can: "keep the song varied and interesting and… give it a strong, memorable structure". In the first line of "The Numbness," it follows the half-sung delivery technique that Edwards discusses whereby the pitch is raised for the first line, then dropped for the second, in a question and answer style. In this case, the "question" and "resolution" take place between the first half and second half of the first line.

In the first line I describe myself as "half-jaked" (inebriated) and "math-brain" – referring to Jeru the Damaja's second album *The Wrath of the Math*. Therefore, in the first line I associate myself with intoxication and with an artist and album focused on "social responsibility" (Bry, 1996) and authenticity in hip-hop. That I am doing so lyrically over a rock/pop-based beat with a female sung vocal hook is not coincidental. Throughout my career with Stanley Odd I repeatedly utilise lyrical content and style to challenge and contest easy criticism of not being hip-hop due to musical aesthetic.

Each word of line two is concerned with further self-definition. "Popping pills" and "quoting Jeru" are juxtaposed to reinforce the hedonistic, chemically stimulated characteristic in conjunction with teaching (classmates) and authentic, socially conscious rap (Jeru). The teacher element of the content can again be traced through rap lineage and inspiration from African American culture dating back, as Price-Styles notes (2009), all the way to the African griot. The teacher imagery is dual layered as both the overt direct reference to teaching and the underlying act of actually informing the audience. The hedonistic component is also part of an established lineage going back to the Beat Generation's dual alt-to-mainstream stance and preference for hedonistic pursuits but also to Scottish folk culture of drink and song. Parallels can be drawn here between the hip-hop aesthetic through which I am expressing myself and Scottish oral cultural heritage of folk song. Comparisons have been drawn in the past between hip-hop and folk music. At a performance for Celtic Connections Festival, Glasgow in 2014, I am quoted as saying: "hip hop is like folk music with caps instead of cardigans" (Hook, 2014: unpaginated). This quote, while a flippant comment, highlights a conscious process whereby I often draw on Scottish folk roots but express them through a contemporary African

American medium, even though hip-hop in becoming a global culture became more than purely an African American culture. This is the inspiration and interpretation that Bradley (2009) talks of when discussing African American cultural creation and how it doesn't appear in a vacuum and how to say so would be doing it a disservice.

Lines three and four combine visual, imaginative superhero / evolutionary / mutuation imagery with social comment/ critique of Scottish culture, in this case the Faslane nuclear base. Returning to the scattershot nature of rap lyrics and its potential to encapsulate such a wide range of images and stimuli as a result, I find an excitement in wide and wondrous flights of fancy – crazed visceral leaps both as a writer and as a consumer. As an introduction to an artist's character, these four lines describe an inebriated X-Men-style superhero, a rebel and a teacher, with hip-hop golden age credentials (1987-1993 as per Peterson 2012) and an eye for social justice, telling stories relating to contemporary Scottish culture. I claim to be a social commentator, a superhero, a wasted anti-hero and a political critic. The content can be seen as a challenge against the music-style and sung vocal.

In a way, from the very first Stanley Odd release I have been fighting with the contrasting indicators within my own compositions. This is evidenced by a review of the first album, *Oddio*, from 2010 in culture magazine *The Skinny*. Marshall (2010) describes Stanley Odd as "the latest act to attempt to haul the inward-looking scene into the daylight," noting a combination of "lyrical clout and head-nodding populism." While this review also refers to some of the areas we as a band felt we needed to develop in terms of musical style, it highlights a constant tension between the lyrical content and the musical aesthetic. The simple solution for easier hip-hop cultural validation would have been to simply utilise an acceptable 'reality rap' aesthetic. Instead, I maintain this tension throughout Stanley Odd's output, refusing to accept that musical accessibility cannot co-exist with authentic commentary and artistic credibility. As discussed above, reaching an audience of non-hip-hop fans while convincing an audience of hip-hop heads has been a dual objective throughout.

One final point of interest here that speaks to impact of the output is that the lyrics of the start of this verse have been the inspiration for a comic – *The Odd Lot* – created by writer Alex Giles and artist Pete Jones and published by Insane Comics. Giles (2016) has written several blog posts about how this comic was inspired by the song lyrics.

The verse continues:

> Reciting Scroobius Pip with a pen to your throat
> A brick through yir window saying 'Remember to vote'
> Warn yir neighbours, we're so famous
> When we get together it's like an episode of Shameless
> Or the diary of a politician
> For example: "April 11th
> I woke up wi no shoes, ma wallet's missing
> And I've enough guilt tae jumpstart Catholicism"
> The look that I'm rocking is 'Handsome Tramp'
> And I'm back with another losers' anthem rap
> Time tae get yir thinking caps on and yir clothes off
> We let the beat pause but don't stop

Bar 5-16: "The Numbness" (Stanley Odd, 2009)

The remainder of the verse continues the practice of juxtaposing contrasting actions or behaviour while using popular cultural references to deepen the links to the established identity created in the first four bars. As a socially conscious lyricist, mentioning Scroobius Pip (London-based spoken word poet and hip-hop artist) furthers the alignment of myself with that style and content, while creating the contrasting imagery of reciting poetry to someone while physically threatening them. The "pen to your throat" threat also carries the image of the pen being mightier than the sword, where a pen is my weapon of choice, as such this becomes a metaphor for the power of words. Similarly, the ridiculous imagery of throwing a brick through someone's window with a message on it reminding them of the importance of voting is effective because of its use of contrast and the absurd – using vandalism and public nuisance to promote political engagement. These images also play on stereotypes of young people and urban culture in comparison to thoughtful writing and public responsibility. Following that, lines about TV Show, "Shameless" (2011-2016), serve as an effective way to visually, culturally and socially place myself and the band. Shameless was itself a comedy, an amazingly in-depth, well-defined picture of working-class life and a play on contemporary Britain. Thus, this reference

speaks to the hedonism and wildness of the characters in Shameless while also attempting to associate with its social commentary and storytelling. To summarise, every line and virtually every word of "The Numbness" first verse is an announcement of how I want to portray myself. The overt meanings, underlying meanings, lyric structures and delivery all serve a combined purpose of self-definition.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to indicate the wide range of activities involved in identity creation and authentication. Clearly, the process is a continual, collaborative and negotiated activity between creators, audience and gatekeepers; transmission and reception. Lyric construction and delivery, musical aesthetic, live performance, media construction, association and collaboration all play a part in identity construction. As such, it becomes clear that identity construction is not linear, it doesn't have one thread. This makes it complicated to unravel. It is a collection of interwoven strands; a complex, multi-point, simultaneous, inter-related process. I am not authentic because I say I am. Neither am I honest because a reviewer wrote that I was. An audience member will not see me morphing from drunk, to philosopher, to rap superhero as I vocalise each image. Rather, my claims, others' descriptions, my lyrical content, individual perception and cultural context all combine (and change temporally) to create my image as an artist.

Another key idea here is hybridisation as applied to music making, to identity construction and to lyrical content. Bradley (2009:24) notes the combination of the "inherited and the invented." Therefore, elements from hip-hop culture intersect with local cultural elements. This melding creates something original and authentic – both to its generic roots and to its regional audience. Thus, my idiosyncratic version of hip-hop resides where Nas and Big L intersect with Hamish Imlach, Fairport Convention's "Matty Groves" (1969) and Matt McGinn singing "The Jeely Piece Song," along with 1980s marketing slogans such as "Glasgow's Mile's Better" and "What's it called? Cumbernauld." If, as Frith suggests, identity is something that we "put on or try on," syncretised from a range of cultural stimuli, then we create a patchwork identity, formed in the same bricolage of music and culture that is a central element of hip-hop itself.

Therefore, perhaps hip-hop's popularity could result from its embodiment of the process of our own identity construction through music. My idiosyncratic representation of hip-hop expresses my own interpretation of its core values filtered through my life.

This is where the distinction between 'realness' and appropriation or emulation appears in hip-hop. Simply learning the skills, dressing like an American hip-hop artist and using the language associated with that will not create the belief in authenticity. At best this will result in an excellent mimic or showcase of what already exists and was created elsewhere. Rather, it requires that these elements are merged and combined with local and individual cultural elements (from a range of sources) to make this bricolage of something else. These modern ideas of the fluidity of identity and creativity between creators and consumers are not unique to musical spheres. The work of McCarthy (2012) on remixing literature is also relevant here, reflecting the interactive and collaborative relationship between author and audience, between performance and reception. As hybrid musical styles become the new genre, hybrid identity becomes the new authenticity (Frith, 2000). Hybridised identity construction can still be seen as an expression of personal identity because every author or actor has a style or voice even when they tell or retell a story. Therefore, inside the interpretations and impersonations of culture are the timbre and vocabulary of the individual: a melting pot of coherence and incoherence, of inference and interference. (Hip-hop, to me, is the musical and lyrical manifestation of social identity.) We are all translating, broadcasting, receiving, repeating, misremembering, interpreting and embellishing all the time as we constantly perform our identities in public discourse.

Chapter 3 – An outsider in a genre of misfits

I was born were every Venn diagram intersected
And spent a lifetime on edge and on the edges
                                          Hook 2017

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the themes of marginalisation and outsiderdom that permeate my work. Following on from chapter two's discussion of identity construction, this chapter considers how images and people from outside of the mainstream are represented. These themes are often expressed though a cultural identity creation set in opposition to perceived dominant culture(s). Considering the idea of "boundary construction" (Stokes, 1994: 13), it is useful to reflect on the ways that music and writing contribute to the breakdown of social borders or the inverting of insider/ outsider status. Stokes states:

> Subcultures borrow from the dominant culture, inflecting and inverting its signs to create a bricolage in which the signs of the dominant culture are 'there' and just recognizable as such, but constituting a quite different subversive whole (Stokes, 1994: 19)

This idea is very relevant to rap and hip-hop culture. The idea of subverting dominant culture is a key component of rap and hip-hop (Rose, 1994; Forman, 2004 ;Price-Styles, 2015) – riffing on pop culture, adapting it and combining it with in-jokes and comments. Furthermore, the practice of creating something that is the same but different; of saying something new with something that already exists, is part of Gates Jnr's (1988) theory of signifyin(g), relating to African American literary practice and criticism. Krims (2001: 102) discusses Ice Cube utlising his lyrics to define his "role in political and cultural resistance to the dominant white culture." Examples of this approach to popular culture are prevalent across the spectrum of hip-hop lyrics such as Lauryn Hill in 1996 rapping: "The 666 cut W.I.C. like Newt Gingrich sucks dick" (meaning that white devils cut Women, Infants and Children (welfare) – instigated by Newt Gingrich in the 1990s). Eminem takes this approach constantly – from noting that it's "cool for Tom Green to hump a dead moose" (2000), to arguing that the media want to "sit me here next to Britney Spears" (2000). Kajikawa (2009) observes that in sending up mainstream images of white American culture Eminem was

able to position himself as counter to that, creating an ultimate underdog persona (outsider in hip-hop culture and outcast from white America) capable of succeeding in an industry and culture that defined authenticity by skin colour. Appropriation, adaptation and repackaging of dominant cultural elements into subcultural output is useful in that it enlists well known reference points, often in a pre-existing and widely understood format, to tell less common stories, reposition social forces and show alternative perspectives. This process is directly linked to Gates Jnr's notion of signifyin(g), where repurposing cultural expressions, artefacts or exponents can be empowering while also challenging the status quo.

As with previous chapters, this chapter takes a multi-method approach, rooted in autoethnography, making use of memory work and textual analysis to achieve both a reflexive and an analytical understanding of my creative output. Further to this, historiographical, social and anthropological aspects are considered in order to achieve a deeper, more contextualised picture of the songs and the process of their construction. The chapter will begin by discussing the concept of outsiderdom and defining the term as it is being used here. There will be a discussion as to how outsiderdom is represented in hip-hop in the US and how it manifests when localised in Scotland. Monaco (2010: 120) asserts the benefits of memory work to "introduce the analytical and epistemological value of the personal narrative." This is conditional on recognition of the subjectivity involved in any form of memory work (Reinharz, 1992). In such cases, additional forms of evidence and research can be utilised to provide support for any findings. Hence, the relevance of a multi-method approach. As such, memory work is employed to give some consideration of the formative processes, experiences and influences that caused me to develop as a writer. Following on from this, the second section of this chapter comprises the close reading of two pieces of my own work that demonstrate different approaches to expressing or narrating outsiderdom in rap.

What is Outsiderdom?

In order to develop this chapter in terms of analysing the themes and approaches to outsiderdom in my own work, it is necessary to first consider and define the parameters of the terms being used. Often, society regards the artist

as an outsider (Rader, 1958: 306) and the act of portraying alternative views outside of the mainstream is a long-established expectation of those working in the arts. That hip-hop lends itself to marginalities, untold stories and narratives outside of the mainstream is beyond refute. Rose (1994) highlights the thread that runs through hip-hop of alternative perspectives and marginal characters.

Kajikawa (2015) notes that where rock'n'roll and jazz started out as marginal musical practices from diverse ethnic backgrounds, as they centralised, their biggest names worldwide became predominantly white practitioners. Hip-hop is different in this case as it has retained its identity as a black genre, both in terms of perceived authenticity and in terms of what its audience expect of its content (McLeod, 2012). It should be noted however, that commercial images of hip-hop artists (and their cultural backgrounds) are often narrow and restrictive, perpetuating the image of ghetto-centric gangsta rap and the negative connotations that go with this as the main viable image of young black men and women (Bradley, 2015). Having said this, evidence of its roots, practitioners and content help to support the assertion that hip-hop has a legacy of opposition, challenge and alternative perspectives.

Once globalised, this inherent theme of the outsider is expressed in a wide range of ways from ethnicity, to class, to gender, but Kahf (2012) argues that core to this is the continuous thread of dissent that is a central element of the genre, allowing for engagement with and opposition to contemporary social issues. In chapter four of this document, I argue that it is this continuous thread of dissent that brought hip-hop in Scotland to the forefront during the Scottish Independence referendum in 2014; that hip-hop lends itself to social commentary and critique and that practitioners already adept at this in Scotland became obvious outlets for creative engagement during a particularly politically active period in recent Scottish history.

So, how do we define the outsider? As discussed in chapter two, identity and persona are concurrently constructed both by the individual and by society (Appiah, 2007). In designing a conceptual and historical framework for discussing outsiderdom, Aschenheim (2012: 145) notes that insiders and outsiders are "universal organizing categories" by which societies, cultures and

individuals define themselves and those around them. He goes on to observe that the label of 'outsider' is related to "power structures and meaning endowing norms" (ibid: 146). Through these observations, an understanding of outsiderdom begins to form as any group or individual that is either outwith the boundary of the main cultural power or the most common social definition of 'normal'. Some reasons for outsiderdom by this definition would be ethnic minority, religion, disability, gender, class and economic background. Speers (2017) consideration of insider/outsider research touches on how people shape their identity around the idea of being inside or outside of a social group. This can be constructed as a "positive choice" (Aschenheim (2012: 146) to remain outside or as a position designated through exclusion by those inside the social group. For the purpose of this chapter, outsiderdom is understood to be the act of being of or representing views, conditions and experiences contra to the cultural norm or power centre. Stories of outsiderdom, then, represent attempts to voice the voiceless, reposition the margins and include the excluded.

Outsiderdom in Hip-Hop

In US hip-hop the most common form of voicing the marginalised is – quite obviously and properly – ethnicity-based i.e. telling stories of black people and addressing issues relevant to black culture. Originating in the South Bronx, New York City and providing a voice for the under-represented, hip-hop has long been established as an outlet for marginalised people, those "relegated to the margins of public discourse" (Rose, 1994). Of the US population, 13.3% is African American (United States Census Bureau, 2016). Hip-hop provided a cultural outlet by which the under-represented inner-city black youth could positively express their social conditions, record experiences, document and develop their culture and challenge societal issues. Hip-hop allowed the opportunity to be playful and celebratory; be creative with language; have something that belonged to them. Thus, hip-hop becomes about race but also about space, place, class and other marginal perspectives (Forman, 2012). In a way, hip-hop has allowed the feelings of outsiderdom and otherness associated with a minority group to be celebrated from within (and outwith) – providing a cohesion and togetherness.

In Scottish hip-hop, the format and premise of voicing the voiceless and representing the under-represented prevails but due mainly to the ethnic make-up of the country – 96% of the Scottish population is white (Scottish Government, 2011) – the positioning is less ethnicity-based and more to do with class inequality. Examples of this can be found from Sugar Bullet (1991) to Loki (2004 – present). This is not to say that race inequality doesn't exist in Scotland but rather that the majority of Scottish hip-hop artists (myself included) are white and that the primary use of hip-hop as a tool to represent marginalisation is not to address ethnic inequality (although I and others have written on the subject on occasion).

Scottish hip-hop has historically been a predominantly working-class subculture. As Steg G, DJ, producer and ardent supporter of hip-hop in Scotland, observes:

> The story of 21st-century living in Scotland comes out in the raps. It's our CNN, our news channel. It tells you what's going on in Arden, in Springburn, in Wester Hailes (Ross, 2012: unpaginated)

This focus on the local, providing a type of news broadcast service from deprived areas echoes Chuck D describing rap music in 1988. It is in-keeping with the ethos of the wider hip-hop community, both as a means of representing where the artists are from and in the authenticity that comes with talking in a regional voice about local issues. Loren Kajikawa (2015: 6) states that "rap musicians and fans ascribe great value to authentic expression." It is this need for authenticity or 'realness' that demands lyrical content to be from a regional perspective and in a local accent. Within the Scottish hip-hop community, ingrained feelings of otherness and distrust are repeatedly expressed and these feelings can be extended to its interaction with the wider Scottish music community. To use an oft-cited metaphor in hip-hop, the Scottish music community has, at times, treated Scottish hip-hop like a stepchild: neglected, unwanted and mistreated, dismissing its artistic merits. In an online article in Bella Caledonia (one of the alternative media outlets that sprung up as part of the independence discussion), writer Katie Gallogly-Swan refers to the "shaming and ridicule of Scottish hip-hop" as "traditional elitism of economic privilege versus the perceived 'vulgarity' of working class creativity" (2016: unpaginated). This very succinct summary exemplifies the cultural barriers that

have traditionally existed between Scottish cultural commentators (and consumers) and its hip-hop creators.

Inside Outsiderdom – A Personal Account

My own approach to writing on the topic of outsiders has been to take a unifying position of outsiderdom, creating a space for anyone outside of the dominant mainstream to exist and be represented. My process raises questions of the artist and the persona – where one meets the other. As discussed in chapter one, the lines between the two blur continually in hip-hop, with issues of authenticity and 'realness' circling around this. The purpose of this section is to consider how my upbringing, social group and musical listening practices contributed to my development as a musician and a writer. As an autoethnographic approach is taken here, there follows first a short discussion on autoethnographic considerations.

Autoethnography relies on a need to "self-interrogate" (Denshire, 2013) in order to negotiate the complexities and subjectivity of identity and memory. Memory work can be revealing in terms of gaining a deeper, reflexive understanding of your own actions and the processes involved in a person's development socially, culturally and creatively. Kuhn (2000: 186) states that "Memory work is a conscious and purposeful staging of memory," noting the importance of actively re-evaluating and interpreting memory in the context of cultural and social bias. Autoethnography and memory work have been criticised as self-indulgent and lacking in analytical objectivity (Sparkes, 2002). Monaco's defence of this states that:

> Autoethnography… differs from any simplistic notion of the confessional through its questioning of how the self is mediated and constrained through language, culture, socio-economic historical conditions and through its ability to connect this questioning with the experience of others. (Monaco, 2010: 132).

Monaco is describing a process of controlled self-analysis, that can then be used to draw comparisons with wider experiences. Although less prescriptive (some might say less restrictive), Monaco's approach can be related to Anderson's (2006) "analytical autoethnography" in that it works towards "developing theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena"

(2006:373). Pace (2012) adds to this by arguing that multi-method research strategies can produce higher quality results through bespoke methodologies (or "flexible strategies" (2012: 13)), designed to both strengthen academic rigour and analyse the relevant data. From the available literature, the benefits of autoethnography emerge to provide a means to critically reflect on personal creative practice. It also becomes clear that a disciplined and organised approach is required. In what follows, autoethnography is combined with other academic frameworks to authenticate and contextualise the data.

I grew up in rural central Scotland in a house on its own, outside of a village, on the outskirts of a satellite town in the Greater Glasgow area, pre-internet. This was a very isolated upbringing in many respects in terms of social interaction and development. I was aware of being an outsider in the primary school in the village. I was then an outsider again in the high school in town. One result of this upbringing seems to be less of an affiliation with calling a place 'mine' than writers (and people in general) often seem to have; a lack of geographical attachment to a specific area. This is very different from many hip-hop artists in that representing your own area is one core element of hip-hop writing (Forman, 2012). Perhaps due to this lack of specific geographic anchor (I have lived in over ten different homes since the age of 17 in Airdrie, Stirling, Edinburgh and Glasgow), my frame of reference is a more widely distributed view of 'home' across Scotland (or certainly Central Scotland).

Further to this, sitting outside of the hip-hop community, rather than at its centre, I could observe and study it as a fan and avid listener, contribute to it artistically but seldom actually felt myself to be a part of it as a member of a culture or 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006). This also allowed an alternative perspective at times; e.g., I can empathise with and understand the feeling of isolation and outsiderdom from those who are in a minority group such as the very specific group of working-class Scottish rap artists – but it seemed to me that writing in that form meant talking about being a voice for the voiceless as long as that voice was the same as mine i.e. both inclusive and exclusive at the same time – including those who had the same issues and background but by doing so excluding others. One thread that permeates my work is the attempt to give voice to the outsiderdom that is universal in

everyone. This is exemplified in the final four lines from "Ten to One" (Hook, 2010):

> Stanley Odd - check the credentials of my oddity
> Stand up if you believe things are not how they ought to be
> So the 'It Crowd' can sit down, the end's begun
> We outnumber them ten to one - stand up

Here the final four bars of the last verse of the song begin by restating my otherness or "oddity," then move on to demand action and collective unity against the current system. The final two lines refer directly to the "It Crowd," further evoking insider/ outsider relationships, and finish with the observation that "We outnumber them ten to one," calling for a universal togetherness of those who don't benefit from insider status. Thus, this song and these final lines play with societal insider/ outsider dynamics and construct an alternative centre from which to renegotiate social and cultural power relationships.

It feels necessary to note that in utilising hip-hop to write stories of outsiderdom and marginalisation I am not trying in any way to equate being a young black male in inner city America with a white male growing up in rural Scotland. I am not trying to claim anything even close to equivalent levels of suffering or injustice. I am not trying to compare individual experience with the structural racial bias against African Americans. What I am saying is that expressions of isolation and outsiderdom in hip-hop were able to transcend these vastly different life experiences and resonate on some level with a white teenager in the Scottish countryside and that this then inspired me to be able to analyse, discuss and comment on that theme of outsiderdom in other aspects of Scottish life – as well as the wordplay, the 'coolness', the slang.

Compelling arguments could be made on either side as to whether or not this is appropriation or inspiration. Ultimately, that decision is made by the audience and the wider culture. In my case, I make significant effort to pay respect to the culture from which my own musical output has come, this taking the form of lyrical quotation and reference as well as in community projects and interviews where the opportunity to inform and discuss hip-hop history arises. As discussed in earlier chapters, evidence of this can be found from the second line of the first Stanley Odd release "quoting Jeru to my classmates" (2009),

through reworking the BDP "Stop the Violence" (1987) introduction in "Let Ma Brain Breathe" (2014), to lines from "Hatekeeprz" (forthcoming):

> I got intae hip-hop light years from the South Bronx
> And got lost in amongst the wordsmiths and outlaws

There is a demonstrable pattern of attempts to frame, reference and give respect to the history of the genre.

Hesmondhalgh and Melville (2001: 87) make a case for 'localisation' giving insufficient credit to the transformative process of hip-hop interpretation in the UK, noting a "complex network of cultural flows" between "black cultures in Britain, the Caribbean and the United States." Traber's (2001**)** paper "L. A.'s "White Minority": Punk and the Contradictions of Self-Marginalization" focuses on the ways that the LA punk rock scene from 1977-83 relocated to the inner-city underclass, then claimed it in order to critique society. As he notes, this is much more a case of appropriating a life and social class. It differs to the idea of reflecting your own life experiences and upbringing. Further to this, Traber (ibid: 31) asserts that by replicating the social identity markers that relate to the minority they wish to emulate, participants "reinforce the dominant culture rather than escape it." As a developing writer, hip-hop and its emphasis on authenticity taught me to work on using my own language and dialect to represent my surroundings as it did many of my contemporaries.

Returning to the idea of outsiderdom due to geography, I am not claiming to have grown up in a vacuum. I identify as someone who grew up in the 1980s waste-ground of Thatcher's Britain in the post-industrial satellite towns of Central Scotland. I have a huge number of cultural and societal references to draw on from that period ranging from Star Wars and ET to sectarianism and Poll Tax demonstrations (officially called the Community Charge – a system of per-capita taxation that unfairly disadvantaged the poor). I just happen to have an additional perspective having grown up slightly removed from any particular social group due to the nature of my rural geographic location. As such, my work has always been concerned with finding links between the individual and the universal; with examining rules (social and governmental), relationships, fairness and social interaction; commenting on society; trying to understand it;

channelling and voicing myself and others; consciously studying and taking on the various forms of storytelling with a deeper meaning.

Further to this, I am a white, 38-year-old European male who works as a lecturer in music technology. I am also a Scottish hip-hop artist. I also work with young people and in community projects. I am speaking from a position of relative privilege. One thing that I am interested in as an artist is highlighting examples of outsiderdom and marginalisation and telling those stories. To reiterate, growing up, I experienced outsiderdom due to geographic location, due to cultural and social naivety and due to social situation. These formative experiences have shaped the direction and processes of my artistic output as an adult. For me to claim to be trapped in the margins of society would be untrue and inauthentic, rather I aim to describe my own experiences and report from the margins, with a view to highlight voices and stories that might not otherwise be heard and to provide a point of connection for disparate social or cultural outsiders to exist. To this end, I attempt to draw on my core sensibility of being a social outsider; my understanding of awkwardness in social situations and my empathy for those that are excluded from the discussion.

An Informal Study of Lyric Writing (1994 – 2004)

Looking at the artists discussed so far, from Ice Cube, to the Fugees, to Eminem, their content and messages are in-keeping with the assertion that hip-hop is a radical genre that plays on contemporary culture in order to highlight alternative perspectives and voices. At the core of this, is a "discourse of resistance" (Wright, 2012: 520). For me that message of resistance began in the early 1990s with Rage Against the Machine. The anger and energy of the music combined with teaching and informing through clever lyrics was a powerful experience. The content – a lot of which was America-specific – could be summarised as an anti-government, anti-corporate, pro-equality message which, combined with the anger and energy of its delivery, was extremely exciting to a rebellious teen. This listening material was mixed with hip-hop artists such as Snoop Doggy Dogg, Cypress Hill and House of Pain. As a white Scottish teenager, it was the rebellion, hedonism and anti-authoritarian content of these artists that drew my attention. Additionally, there is the element of otherness that Tricia Rose (1994: 5) discusses in white suburban teens in the

US "listening in" on black cultural practices and the coolness and style that came from that. My listening practices at this point were rounded off with alternative American rock artists such Pearl Jam, who again could be characterised as angry, loud and socially aware, with songs such as "Jeremy" (1991) (about a school boy taking his life in school) and "WMA" (1993) (White Male American: protesting police racism and brutality).

Other artists like Beck took inspiration from the 'anti-folk' movement (Kihn, 1994), combining elements of hip-hop (samples, loops and rap) with white folk music tradition. This resulted in the song "Loser" (1994), an alternative outsider anthem and something of a blueprint for aspects of my own writing. I was also listening to Frank Zappa with his social commentary, storytelling and humour in songs such as "Brown Shoes Don't Make It" (1967) and even Cream's "Politician" (1968). What is evident here is that much of my listening material at this point seems to originate from America. I was also listening to UK acts such as Skunk Anansie – with riff-based guitars and powerful drums, but in the distinctly unique voice of an English, black, skinhead, bisexual addressing issues of race, sex and culture in her music. From these foundational musical sources, my listening practices simultaneously diversified and focused-in, locating more 'lyrical' hip-hop such as Nas, Wu-Tang Clan and Biggie Smalls, then finding UK artists Mark B and Blade, Taskforce and Skitz's *Countryman* record (2001) that introduced a whole scene of English rap artists that used the art form to describe their surroundings. Of this period, I am quoted in an interview as saying:

> I did start to find some UK artists though and that was a huge development stage for me, I think…they were talking about stuff that was happening around us, their points of reference were closer to my own life experiences (Sutcliffe, 2017).

Through this process I was deepening my understanding of hip-hop writing and cultural practices, whilst also learning how to represent place and space in lyrics. My next transformative period in the study of lyric-writing as an art form came with the discovery of Buck 65 and Bob Dylan at the same time – white artists writing about culture and society, one through hip-hop and one through folk music. I believe that parallels can be found between hip-hop and Dylan's writing in terms of word-count, verse structure and content. I came to recognise

the similarities between hip-hop and folk music, with both genres using music as a vehicle to tell a story. Buck 65 was relevant to me because he comes from rural Canada. This was the first time I encountered rap that represented places closer to my own upbringing, telling stories outside of the inner city; vivid, urgent stories that felt as important to be told as those originating from more urban settings. Where the visceral imagery of New York ghettos felt immediate, fast-paced and dangerous, the descriptive depictions of wilderness and post-industrial backwaters felt both contrastingly tangible and like they encapsulated the real-world dangers implicit in fairytales. "Cries a Girl" (2005) is an excellent example of this, while also demonstrating the scene-setting, populating, set-the-characters-moving, process that I discuss later in this chapter as an approach to 'lyrical portraiture'. This gradual building up of a skillset through immersion in a range of musical artists has involved analysis of hip-hop culture and writing, social and political commentary in music, and the means to represent and tell stories from areas of society that may otherwise not be told.

Analysis Part 1: Signifying outsiderdom

The first examples of my thematic engagement with outsiderdom can be seen to embody the techniques addressed earlier in this and the previous chapters relating to signifyin(g), social referencing and subversion of pop culture. Here, hip-hop's role of repurposing, repositioning and reimagining cultural boundaries is taken up to represent less popular and less celebrated elements of Scottish culture. The technical approach to these writings involved employing rap techniques covered in chapter one such as the use of punchlines, wordplay and referencing. This approach is often based around a series of rhyming couplets that broadly fit within a concept – in this case outsiderdom – used to inject humour, observation and to reinforce the overall intention of the song. This process pulls together much of the theory covered to date. The techniques employed to represent outsiderdom are signifyin(g) as discussed by Gates Jnr (1988), scattershot cultural referencing creating the bricolage that Rose (1994) refers to as well as the process of "rupture and flow" that Rose identifies as being core to hip-hop writing. Alongside these concepts is an awareness of social norms and a ludic desire to disrupt them, to provide alternative perspectives. The dual purpose and result of these actions is to present under-represented aspects of society and to reposition these aspects as powerful

where they might be considered weak and central where they might be considered marginal. These words tap into the outsiderdom inherent in everyone and challenge the definition of normal – and of odd.

Close Reading: "Will the Last One Out Please Turn Off the Light" (2012)

Continuing a theme of inclusion through exclusion that was introduced in 2010's "Ten to One," "Will the Last One Out Please Turn off the Light" expanded on and extended the concept two years later in 2012. A close reading of the piece helps to demonstrate the level of social referencing and cultural commentary along a continuous thread of outsiderdom.

> Join the Reject Society
> An after-school club here's the dates for your diary
> Normally with clubs some exclusion is expected
> For this club every applicant has been rejected
> And by that definition are accepted
> It's an anti-social assembly
> – A vocally reticent club president
> Dyslexic secretary and cleptomaniac treasury
> We conspire in secret
> Pious eedjits would rewrite the truth as we try and speak it
> So I respond with the silent treatment
> Aye right. Not likely, Darwin Almighty
> I might be 1984'd if I'm caught writing
> I mean what d'you expect?
> We're meant to get caught in the net, that's why they call it the web
>
> There's no audition or application
> Or waiting list based on yir personal statement
> No nods, winks or secret handshakes
> You can't fall out with our target demographic
> No greedy backers or nuisance bankers
> Funded by an army of translucent hackers
> The disillusioned and disaffected
> Step up and be rejected
>
> Will the last one out please turn off the light
>
> Escape from the pigeonhole, the lonely and miserable
> If only on principle, we're wholly indivisible
> The norm is hypercritical. It's so hypocritical
> And Darwin forbid you should ever get political
> So, go with me if you don't know what you're supposed to be
> Believe ghost stories or like to write poetry
> Math-letes in trousers that suggest yir cat's deid

> Great Gatsbys, with elbow patches and mismatched teeth
> Talking to yourself is not a sign of lunacy
> Or if you seek solace in the online community
> I'm rejecting the concept of imperfection
> Imperfect at whose discretion?
> Better have me sectioned for picking a fight
> With a notion nothing more than a trick of the light
> So whether social, conceptual or physical
> You say reject, I say individual

<div align="center">Lyrics to Will The Last One Out Please Turn Off the Light (Hook, 2012)</div>

Structurally, the song is formed of two 16-bar verses with an 8-bar pre-chorus tag and a one line chorus. The piece begins and centres around playing with the meaning of the word "reject": the verb "reject" as a call to reject society, followed by the noun to create a "Reject Society" – an organisation for those who have been rejected. The line "every applicant has been rejected, and by that definition are accepted" has a dual meaning as on the surface this would create the ultimate exclusive club where no-one is accepted as a member but in this case the sole qualification for acceptance is to have been rejected (in some other way in life). "Antisocial assembly" again has the duality of implying activities that are considered a public nuisance or outwith the bounds of acceptable social behaviour (in the time of ASBOs – government issued behaviour orders that can restrict individuals' actions), here meaning at odds with society – tying in with the first line of the song.

There then follows a list of personnel involved in running the society, each would normally be considered unsuitable for their set tasks, the ironic juxtapositions of socially defined conditions and disorders with their most unsuited tasks adds humour while pushing at societal restrictions and boundaries:

> – A vocally reticent club president
> Dyslexic secretary and kleptomaniac treasury

These two lines are rhythmically different from the preceding six, passing three-syllable compound rhyme within the bar rather than following the earlier AABB structure. It serves to build tension over these lines that interacts with the music prior to the drums appearing at bar nine. There is a significant amount of rhythmical play throughout this verse with the next three lines consisting of four-syllable rhyme setting an Orwellian-style scene of clandestine counter-cultural

meetings. These lines also draw on colloquialism such as "eedjits" to personalise and contextualise the cultural geography.

> We conspire in secret
> Pious eedjits would rewrite the truth as we try and speak it
> So I respond with the silent treatment
> Aye right. Not likely, Darwin Almighty
> I might be 1984'd if I'm caught writing
> I mean what d'you expect?
> We're meant to get caught in the net, that's why they call it the web

The silence in the ironic "I respond with silent treatment" is created literally with the music stopping, then interrupted and broken by the colloquial "aye right" at the end of bar 12. Bars 13-16 continue with the imagery of social constrictions, government restrictions and civil liberties. It frames the narrative in an atheist (replacing God Almighty with "Darwin Almighty"), dystopian perspective commenting on freedom of speech and plays on the synecdoche of the word 'net' for 'internet' being something used to catch prey and draws the comparison, doing the same with 'web' for 'World Wide Web'. These lines are no less relevant in 2017 in the wake of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (known as the Snoopers' Charter, allowing an unprecedented level of state surveillance and retention of public internet usage data).

> There's no audition or application
> Or waiting list based on yir personal statement
> No nods, winks or secret handshakes
> You can't fall out with our target demographic
> No greedy backers or nuisance bankers
> Funded by an army of translucent hackers
> The disillusioned and disaffected
> Step up and be rejected

The 8-line pre-chorus begins with a 5-line rejection of a series of exclusionary actions ranging from auditions and applications to nods and winks. Reference to "greedy backers or nuisance bankers" and "secret handshakes" refer to social mobility from economic privilege to Freemasonry. Again, humour is used to counterbalance radical content, hence the line "funded by an army of translucent hackers". None of the imagery used in this section is overly hyperbolic. As a society, we are widely familiar with nationally televised X-Factor auditions, wide-spread unemployment and low-end jobs, class-based privilege, a world-wide banking crisis, hacking and cyber activism (Anonymous,

Wikileaks, etc). This part simply populates the song with these phenomena. The final line in this section returns to the core concept of rejection, again playing with its meaning in "step up and be rejected."

The second verse expands on the theory of rejecting the norm, with six-syllable compound rhyme passed both within lines and at the end of lines. It is a critique of the hypocrisy and narrow field of what is acceptable in mainstream society or pop culture. The replacement of God with Darwin is reiterated in "Darwin forbid." Lines 4-6 define other contemporary 'uncool' traits that could qualify for the Reject Society. This approach follows the inclusionary, humorous approach applied extensively in Ten to One extending to "Math-letes," colloquial references such as "trousers that suggest yir cat's deid" (meaning they are at half-mast i.e. too short) and "Great Gatsbys, with elbow patches and mismatched teeth." The final part of this verse is concerned with getting to the theme's core. It makes the statement of "rejecting the concept of imperfection" and asks who has the right to define these terms. Internal rhyme is passed from the previous AABB format ending at "discretion" to the lines:

> Better have me sectioned for picking a fight
> With a notion nothing more than a trick of the light

These lines question what beauty is and challenge its existence. The "Better have me sectioned" line implies that it would be crazy to try and have a physical altercation with something that is only an abstract concept; like trying to fight your shadow; that perfection is an illusion. The final lines redefine "reject" and frame it as a positive attribute – "individual" as opposed to conformist.

The title of the song and the refrain of the chorus "Will the Last One Out Please Turn Off the Light" parodies the political rhetoric of newspaper articles but in this case is a rhetorical device inferring the universality of having been marginalised or excluded in some way, shape or form.

To summarise, the first verse explains the purpose of the society and frames it in an anti-authoritarian context while making comments about contemporary society. The bridge/ pre-chorus functions almost as an advertisement to join (in fact the whole song does). It explains what values are unwelcome in the

proposed society and who is welcome, while peppering contemporary cultural images. The second verse expands on the theory of rejecting the norm and lists some of those welcome, then finishes by challenging the definition of acceptance, beauty and rejection.

Writing this song was the genesis for the overarching concept and title of Stanley Odd's second album – *Reject*. In an interview with 17 Seconds blog in 2012, I explained the album title as follows:

> I feel like there has always been a common theme of outsiderdom in our songs. Everyone can emphasise with feeling uncomfortable or socially awkward, so often that's a starting point for me writing. The 'Reject' title is more like trying to write a collection of stories about rejection, and rejecting things, so it can be read as the noun, 'Reject' i.e. someone who is not accepted in a certain group or situation; or it can be read as the verb 'Reject', to reject an idea, opinion or accepted norm. A call to arms if you like.

In fact, the title of Stanley Odd's first album, *Oddio* (2010), playing on the word audio and the band name itself is designed to signify a positioning outside of the norm, at odds with the mainstream and alternative to the accepted stance.

In summary, this approach to broadcasting outsiderdom is intrinsically tied to cultural referencing and authenticity. Utilising the toolkit set out in the first two chapters, the song works by demonstrating a range of the techniques for rap such as wordplay, complex rhyme schemes and quotation, combined with a barrage of cultural images that can be questioned, repurposed or satirised. Carrying on the tradition of hip-hop culture as music of "resistance" (Kahf, 2012), this song fits into a sub-genre of what Allen Jr (1996) called "message rap." It resides somewhere between Krims' (2001) categories of jazz/bohemian and reality rap, with the content leaning towards jazz/bohemian, again, without the musical indicators.

Analysis Part 2: Lyrical Portraiture

The final piece to be discussed in this chapter can be considered social commentary in the form of what I am calling 'lyrical portraiture', in that it tells an individual's story while also describing situations of marginalisation and outsiderdom from the society we live in.

I have a specific perspective and technique that I apply when storytelling in a rap format. Rap lyricism differs in one obvious way from most other contemporary song lyrics – the sheer number of words that can be fitted into a three or four-minute piece of music. As such, it has the duality of being able to benefit from being so descriptive and specific while also having the disadvantage of being so descriptive and specific. That is to say, that writing so descriptively allows you to paint a clearer picture and to be more detailed but this very fact also means that less is left open to interpretation than in conventional song. As a result of this, rap songs are often less likely to be identified with so widely as with a vaguer set of song lyrics. Davis (1985: 3) observes that in songwriting, "Lyrics that resonate with universally felt emotions foster strong identification between performer and audience." I argue that the specific nature of rap's content construction creates a need for the listener to be engaged with and to care about the outcome of the song in order to really listen to it. As such, I see good writing as often following a set pattern designed to achieve this level of engagement from the listener. This pattern consists of initially painting a picture and setting a scene vividly that the listener can picture. Having drawn the background, you then populate the scenery with people. Then, having created a tangible geography and populated it with visceral, interesting characters, you make them move and interact, hoping that by this point the listener is invested in their story and wants to know what happens to them. It is a filmic approach to lyricism. This format can be observed in any number of hip-hop songs from a wide range of sub-genres and can also be demonstrated in my own writing. (Examples include Nas "NY State of Mind," Buck 65 "Cries the Girl," Aesop Rock "Ruby '81." Stanley Odd "Draw Yir Own Conclusions," Just Jack "The Day I Died").

While songs such as "Ten to One" and "Will the Last One Out Please Turn Off the Lights" are written in the first person and follow a form and tone based

around punchlines, observations, contrasts and commentary, "Draw Yir Own Conclusions" is in the third person. This style of writing involves more descriptive imagery, building on emotive content. It is interesting that writing in this form allows me to be more emotional and arguably delve into the characters more by taking myself out of the story. This perhaps speaks to acceptable self-images in hip-hop (discussed further in chapter five), where the autobiographical and authenticity-related (Krims, 2001; Hess, 2007; McLeod, 2012) features of the genre make weakness or emotional content difficult to display without compromising a rapper's persona and therefore their credibility.

Close Reading: "Draw Yir Own Conclusions" (2014)

While he was Arts Editor at *The Herald*, Alan Morrison (Head of Music for Creative Scotland), wrote of "Draw Yir Own Conclusions":

> Draw Yir Own Conclusions condensed about 20 British social realist movies into a 5-minute song that cut through prejudices to the heart of modern life on a housing estate. These are vivid words making vivid images.

This quote can be directly related to my earlier observation about lyrical portraiture being a filmic approach to song writing. "Draw Yir Own Conclusions" charts the life of a woman from poverty and childhood neglect, to young motherhood, abusive relationships and alcohol dependence, depicting her use of drawing as an escape from the realities of the path her life has taken. She then disappears and her son finds all her secret drawings of an alternative life. The central concept of drawing serves to tie all the imagery together into a cohesive tale. Being able to use this trope for the story allows the outcome to be left open to interpretation – Did she run away? Did she die? Did she magically draw herself into a better place? Further to this, it allows the title "Draw Yir Own Conclusions" to direct the listener to take an active role in deciding what has happened.

The accompanying music is in 6/8, which is less common in hip-hop writing. I felt that the piece would work best told in two voices – sung four-line sections and rapped eight-line sections. Thus, the sung sections serve to draw the scenery while the rap sections tell the story, then the next sung section updates

the visuals and summarises content before the next rap section continues with the narrative. I felt that melody was important to add emotional content. The melodies are intentionally simple and ornament free following my belief that, in this case, ornamentation would serve to distance from authenticity while simple sung melody deepens emotional content and connection. This echoes Moore (2002: 212) discussing Paul Weller:

> His voice eschews the finesse of embellishments and melismas and carries no sense of being treated as an end in itself. These features can *convey* to his audience that they are perceiving real emotion

This observation, combined with my intentional desire for simple, unadorned vocal performances highlight the purposeful drive to communicate honesty and truth through the delivery as well as the content.

The strength in this song lies less in wordplay and more in imagery, again this speaks to veracity, where jokes or ludic language activities would detract from both the tone and the sincerity of the narrative. Every line is designed to bring the listener closer to the story, to have them more invested in the outcome and to make the scene more lucid and palpable. There is a strong emphasis on dialect and colloquialism throughout, designed to add to the realism and to place the events in a specifically Central Scottish environment. From the very first two lines – before the music starts – 'wean', 'maw' and 'pals' are employed to achieve this.

> As a wean her friends wouldn't come over
> Cause her maw and her pals were never sober
>
> They just drank and played cards and she was see-through
> So she sat in the dark with pictures she drew
> A typical story, nothing unusual
> Picked on at school for never having new clothes

Opening Lines from Stanley Odd, "Draw Yir Own Conclusions"

The descriptive nature of the content in the first four-bar sung section sets the scene for a child's home life. They establish neglect, the specific information that "They just drank and played cards and she was see-through" already creates a feeling of isolation and of being unsafe. This section introduces the idea that she draws. These opening lines intimate poverty, the resulting bullying

88

at school and that none of this is particularly unusual in wider society. The lines are written to be sung, providing sufficient space for the melody, with these four lines taking up as many bars in the song as the following eight do rapped.

The first rap verse moves the story forward, taking in teenage pregnancy, alcohol and domestic abuse, neglect, with the end simile of paper fading in sunlight being related to her hopes and dreams but also linking to the drawing concept. In 2016, the Wall Street Journal published a methodology for creating an algorithm to analyse hip-hop lyrics. This method was informed by research carried out by a number of academics and authors on rap, rhyme and flow (Edwards, 2009; Woods, et al., 2010)) The verse below draws on these approaches with the colouration of the words and syllables indicating the evolution of the rhyme scheme, demonstrating how rhymes are passed both internally from line to line and at the end of each line.

> Started seeing one of the boys that caused bedlam in her scheme
> Her maw had done the same so she got pregnant in her teens
> The da used his fists wanting money to get drunk
> Kids being kids becomes kids bringing kids up
> Old before her time, didn't rebel, felt there was no use
> Was told since she was 12 'get on the list for yir own hoose'
> Now she takes a drink hersel' from the morning to the night
> Her dreams and aspirations fade like paper in sunlight

Verse One, from Stanley Odd, "Draw Yir Own Conclusions"

Although the focus is on imagery and storytelling, a number of technical lyrical devices are employed here. One line of rap takes place over two bars of 6/8 at 89bpm. In relation to the 6/8 time-signature, there are four stressed words or syllables in each line, falling on beats 1 and 4 in each bar. Lines one and two end in five-syllable compound rhyme. The third line introduces internal rhyme with "fists" relating to "kids" in line four. Line four also utilises repetition of the word "kids" to emphasise the content, mimicking the sameness of young parents and their children. Lines five and six develop internal rhyme further with "old" and "rebel" falling on downbeats and linking with "told" and "12" on the downbeats of the following line. Line six also uses "list" to link back to "kids and fists" – all of these internal rhymes take place in addition to the two-syllable end rhymes of "no use" and "own hoose." Line seven continues the internal rhyme with "herself" before line eight produces assonance between "aspirations" and

"paper" as they fall on accented beats prior to the final rhyme of "sunlight." The aim for the overall effect of this is for the rhyme schemes to appear effortless but the subtle complexity of the repetition to aid in embedding the content through a combination of strong imagery, rhythm and rhyme.

The next sung section updates the scenery and summarises the situation:

> A life passing time, nothing more, nothing less
> Skin stretched over ribs under a faded summer dress
> She was a sketch; never put meat on her bones
> Never at rest; never found peace on her own

<div align="center">Second sung verse from from Stanley Odd, "Draw Yir Own Conclusions"</div>

Again, it is imagery and continuity that strengthen this section. The feeling of hopelessness and entrapment is established, the image of malnutrition and poor health through the "Skin stretched over ribs under a faded summer dress" is striking but will also lead into a later part of the song. The drawing theme is continued, personifying her as a "sketch," restless but with nowhere to go.

> Her Mum was mad & loud and Dad was a man-child
> As a woman she's gentle and fragile; limbs restless and agile
> They flutter and twitch and twirl around nothingness
> And there's a hole in her circumference
> A space on worn Lino where she'd look out the window tracing pictures
> Making sketches of a life with the nimblest of fingers
> Elbow on hip, cigarette burning to the filter
> Colourful and vibrant, trapped behind the glass, bewildered

<div align="center">Verse Two from Stanley Odd, "Draw Yir Own Conclusions"</div>

The second rap verse contrasts her parent's hard exteriors with her fragility. The use of words like "gentle and fragile," "restless and agile" and specifically "flutter and twitch" continue to build the impression from the previous section of vulnerability, designed to evoke bird-like imagery, again to be expanded on later in the song. In the lines "A space on worn Lino where she'd look out the window tracing pictures // Making sketches of a life with the nimblest of fingers" the space is literal and the worn Lino is indicative of economic and social background but the space is also metaphorical. It is the space where she exists and where she could exist. Drawing the pictures on the window while "trapped behind the glass, bewildered," she inhabits two places at once – where she is physically and where she could be.

90

Sometimes at night, with a glass of gin and a fag
She tells her wee boy how she used to draw pictures in a pad
He says, how come you don't draw now mummy
She laughs sadly and says it doesn't work that way lovey

The third sung section is again both a visual update and content summary. Each section serves a narrative purpose while also taking the opportunity to further enrich the imagery, creating a deeper, realer experience for the listener.

The penultimate rap verse is an unconventional 14 lines long, breaking from the neatly structured 4/8/4/8 pattern. It is also where the story changes; where the particular incident on which the song hinges takes place.

One day she vanished, she was there then she was gone
No bag packed, nothing out of place but the clothes that she had on
Reported missing, barely a footnote on the news
The police got involved, searching the hoose for clues
Her son comes to look though he's grown noo
In her wardrobe he found thousands of drawings in hundreds of notebooks
Songbirds, familiar faces and vivid dreams
Intricate drawings that only one person had ever seen
Then he spotted it – it was the same figure
More defined than ever in the flesh, in picture after picture
Bright cotton summer dress gently blowing in the breeze
Through a myriad of scenes, the story is conceived
So many drawings and almost every single one
Contains a happy version of his missing mum

Vocal delivery and musical content follow the dynamic of the lyrics here. The section begins stripped back to guitar and vocal then builds to include string section, then drums fading in to full instrumentation. This is a crucial and pivotal part of the song: the disappearance of the nameless character, the general disinterest in her having gone and the discovery by her adult son of her collection of drawings. The drawings show what could have been. The faded summer dress mentioned earlier is a "Bright cotton summer dress gently blowing on a breeze." The revelations that she has gone and that she never stopped drawing raise more questions than they answer. Where has she gone? What do the drawings mean?

> She's lived her life as a tiny bird in a cage
> And found a way to escape the hurt and the waste
> Life had left her thin, haggard and drawn
> So she drew her life back, in a place she belonged

<p align="center">Final sung verse from Stanley Odd, "Draw Yir Own Conclusions"</p>

The last sung section is again utilised to summarise and explain intent. The imagery of a tiny bird in a cage is directly linked to her earlier descriptions of fluttering limbs, restlessness and being trapped. This section speaks of escape from pain and suffering through art. The description of being "thin, haggard and drawn" plays on "drawn" as in strained or worn and "to draw", with the final line that if life had drawn her as "drawn" then she in turn "drew her life back" by reimagining it.

> He kept one picture and he hung it above his mantelpiece
> A landscape, a clearing in a forest in pastel green
> And in the corner is a cottage with an open door
> And an open cage sat on the abandoned porch
> He looks daily at the open cage, smiles as he takes in the scene
> The wide-open space, sun's unbroken rays, and he hopes and dreams
> That the bird that's flown away and is never again to be seen
> Is her gone from that place, as her drawings had set her free

<p align="center">Final verse from from Stanley Odd, "Draw Yir Own Conclusions"</p>

The final eight lines are rapped again and they shift character. It is now her son we are watching, no longer the nameless woman. This last verse sets a new scene by describing the one picture that the son has decided to keep. It contrasts all the previous imagery by depicting wide open, natural space as opposed to closed-off residential areas. The illustration starts with a wide lens and with each line closes in on an open cage on an empty porch. It then moves back out to show the full scene again. The trapped bird imagery that has appeared throughout is continued and the song finishes on the idea that she has escaped as "her drawings had set her free." The ambiguous ending is designed to leave the listener thinking about what the story means. It forces engagement with the piece, to imagine what the outcome may be, to decide for yourself what happened. The last two verses aim to add some light into the darkness. If there is no light in the darkest of stories then they become too 'heavy'; too depressing and less engaging. Adding some light into the story serves to further develop the emotional link between listener and lyrics.

To summarise, this process of storytelling outsiderdom through lyrical portraiture differs from the first example of signifying outsiderdom in a number of key ways. Firstly, the narrative is much more singular and coherent. The very strength of the signifying example is that its generic contract allows a scattershot approach pulling in a wide range of cultural references and creating this bricolage of subverted mainstream imagery. The key tools for this process (wordplay, humour, overtly technical rhyme schemes) would be detrimental to the success of a lyrical portrait. In the latter case, vivid imagery and effective character definition are key to development of a story and character that demands first the listener's focus, then their emotional attachment. Poetic devices such as metaphor and simile and complex rhyme schemes are still employed in this example but they are created in a way that supports the main purpose of the piece: to develop the story.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated two different approaches to writing in rap form about the themes of outsiderdom and marginalisation; two practice-based theories for writing from the margins. The first approach is about criticising social and cultural exclusion, while providing a space for the outsider to exist. The second approach is about lyrical portraiture – painting a picture of a specific example of outsiderdom to evoke empathy and for the story to be heard. These stories are told with an aim to engage, rather than sermonise. The approach taken in the writing is designed to create discussion and debate as opposed to providing complete answers.

Voices of outsiderdom are about borders and intersections. They are about crossover and places where things meet. In some ways, if you are on the outskirts of everything then you are more connected to other things than if you are in the centre of anything/ something/ one thing. At a certain level, all aspects of human social interaction are governed by an insider/outsider perspective. Thus, we are all simultaneously inside and outside. There are times where the benefit is to be inside a certain group and other times where the benefit comes from being outside of a group. Culler (1997: 75) states that "poetry (is) a disruption of culture rather than a main repository for its values." This is in-line with the idea of signifying and mainstream cultural critique through

cultural repurposing. Hip-hop exists within a set of contradictions. It operates as mass culture that critiques and parodies mass culture. It is a mainstream cultural practice that also allows for stories to be told from the margins. In Scotland, it is both a mainstream musical genre (US hip-hop) and a marginalised subculture (Scottish hip-hop) at the same time. Tricia Rose talks of flow, layering and rupture: the "welding" of "abandoned parts, people and social institutions" (1994: 22). My approach to writing on these themes in an inclusive manner can be related to theories of intersectionality in that in reality social and cultural groups overlap and are not completely autonomous, separate entities.

To quote from "The Bleakest Blues" (2016), the concept of outsiderdom is addressed:

> An outsider in a genre of misfits
> Didn't want to be different but I never fit in
> … like that ladle in the drawer in the kitchen
>> Lines from "The Bleakest Blues", Asthmatic Astronaut ft Solareye (2016)

The first line here reflects on both the universally dissident state of hip-hop artists in Scotland and a feeling of existing outside of that social group. The ladle line is important (possibly particularly in Scottish culture) as it is a counterweight to the admission of outsiderdom and feeling isolated; it is a simile to make you smile; its purpose is to dispel any impression of taking myself too seriously or wallowing in introspection. In terms of outsiderdom, I am used to representing outsiders while repeatedly feeling outside of any group. I make hip-hop that does not always fit within that definition to the Scottish hip-hop community. I make Scottish hip-hop that as a genre is often derided by wider society. I am a practitioner who works in academia. I am now an academic, analysing my practice. It is the constant questioning of identity, combined with residing on the outskirts as opposed to the centre that is central to what I do as a rapper and, for me, to how hip-hop functions.

Chapter 4 – Rap Essays on Independence and National Identity

It's evolution with a silent R
                Hook, 2014

Introduction

This chapter chronicles and dissects a creative engagement with Scottish politics and the 2014 independence referendum over the period from 2011 – 2014. The following discussion begins by examining hip-hop as social commentary, its historical relationship to politics and social observation and how that changes over time. From this, consideration will be given to Scottish hip-hop and how it has embodied the social and political elements of hip-hop culture. Having established a central element of social commentary in hip-hop culture and its manifestation within hip-hop in Scotland, the focus of this chapter will be to trace a line through my creative output from early 2011 until the end of 2014 regarding political and cultural commentary relating to the Scottish independence referendum, 2014. This creative arc demonstrates a prolonged investigation of political thought, cultural engagement and analysis both individual and collective.

Hip-Hop as Social Commentary

Social commentary has been core to hip-hop from its inception. Rose (1994: 21) describes hip-hop's intrinsic link to "life on the margins of postindustrial urban America," going on to highlight and analyse the political and cultural significance of artists such as Public Enemy and NWA in addressing racism, oppression and social inequality. This narrative of social commentary can be found throughout hip-hop's history and – fundamentally linked to issues of authenticity and 'realness' – its dispersion around the globe. Deis (2015: 199) states that: "hip-hop music can be understood to be a type of social soundtrack or informal barometer for a society or community's mood and sentiments." Here he emphasises the direct link between hip-hop and the social surroundings from which it emanates. Deis (ibid) also notes a link between periods that see a rise of political rap and times of political change or social upheaval, indicating the connection between Black nationalist hip-hop such as Public Enemy and Poor Righteous Teachers in the late 1980s with the more mainstream political

narrative of Jesse Jackson running for president. This is then countered by the social outlaw imagery of NWA and gangsta rap coinciding with the rise in documentation of police brutality and the LA Riots. A recurrence of these scenarios can be seen in 2008 with the links between many high profile hip-hop artists such as Jay-Z and Common intersecting with Barack Obama's presidential campaign. More recently, artists such as Kendrick Lamar, TI, Beyonce and many others have used their voices to address the systemic racism against and violence towards African Americans by police across the US. In Scotland and the UK links can also be drawn between periods of significant social and political change and the popularity and propensity of politics and social commentary in rap.

Discussion: The Scottish Independence Debate

Scotland has been going through a period of intense discussion for the past few years as to the future of its political system and relations to the rest of the United Kingdom. Covering a wide range of issues from sovereignty, the legacy of colonialism, social justice and equality, to economic structures, community and democratic models, this discussion reached its peak in September 2014 with the referendum on Scottish independence. Law (2015: 3) observes:

> In the six months leading up to the referendum vote on 18 September 2014 Scotland experienced a period of exceptionally heightened political discourse, a widespread form of political participation unusual in western liberal democracies.

In this article, Law goes on to note that it was through a "mass grassroots movement in support of independence" (ibid) that existing traditional structures of media, institution and political class were disrupted, re-framed and challenged. As Rose (1994) has stated, hip-hop culture and creativity is intrinsically linked to flow, layering and rupture. As such, she recognises its radical roots in providing alternative identity creation in disenfranchised communities, taking ideas, developing them but being prepared to break off in new or unexpected directions in reaction to external factors.

On this Rose states (1994: 39):

> Let us imagine these hip-hop principles as a blueprint for social resistance and affirmation: create sustaining narratives, accumulate

them, layer, embellish, and transform them. However, be also prepared for rupture, find pleasure in it, infact, *plan on* social rupture. When these ruptures occur, use them in creative ways that will prepare you for a future in which survival will demand a sudden shift in ground tactics

This quote speaks to a dual purpose of transformation through repetition with a difference (signifying), combined with an attitude that expects, anticipates (and even looks forward to) changes and breaks in social and cultural norms. With these principles at the core of hip-hop culture it is not difficult to understand why Scottish hip-hop artists found themselves drawn closer to the foreground of Scottish culture during this period of social, cultural and political destabilisation.

Examples of Scottish hip-hop's increased presence in wider culture can be found in an increasing representation in the press (Rimmer, 2016) as well as artists contributing opinion writing for national newspapers and blogs (McGarvey, 2017), involvement in community and education projects and even making an impact on occasion at parliamentary level (Harrison, 2016). Few genres are as regularly commenting and impacting on contemporary issues in Scotland. The value of hip-hop as an educational tool is being felt in its integration into classrooms. For example, as Writer in Residence for Edinburgh International Book Festival in 2015 I worked on a three-month project with a high-school class in Glasgow of entirely non-English-as-first-language pupils from Slovakia, Romania and Iraq looking at fairytales from different cultural backgrounds, translating them into raps and setting them in contemporary Scotland. Established resources exist for rap battles to take place in classrooms around the country (Kelly, 2013). Its usefulness is being recognised in community education for young people that do not engage with or have been removed from conventional education practices.

Two of the earliest Scottish hip-hop releases are "Demonstrate In Mass" by Sugar Bullet (1991) and "The Frontal Attack" by Dope Inc (1991); both protest songs against the Community Charge (Poll Tax), a system of taxation widely criticised as unfairly disadvantaging those from deprived areas. In recent years artists such as myself, Loki, Hector Bizerk and Mog have continued this tradition of social commentary, political engagement and critique.

The Journey from Winter… to Son

My own political journey through the years leading up to the Scottish independence referendum can be mapped to a collection of songs that I wrote and released between 2011 and 2014. Beginning with "Winter of Discontent" in February 2011 and concluding in September 2014 with "Son, I Voted Yes," this series of songs make up a narrative arc tracking the trajectory of my own research and creative output regarding Scottish independence. The section below follows this journey on a path from a position of being undecided as to how I would vote in 2011, to being pro-independence by 2014.

"Winter of Discontent" (2011)

My consideration, discussion and creative engagement with the specific topic of Scottish independence in recent years begins with February 2011's "Winter of Discontent" on the EP *Pure Antihero Material*. The piece opens on the concept of waking up on the seventh of May 2010 (the day after the general election) with a hangover, the hangover in this case being the defeat of Labour at the hands of a Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition.

One key aim of this song is to frame the current time period (2011) in direct relation to 1980s Britain – an attempt to highlight the similarities between social inequality, economic disparity and class-struggle taking place currently and in the recent history of Thatcher's Britain. From claims that "Maggie's back at Number 10" to "Electro snares and a Filofax" (electro-snares actually being back in fashion (La Roux 2009-10)), rapid-fire cultural imagery is employed to populate the scene with decidedly retrospective imagery.

> Nae jobs, thousands getting laid off tae save costs
> I'm wanting back to the future – great Scot!
> How do I know the economy's affected?
> For the first time in a decade we've got 10 pound eccies

These four lines continue to comment on similarities in unemployment rates while linking social conditions to pop culture references from the same time period. The second line plays on the film *Back to the Future* (1985) and Dr Emmett Brown's catch phrase "Great Scot!" employed when something shocking or ground breaking was taking place. There are a series of layered

messages here where this line places the context in the 1980s, expresses a desire to escape from the mistakes of the past, and makes Scotland central in the discussion, leading on to additional lines about lack of representation at Westminster. The two lines that follow this place more of a local emphasis in their vernacular. As is the case throughout my writing, light-hearted observation is used to offset serious content. "Eccies" being a Scottish term for Ecstasy tablets, these lines imply that the global financial crisis of 2007-08 has also affected the price of recreational drugs.

Verse two is rounded off with a discussion regarding Scotland's move towards independence while criticising Westminster-based politics, summarising:

> If the SSP and Solidarity intervene
> With the SNP and the Greens then it seems
> Four Weddings and a Funeral for the Union Jack
> -   You've taken that too far
> I'm just chewing the fat…

This fragment is typical of my approach to lyric writing, aiming to play with words, make serious statements while counteracting the seriousness with playfulness, and to set it against a Scottish cultural background. Here the idea of the four parties (at the time) in favour of independence 'wedding', i.e. coming together, allows for the play on the quintessentially British comedy-drama *Four Weddings and a Funeral* – in this case the funeral being that of the union. The seriousness of the sentiment is immediately called into question with the line "you've taken that too far," which is a quote from Scottish comedy sketch show *Chewing the Fat*. The final line signifies a metaphorical hands-up, 'I'm just talking here', 'I'm simply starting a dialogue'. Therefore, these four lines are packed full of code, dual meaning and cultural signals designed to both generate discussion and allow repurposing of existing cultural artefacts.

"Antiheroics" (2012)

Following on from 2011's EPs, two songs released in September 2012's *Reject* were explicitly related to the independence debate. The core concept for "Antiheroics" was the importance of engaging with the debate and voting. As someone who knows a significant number of people who don't vote and historically have not voted, this was an attempt to engage in other ways. The title of this piece – Antiheroics – links to the EP from 2011, *Pure Antihero Material*, relating both to outsiderdom and in this case to the idea that political commentary is seldom seen as heroic or 'cool'.

The second song on the album, "Antiheroics" declares its intent from the outset stating overtly:

> This is Pure Antihero Material
> Most of the people that I know don't really vote

In doing so, these lyrics link to previous work but also attempt to form something of an anthem for voting – a topic that it is not easy to popularise. It frames the action in radical terminology "From homeland agents, to home invasions," then expresses that all this can be changed at "the polling stations," linking radical activity to democratic participation. This sets the tone for the whole piece in terms of it consisting of a bricolage of images and references that as Stokes (1994) discusses are repackaged to present a cohesive message.

The first verse literally sets the stage for the discussion starting "Cue Lights, cameras, atmospheric buzz," before essentially consisting of a list of questions and comparisons designed to frame the independence debate in contemporary local, regional, national and global culture. Quick-fire imagery is utilised to illustrate the landscape from poets, to bankers' bonuses, London and Edinburgh power-centres and the historical ethnic makeup of the British Isles. Where possible, each comparison is countered with an opposing view while maintaining cohesive metaphors so, for example, "Leaving the franchise or emptying the register" reframes the UK as a commercial entity with Scotland wishing to either exit the franchise or to steal from the cash register. Similarly, "fighting the power" relates to the politics of struggle but from a hip-hop

perspective also references Public Enemy and their movement of hip-hop protest. The first verse concludes, again explicit in its purpose, asking the question "Do you want to stay the full Britannia?"

The attempt to show both sides of the argument rather than deny one side any valid point is evident throughout:

> Alex Salmond says we all must dream
> It's no surprise that he's prepared to swim up stream
> What do we all want? Ask the big fish in a small pond
> One side's Martin Luther is the other side's Pol Pot
> Is it King Alex the enslaver? Or Alex the emancipator?
> Can I answer later while the Tories hold hands with Labour?
> Are we oil rich or a subsidised pet?
> Are we rabble rousers or an organised threat?

<div align="center">Opening Lines from Verse Two of "Antiheroics", Stanley Odd</div>

The format here is one of multi-layered referencing, while lampooning both sides of the argument. Salmond is positioned quoting Martin Luther King with the following line playing on his surname and the idiom of the difficulties of swimming against the tide. The fish imagery continues with another idiom (big fish in a small pond) relating to Salmond and the relevance of a small nation, before name-checking King and Pol Pot in the same line to show the polarity of interpretation when discussing the then First Minister. This piece is a collection of questions, designed to emphasise that polarity that could equally be attributed to people's views on independence. In contrasting these viewpoints, I highlight the rhetoric used in media and politics whilst also reflecting the division and strength of feeling across the electorate. A total of 18 questions are posed across three verses, with the general structure of the first verse and first half of the second verse being to ask questions and project opposing views. This then moves into the second half of verse two, where two equally negative views are painted of Scottish and English stereotypes. The Scots are cast as:

> … junkies and alkies
> With Victorian maladies, kept in smack by Southern salaries

Imagery is given over to parasites, cancer and drug addicts being kept by the state and benevolent philanthropists, with pop culture references to Irvine

Welsh's Trainspotting (1994) and cultural indicators such as MP (now Tory peer) Andrew Lansley's role in privatising the NHS (2011-12).

The contrasting English depiction is of:

> Thugs and privately educated Tory toffs
> With a shared affinity for tea and xenophobic thought

Here England is depicted as populated by skinheads, football hooligans and racists. The counter references to Trainspotting are Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels (1998) and ITV's The Only Way Is Essex (TOWIE). Having created these two imperfect reflections and faced them towards each other, they are shattered by the final line of the verse, "I'm in surround sound and they're the stereotype," highlighting their lack of depth and two-dimensional nature. The mirror-image metaphor works well here as the purpose of this section of the song is to hold up a mirror to our own prejudices, give consideration as to how we are seen by others and question what we are told in the media.

The final verse of Antiheroics moves from asking questions to observing and commenting on action, summarising the point of the piece. It discusses insincerity and incongruity in politics ("How can you support Tory Britain and Scottish Labour") and acknowledges a bigger picture than regional and national politics ("From the Occupy Movement to the March for Palestine"). Finally, the piece homes in on its key aim – to encourage engagement in and participation with the democratic process. It addresses the contradictory nature of believing to be protecting personal data by avoiding government processes like census' and voting while using social media and online shopping, concluding with the observation that digital surveillance is a "modern fact" but that voting allows a degree of surveillance of our own: "Putting an X in the box says yir watching back." This illustrates why I would refer to this song as a 'rap essay' on political engagement: it asks a series of questions, sets up opposing arguments, then concludes with a point drawn from these. To write this requires research, engagement, a knowledge of the topic and of the intended audience.

"Marriage Counselling" (2012)

At the core of "Marriage Counselling" is its concept – that of the independence debate being a conversation taking place between a couple in a dysfunctional relationship. This is not a new idea. The trope was utilised a number of times during the debate, (e.g. Lady Alba's "Bad Romance" (2014)) although not so regularly in 2012. Of "Marriage Counselling," an album review at the time from Is This Music? Magazine wrote:

> Recent single 'Marriage Counselling' isn't just the best song on the album, it's one of the best I've heard all year. It's also to my ears the only track talking about the arrival of the most important decision in Scottish History, never mind the fact that it's delivered with such style.

For me, it provided the opportunity to again consider two sides to the story, though in reality on re-reading the piece it clearly frames the relationship as imbalanced, where 'Caledonia' is subservient to 'Britannia', lacking control or equal stature. The strength of the writing is in maintaining continuity in context and content relating to relationships while referencing issues relevant to nationhood and politics. This juxtaposition and translocation of cultural and political issues into personal relationship territory allows for accepted social situations to be shown up as ridiculous and for new perspective to be gained on established issues.

> Dear Britainnia,
> Things aren't right and we have to face it
> I don't appreciate the procrastination
> I'm just saying, it's not like you're pure amazing
> I'm fed up feeling like the poor relation
> And I don't appreciate yir passive aggression
> Is it too much to ask that you answer ma questions?

<div align="center">Opening Lines from Stanley Odd's "Marriage Counselling" (2012)</div>

The "procrastination" and unanswered "questions" raised at the start of the song refer to the fact that in September 2012 the *Edinburgh Agreement* had not been signed and much of the public debate still centred around whether Westminster would 'allow' a referendum to take place. Other significant thematic links between relationship issues and politics in this verse include being allowed to

"speak for myself", being a 1000-year old country and therefore "old enough to look after my own money," and the observation:

> As for that nonsense about me being destitute?
> Hen, I've got the same damn group of friends as you
> So stop implying that if you were to get shot of me
> France, Germany and Spain wouldn't talk to me

Of these lines, Libby Brooks from The Guardian wrote in 2014:

> I've girned in the past about the tendency to frame the referendum debate in the language of a broken relationship. But I take it all back for the rhyme: "As for that nonsense about me being destitute? Hen, I've got the same damn group of friends as you…

It is this adhesion to the relationship concept through reframing issues such as international relations in this context that is at the core of the piece. The parody of relationship idioms such as "Do you think of me at all," "Weren't we always good together" and "half of me doesn't really want to leave you" all allow for dual meaning to reference actual issues raised by either side of the debate.

As the song develops, a wider range of cultural signifiers and indicators are utilised to place the discussion at a specific point in time. In her opening verse Britannia states: "I'm tired of having to keep you in food and drink," playing the role of the sole provider who doesn't feel they should have to deal with any complaints in the household. This is both an unequal and an antiquated idea of how a relationship should work and as well as exposing how the country feels about its partner's contribution also implies its outmoded prejudice. Recent history relating to the collapse of industry is referenced as "I thought we'd agreed to forgive and forget the 1980s." Wider global finance is put into context with "Look at Greece she's even older than you and they just called in the bailiffs." This is both a retort to the economic argument in the first verse and a means of placing the discussion in a distinct period of history, post- 2007-08 financial crisis (plus bailiffs often indicate tension between society and establishment). Other points made in this verse include criticism of Scottish parliamentary and local government finances in the form of the building of the Scottish Parliament and the trams in Edinburgh (both late and over budget). Each of these references, political, social or international, serve to deepen the

level of engagement with the theme of Scottish independence while further connecting every reference to the concept of a relationship.

Over the course of the song, tension builds, with words becoming more inflammatory and accusatory, again reflecting the nature of the debate itself over time. Caledonia's final verse is an ultimatum for change or the relationship will come to an end. This verse addresses life in post-industrial Britain and a need to rewrite and reassess social, cultural and political focus. The final verse belongs to Britannia, who chooses instead to point out Caledonia's own flaws, to maintain the belief that without the UK Scotland would not survive and to finish with the declaration:

> Without me you wouldn't last two minutes
> In fact, I don't even care if we're finished

In addition to the lyrical content, consideration of the musical elements of "Marriage Counselling" is useful in providing additional information relating to Scottish hip-hop. Williams (2017) discusses the theatricality of Akala's "The Thieves Banquet" (2013), noting the use of theatrical performance to signify each character in the song (narrator, dictator, monarch, religious leader and banker). Further to this, he notes musical elements representing individual characters. Williams reflects on the "multi-accentuality" of the performance, going on to decode its meaning in the context of Akala's neo-colonial critique. With "Marriage Counselling" we considered writing sections that musically signposted each character (Britannia and Caledonia). There was also a discussion of accent, and whether I should affect an upper-class English accent during the 'Britannia' sections of the song. While doing so would perhaps have strengthened the relationship between the "musical and lyrical delivery" (Williams, 2017: 98), it was felt that due to existing stereotypes of Scottish culture (e.g. tartan and bagpipes) and tendencies in some circles for Scottish hip-hop to be "seen as novelty" (Rimmer, 2016: unpaginated), this could have a negative effect on being taken seriously. In this instance, I felt that the piece retained more authenticity by being delivered simply as rap with no affectation. I do modulate between a more agitated performance (Caledonia) and a more laidback performance (Britannia) to denote changes in speaker and to infer each character's general demeanour but both performances are still in my own

accent and rap style. Another reason to maintain the same accent in both characters here is that it reflects that Scotland was divided on the independence debate. Making both Caledonia and Britannia Scottish acknowledges that and avoids the discussion descending into anti-English sentiment.

Finally, Kate Higgins (2014) book, *Generation Scot Y,* examines issues of identity, values, society and politics for Scots from Generation Y (or Millennials). Here she discusses examples of art and culture relating to politics and Scottish independence, printing the lyrics to "Marriage Counselling." Being born in 1979, I actually sit on the edge of two generational boundaries: Generation X (1961-77 approx) and Generation Y (1982-2004 approx). Sometimes described as a 'Cusper', bridging the gap between two generations, once again I find myself tending towards outsiderdom by the mere fact of having been born then.

"Son, I Voted Yes" (2014)

A close reading of "Son, I Voted Yes" requires context. It was written as a solution to the issue of having an album due to be released in November 2014, the referendum being in September and the writing for the album being in the spring/ summer prior to that. This was not an event I could simply ignore. It completely dominated culture, politics and society in Scotland in 2014. It was important and as an artist whose entire reason for writing is to reflect social and cultural issues it was impossible not to write about. The solution that I arrived at was to write a story to my son – who would turn 1-year old two days after the referendum in September – explaining my reasons for voting Yes to Scottish independence.

The song was not planned for release outside of the album release in November 2014 but due to its relevance at the time it was decided to release a music video for it two weeks before the referendum (which I made myself). The video went viral with over 200,000 views on YouTube. It rapidly became a song directly associated with the independence movement, was covered in articles from the Daily Record (Dingwall, 2014) to Vice Magazine (Bakkalapulo, 2014) and resulted in us playing alongside Franz Ferdinand, Mogwai and Frightened Rabbit to a 2000-capacity audience at Edinburgh's Usher Hall for *A Night For*

Independence a week before the vote. In an interview conducted after the referendum, Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, was asked her opinion of Scottish hip-hop and replied: "I can't say I'm too up to date but I love Stanley Odd. 'Son I voted Yes' still makes me tear up" (Gray, 2015: unpaginated). This is the leader of the country, referencing local hip-hop in relation to her own politics. However, it would be naïve not to be aware of Christopher Deis' observation that "popular culture is a tool that can be manipulated and used by elites to create a passive public" (2015: 194). This song provided cultural capital for the First Minister to make use of. Yet both the fact that the question of hip-hop was posed at all and the First Minister's response indicate the cultural relevance that hip-hop in Scotland currently holds.

The concept for "Son, I Voted Yes," as discussed above, was simply writing a letter to my son about my reasons for voting for Scottish independence. In terms of an approach to this, I wanted the music to be reminiscent of a lullaby and the imagery to draw on fairytales and nursery rhymes, again using these tropes to provide new perspectives on existing issues and to draw parallels between existing childhood imagery and current affairs. This approach has the added impact of reminiscence and nostalgia in adult listeners that develops an emotional link to their own childhood. In her ethnographic study of the Scottish independence movement, Berg (2016: 69) observes the following from a Scottish contributor listening to the song:

> The look on Michael's face as he travelled in childhood memory, was one of both fond nostalgia and bitter injustice. Michael viewed all that was positive about Scottish society, as directly opposed to the policies of Margaret Thatcher. The dual feeling evoked by this song, one in which feelings of hope are placed side by side feelings of lament of past events, resonated with Michael's own interpretation and remembrance of his past.

These observations prove that for some listeners the intended effect was achieved. "Son, I Voted Yes" was a serious attempt to summarise my own feelings about Scottish independence in summer 2014, taking into account what I had read, discussed, debated and considered over the previous years. It is

also peppered with genuine observations that I felt I would like to share with my son when he is older.

The piece consists of three 24-bar verses. In terms of delivery, it differs from my 'default' rap persona in that it is more gentle and open, virtually spoken rather than rapped, in a tone suitable for talking to a child. The first verse, as usual, sets the scene, gives background and frames the story. The content takes on both the structure and imagery of a fairytale combined with examples of parental advice that can equally be applied to the arguments being made at the time for social justice through independence. The "Witch of Westminster," referring to Margaret Thatcher, is a comment on how she was and is perceived in Northern England and Scotland; but further to this there is a critique of that witch imagery that was used as a celebration when she died. On Thatcher's death in April 2013, street parties were reported around the country (Neild, 2013) and a campaign was run to get "Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead" (1939) to Number One in the music charts (Dex, 2013). Therefore, the line "She's passed away now but we didn't say good riddance" is linked to the line "You should always treat people how you'd like to be treated," advocating a drive to move beyond the negativity of retaliation and revenge. These lines work with the duality of good parental advice and social critique. Overall, the first verse is the background information to the fairytale. It provides a story with a wicked witch, a marginalised people and a series of historical actions to enable their self-governance.

Verse two is concerned with addressing positive reasons for change. It also uses the simplest terms possible to refute pro-union criticism that Scottish nationalism was or is about the 'blood and soil' nationalism of Nazi Germany as allegedly suggested by Alistair Darling in June 2014 (Cowley, 2014). The opening lines from verse two address this directly:

> This isn't about the colour of skin
> Or where you were born, or who you call kin
> It's about pure and simple geography
> And caring for everyone responsibly
> It's about people facing poverty with immunity
> And building and supporting our communities
> Too many people want off the path we're following
> It's time to change how we 'do' politics

The opening lines here are a direct counterargument to the nationalism of ethnicity and landownership. They suggest an alternative civic nationalism where anyone living within a given area has an equal voice, equal access to social care and equal responsibility to the community. Maintaining parallels between parenthood and national politics, the piece continues:

> Responsibility and independence
> Leading by example of the messages we're sendin'
> Character traits we hope for our kids one day
> So why wouldn't we want it for our country?

The idea here that I am trying to convey is that these character traits that are to be encouraged in us as individuals, representing adulthood and maturity, can equally be applied on a national level. Toward the end of verse two, fairytale and children's story imagery is used repeatedly as a metaphor for aspects of the national independence debate. Spin doctors' interrelated, complex manipulation of the mainstream narrative is likened to "Rumplestiltskin" spinning gold from straw; the threatening trolls under the bridge in the "Billy Goats Gruff" transform into online trolls in cyberspace linking to Doctor Who nemesis the Cybermen (those with a pro-independence leaning often being called 'Cybernats' (Grant, 2014)). The verse ends by comparing the worldwide upheaval of the early 21st Century from recession, violence and terrorism to the possibility for "a peaceful revolution."

Verse three continues to provide a counter to much of the mainstream pro-union argument. Further story-based imagery is peppered throughout from the Goose that Laid the Golden Egg, to Oor Wullie and Doctor Who. One important aspect of my writing across a range of pieces that is evident here is that I acknowledge that, although I have made my decision, I can see the other side of the story. This admission of a "hopeful guess" and that "Of course I had reservations, who didn't?" was significant within a nationwide debate where politicians are never allowed to admit to there being any weight to the other perspective. As public figures, politicians are forced to suggest that only their perspective is correct for fear of seeming unconvincing. In reality, this blinkered worldview only serves to polarise the public. I felt it was extremely important to acknowledge that nothing was certain; that the best you could hope for was to

consider the facts and see what happened. This desire for alternative politics is addressed in the lines:

> It's wrong that a politician can only be the shepherd or the wolf
> Cause that way they either want you for your flesh or for your wool

Here, the current stereotypes of political figures either leading the electorate or taking from them are challenged, again using children's story imagery taken from stories such as Peter and the Wolf or Little Red Riding Hood. Verse three concludes with a wider critique of Britain as a global capitalist, neo-colonial power addressing the new working class, wealth disparity and individual capitalism. This is underlined by a consideration of the impact that the decision will have on the next generation:

> I hope you're hearing these thoughts with amazement
> And inequity is consigned to history pages
> I don't want to see another lost generation
> Rioting, frustrated and cross with their parents

"Son, I Voted Yes" was the culmination of three years of reading about, debating, contributing to, reflecting on and writing about Scottish independence. It was a subtle manifesto, (w)rapped up in a poem; a protest song masquerading as a nursery rhyme; a case for change and an honest letter to my son. My rap persona is different, more gentle, addressing a child, explaining complex issues in simple terms using child-like imagery related to fairytales and children's stories. This is all intentional. It represents my continued attempt to understand and frame the debate through translocating it in different contexts, utilising simile and metaphor to make connections between widely understood cultural references and independence-specific issues and arguments.

Post-Indyref Postscript

The level of cultural and political engagement and analysis that took place across Scotland in the period 2012-14 had a side-effect, for me certainly, of becoming much more informed, with a deeper understanding of the country's constitutional and colonial history. A number of pieces that I wrote over the course of 2013-14 engage directly with Scotland's colonial past. Over this period, I several times found myself commissioned to write on a specific topic.

In terms of how I write, I treat lyric writing like research and since around 2010 my approach has been very structured and organised. This also marks the point at which I moved from writing with a pen and paper to writing on a laptop and my phone. This structured, research-style approach to song-writing is particularly evident when writing commissions on a topic that requires depth of understanding. For example, when writing a piece about Nelson Mandela for *Aye Write! Glasgow's Book Festival* in 2013, I undertook several months of background reading and research prior to actually writing the piece. The concept that I decided on to shape the song was to frame it around the fact that Mandela was known by many different names over his lifetime. These range from his birth name, to his 'British' name, given at school, to a host of other names used to define him at different points in his life and from different perspectives of who is doing the naming: Rolihlahla, Madiba, Nelson, The Black Pimpernel, Communist, Terrorist, Prisoner, President. This allowed me to use different names to introduce different stages in his life.

UK hip-hop artist Akala states "hip-hop doesn't ask permission… hip-hop forces its way in whether you want to let it or not" (Zulu Nation UK, 2016). This is evidenced as one of the successful processes whereby hip-hop has been a voice of the marginalised and a means to tell stories that might not otherwise be heard (Rose, 1994; Bennett, 1999; Forman, 2012). Where this becomes an area for discussion is, how does that change when hip-hop is being expressed by a voice that isn't from the margins (i.e., a white European male)? As part of a historically dominant culture there are times where perhaps we should ask or at least consider our right to speak on certain subjects and how we frame this discussion. From the resulting song, "The Man with Many Names," I began by attempting to acknowledge the uncomfortable place of a white European trying to tell the story of apartheid in South Africa, with a desire to show respect to the culture I am attempting to reflect:

> I hesitate to write this, on account of ma whiteness
> I don't think I have the right or the light of the righteous
> Then in the midst of this crisis
> I remember ma parents blessed me with colour-blindness

<div align="center">Opening four lines from "The Man With Many Names", (2013)</div>

The 7-minute piece goes on to tell parts of Mandela's story but also make links between the imbongi praise singers and the role of rap in oral history, drawing similar parallels to those drawn by Smitherman regarding rappers as "postmodern African griot(s)" (1997: 4). Here again, additional parallels can be found in Scottish oral history such as the Salt of the Earth project (Kidd, 2014) that archives oral history and song from working class communities.

Similarly, when writing on the topic of Glasgow's relationship with the slave trade for *Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme* project *The Empire Café*, I read a range of literature, made notes, researched and prepared before forming a basic structure for how the song would work, a concept, a voice, a style. The resulting song, "Princes on the Pavement" reflects this as it tells the story of Glasgow's merchants who profited from the triangular trade and subsequently built much of Glasgow city centre. This piece was important in that Glasgow's history and relationship with the slave trade is not overtly recognised as part of the fabric of the city's past (Mullen, 2009). The song takes the form of a descriptive storytelling of the fates of the merchants and the slaves but its final eight lines turn to questions of the present day:

> How can you take ownership of another human being?
> How can we take ownership of the problem?
> How can I take ownership? I'll never own a ship
> And those merchants died long ago
> This kind of dirt takes centuries to make clean
> Emancipation doesn't wipe the slate clean
> If for every penny made there was a penny paid
> We'd still owe a lifetime spent in chains

<p align="center">Last eight lines from "Princes on the Pavement" (2014)</p>

In this summary section of the song, I make links between the actions of the past and cultural responsibility in the present. This song does not make any claim to have the answers to these questions but it does make the move of acknowledging inherited responsibility and a need to engage with this history. Both the teacher/ storyteller format and the acknowledging sentiment of these pieces are relevant in light of the "historical amnesia" Shashi Tharoor refers to regarding a lack of colonial history being taught in British schools (Channel 4 News, 2017). I express similar sentiments in the piece "The Friendly Games" (BBC, 2014) written for BBC 5 Live during the Glasgow Commonwealth Games

2014. Again, the perspective that I write from involves a need to engage, discuss and acknowledge Scottish complicity in British imperialism.

Finally, taking the wider concepts of Scotland's colonial history on board along with more recent analysis of Scottish/ British cultural relations, "Who Am I?" (2014) demonstrates the end-point of the Scottish independence debate in terms of how I viewed Scotland at the time. From a writer's perspective, it is very easy to point the finger at *the other*; the oppressor, your opponent. The aim of this piece was to challenge not only what I see as contrasting views to my own, but also to challenge my cultural background and the legacy of white Britain of which I am a part.

> Rule Britannia. Rule the waves that
> Oppress nations. Making slave ships
> Consciousness stuck in imperial stasis
> Now run by the media and corporations
> Spread halfway round the world like a mass contagion
> History of an empire on bloody pages
> Why do you think that they call it the butcher's apron?
> It's Carrying On Killing - like Ooh matron
> Don't think Scotland wasn't on the take then
> How many streets named after tycoons from plantations?
> Playing the global benevolent patron
> Should have left on the horse that you came with
> From Palestine, to South Africa, to India your fingerprints
> Are found at the crime scene; your influence is lingering
> Old and feeble, knocking on the almighty gates
> Passed on the baton to the United Snakes
> New world order you approach with legs bent
> To plead to play war-games from yir deathbed
> Prince Charles posing as a humanitarian
> Aiding a billion-pound arms trade to Saudi Arabia
> Thinking of all the countries where we've set flames
> I can't help but wonder how they forgive
> I'm just trying to set maself straight
> On a definition of this country that I'm comfortable with
> Who Am I?
>
> Verse one, "Who Am I?" (2014)

The style and delivery of the piece are influenced by a number of well-known hip-hop artists. The melodic, ironic delivery of the first four lines in a sing-song, nursery rhyme style parodies the singing of the national anthem, while the direct addressing of a country and form of this section is a reference to Brother Ali, "Uncle Sam Goddamn" (2007), which in itself is channelling Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddamn" (1964). This inter-sampling goes back to the notion of

creating a multi-layered dialogue between recordings and writings from different artists (Williams, 2013). In taking on those influences I also attempt to attach myself to that already established pedigree of protest music. My first line even rhythmically mimics the first line of the first verse in "Uncle Sam Goddam" (see Example 1) but where Brother Ali's melodic delivery conjures images of a southern preacher perhaps, mine takes on a mocking childish tone, intended to turn a national anthem into a playground taunt.

0				1				2				3			
0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
		x		x	x		X	x		x		x			
		Smoke		and	mirr		-	ors		stripes		and		stars	

0				1				2				3			
0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
		x		x	x		X	x		x	x			x	
		Rule		Bri-	tan		-	nia		rule	the	waves		that	

Figure 3: Rhythmical comparison between first lines from Brother Ali "Uncle Sam Goddamn" and Stanley Odd "Who Am I?"

The cadence of bars 5 – 8 are intentionally referencing a common rhythmical pattern used by Mos Def (or Yasiin Bey as he is now). The rhythmical phrasing that I use here and the vocal inflection from high to low (portamento) are techniques often employed by Mos Def. For example, his delivery in "Children's Story" (1998) evidences this rhythmical pattern of a quaver/ semi-quaver rhythm with descending portamento. In employing this flow I am again utilising these forms to frame myself in a similar context to another well-established, socially and politically relevant rapper. Mos Def's delivery itself owes something to dancehall and Caribbean influences as well as obviously being New York hip-hop. As such, I am aware that I am stylistically channelling African-American music with Afro-Caribbean influenced elements to criticise British Imperialism. I would hope very much that I do so with the upmost respect for the art form and culture from whence it has come. In fact, rhythmically referencing Mos Def is useful due to his tendency to reference earlier artists in his own music. From "Children's Story" reworking Slick Rick, to quoting and rewriting Boogie Down

Productions "Stop the Violence," this form of sampling authenticates through association with earlier established artists while also paying respect. In my doing this with Brother Ali, Nina Simone by association and Mos Def I am attempting to authenticate, pay respect and to frame the content as social commentary protest music.

The line "It's Carry on Killing, like Ooh Matron" makes statements about Britain's approach to war, international relations and colonialism on multiple levels. The phrase is referring to a series of very British comedy farce films made between the late 1950s and late 1970s, each with the title Carry On… e.g. "Carry on Camping," "Carry on Abroad" etc. The titles obviously had the dual meaning of the entire situation being a 'carry on' i.e. a farce, and to continue or keep doing what you are doing. Thus, the line "Carry on Killing," mocks and criticises the UK's foreign policy and approach to war e.g. bombing Syria, invading Iraq, arming Saudi Arabia, while also observing that it continues to be business as usual in terms of Britain's approach to war. The second part of the line, "Ooh Matron" – a famous quote from the "Carry On…" films – further develops the mockery and absurdity of this approach to international relations from a supposedly developed country. In the original films, it was used to show false shock or surprise at a double entendre when the person saying it was generally anything but shocked. In this case it further ridicules what I perceive to be the hand-wringing and faux concerns raised by politicians before going to war when they are generally entirely aware and in favour of that outcome from the start – the duality of their true intentions and public facade. Reworking social references such as this, combined with local colloquialisms all serve to locate the work in a British and more exactly central Scottish context. There is a duality here in terms of the melding of cultural artefacts and cultural heritage, where my lived experience of the culture that I have grown up in is being expressed through the structures of hip-hop culture that make up my listening background and creative engagement.

The line "Don't think Scotland wasn't on the take then" is a pivotal point in the verse, emphasising the importance of recognising historical collusion as opposed to creating a blame culture where responsibility is shifted to a perceived establishment. Almost immediately after the act of Union in 1707

Scottish merchants started to benefit from Imperialism. Glasgow city was called the Second City of the Empire. It's major street names: Jamaica Street, Buchanan Street – named after a plantation owner, Ingram Street – named after a plantation owner, Glassford Street – the same. The Merchant City, the oldest part of the city, was built on money from merchants' ships returning from the Triangular Trade across the North Atlantic. It is not acceptable for Scotland to blame England for all its ills when our country was complicit in imperial expansionism for centuries.

The final four lines of verse one, which also become the refrain at the end of each verse, change the tone. They move from social commentary to summary of activity. They acknowledge self-reflection and refer specifically to an unfinished search for comfortable definition. It is worth noting that the rhyme scheme changes from AABB format to ABAB. In doing so this refocuses the listener and allows me to summarise the content of each verse. Verses two and three become more and more locally focused – first addressing domestic policy and immigration, then in the final verse religion, sectarianism and local issues. The aim was to start with a broad view of British socio-political issues from an international viewpoint, then to gradually focus-in more closely, addressing issues of history, culture and identity.

Conclusion

I have examined four songs released between early 2011 and late 2014 that display critical thinking regarding Scottish independence. Combined, they demonstrate a development of critical thought over time expressed as creative output. To put this timeline in context, the catalyst for the first piece was the result of the 2010 General Election; in January 2012 the Scottish and UK government were still debating whether the UK government would 'allow' Scotland to hold a referendum (Wimpress, 2012); the signing of the *Edinburgh Agreement* took place in October 2012, setting the official date and granting constitutional legitimacy to the referendum; the *Scottish Independence Referendum Bill* was passed in November 2013 and the referendum itself took place on 18th September 2014.

Each song has a specific core purpose in mind. For "Winter of Discontent" the purpose is to draw a line stating that the result of the 2010 General Election and the coalition government that came out of it would be the catalyst for significant political change. It is no coincidence that I chose the title both from a Shakespearean play but also from a period in UK history (*The Winter of Discontent*, 1978-79, during which I was born) that saw widespread social unrest leading to Thatcher's election in 1979 and the start of 18 years of Tory rule. "Antiheroics" has a central theme focused on the importance of voting. "Marriage Counselling" attempts to stimulate debate while showing there are two sides to a story and "Son, I Voted Yes" is the culmination of several years analysing the question of independence and a treatise on the reasons that it should happen. Generally, these songs eschew emotional content, aiming instead to stimulate the listener and retain their attention through wordplay, recognition and engagement. "Son, I Voted Yes" is different as it has ended up having an emotional link for people. Perhaps this is the key to its wider success. It suited a purpose and gave a voice to many people but it also allowed for a political and social subject to become a personal and emotive topic. By asking a series of questions as well as providing opinion, these songs attempt a level of identity analysis through social commentary.

As stated earlier, the narrative arc of this collection of songs tracks my personal journey from being undecided as to how I would vote, to being in favour of independence. Viewing the creative works, in combination with autoethnographic reflection and interview materials provides insight into this process. In August 2013 as part of an event called "5 Artists in Search of a Country" I am quoted describing the independence debate as "a constantly evolving re-definition of ourselves" (Small, 2013). This statement unknowingly echoes Rose's theory of flow, layering and rupture. In an interview with music blogger *The Pop Cop* in April 2013 I state:

> I take exception to decisions regarding Scotland being decided by a parliament in Westminster and I have concerns about issues such as taxation and revenue generation being centrally controlled and handed out to the Scottish government, but I am not sure whether complete independence is the answer or whether further devolved powers within the UK would be sufficient.

These statements can be contrasted with those I made a year later in the summer of 2014, showing much more emotive and immediate language, such as this interview with the Scotsman (Webster, 2014):

> The decision that we make isn't just for us, it's for our families, it's for the future, it's for the communities that we live in.

and with the Skinny Magazine (Bett, 2014):

> I'm absolutely in favour of Scottish independence… I think to take the opportunity to be responsible for our own decisions is one we shouldn't miss and I also feel personally that to have disagreed with so many things that have come out of Westminster politics in my adult life I couldn't honestly not vote yes for Scottish independence

The change in my perspective and the increase in intensity of expression run in parallel to my creative output at each point in time. The level of social interaction and discursive activity taking place outside of the act of song-writing was paramount to being able to write with the level of cultural referencing, layering of meaning and metaphor being applied line-on-line within the lyrics. To be this immersed in a topic was not difficult given that the country as a whole was in the middle of a "period of exceptionally heightened political discourse" (Law, 2015).

At the core of these pieces is a drive to write about society in a way that critiques, challenges, invites debate and allows for people to identify with it at the same time. As such, these works link to the themes of outsiderdom, self-determination and giving voice to the marginalised that are discussed in the previous chapters. This is about framing stories in a way that people believe they are astute observations but also obvious observations. It is about summarising a general feeling across broad sections of society. It is about making serious points without being seen to take yourself too seriously. It also links back to chapter two's discussion of identity creation, in that the style of writing requires the performance of a "believable" and "original" identity (Peterson, 1997: 220), in order to be authentic and subsequently perceived as 'honest'.

In an article from 2013 searching for revolutionary art in hip-hop, cultural commentator Gareth Vile writes:

> Stanley Odd are measured and smart: rapping in their own accents, they pick up on a UK tradition that includes Roots Manuva – telling their truth, not being in thrall in the gangster bravado of the 1990s underground and throwing down beats that owe more to the melodic hooks of DJ Premier than the glitch and paste of J Dilla… But it wasn't them. They are too moderate, too sensible. They encourage voting. They see both sides of the argument, but separate them and turn their tracks into dialectical, reasoned debates. Their frustration at society isn't dystopian: they see abuses in terms of corruption of the existing state, and aren't revolutionary.

I would consider this a fair appraisal of what I have been trying to achieve with the pieces examined above. There are numerous examples in these pieces of attempts to reframe existing social and cultural indicators to better understand them. Songs such as "Antiheroics" demonstrate a desire to encourage non-voters to engage with the established machinery of democracy.

In 2014 song, "Chase Yirsel", I rap the lines:

> Is Russell Brand right to say don't vote?
> If you're a no-show on 18th September then we won't know

These lines are designed as a direct challenge to the mainstream populist 'revolutionary' refusal to vote by means of protest. It questions whether refusing to engage with existing systems can have any impact, and instead suggests active engagement in order to effect change. Throughout the analysis of the above pieces, their creative process and the dialogues that surround them, there is a clear message of engagement through discussion, moving toward gradual change of perspectives through subversion of existing signifiers and indicators. In the song "To Be This Good Takes Stages" on the 2014 album *A Thing Brand New*, I rap:

> It's evolution with a silent R
> I'm a peacekeeping fighter and a violent bard

Although a song regarding self-definition and identity creation, these lines are very apt in explaining the core of how I see my place as a writer of social commentary. This *is* revolution but subtly, carefully and gently. Evolution with a

silent R. Revolution in the shape of natural progression. Perhaps none of the songs discussed above could be considered revolutionary in their form. As Vile notes, they are too measured; too willing to reflect; too happy to exist within established boundaries. The replacing of a government with a whole new system is by definition revolutionary, therefore the movement for Scottish independence was a revolutionary act. In that way at least, "We were part of a peaceful revolution."

Chapter 5 – Growing Up and Getting Personal

Introduction

This chapter is about growing up, changing focus and topics, and how to reframe that within existing genre structure. It is about me as an artist going from growing up *with* hip-hop in my youth to growing up *in* hip-hop through documenting the process, unpacking life experiences and working through feelings and emotions. This chapter will look at examples where my writing focuses on personal, reflexive commentary as opposed to cultural or social commentary. These songs reflect me as an individual human being (as opposed to me, the constructed rap persona) expressing universal themes such as love and fatherhood. In what follows, I discuss the means by which I approach this within the established confines of the genre.

In 2006, Mark Anthony Neal asked the question, "What does hip-hop look like when it becomes grown folks' business?" (Morgan & Neal, 2006: 235). This is Neal conceptualising and comparing the life-span of hip-hop as a genre with the development of a human being, reasoning that in 2006 hip-hop is around 30 years old and hypothesising about what any 30-year-old might be concerned with in life. Hence, his assertion that "hip-hop right now is about growing up" (ibid). (Although, as a youth culture, hip-hop was really a youth when it was born, so would have been ages with its contemporaries. Therefore, is hip-hop, in fact, in its 50's now?) There are all manner of difficulties, pitfalls and traps within the boundaries of hip-hop as a genre that make it difficult to 'grow up' or worse still to grow old. Forman (2014: 302) notes that "Age in hip-hop has, thus, been almost singularly associated with youth even as this construct becomes less tenable." Having been born of defiance and youth culture, many of hip-hop's core values (both positive and negative) make the act of aging or admitting to it quite troublesome. As with many aspects of hip-hop culture, a preoccupation with remaining youthful and denying adult responsibilities is perhaps a valid reflection of wider contemporary culture. Problems for artists as they age can be found in abundance, an example from GZA from Wu-Tang Clan's 2008 performance at ABC, Glasgow, is highlighted in this review where the author states: "GZA underlines this lack of mobility by pulling up a stool to

perform Animal Planet" (Drever: unpaginated). It is interesting in that for my generation the image of an old blues musician such as Muddy Waters performing sat on a stool is completely acceptable but that accommodation of age has not been reached or considered viable yet in hip-hop.

Difficulties in expressing feelings abound in a genre where even the phrase to 'catch feelings' is considered a derogatory comment. DMX's (1999) "What These Bitches Want," explains:

> I fucks with these hoes from a distance
> The instant they start to catch feelings
> I start to stealin' they shit
> Then I'm out just like a thief in the night

This DMX verse highlights considerably more than just the problem of expressing certain emotions in hip-hop. It speaks to hip-hop's issues with sexism, patriarchy, misogyny, hyper-masculinity and perceptions of manhood. In the context of American culture, Dyson (2012: 367) describes these prejudices in hip-hop as "the ugly exaggeration of viewpoints that are taken for granted in many conservative circles across the nation." While not deflecting from the issues of sexism and hyper-masculinity that exist in hip-hop, this does introduce the idea of sub-cultures and musical genres reflecting the issues that exist in wider mainstream society. These issues can be reflected as social observation or critique but they can also be reflected in their absorption, acceptance, amplification and repetition. By no means limited to the United States, comparisons can be drawn to UK grime artist Stormzy in 2015's "Shut Up":

> I set trends, dem man copy
> They catch feelings, I catch bodies

In Stormzy's lyrics he sets up contrasting positions in each line, attaching the positive attribute to himself and the negative attribute to his opponents. He explains that he sets trends while others are copying and that while others catch feelings i.e. fall in love or have emotional attachment, he catches bodies i.e. kills people (either metaphorically or literally). These lyrics demonstrate the continued emphasis on hyper-masculinity in rap and negative connotations of exhibiting emotional attachment to women. From her ethnographic work in

London's hip-hop scene, Speers refers to a scene that is "so male dominated" (2017: 7). Regina N. Bradley dissects gender in hip-hop, breaking it down as:

> Hip-hop masculinity is aggressive, dominant and flattened while hip-hop femininity is submissive, (hyper)sexual, and silenced. (2015: 182)

Rose (2008: 4) observes and criticises the narrow boundaries of hyper-masculinity in hip-hop, linking them to a process of commodification, commericalisation and simplification, noting:

> The trinity of commercial hip-hop – the black gangsta, pimp, and ho – has been promoted and accepted to the point where it now dominates the genre's storytelling worldview.

This results in a one-dimensional narrative but again is not simply limited to hip-hop. This oversimplification of individual histories and personal characteristics is evident across society where, in order to make sense of the world, people with perceived social or cultural similarities are grouped together and ascribed the same character traits. Binary definitions of people's behaviour, feelings or characteristics will always result in an incomplete picture, reducing the means by which individuals can express themselves. To return to Dyson's comments regarding hip-hop reflecting wider society, these issues are equally relevant in Scotland. In wider Scottish culture, images of masculinity are consistently tied to drinking culture (O'Brien, et al., 2009) and violence (Deuchar & Holligan, 2014), and Scottish men have the lowest life-expectancy in the UK (National Records Scotland, 2012). Therefore, navigating and negotiating acceptable perceptions of masculinity in hip-hop can also produce and reflect interesting results relating to masculinity in society.

Navigating Hyper-Masculinity in a Genre That Won't Acknowledge Vulnerability

I bypass some of these difficulties for a number of reasons but still have to negotiate a complex maze of acceptable levels of self-expression even on the periphery of the more toxic masculine elements of the culture. As a white European male, privilege allows me to lower my guard to a certain extent, as does my situation outside of 'hardcore' hip-hop. As discussed in chapter two, most of my creative output situates me in a less restrictive place as the rap

persona I have created is less a 'super-hardman' and more a 'super-geek', but I still take care not to extend beyond the genre bounds that inform my work. Age also plays a part in this. As a 38-year-old, married father-of-two I am much more comfortable in my identity than I was as a youth and a young man. I am less challenged and don't feel the need to overemphasise my masculinity at this stage in life, which is to be expected as I age.

Between *Oddio* (2010) and *Reject* (2012) there is a clear drive to become more personal in my writing and this is again stated as an aim for *A Thing Brand New* (2014). I am regularly quoted as wanting to write from a more personal perspective. This is reflected in the released material and from interviews, a clear intent. Discussing *Reject* (2012) in an interview with MTV in 2013, I'm quoted as saying:

> Lyrically it's got plenty of social commentary, as is the Stanley Odd standard, but there is some more personal content in there too.

An interview with Scottish hip-hop blog "Scotland Stand Up" in December 2014 shows an awareness and intentional effort to create personal, emotive content:

> For the last couple of years I've been trying to focus on writing honestly and adding more personal reflection into my lyrical content, as well as broader social referencing. (Rimmer, 2014)

This drive to develop as a writer, express myself on a personal level and acknowledge my own tendency to find social commentary and critique easier is something that I have expressed repeatedly over a period of years.

Rap Strategies for Expressing Emotion

Davis (1985: 3) states: "Lyrics that resonate with universally felt emotions foster strong identification between the performer and the audience." The key for rap artists is to find a way to be original on universal topics *and* to write about emotional themes without compromising the persona they have created. Expressing real feeling means exposing yourself; making yourself vulnerable; highlighting your flaws. This is a problem in hip-hop as much of the culture is designed to create invincible, seemingly flawless characters that are impervious to damage or pain. It is difficult in an established identity to express new

character traits. Artists such as Jay-Z, Eminem and Kanye West all demonstrate different techniques to maintain their public persona while expressing sentimental material. For Jay-Z, in "Make the Song Cry" (2001), he transmogrifies the song, bestowing emotional abilities onto the piece of music itself and allowing it to cry in his place. Kanye in "New Day" (2011) wishes everything for his son that he is not, acknowledging his flaws without actually intimating that he can change. Eminem in "Hailie's Song" (2002) breaks so many rules of masculinity in hip-hop by daring to sing the vast percentage of the song (also enjoying a position of privilege due to skin colour and to market position at the time). The topic of fatherhood allows this – where family is one of the few areas it is acceptable to show emotion – but even so he pushes it to its limit, just balancing the sentimental, melodic content with struggle, voicing a dual personality through his vocal performance in the pre-choruses and counteracting the saccharine of the sung verses with a more aggressive and more lyrical rap section at the end.

In the UK, Jehst's "ESP" (2003) is a magnificent example of writing a love story in hip-hop:

> The peacekeeper, the key to life beyond us
> I love her beyond lust
> My trust placed in her
> Illustrious face with a great figure
> Forbidden fruit of youth in the fingers of the grave digger
> Manipulated my late-night sanctum
> The lone catalyst of my tantrum
> Her tender touch turns to talons
> In her tempers clutch I bleed burgundy gallons
> Her crimson lips lick my wounds
> Her tongue tastes the claret
> My pain is vintage, her comfort is twenty-four carat
> In a golden moment of havoc my heart beats haphazard
> My brain bleeds black ballads that embarrass the author
> My favourite torture
> I drown in the depths of my mermaid's water
> At war with the storms daughter
> The tornado's sister, she's twisting my aura

Excerpt from Jehst, ESP (Extra Sensory Perfection)

Here, Jehst makes his topic epic and classical, a story of larger-than-life proportions. He makes it visual and filmic. He creates tension and struggle. He uses original imagery and metaphor. These techniques serve to raise it above

125

the general topic of young love and free it from the restrictions of writing openly about deeply emotional content. The writing also distances him from the day-to-day reality of love and relationships and in transporting his feelings to this more epic plane he is able to leave behind the cultural awkwardness and embarrassment associated with this topic.

This chapter is about using hip-hop to tell your own story. It is about contradictions, universal feelings and small personal revelations. There follows an analysis of three songs released between 2012 and 2014 in which I make an effort to describe particular events in relation to growing, maturing and developing. These songs demonstrate a desire for personal growth and understanding, coupled with my development as a writer in finding ways to express the emotional content.

Topic One: Love, "Day 3" (2012)

"Day 3" is essentially a love story. Written as a duet with a sung vocal part and a complimentary rap vocal part, this song is an example of my attempt to manipulate form and content to present a universal and very common theme in an original way. In order to properly analyse the construction of this piece, a combined literary and musicological approach will be applied.

The music for the piece was written by Thilo Pfander, keyboard player in Stanley Odd. When he wrote the piece, he wrote it in 6/8 time, which although less common in hip-hop is by no means unheard of. Kanye West's "Spaceship" (2004) is an excellent example of hip-hop in 6/8, with the rap verses also written in 6/8 to fit the music. In the case of "Day 3," the time signatures and rhythms within the track became more interesting because Samson – drummer with Stanley Odd – decided to play in 4/4 over the top of the 6/8 instrumentation. This created an interesting effect where the musical and rhythmic sections repeat at different intervals with the 6/8 pattern repeating over 3 bars of 4/4. I decided to write lyrics in simple time that could fit into the 3 bars of 4/4 it takes for the 6/8 pattern to repeat, capitalising on the rhythmical interplay between these two parts.

	Beats	Rhyming Tercets
6/8 beats	1 2 3 4 5 6 1 2	
4/4 beats	1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and	1
6/8 beats	3 4 5 6 1 2 3 4	
4/4 beats	1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and	2
6/8 beats	5 6 1 2 3 4 5 6	
4/4 beats	1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and	3

Figure 4: 6/8, 4/4 and Rhyme Scheme Relationships in Stanley Odd, "Day, 3"

The initial issue with typical lyrical structure was that standard rhyming couplets won't fit into a 4/4 pattern that repeats in groups of 3 bars: there is an extra bar left over before the chord changes. The solution that I came up with, in order to rap with four beats in the bar, was to have rhyming couplets over two bars followed by an 'answer' bar from Veronika Electronika's sung vocal completing each pattern (compiling a tercet). This allowed me to include two voices in the song and have them literally intertwined, completing each other; the full story incomplete without both parts. In this way, the structural components of the piece mimic the lyrical content. The first 1min43s of the song consist of pared-back instrumentation and only Veronika's sung vocal. These lines – that can work as a standalone poem – are actually the final line of each tercet when added to the rap section that enters with the drums at 1min44s.

> Perfectly balanced right
> Between night-time and breaking day
> When the clocks are ticking in time
> I can lip read
> Click goes the missing piece
> I'm feeling high now
> Daylight dances on his wrist
> Pulse a distant beat
> He seems lost at moments
> Singing those blues of his
> A heart is a fickle device
> This is where I want to be

Opening sung vocal from "Day 3", Stanley Odd

Firstly, in this introductory section I am able to write in a less direct and more metaphorical manner than I normally would with rap lyrics. The sung sections have shorter lines as the lyrics stretch out across the bar more when sung than

when rapped. I am able to take advantage of an audience being more familiar with song lyrics being left open to interpretation and using metaphorical imagery. Having said this, the piece is still both coherent and visually evocative. It sets the scene, the events taking place in between night and dawn (i.e. late night). It introduces the other character in the story, revealing snatches of information, implications of closeness "pulse a distant beat," of potential conflict "singing those blues of his" and of love "a heart is a fickle device/ this is where I want to be."

When the rap vocal arrives with the 4/4 drums at 1min44s the story is completed:

> Her salt lips taste maritime, a volatile valentine
> Words written at 451 Fahrenheit
> **Perfectly balanced right**
> In a dystopian present day the silence resonates
> She turns as cities burn looking for a better way
> **Between night-time and breaking day**
> Sunrise touching me, a trick of the light
> Her eyes shine playfully, picking a fight
> **When the clocks are ticking in time**
> Displeased, I ask won't you miss me
> She says 'move closer I can lip read'
> **I can lip read**
> Raven-haired, she steals ma breath as she kisses me
> Draws my soul through the gaps in my missing teeth
> **Click goes the missing piece**
> She smiles, raises an eyebrow and I could die now
> Whispers in my ear and the screaming dies down
> **I'm feeling high now**
> She smiles like a nymph and laughs like a witch
> I've been trying to find a way to capture her since
> **Daylight dances on his wrist**
> Talks of mystery, and of history
> I stare in disbelief and admit defeat
> **Pulse a distant beat**
> I tell her 'you fix me and I'm often broken'
> She maintains the mystique in constant motion
> **He seems lost at moments**
> Trickle feeds a mixture of truth and myth
> With words that when spoken they bruise her lips
> **Singing those blues of his**
> I think her heart is bigger than mine
> As we sink together with our fingers entwined
> **A heart is a fickle device**
> And stay twisted together, born atomically
> I pray forever she'll be haunting me
> **This is where I want to be**
>
> Duet from "Day 3", Stanley Odd

128

Here, elements of the story converge. In Veronika's sung verse it states that the events are taking place "between night-time and breaking day" but then mention that "daylight dances on his wrist." This would seem contradictory but the line "sunrise touching me, a trick of the light" updates the scenery between these two parts. Although still heavily metaphorical and utilising elements of epic imagery, my rap lyrics are much more of a direct narrative, describing events taking place. The sung lyrics slotted into each tercet are more observational, like the unspoken thoughts of the female character in the story. In terms of the lyrics, I would say that they are actually written in 12/4 against a 4/4 drum rhythm with the keyboards, bass and guitar playing in 6/8. In the instrumental outro there are two bass parts: one in 4/4 and one in 6/8 further linking the two sections. The ultimate aim and – hopefully – outcome of the song structure is that neither individual vocal part is complete without the other. Only by combining the two together is the story made whole. I even felt that written down the two parts resembled a double helix of DNA, visually representing the line "stay twisted together," which has the dual meaning of being intertwined and "twisted" also referencing the continual theme of oddity and outsiderdom across the whole body of work on which this critique reflects.

As regards a closer reading of the rap lyrics, in terms of form I have utilised a style that I would refer to as 'epic' to escape the trappings of standard pop love songs. The song is basically about falling in love with someone after a late, hedonistic night. As such, had Mike Skinner from The Streets written the piece then you would expect very literal, clear depictions of perhaps a flat or tenement, drug paraphernalia and alcohol, cigarettes and music playing, all designed to set the scene for the exchange. In my approach, this scenery is replaced with dystopia, burning cities, witches, soul stealing, magic and mythology. For me personally, there are a lot of links between mythological imagery and the way it feels late-night/ early morning in these situations, so the layers between the two are very thin as I see them. This is also about the solution to writing about love within the context of hip-hop, avoiding clichés and pitfalls and trying to find original means of expression. As such, the opening lines infer intimacy, potential conflict ("volatile valentine") and high drama. 451 Fahrenheit is the temperature at which paper burns, referencing the dystopian Ray Bradbury novel about love and society as well as implying that the words

written (and therefore spoken between us) could set fires. That line leads into the "dystopian present day" in the following tercet. The lyric "she turns as cities burn looking for a better way" has the layered meaning of relating to the dystopian imagery, the idea of putting the world to rights late at night, but it is also the literal image of her turning from a window as the sun rises over the city. The sung, final lines of each tercet are linked to the previous two on each occasion normally by two or three-syllable compound rhyme. Each individual rhyming couplet within the tercet serves to further develop the relationship between the two characters, building the sense of awe that the rap verse is displaying for its female counterpart, while also creating feelings of danger, drama or tension, all part of the heightened feelings of emotion and exhilaration that can be felt at intimate points in a relationship.

Topic Two: Parenthood, "Put Your Roots Down" (2014)

"Put Your Roots Down" is interesting as a composition again due to its song structure as much as its content. This piece tells the story of finding out that I was going to be a father and concludes with observations on waiting for the baby to be born. It is written in three distinct sections. The intro and outro of the song are in 3/4 with a simple piano riff and spoken lyrics. This piano part is the baby's musical motif (shown in Figure 5), combined with a poem describing the surrounds in which the story takes place.

In an article on the universal language of lullabies, Perry (2013) observes that triple metre is common to lullabies across the ages:

> Rhythmically, there are shared patterns too. Lullabies are usually in triple metre or 6/8 time, giving them a "characteristic swinging or rocking motion," says Sally Goddard Blythe. This is soothing because it mimics the movement a baby experiences in the womb as a mother moves.

In this article Perry goes on to note that as well as the characteristic rocking motion of the 3/4 time-signature, lullabies often contain elements of danger and warning within them. They are noted as serving a purpose of passing on advice on how to live your life, warning of threats but ultimately should be "rooted in love, tenderness and caring."
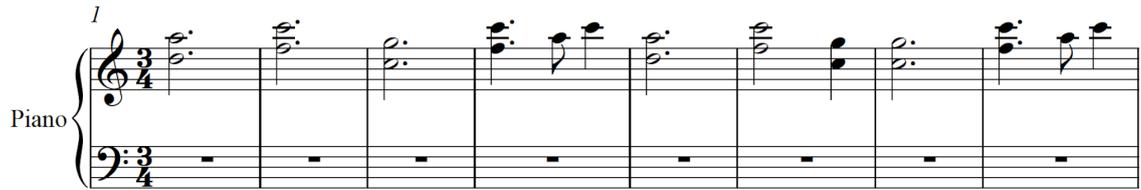
Figure 5: Stanley Odd, "Put Your Roots Down", musical motif

"Put Your Roots Down" plays with and draws from the format and structure described by Perry. In terms of lyric structure, the song conforms to the lyrical portraiture approach that I have discussed in previous chapters. The introduction sets the scene for the story to take place. It names the actual date of the events, paints a wintery picture of darkness, frost, city dwelling and melancholy or depression. Very often, I explain the background to this song when playing it live. It tells the story of finding out that I was going to be a father on the 3rd of January 2013, still feeling worn out, exhausted and hungover from over indulging during Hogmanay celebrations. I was quite self-contained, slightly depressed and generally inward-looking when my wife simply came into the room and told me she was pregnant.

The surprise of this statement allowed me to create a set-up scenario within the song where the introduction draws the scenery, the chorus utilises a range of images regarding hiding and growing, and the rap verse tells the narrative of the actual encounter, ending with the surprise reveal. Rhythmically, the introduction sticks very rigidly to the metrical rhythm of the piano part. The stresses in each line are on the accented beats in each bar. In terms of delivery, the aim of this section is to lock-in with the music while also feeling like normal speech patterns as opposed to a musical 'sing-song' approach. I wanted to have the words become part of the music (the lullaby) here without losing their human, emotive content through complete fusion with the music.

3rd of January
Daytime reticence
Night inhales the light
Inside the tenement
Frost graffiti tags
On mural window sills
Darkness heaves and drags
City winter spills
Underneath my skin
In between my ribs
Through my weary heart
Where my breathing lives
Lights off in the close
Chilling solid stone
Lock and bolt the door
But we're not alone

Through the use of imagery depicting long winter nights, coldness and gloom, I attempt to create unwelcoming and disquieting surroundings. Into this I place the last two lines ending: "Lock and bolt the door, But we're not alone," with all the foreboding and potential threat that this implies. There is clearly a dual meaning here, a much less threatening (but equally daunting) meaning replacing menace with parenthood.

The chorus uses a range of hiding, growing, travelling and baby references to create a collage of these images, embedded with the repeated refrain – "Put your roots down" – directly addressing the unborn child. This section uses layered metaphor to link various domains, cultural references and images to the central images of growth, hiding and pregnancy. Each of these metaphors is rooted to the song title, "Put Your Roots Down," repeated every fourth bar:

With a Teardrop heartbeat face
A delicate Chrysalid waits
A Flat Stanley stowaway
Put your roots down
An escape artist lying in wait
For an Indian Summer day
Seedling that floats in space
Put your roots down

"Put Your Roots Down" Chorus Lyrics

The metaphors here can all be linked to the aforementioned themes. The "Teardrop heartbeat face" refers to the Massive Attack song, "Teardrop" (1998), and its music video. The video is of a fetus in the womb, singing the lyrics to the song. Clearly this refers directly to an unborn child. The key lyric from "Teardrop" – "Love, love is a verb, love is a doing word" – is an additional link for me to the piece and the content of "Put Your Roots Down." The use of Chrysalid as the alternative of chrysalis has the direct meaning of a home in which a creature grows and develops before emerging, but also relates to the John Wyndam novel by the same name. This novel – another dystopian future tale – asks questions of accepting or deriding difference, with topics of children's development and growth. Hence, the oblique reference to this novel attempts to tie to these themes, themes that are coherent throughout the rest of my writing as discussed at length. "A Flat Stanley stowaway," refers to the children's books and the character that could travel inside an envelope. The final images – an escape artist and a seedling floating in space – also cover similar attempts to reframe and connect a wide range of images to the central themes. "The Indian Summer day" relates to the fact that Calum was born in September. As such, this short section is heavily laden with consistent imagery and metaphor designed to deepen and enhance the connection to the themes of hiding, growth and pregnancy.

The rap verse, as usual, becomes more direct, providing a narrative for the more abstract earlier sections. This narrative describes the situation and dialogue between myself and Stella, making observations of how she and I seem during the conversation, with the climax of the section based around my being unaware as to the point of the conversation and her delivering the final line "I'm pregnant."

> We could be the only two left alive today
> The colours have bled out, chaos lies in wait
> And I know it might sound insane, but I can't get out the way
> Of feeling like everything I know is just about to change
> As drama condenses from the vapour in the air
> She fixes me in place with a cautionary stare
> Half solar flare, eyes like glassy marbles
> The shocked Manga face of a young lassie startled
> She says: 'This isn't how I imagined telling you'
> While I'm busy climbing out of the self-pity that I'd fell into
> Displaced and equally dazed, brain cerebrally frayed

133

It's time to face the demons we've chased and switch place to keep them
away
I tell her 'I was 17 when I left home to dance in the wind
And I've been doing ma best impression of a man ever since'
She smiles and the room seems brighter by the second
With a grin, I think random acts of kindness are a blessing
I would know her in an abstract artist's impression
I would consider her my most health of obsessions
I tell her if you're the answer I'm the question
She laughs then simply says 'I'm pregnant'

"Put Your Roots Down" Rap Verse Lyrics

The direct narrative focuses what has, to this point, been a story that is open to interpretation. In this section, rhetoric is employed in an attempt to create the correct level of emotion taking place between the characters. The opening lines aim to evoke the quiet, still, greyness of early January in Edinburgh, post-Hogmanay celebrations: empty streets, half-light and silence (as seen out my flat window). The "only two left alive" line is also designed to imply that everything else in the world has faded out due to the importance of the exchange. This is hinted at with "chaos lies in wait." Tension and high drama are called up with the lines "As drama condenses from the vapour in the air // She fixes me in place with a cautionary stare." The personification of "drama" condensing and fixing me in place makes Stella synonymous with drama. It again elevates the story beyond the mundane, creates and implies spectacle. It overtly states performative, theatrical elements of the story. These techniques are employed to allow me to talk about love and feelings within the hip-hop paradigm. It raises the story and its stakes to a higher point. I try to balance this epic imagery with colloquialism to root the story in a decidedly Scottish environment. The contrast of spectacular, grand imagery such as personifying drama and her stare being "Half solar flare" are set against the image of "The shocked Manga face of a young lassie startled." Here the colloquialism of a young "lassie" combined with the Manga iconography where larger-than-life eyes can indicate transparent feelings, "innocence, purity and youth" (Brenner, 2007)**,** are utilised to root the story in a contemporary Scottish context and to maintain the emotive personal thread while building the dramatic background. This verse acknowledges a selfishness in me, wallowing in self-pity and a desire to grow out of that, while also recognising the importance that Stella plays in my ability to do so. The rap is less about the forthcoming life-changing

elements of fatherhood and more a declaration of love. It notes a reflection on young adulthood and the process of growing up: "I tell her 'I was 17 when I left home to dance in the wind // And I've been doing ma best impression of a man ever since.'" The final lines set me up for a fall, as I reach for more and more elaborate ways of describing her excellence she cuts through the rhetoric; brings it back to reality; sees through the floral language. "She laughs then simply says 'I'm pregnant.'"

At the end of the rap verse, the song works in reverse order from its start, returning first to the chorus, then ending with another 3/4 lullaby section, updating the timeline from January to August, describing the move to autumn, the "nightly fireworks" (or Edinburgh during the Festival), the feeling of time dragging and speeding past at the same time in anticipation of parenthood and flips the initial brooding threat of "Lock and bolt the door, but we're not alone" to a situation where the same "we're not alone" phrase is life-affirming and positive.

> September's on its way
> And nightly fireworks chase
> Summer heat away
> As Autumn lies in wait
> Night extends her reach
> With arms that greet the day
> A sun that doesn't heat
> Thins and seeks the shade
> A year on varispeed
> Hurry up and wait
> A busy passenger
> Almost come of age
> Is tapping out a code
> From amniotic home
> Just let us know
> That we're not alone

"Put Your Roots Down" Outro Lyrics

Thus, the song itself moves from the implicit danger and darkness to the "love, tenderness and caring" Perry discusses in her article. The central devices are the use of lullaby-style rhythm, the use of hiding and growing imagery, the dual meaning of the phrase "we're not alone" to move from menacing threat to uplifting positivity, and the storytelling device in the unexpected revelation: "I'm

pregnant." The listeners may already know that the female character in the story is pregnant from the information provided but the narrator (me) clearly doesn't.

Much of this song is poetic. In Culler's (1997) discussion of Plato's view of poetry and its purpose, he states that poetry "provides a safe outlet for release of intense emotions," going on to describe Plato's belief that poetry models the "valuable" experience of passing from ignorance to knowledge. By these definitions, "Put Your Roots Down" is poetic, making use of poetic language, form and structure to express a deeply emotional journey that, at its core, is about going from ignorance to understanding. The journey from ignorance to knowledge is dual, in that it both relates to finding out I was to be a father, and in the more gradual and continual transition to maturity and responsibility. These emotions and this journey are still expressed through a hip-hop lens in that the rap element still conforms to the structures within hip-hop culture. I would argue that there is sufficient lyrical dexterity, rhythmical interchange, word-play, metaphor and imagery to locate this song within the hip-hop canon.

Topic Three: 'Getting mad wae it': Scottish Drinking Culture, "Carry Me Home" (2012)

"Carry Me Home" encompasses many of the concepts and issues already discussed in this chapter. It is a very personal piece of writing. It chronicles a point in time in my life (late 2011). It documents a process of self-evaluation. It expresses a desire to grow and change. As such, this song fits into the theme of growth, self-expression and emotional output. I wrote this piece in November 2011 in a period of emotional distress. It was the result of a growing sense of the need for significant change in my behaviour, the catalyst for this final-straw-revelation being the band filming me being carried unconscious from the bar of the venue that we had played the previous night. Had this been an isolated incident it might have been humorous but unfortunately it was in-keeping with a catalogue of incidents whereby my behaviour was becoming more out-of-control, fuelled by alcohol and other controlled substances.

The song lyrics are a first-person outpouring that describes being stuck in a self-destructive cycle of consumption; a downward spiral of excess, surviving and recovering through the week only to nosedive again at the weekend. It is easy to write this situation off as self-inflicted, paying the price for hedonism but when you can't stop and it makes you feel so bad in between sessions it becomes a problem that you are not managing. This is about mental health which, in itself, is still a taboo subject in many areas of society. O'Brien, Hunt & Hart (2010)'s research into Scottish men's constructions of masculinity make direct links between issues such as indifference to health, binge drinking culture, and perceived masculinity. However, they also note a change in these attitudes with age and significant life changes such as fatherhood. The song speaks to wider issues of health and concepts of masculinity in Scotland. It takes into account societal relationships to alcohol and drugs, mental health and coping mechanisms.

Writing on alcohol and drug-related illnesses is one of the 'acceptable flaws' in hip-hop culture. It fits within the hyper-masculine construct, related to heavy drinking and excess that conforms to societal preconceptions about manliness. As such rap content in Scottish hip-hop can often include entire songs dedicated to increasingly hedonistic activities. I have written songs such as this. More generally speaking across society, the sometimes-illicit nature of these activities means that they are often linked to sub- and counter-cultures. When done well, exploring these experiences can lead to some excellent writing, social commentary and documentation, and great music. One such example would be 2016's "Sunday Dunt Club" by Mr Jinx, El Green and Nostal. This piece is a euphoric celebration of getting 'dunted' i.e. getting high or drunk. It displays excellent lyricism, wordplay and content, carrying with it the energy, excitement and thrill of getting inebriated and having fun. Expressing these emotions and reflecting these activities is a part of human nature. The purpose of this discussion is neither to criticise this style of writing nor to demonise the activities. Rather, continuing the themes of hip-hop 'growing up', and of personal growth and self-development, this is about reflecting on how priorities change over time and more specifically about my writing at a point of emotional crisis in my life.

Carry Me Home – A Close Reading

The lyrics and music to "Carry Me Home" were written by me, but the contributions in arrangement, production and performance from the rest of Stanley Odd were invaluable in making the song complete. Instrumentally, it consists mainly of piano and strings with bass and guitar featuring throughout, and drums appearing only for the third verse and outro. The chorus vocals are in a gospel style that add a strong performative, emotive element to the piece. When I originally recorded them myself they were more in the sung/spoken style of Aidan Moffat from Arab Strap, but adding Veronika's voice to this transformed them into a much more lush and powerful force. The general purpose of the song was to express the despair and depression that I was feeling, as well as explaining the reason that I had come to feel this way. It was about working through those problems by writing them down.

In terms of content, I move between self-criticism and ridicule as I reflect on myself. This piece combines serious comment on binge drinking and societal norms with more personal emotional outpouring. Describing it in this document implies that it is perhaps such a heavy and depressing piece that it would be difficult to listen to, or too much for people to be able to find anything to enjoy in it. However, the key to this song was being able to include all of the heavy material that I have discussed above whilst also making it an engaging story that people were interested to hear. The piece had to be personal but relatable; to describe a unique experience that nonetheless lots of people can identify with, relate to and empathise with. Writing this song involved a search for a range of original ways to describe the issues and the level of feeling about it. For the lyrical analysis of this piece I have employed the colour-coding method utilised in chapter three to highlight rhyme schemes and to visually demonstrate song structure.

> It's that Handsome Tramp. I weave a spangled dance
> As I sift through the wreckage of the aftermath
> I woke up to an abandoned camp, a bunch of random bams
> And thought 'I'll just have to disband the band'
> 'When will I, will I be sober?
> I can't answer that'
> I'm at an all-time low
> I hate being a wide-o
> And people think seem I'm always taking the Michael

I've no idea where my time goes and I'm in no hurry to find out
I need some time out. Up for too long to climb down
'Cause right now the band are calling me Davie Winehouse
The Comatose Kid
Pass me over some shit that I can overdose with
I'm already half cut hoping no-one's noticed
Salvation held in my enclosed fist to avoid thoughts I won't be left alone with
Carry me home

Carry Me Home, Lyrics to Verse One

The first line starts: "It's that Handsome Tramp." This refers to the name of our own record label – Handsome Tramp Records. The name was initially a backhanded compliment that I had received on being dishevelled and poorly attired. The record label is an example of the process of taking derogatory comments or labels that other people ascribe you and owning them, repurposing them for your own needs. In this case, we literally took a label and turned it into a label. The song then, opens with a reference to the band through its label name. Three-syllable rhyme is passed both internally and at the end of each line for the first four bars, painting a picture of destruction and fall out. Phrases such as "wreckage of the aftermath" and "abandoned camp" evoke images of emptiness and breakage, while "random bams" roots the context in Scottish vernacular and "disband the band" links all of this intrinsically to band activities.

The line "When will I be sober? I can't answer that" refers to the Bros song from 1987, "When Will I Be Famous?" In doing so I am mocking myself, acknowledging the problems that I'm having and relating them to a false 'fame' from touring with the band. (Referencing a 1980s boyband is not a 'cool' reference – this is intentional – it's meant to make fun of me.) This is perhaps a very Scottish 'don't get above your station'-type response. The next lines continue to establish the state of despair, the continued use of Scottish colloquialism such as "wide-o" balances the more ornate language, maintaining the roots of the piece. This song is a very honest and personal account and as such it is littered with Scots language from everyday life, produced in the vocabulary that I would use to speak normally. Sometimes these words are used for exclusivity and in-jokes. Here they are used as the most direct route to my root, my psyche and to link that to a wider cultural psyche perhaps. The

"Davie Winehouse" line obviously refers to Amy Winehouse, who had passed away in the July of 2011. While a clear play on my name and a link to alcohol and substance abuse (even to 'rock'n'roll death'), the play on words was not mine, rather it was a name that the band had actually started calling me at the time. The final lines of the first verse again refer to binging, excess and the desire to become inebriated as a way of avoiding facing up to the reality that what I was doing wasn't good for me. Each verse is broken up with the refrain "Carry Me Home". Verse Two follows:

> I descend into the scotch mist
> Fueled on cough syrup, I'm a machine with no off switch
> But let those who cast the first stone be innocent
> Ma sentence is this endless loop that I'm imprisoned in
> I'm Sysiphus, the bottle is my boulder
> Another drink with the devil walking on my shoulder
> I'm an unsteadily disassembling man
> Through each raised glass with ma trembling hands
> Making deep friends
> That fade after the weekend
> Exposed and worthless; a broken circuit
> Fractured. Damaged goods with no master plan
> Trying to heal the break with this plastered cast
> Living a triple life of work, band and my wife
> Plus I sit at night with a pen, a pad and I write
> Going insane, I draw an escape, a door on a page
> As I'm going away one thought explodes in my brain

Carry Me Home, Lyrics to Verse Two

Verse two opens with the line "I descend into the Scotch mist." This multi-layered reference obviously relating to alcohol and losing focus also references the start of a Jehst song, as well as being tied to the Scottish Highlands, which we had just returned from touring when I wrote this. The metaphor of a "machine with no off switch" is particularly relevant and poignant here in expressing the feeling of being broken, numb (as machinery can't feel) and stuck in a cycle of repetition. In terms of dual meaning, in British vernacular, "machine" is often used to express masculinity for a capacity to drink, fight or play a sport.

At this point in the piece there is a slight railing against people who – at the time – were telling me to sort myself out, hence the point that no-one is "innocent." The line "My sentence is this endless loop that I'm imprisoned in" actually

creates a feeling of looping around within itself. Placing "loop" halfway through the bar was a lyrical choice. The word "endlessness" would have completed the rhyme but "loop" states what the lyrics just did and punctuates the end of it. Thus, the first half of the line passes rhyming syllables back and forth, creating a looping effect. There is the play on the word "sentence" as the line is my sentence in that I wrote it and that the sentence (punishment, tied to "innocent" from the previous line) is to be imprisoned in a continuum that I can't escape from. This theme of punishment and repetition is continued with the reference to Sisyphus, the Greek figure who had to push a rock up a hill for eternity. The first time I heard the story of Sisyphus was in a cartoon called "Ulysses 31" in 1985-86. Episode 7 of this children's series, "The Eternal Punishment," retells the ancient Greek tale. It has obviously had a significant effect on me as I still remember it vividly. In this way, there are multiple examples within this text of me performing a reminiscence exercise. From the pop culture Bros reference in the first verse to classical Sisyphus here, I have included elements within the song that on certain levels are for me only. They are formative childhood memories and references embedded within the song.

The following lines expand on a theme of coming to pieces ("disassembling man") and the feeling of connection at the time of being high followed by the emptiness of coming down. I used a series of metaphors in short phrases to build up the images of being broken down. The fracture in one line leads into "Trying to heal the break with this plastered cast." Clearly there is double meaning again here of a plaster-cast being used to protect a broken limb and the futility of getting drunk and revelling again to try to fix the problems that this caused in the first place. The final lines of verse two acknowledge the very different areas of my life and how I have tried to maintain them by keeping them separate. The verse finishes by recognising the importance of the process of writing in making sense of and escaping from the situation.

Verse three moves towards a conclusion, through increased rhythmical interplay, wordplay and continued self-deconstruction:

Brain cells fade like an unfinished symphony
I find that head injuries make the best similes
I'm fast diminishing my anonymity
Through random infamy, nimbly I deconstruct the mimicry
The thinly veiled self-loathing I assimilate
Means my most vociferous supporter's got it in for me
And all that equates to a loud mouth drunk
Less classy than Class A
The last flashing synapse fades
Amid the mashed state of a trashed brain
Which translates to last place in this rat race
The grey matter heats up as I try and think
Aches at the back of my skull 'til I'm supplied with drink
I got ma carry out, had a lock in
Now I'm being carried out, please somebody stop this

Carry Me Home, Lyrics to Verse Three

Opening with the simile "Brain cells fade like an unfinished symphony," this refers to the literal damage caused to brain cells from alcohol consumption but also develops imagery of incompleteness, of never reaching or achieving potential. The exact phrase of an "unfinished symphony" links the issues of incompleteness to music, meaning both this song itself and a wider reference to musical output in general. The following line takes up the three-syllable word "symphony" and ties to it internally and at the end of the following line over four syllables with "I find that head injuries make the best similes." This one line performs many roles. It refers to the actual simile in the previous line. Therefore, this lyric is observing that the very act of losing brain cells has provided a beautiful simile. It also refers to the increased likelihood of injury when inebriated. Furthermore, this line is a comment on how being out of control and drunk helps to construct the 'tortured artist' persona. It is additionally a comment on how being in this state provides song-writing material. Finally, it considers all these factors but is ultimately self-mocking, ridiculing the fact that I am trying to excuse my behaviour as some sort of artistic process.

Tension builds across the introductory lines of the final verse. The three syllables of "symphony" became four syllables in "head injuries" and "best similes," move to five syllables that dominate almost whole lines in "fast diminishing my anonymity, through random infamy," moving back to three syllables in "nimbly I deconstruct the mimicry." The density of rhyme in this section helps to build immediacy. The last line is an overt recognition that I am

taking apart my own pretence at being a 'tortured artist'. Essentially, I accuse myself of 'faking it' or just playing a part. The "random infamy" is consistent with an opposing view to the "famous" references in verse one.

The following lines on "thinly veiled self-loathing" meaning my "most vociferous supporter's got it in for me" continue the rhyme scheme. They are intentionally loquacious and amount to admitting to the internal contradictions of self-promotion versus negative self-image. The following line "And all this equates to a loud mouth drunk" is stated as simply as the previous line was verbose. It is an intentional counter to the ornate language, designed to literally cut through the mask of effusive words; to deflate the hyperbole. Note that the line doesn't rhyme either. It is a complete break in the flow that had been building to this point.

The following section is interesting rhythmically in that having broken the rhythmical flow, it rebuilds it with the rhyme falling at the start of each line rather than the end, then with each rhyming word, pushes the rhyme closer to the end of the line until after three lines it has returned to its more traditional place at the end. Seven two-syllable rhymes appear in the process of this taking place. This serves to build tension and pace again, creating the feeling of losing control; of events getting away from you. Finally, the piece ends linking all this to the song's title, key theme and to the actual, literal event that led to its being written. The "carry **out,**" a Scots phrase for a bag of alcoholic drinks, results in a "lock **in**" i.e., staying in a pub after closing time. I am then "carried out": literally carried unconscious from the building. The final line is a genuine appeal for help and an expression of the will to change; to end the cycle: "Please somebody stop this." Finally, verse three is only 14 bars long, two bars short of a standard 16. There is something missing from the verse itself. There is also a space for something new/ else.

Some of my most deeply autoethnographic self-interrogation has had to take place with "Carry Me Home," as it is coming from a place of emotional crisis. It is one of the least controlled emotional expressions; the most driven and needy. Studying myself retrospectively and autoethnographically, I felt that I had to write this; that I had no choice. It was a very cathartic experience and process

and felt psychologically important. It formed a pivotal point and crucial part of continued recovery and repair in its composition, its sharing and release, and its repeated performance for 12 months after its writing. It doesn't define me. I have moved past this place (but still have the propensity to go back). I don't play the song any more. Discussing and analysing it for this critical reflection is the first time I've revisited it in a long time.

In an interview with Margaret Chrystall of the Highland News in September 2012, I was asked of the then new release, *Reject*, "You have bared your soul?" My response begins:

> Yes, it's a lot easier to point out the flaws in society than be honest about your own stuff. But I think if you want to try and push yourself a bit you have to try and find different topics to talk about. (unpaginated)

My admission of a clear drive to be more reflective and personal in my writing was followed with the question:

> The song Carry Me Home – I didn't know how tongue-in-cheek it was – but it seems to be all about "the drink"! Was that one of the tracks you were talking about as being from a more personal perspective? There's a line in it when you say something like "they're calling me Davy Winehouse".

In reply, I acknowledge the personal content in "Carry Me Home," going on to note that the writing of the song has been "a bit cathartic." My recognition of the therapeutic value in writing about personal and emotive issues is clear. In fact, a live review from September 2012 quotes me as describing the performance of the song as a "group therapy session" (MacAlister, 2012). Through analysis of the content, context and interviews at the time it is apparent that the process of writing on this topic was both deliberate and instrumental in my personal development and in working through on-going issues.

Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter is concerned with personal reflection and growth both in and through song writing within a hip-hop template. The pieces analysed are personal ruminations on age-old universal themes. They tell of individual incidents that virtually everyone goes through. They are all in the first person, in contrast to the lyrical portraiture of earlier chapters when focusing on social commentary. They involve looking inward and describing what you see and feel, as opposed to looking outward and around you. The pieces necessitate a drive for self-discovery and growth, articulating attempts to grow-up, progress, change or understand myself better. Sometimes they unburden by sharing. On other occasions, as discussed by Forman (2014), they mark situations or times in life, allowing for reflection and to unpack their meaning, significance and repercussions. As Davis (1985) notes, it is the universality in the experiences described that makes them of any interest to someone else, the empathy and association. Perhaps this recognition and expression of universal experience is ultimately an antidote to the outsiderdom expressed and discussed throughout this document.

Close reading of my lyrics in this chapter provides examples of my attempting to write about commonly expressed feelings or human situations in an original way. In each one of the pieces, the music is very relevant and specific to the lyrics. Each piece of music has been written to enhance and augment the lyrical sentiment, hence the need to include a musicological perspective. Often the means to make the universal original involves a postmodern approach of exploiting familiar tropes to heighten the sense of fracture (rupture) and differences of the contemporary narratives built around them. "Put Your Roots Down" does this with the 3/4 lullaby section and the darkening imagery ending on a play on words "but we're not alone." The poetical nature of the lyrics is demonstrated in that each song reaches a point in the story that reveals an unknown, challenges a perception or contrasts an assumption. Thus, there are tiered actions taking place within the writing regarding self-reflexion and referencing.

The layered linkages between the music, words and images for these songs provide different levels with which to engage them. The songs have to work on

the 'top' layer i.e., they must be simply musical and interesting. The subsequent layers are there to strengthen, enhance and extend their meaning and content. Some of the additional elements and linkages might not reach any listeners other than myself and that is absolutely fine with me. I like assigning meaning and layers to my work without feeling the need for all of them to be a part of the listener's experience. From the analysis of this, it has become clear that writing these pieces is not something that is only designed to benefit an intended audience, but that I myself am also the audience; also getting something from both the process and the output. In each song, there is either an implied or an explicit admission of foolishness. In "Day 3" that is found in the imagery of fixing me, drawing my soul through missing teeth and admitting defeat; in "Put Your Roots Down" the concept of my rhetoric being brought back to reality by her revelation and of self-pity; in Carry Me Home the entire song is a catalogue of flaws.

This chapter has been concerned with the processes of growing up in hip-hop and documenting that creatively. As discussed, hip-hop as a genre has been criticised for lacking emotional depth at times. Again, this is hip-hop reflecting and embodying wider culture. These issues could equally be levied at accepted norms of masculinity in wider society. As a genre that is known to be male dominated and gender imbalanced, its hyper-masculine elements reflect a narrow societal view of masculinity that does no favours for women but also does men a disservice. The same social constructs that imply men should not cry or show weakness, and that binge drinking is a demonstration of manliness, manifest in the boundaries of acceptable expression within hip-hop. Therefore, good writing becomes about how you negotiate these cultural and generic norms, whilst trying to break from them – the pulling in different directions, subversions and challenges, stresses and fractures, causing hairline cracks that can lead to fissures, splitting open the concrete walls of generic and societal boundaries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this critical appraisal was concerned with demonstrating the reflexive and analytical retrospective synthesis of academic theory with creative practice. Through a primarily autoethnographic framework this document chronicled the creation of a body of work over a five-year period, exploring some of its key points of engagement from hip-hop studies, poetic analysis and musicological perspectives. It is from the recontextualisation of the creative practice (within academic frameworks) that evidence emerges of an original contribution to knowledge. From initial analysis, the following research questions were asked:

> How is global hip-hop interpreted and translated (localised) through Scottish culture?
>
> What is the process of constructing a rap identity in Scotland?
>
> What creative approaches can be applied to expressing outsiderdom in Scottish hip-hop?
>
> How did Scottish hip-hop and my work in particular reflect and shape discussions around Scottish independence 2011-2014?
>
> How does one mature, show emotional sensitivity or weakness within a genre known for its hyper-masculinity?

In answer to the above questions, I argue that my published works make a contribution to understanding in three distinct areas:

1. Global and local intersections in Scottish hip-hop
2. Identity re/construction and negotiation
3. Approaches to storytelling: social commentary and outsiderdom in rap

Global and Local Intersections in Scottish Hip-Hop

From the areas identified as providing original contributions to knowledge, localisation of global culture in Scottish hip-hop is perhaps the most overt. As well as providing a lexicon for discussing the topics in later chapters, chapter one demonstrated how the local interprets and alters the global in my creation of Scottish hip-hop. The use of vernacular and slang such as "gurners" and

"havering switherer", combined with the technical poetics of global hip-hop serve to authenticate the work as both representing my cultural background and referencing hip-hop cultural indicators. Punchlines that demonstrate global techniques while playing on local phrases and phenomena perform a similar role. Global and local mediation becomes particularly significant at points when the approach has to change due to cultural differences. This was evidenced in the braggadocio element of hip-hop culture whereby I negotiate the culture clash between hip-hop braggadocio and Scottish self-derogation by making self-derogation the basis of the braggadocio. Thus, braggadocio itself is undermined in a self-ironic way.

Chapter two also displayed a number of examples relating to Scottish cultural appropriation of hip-hop. Firstly, in studying introductory lines in hip-hop songs it is possible to demonstrate the multi-layered identity construction that takes place in just four lines of rap. These layers include a display of technical skills, global referencing, local referencing and individual image construction. This is relevant in that it shows how fully-formed a rapper's identity can be as well as the level of referencing for different audiences that is taking place simultaneously. Additionally, chapter two identified commonalities in language play between African American signifyin(g) (Gates Jnr, 1988) practices and Scottish subversion of 'proper' English language. Here a line can be drawn that shows African American language use, and by extension rap, sharing a positionality with Scots language, accent and rap in relation to hegemonic American and British culture respectively. The analysis of my own work at this stage demonstrated an intentional use of word subversion in order to create new and hidden meanings for different audiences.

Chapter three, while focused on analysing outsiderdom, made observations about the global and the local around the duality of hip-hop being both a mainstream (global) culture and an underground (local) culture at the same time in Scotland. Further consideration of Scottish cultural reflections as a Scottish rapper relates to the observation that jokes, self-derogation and light-hearted moments must be inserted into 'heavy' material in order to avoid being seen as taking yourself too seriously. Chapter four's focus on social and political commentary raised the question as to why a small subculture (Scottish hip-hop)

should be drawn to the fore during the constitutional upheaval of the Scottish independence debate. The answer to this question is that political and cultural commentary are inherent in hip-hop, providing a readymade vehicle and cadre of experienced practitioners at a point when there was both cultural interest and political need. Finally, in addition to asking questions of the restriction of a genre in terms of personal expression, aging and masculinity, chapter five intersected and engaged with Scottish cultural phenomena relating to gender, in particular alcohol and drug consumption, and expressing emotion.

Identity Construction and Negotiation

Chapter two focused on the importance of authenticity in hip-hop and how that manifests as utilising a global, US-created music to express a distinctly Scottish voice. Taking a holistic, artist-centred view yields valuable insight into the multi-point, interrelated process of identity construction, demonstrating how identity and authenticity are intertwined concepts built on a reciprocal relationship between performer and audience. The importance of perceived authenticity is a concept proven to be highly significant in hip-hop (and popular music for that matter). New knowledge can be found in my particular approach to analysis of identity construction through lyrics. As far as I am aware, no-one has yet conducted a study into rappers' identity construction based on the introductory lines from their albums. The beginnings of this process in chapter two produced some insights into the degree of identity formation a rapper undergoes and the layers on which even a few lines of rap are working toward identity and authentication. Furthermore, chapter two went on to demonstrate the complex interconnected strands that contribute to identity construction both from what a rapper says when they write and perform, and from how they are shaped by media and by audience. From an autoethnographic perspective, this produces new knowledge in areas such as my acknowledging from a musician's perspective the elements of strategy and negotiation that take place to construct identity and achieve authenticity.

Approaches to Rap Storytelling: Social Commentary and Outsiderdom

Chapter three discussed the perspective of outsider writing as an attempt to write inclusively about universal outsiderdom. This chapter also brought about the discussion of 'lyrical portraiture'. Not a new approach to songwriting (it can be demonstrated in an incalculable number of songs), the new knowledge here is down to my proposing an organised framework for the process of writing this way, with additional justification as to why it is particularly suited to rap lyrics. This responds to Munro's discussion of creative practices being "messy" (2010) and to the fact that much of what practitioners do is by learned instinct as opposed to organised process. By systematically outlining the songwriting approach, I offer definition and a name to this particular style of writing.

Chapter four made observations about songwriting with the emphasis being on how to write about society in a way that critiques, challenges and invites debate, while also allowing for people to identify with it. Creatively, the analysis of the songs in this chapter demonstrate the use of hybrid/ remix perspectives to combine the potentially dry issues of nation and sovereignty with childhood-ingrained images of nursery rhymes and fairytales. This trope allows links between the emotional and the rational as well as stylistically recalling the intergenerational aspect of the debate.

Finally, chapter five evidences work around the musical boundaries of what could be called hip-hop. Analysis of the songs in this section demonstrates creative interaction with song structure to compliment lyrical content e.g. duet lyrics intertwined to a 6/8 / 4/4 / 12/4 time-signature and a 3/4 lullaby with theme music to represent a baby while using wordplay to create dual meaning of "we're not alone," journeying the listener from negative to positive connotations over the course of the song. This chapter also explored the use of epic imagery and mythology to escape the trappings of the everyday as a means to negotiate taboo topics in a hyper-masculine genre. Lastly, the final chapter demonstrated a multi-layered referencing system within songs such as "Carry Me Home," whereby the song works for a wider audience on one level, contains information for a smaller number of people on another level, and exhibits references that

are really only for the writer (me) on yet another level. This brings forth the notion of the artist as audience, of writing for personal benefit and adding another aspect of self-reflection.

Areas for Further Study

There are a number of areas for additional academic study identified within this work. Firstly, as this is a PhD by Published Works in creative practice the critical appraisal, quite rightly, focuses on my own work. There is room for and good reason for a wider study into a range of areas relating to Scottish hip-hop including language use, content, identity construction, social impact and many other aspects analysing the similarities, differences and unique ways that rappers and producers in Scotland are making hip-hop. On the basis of chapter two, I argue that the study into introductory rap lyrics could be extended and developed, with a view to analysing rap identities, lyrical construction and layered referencing. From the content of chapter three, I would be interested in formalising the work around lyrical portraiture as a song writing technique. There is also space for Krims' work on genre classification to be reworked for the Scottish hip-hop community. Finally, I feel that there is room for a lengthier formal study into exploring 'acceptable, questionable and unacceptable flaws' in masculinity in hip-hop. For example, mental health issues are framed as acceptable when they contribute to a wilder or more aggressive persona. However, this isn't the case if the mental health issues are seen to negatively affect a rapper's image of hyper-masculinity. It is my feeling that additional analysis and building of a library of 'flaws' would yield very interesting results regarding the construction of masculinity in hip-hop and in the wider society it reflects.

In terms of my creative practice, my aims for further research involve developing and extending my existing areas of interest. In July 2016 Stanley Odd released one song called "It's All Gone To Fuck." This was a political piece that drew on many of my familiar themes and attempted to frame them in a unique way. For example, the chorus refrain – "It's All Gone To Fuck" – is intentionally sung in an unadorned, sweet Scottish accent designed to be the antithesis of the angry lyrical sentiment. This contrasting juxtaposition of content and format is characteristic of my writing. The rap lyrics also contain a range of

contrasting images designed to undermine cultural stereotypes, such as the lyrics "Hi, I'm Dave, I'm the hardest guy in the library," designed to simultaneously engage with and critique both the braggadocio and hyper-masculinity associated with hip-hop.

The project that I am currently working on – a solo album under the name Solareye due for release in late 2017 – is called *All These People Are Me*. This album is concerned with identity and the ambiguities and conflicts that run through it. The album begins with the song, "Reconstruction," which considers the ways that we build and rebuild ourselves on waking up every day. The last song on the album, "Deconstruction," challenges many of my own assertions from across the record. In the first verse of this last song I attack my own premise for making the album:

> All these people are me – that's the fiction
> It's just an excuse for being a walking contradiction
> And if you question my convictions
> I can always blame it all on the human condition

This direct self-critique, in the lyrics themselves, of my character and of the album that I've just made is in keeping with what has been revealed in the critique regarding my approach to writing. Making the album, whilst carrying out the research involved in this critical appraisal has definitely had an impact on the lyrical content. It has made me more aware of common tropes within hip-hop writing broadly speaking and also more self-reflexive in style and content. As such, I do worry that parts of the new album might be verging on self-indulgent or overly introspective; concerned and unsure as to where the line lies between being relatable and being too specific. Ultimately, my aim is for *All These People Are Me* to embody the concepts of hybridised identity, transmission, reception and hip-hop's magpie-like love for syncretism and bricolage. The album's overall message is perhaps best contained in the lines:

> So horde your contradictions up
> Fill them out with bricks and mud
> A home to house the things you love
> From folks that are too quick to judge

Here, in this final verse on the album I attempt to champion inconsistencies and conflicts in human nature, railing against the need for people to be pigeonholed

or categorised and their subsequent denial of fully expressing themselves as a result. It is also clear from this final verse that my audience is changing as I see myself now in the role of father as well as rapper. The final lines of the final verse, emphasise this shift and blurring in who I consider to be my audience:

> One passage that they underlined
> To highlight to a younger mind
> Change yir stripes a hundred times
> For clarity, stay undefined

As well as the three-syllable rhyme-scheme and dual meaning of "undefined" playing on the word clarity, these lines are significant final lines to the verse and the record as they demonstrate this shifting of audience. As such, the rhymes themselves become the embodiment of many of the themes discussed in this critical appraisal: an element of teaching or informing; displaying technical dexterity; dual meaning and wordplay; amalgamation; with the underlying message of change and fluidity.

To conclude, this critical reflection demonstrates a range of considerations relating to global and local intersections in hip-hop and society, proposing methods to stimulate engagement, discussion and debate. Considering the poetics of identity (Krims, 2000) in relation to locality, authenticity and social commentary, provides a view of how the technical and cultural construction of rap lyrics combine to reflect and challenge both society and genre. The works in this thesis provide perspectives from the edges of hip-hop: commercially, culturally and authentically; to narrate stories from the edges of communities: socially, economically and culturally. My interpretation of hip-hop pivots on how it can address serious topics but revel in ludic engagement with wordplay, finding delight in poetics and hoping that the joy in the lyrical construction spills out into its semantics. My own work is autoethnographic, ethnographic, musicological, literary, poetic, political, musical. It is a work of hip-hop through the cultural elements that hip-hop controls, constructs and conforms to and the wider world in which hip-hop exists. My creative practice *is* hip-hop studies. Through engagement with the academic frameworks, this critical appraisal puts those studies in context, allowing for evidence of the original contribution to knowledge to come to the fore. These are hybridised academic frameworks to study hybridised musical practice that is created and consumed by a hybridised

culture. For me, what makes hip-hop exciting is the synergy between the global, the local and the idiosyncratic; being inspired by a style of music, then making something new that represents your world and the world that the music came from. Championing the contradictory, the conflicted and the constructed, hip-hop to me represents the ever more rapid morphing, mutating and blending of culture that makes up 21st century identity.

Bibliography

Alim, H. S., 2003. On Some Serious Next Millennium Rap Ishhh Pharoahe Monch, Hip Hop Poetics, and the Internal Rhymes of Internal Affairs. *Journal of English Linguistics,* March, 31(1), pp. 60-84.

Alim, H. S., 2009. Straight Outta Compton, Straight aus München: Global Linguistic Flows, Identities, and the Politics of Language in a Global Hip Hop Nation. In: H. S. Alim, A. Ibrahim & A. Pennycook, eds. *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language.* New York: Routledge, pp. 1-23.

Allen Jr, E., 1996. Making the Strong Survive: The Contours and Contradictions of Message Rap. In: W. E. Perkins, ed. *Droppin Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 159-191.

Anderson, B., 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* 2nd Edition ed. New York: Verso Books.

Appiah, K. A., 1992. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Appiah, K. A., 2007. Does Truth Matter to Identity?. In: J. J. E. Gracia, ed. *Race or Ethnicity?: On Black and Latino Identity.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 19-27.

Aschenheim, S. E., 2012. *At the Edges of Liberalism: Junctions of European, German, and Jewish History.* Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Auslander, P., 1999. *Liveness: performance in an mediatized culture.* London: Routledge.

Auslander, P. 2004. Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 14(1), pp. 1-13.

Auslander, P. 2006. Musical Personae *TDR: The Drama Review*, 50(1), pp. 100-119.

Bakkalapulo, M., 2014. *"It's a Dying Empire, Let's Get Shot of It" - How Scottish Rappers Are Encouraging People to Set Their Country Free.* [Online] Available at: https://noisey.vice.com/en_us/article/rzpg9r/rap-and-the-scottish-referendum-2014 [Accessed 27 June 2017].

BBC, 2014. *Commonwealth Games poem: 'I was part embarrassed, part amazed'.* [Online]

Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0241dnc

[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Bennett, A., 1999. Hip hop am Main: the localization of rap music and hip hop culture. *Media, Culture and Society,* January, 21(1), pp. 77-91.

Bennett, A., 1999. Rappin' on the Tyne: white hip hop culture in Northeast England – an ethnographic study. *The Sociological Review,* February, 47(1), pp. 1-24.

Berg, L., 2016. *Imagining Independence: An Ethnographic Study of Values and Actions in Scottish Nationalism and the Scottish Independence Movement,* Oslo: s.n.

Bett, A., 2014. *"The level of politicisation that is happening in Scotland right now has to continue" – Stanley Odd.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.theskinny.co.uk/videos/entertainment/the-level-of-politicisation-that-is-happening-in-scotland-right-now-has-to-continue-stanley-odd

[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Bett, A., 2014. *Holy shit, new release from @StanleyOdd.* [Online]
Available at: https://twitter.com/AJBee888/status/446014955176099840

Bradley, A., 2009. *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop.* New York: Basic Civitas.

Bradley, R. N., 2015. Barbz and kings: explorartions of gender and sexuality in hip-hop. In: J. A. Williams, ed. *The Cambridge Compansion to Hip-Hop.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 181-191.

Bramwell, R., 2015. *UK Hip-Hop, Grime and the City: The Aesthetics and Ethics of London's Rap Scenes.* New York: Routledge.

Brenner, R. E., 2007. *Understanding Manga and Anime.* Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited Inc.

Bry, D., 1996. Jeru The Damaja 'Wrath of the Math'. *Vibe Magazine*, November.

Bynoe, Y., 2002. Getting Real about Global Hip Hop. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs,* 3(1), pp. 77-84.

Chang, J., 2005. *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-hop Generation.* London: Ebury Publishing.

Channel 4 News, 2017. *MP Shashi Tharoor on the consequences of Britain's imperial past.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.channel4.com/news/mp-shashi-tharoor-on-the-

consequences-of-britains-imperial-past

[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Chrystall, M., 2012. *Inverness tribute from Stanley Odd.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.highland-news.co.uk/Whats-On/Music/Inverness-tribute-from-Stanley-Odd-20092012.htm
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Coffey, A., 1999. *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity.* London: Sage.

Cowley, J., 2014. *Alistair Darling interview: "Salmond is behaving like Kim Jong-il".* [Online]
Available at: http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/06/alistair-darling-interview-salmond-behaving-kim-jong-il
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Crossley, S., 2005. Metaphorical Conceptions in Hip-Hop Music. *African American review,* Winter, 39(4), pp. 501-512.

Culler, J., 1997. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Davies, C., 2010. *The Mirth of Nations.* New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Davis, S., 1985. *The Craft of Lyric Writing.* Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books.

Dawson, I., 2016. *Stag and Dagger (Part Two), 1/5/16.* [Online]
Available at: http://ravechild.co.uk/2016/05/12/stag-dagger-part-two-1516/
[Accessed 25 June 2017].

Deis, C., 2015. Hip-Hop and politics. In: J. A. Williams, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 192-205.

Deuchar, R. & Holligan, C., 2014. What does it mean to be a man? Psychosocial undercurrents in the voices of incarcerated (violent) Scottish teenage offenders. *Criminology & Criminal Justice,* 12 August, 15(2), pp. 361-377.

Dex, R., 2013. *BBC defends decision to ban 'Ding, Dong, The Witch Is Dead' song after Lady Thatcher's death.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/bbc-defends-decision-to-ban-ding-dong-the-witch-

is-dead-song-after-lady-thatchers-death-8980678.html

[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Dingwall, J., 2014. *Independence referendum inspires hip-hop hit by Edinburgh act.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/whats-on/music-nightlife-news/independence-referendum-inspires-hip-hop-hit-4170905
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Drever, R., 2008. *GZA/Genius @ ABC, 12 Nov.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.theskinny.co.uk/music/live-music/reviews/gza-genius-abc-12-nov-event_review
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Dubrow, H., 1982. *Genre (The Critical idiom).* London: Methuen.

Duncan, M., 2004. Autoethnography: Critical appreciation of an emerging art. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 2(4), p. 39.

Dyson, M. E., 2012. "Cover Your Eyes as I Describe a Scene So Violent" Violence, Machismo, Sexism, and Homophobia. In: M. Forman & M. A. Neal, eds. *That's The Joint! Hip-Hop Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge, pp. 358-369.

Edwards, P., 2009. *How to Rap: The Art & Science of the Hip-Hop MC.* Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Edwards, P., 2013. *How to Rap 2: Advanced Flow & Delivery Techniques.* Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Forman, M., 2012. "Represent": Race, Space and Place in Rap Music. In: M. Forman & M. A. Neal, eds. *That's the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader.* 2nd Edition ed. New York: Routledge, pp. 248-269.

Forman, M., 2014. Visualizing place, representing age in hip-hop: converging themes in Scarface's 'My Block'. *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies,* 28(2), pp. 300-313.

Francesconi, S., 2011. Multimodally Expressed Humor shaping Scottishness in Tourist Postcards. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change,* 9(1).

Frith, S., 1996. Music and Identity. In: S. Hall & P. Du Gay, eds. *Questions of Cultural Identity.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 108-127.

Frith, S., 1996. *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frith, S., 2000. The Discourse of World Music. In: G. Born & D. Hedmondhalgh, eds. *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music.* Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 305-322.

Gallogly-Swan, K., 2016. *Cos I Can.* [Online]
Available at: http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/01/07/cos-i-can/
[Accessed 26 June 2017].

Gates Jr, H. L., 1988. *The Signifyin' Monkey.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gilroy, P., 1993. *The Black Atlantic - Modernity and Double Consciousness.* London: Verso.

Goffman, E., 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* New York: Anchor Books.

Goffman, E., 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience.* New York: Harper & Row.

Grant, G., 2014. *Cybernats unmasked.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2545901/Cybernats-unmasked-Meet-footsoldiers-pro-Scottish-independence-army-online-poison-shames-Nationalists.html
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Graver, D., 1997. The Actor's Bodies. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 17(3), pp. 221-235.

Gray, M., 2015. *Nicola Sturgeon says 'Yes' to feminism and 'No' to the arms trade.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/262/nicola-sturgeon-says-yes-feminism-and-no-arms-trade
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Harrison, E., 2016. *The Glasgow Effect.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.ellieharrison.com/scottishparliament/
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Hesmondhalgh, D. & Melville, C., 2001. Urban Breakbeat Culture: Repercussions of Hip-Hop in the United Kingdom. In: T. Mitchell, ed. *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA.* Middletown: Weslyan University Press, pp. 86-110.

Hess, M., 2005. Metal Faces, Rap Masks: Identity and Resistance in Hip Hop's Persona Artist. *Popular Music and Society,* July, 28(3), pp. 297-311.

Hess, M., 2007. *Is Hip-Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, and Future of America's Most Wanted Music.* Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Higgins, K., 2014. *Generation Scot Y.* Edinburgh: Luath Press.

Holmes Smith, C., 1997. Method in the Madness: Exploring the Boundaries of Identity in Hip-Hop Performativity. *Social Identities,* 3(3), pp. 345-374.

Holt, N. L., 2003. Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography: An Autoethnographic Writing Story. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 2(1), pp. 18-28.

Inoue, M., 2004. Introduction: Temporality and historicity in and through linguistic ideology. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 14(1), pp.1–5.

Jupp, E., 2014. *Gig Review - Stanley Odd.* [Online]
Available at: http://17seconds.co.uk/blog/2014/11/23/gig-review-stanley-odd-3/
[Accessed 25 June 2017].

Kahf, U., 2012. Arabic Hip-Hop: Claims of authenticity and Identity in a New Genre. In: M. Forman & M. A. Neal, eds. *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader.* New York: Routledge, pp. 117-133.

Kajikawa, L., 2015. *Sounding Race in Rap Songs.* Oakland: University of California Press.

Kautny, O., 2015. Lyrics and flow in rap music. In: J. A. Williams, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 101-117.

Kelly, P., 2013. *Authors Live: The Word War Final.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/blog/2013/01/authors-live-the-word-war-final
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Keyes, C. L., 2012. Empowering Self, Making Choices, Creating Spaces: Black Female Identity via Rap Music Performance. In: M. Forman & M. A. Neal, eds. *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader.* 2nd Edition ed. New York: Routledge, pp. 399-412.

Kidd, D., 2014. The Scottish Life Archive. In: *Scottish Archives.* Edinburgh: The Scottish Records Association, pp. 123-133.

Kihn, M., 1994. *A Scene Is Made.* [Online]
Available at:
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=MeQCAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA7&dq=n

ew+york+magazine+volume+27+no.+36&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiJ
7rz-
r9vUAhXMfRoKHflbB6cQ6AEIJDAA#v=onepage&q=new%20york%20m
agazine%20volume%2027%20no.%2036&f=false
[Accessed 26 June 2017].

Kitwana, B., 2005. *Why White Kids Love Hip Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers,
Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America.* New York: Basic
Civitas Books.

Krims, A., 2000. *Rap music and the poetics of identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press.

Krusenstjerna, S., 1989. The Scottish Arts Council Grows Up? An Identity
Crisis. In: D. McCrone & A. Brown, eds. *The Scottish Government
Yearbook 1989.* s.l.:University of Edinburgh, pp. 155-172.

La Di Da Di by Doug E. Fresh and Slick Rick, 2017. *La Di Da Di by Doug E.
Fresh and Slick Rick.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.whosampled.com/Doug-E.-Fresh/La-Di-Da-Di/
[Accessed 24 June 2017].

Law, A., 2015. Mediating the Scottish Independence Debate. *Media Education
Journal,* Issue 56, pp. 3-7.

Local Buzz, 2012. *Local Buzz: Stanley Odd | Matt Norris and the Moon | Callum
Beattie.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/music/local-buzz-
stanley-odd-matt-norris-and-the-moon-callum-beattie-1-2538462
[Accessed 25 June 2017].

Lusane, C., 2004. Rap, Race and Politics. In: M. Forman & M. A. Neal, eds.
That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader. 1st Edition ed. New York:
Routledge, pp. 351-362.

MacAlister, E., 2012. *Live Review: Stanley Odd at Stereo, 20/9/12.* [Online]
Available at: http://ravechild.co.uk/2012/09/25/live-review-stanley-odd-at-
stereo-20912/
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Madonna apologises, 2014. *Madonna apologises for using racial slur on
Instagram post.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jan/18/madonna-

apologises-racial-term-instagram

[Accessed 24 June 2017].

Marshall, W., 2006. Giving Up Hip-hop's Firstborn: A Quest for the Real after the Death of Sampling. *Callaloo,* 29(3), pp. 868-892.

McCann, A., & Ó Laoire, L., 2003. "Raising one higher than the other": The hierarchy of tradition in representations of Gaelic- and English-language song in Ireland. In H. Berger & M. Carroll eds. *Global pop, local language.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, pp. 233–265.

McCarthy, T., 2012. *Transmission and the Individual Remix: How Literature Works.* London: Vintage Digital.

McCarty, N. & Johnson, A., 2016. *Pretty much sums it up. Great tune from a great band from north of the border.* [Online]
Available at:
https://www.facebook.com/neil.mccarty.98/posts/10153946685077531?match=bmVpbCBtY2NhcnR5LHN0YW5sZXkgb2RkLA%3D%3D
[Accessed 20 June 2017].

McGarvey, D., 2017. *If we can't criticise the SNP, then what sort of society do Yessers want?.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/darren-mcgarvey-if-we-can-t-criticise-the-snp-then-what-sort-of-society-do-yessers-want-1-4487161
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

McGee, K., 2015. Musical Hybridity in the New European City: The Jazz Hip Hop Collectives of C-Mon & Kypski and Kytopia. In: N. Gebhardt & T. Whyton, eds. *The Cultural Politics of Jazz Collectives: This is Our Music.* Oxon: Routledge, pp. 86-116.

McIlvanney, W., 2013. *The auld enemies meet again - but do we care?* [Interview] (8 August 2013).

McLeod, K., 2012. Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened With Assimilation. In: M. Forman & M. A. Neal, eds. *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader.* 2nd Edition ed. New York: Routledge, pp. 164-178.

Middleton, R., 1990. *Studying Popular Music.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Mitchell-Kernan, C., 1999. Signifying, Loud-Talking and Marking. In: G. Dagel Caponi, ed. *Signifyin(g), Sanctifyin', & Slam Dunking: A Reader in African America Expressive Culture.* Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, pp. 309-330.

Moore, A., 2002. Authenticity as authentication. *Popular Music,* 21(2), pp. 209-223.

Morgan, J. & Neal, M. A., 2006. A Brand-New Feminism. In: *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop.* New York: BasicCivitas, pp. 233-246.

MTV, 2013. *wrap up and watch out: stanley odd.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.mtv.co.uk/the-wrap-up/blog/wrap-up-and-watch-out-stanley-odd
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Mullen, S., 2009. *It Wisnae Us: The Truth About Glasgow and Slavery.* Edinburgh: The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland.

Munro, A. J., 2011. *Autoethnography as a Research Method in Design Research at Universities.* s.l., Design Education Forum of Southern Africa.

National Records Scotland, 2012. *Life expectancy in Scotland, the UK and Europe.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/life-expectancy-areas-in-scotland/2010-2012/html/life-expectancy-for-areas-within-scotland-2010-2012-scotland-uk-europe.html
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Neild, B., 2013. *Margaret Thatcher's death greeted with street parties in Brixton and Glasgow.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-death-party-brixton-glasgow
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

O'Brien, R., Hunt, K. & Hart, G., 2009. 'The average Scottish man has a cigarette hanging out of his mouth, lying there with a portion of chips': prospects for change in Scottish men's constructions of masculinity and their health-related beliefs and behaviours. *Critical Public Health,* September-December, 19(3-4), pp. 363-381.

O'Neal Parker, L., 2006. Why I Gave Up On Hip-Hop. *Washington Post*, 15 Octobe.

Pennycook, A., 2007. Language, Localization, and the Real: Hip-Hop and the Global Spread of Authenticity. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education,* 6(2), pp. 101-115.

Pennycook, A & Mitchell, T., 2009. Hip Hop as Dusty Foot Philosophy: Engaging Locality. In: H. S. Alim, A. Ibrahim & A. Pennycook, eds. *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language.* New York: Routledge, pp. 25-42.

Peplow, D., 2010. 'Keep scopin til you hear me, words is spoken clearly': Hip-hop music and the art of exclusion. In: *Working With English: Medieval and Modern Language, Literature and Drama 6.* s.l.:University of Nottingham, pp. 14-44.

Perry, N., 2013. *The universal language of lullabies.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21035103
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Peterson, J., 2012. "Dead Prezence": Money and Mortal Themes in Hip Hop Culture. In: M. Forman & M. A. Neal, eds. *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader.* 2nd Edition ed. New York: Routledge, pp. 596-608.

Peterson, R. A., 1997. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Identity.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pickering, M., 1986. The Dogma of Authenticity in the Experience of Popular Music. In: G. McGregor & R. White, eds. *The Art of Listening.* London: Routledge.

Podcart, 2014. *Bit of a Massive Attack feel about this. Love it..* [Online]
Available at:
https://www.facebook.com/podcart/posts/10152120472555095?match=c3RhbmxleSBvZGQgbGV0IG1hIGJyYWluIGJyZWF0aGUsbGV0IG1hIGJyYWluIGJyZWF0aGUsc3RhbmxleSBvZGQscG9kY2FydA%3D%3D

Price-Styles, A., 2015. MC origins: rap and spoken word poetry. In: J. A. Williams, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 11-21.

Reinharz, S., 1992. *Feminist Methods in Social Research.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

RESPECT.Staff. 2013. *Concert Review: Homeboy Sandman is a Humble Freight Train.* [Online]

Available at: http://respect-mag.com/2013/08/concert-review-homeboy-sandman-is-a-humble-freight-train/

[Accessed 24 November 2017]

Rimmer, J., 2014. *Stanley Odd - Interview.* [Online]

Available at: http://www.scotlandstandup.co.uk/2014/12/stanley-odd-interview.html

[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Rimmer, J., 2016. *Voices for the Voiceless: Scottish Hip Hop in 2016.* [Online]

Available at: http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2016/02/11/voices-for-the-voiceless-scottish-hip-hop-in-2016/

[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Rodney P Presents... The Hip-Hop World News. 2016. [Film] Directed by Jaimie D'Cruz. UK: s.n.

Rollefson, J,G., 2017. *Flip the Script: European Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postcoloniality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Rose, T., 1994. *Black Noise.* Middletown: Wesleywan University Press.

Rose, T., 2008. *The Hip-Hop Wars.* New York: Basic Books.

Scottish Government, 2011. *Summary: Ethnic Group Demographics (2011).*

[Online]

Available at:

http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Equality/Equalities/DataGrid/Ethnicity/EthPopMig

[Accessed 26 June 2016].

Small, M., 2013. *The Edinburgh festival's attempt to keep politics out in 2014 is farcical.* [Online]

Available at:

https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/13/edinburgh-festival-scottish-independence-referendum

[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Smitherman, G., 1997. "The Chain Remain the Same" Communicative Practices in the Hip Hop Nation. *Journal of Black Studies,* September, 28(1), pp. 3-25.

Speers, L., 2017. *Hip-Hop Authenticity and the London Scene: Living Out Authenticity in Popular Music.* Oxon: Routledge.

Steele, T., 1999. *All the Fun's in How You Say a Thing: An Explanation of Meter and Versification.* Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Stokes, M., 1994. Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music. In: M. Stokes, ed. *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place.* Oxford: Berg Publishers, pp. 1-28.

Sutcliffe, O., 2017. *Hip-Hop in Scotland: Glocalisation and the rap of the Scottish Emcee,* Paisley: s.n.

The Pop Cop, 2013. *40 musicians answer the Scottish independence question.* [Online]
Available at: http://archive.fo/XZgGN
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Traber , D. . S., 2001. L. A.'s "White Minority": Punk and the Contradictions of Self-Marginalization. *Cultural Critique,* 48(Spring), pp. 30-64.

United States Census Bureau, 2016. *QuickFacts.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/#qf-headnote-a
[Accessed 26 June 2017].

Vile, G., 2013. *Hip-Hop Pondering.* [Online]
Available at: http://vilearts.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/hip-hop-pondering.html
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Webster, C., 2014. *Scottish independence: Musicians back independence.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/music/scottish-independence-musicians-back-independence-1-3541771
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Weiner, J., 2012. *"Niggas," in Practice: Jay-Z, Gwyneth Paltrow, and when white people can say the word.* [Online]
Available at:
http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/music_box/2012/06/gwyneth_paltrow_and_niggas_in_paris_is_it_ever_ok_for_white_people_to_use_the_word_.single.html
[Accessed 24 June 2017].

Welsh, I., 1994. *Trainspotting.* s.l.:Vintage.

Williams, J., 2015. *'Colonised by Wankers': Performing the Scottish Independence Debate through Hip-Hop.* Helsinki: s.n.

Williams, J. A., 2013. *Rhymin' and Stealin'.* Michigan: The University of
Michigan Press.

Williams, J. A., 2017. Rapping Postcoloniality: Akala's "The Thieves Banquet"
and Neocolonial Critique. *Popular Music and Society,* 40(1), pp. 89-101.

Wimpress, C., 2012. *Scottish Independence Referendum: Westminster
Considers Handing Powers To Salmond To Trigger Vote.* [Online]
Available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/01/10/scottish-
independence-illegal-david-cameron-law-change-section-30-
order_n_1196635.html
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Woods, D. L., Yund, E. W., Herron, ,. T. J. & Cruadhlaoich, M. A. I. U., 2010.
Consonant identification in consonant-vowel-consonant syllables in
speech-spectrum noise. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of
America,* 127(3), pp. 1609-1623.

Zulu Nation UK, 2016. *Talib Kweli, Donald D, Akala, TJ Chill discuss Hip Hop
Open Spaces - MEETING OF THE MINDS.* [Online]
Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GY1aGT6PqOc
[Accessed 27 June 2017].

Discography

Stanley Odd. (2012). Antiheroics. On *Reject*. Handsome Tramp Records.

Stanley Odd. (2011). By Way of Explanation. On *The Day I Went* Deaf. Circular
Records.

Stanley Odd. (2012). Carry Me Home. On *Reject*. Handsome Tramp Records.

Stanley Odd. (2014). Chase Yirsel. On *Chase Yirsel.* A Modern Way
Recordings.

Stanley Odd. (2012). Day 3. On *Reject*. Handsome Tramp Records.

Stanley Odd. (2014). Draw Yir Own Conclusions. On *A Thing Brand New*. A
Modern Way Recordings.

Stanley Odd. (2016). *It's All Gone To Fuck.* A Modern Way Recordings.

Stanley Odd. (2014). Let Ma Brain Breathe. On *Chase Yirsel.* A Modern Way
Recordings.

Stanley Odd. (2013). *The Man with Many Names.* Self-released.

Stanley Odd. (2012). Marriage Counselling. On *Reject*. Handsome Tramp
Records.

Stanley Odd. (2014). *Princes on the Pavement*. Self-released.

Stanley Odd. (2014). Son, I Voted Yes. On *A Thing Brand New*. A Modern Way Recordings.

Stanley Odd. (2010). Ten to One. On *Oddio.* Circular Records.

Stanley Odd. (2010). The Numbness. On *Oddio.* Circular Records.

Stanley Odd. (2014). To Be This Good Takes Stages. On *A Thing Brand New*. A Modern Way Recordings.

Stanley Odd. (2014). Who Am I?. On *A Thing Brand New*. A Modern Way Recordings.

Stanley Odd. (2012). Will The Last One Out Please Turn Off the Lights. On *Reject*. Handsome Tramp Records.

Stanley Odd. (2011). Winter of Discontent. On *Pure Antihero Material.* Circular Records.

Asthmatic Astronaut ft. Solareye. (2016). The Bleakest Blues. On *This is Not Pop.* This is Not Pop.

Louie x Solareye x Scatabrainz. (2013). *Pan Breed* Self-released.

Solareye. (2012). The Pageant. On *The Pageant.* Handsome Tramp Records.

Solareye. (2017). Deconstruction. On *All These People Are Me.* Forthcoming.

Akala. (2013). The Thieves Banquet. On *The Thieves Banquet.* Illa State Records.

Beck. (1994). Loser. On *Mellow Gold.* Geffen.

Black Star. (1998). Children's Story. On *Mos Def & Talib Kweli Are Black Star.* Rawkus.

Black Star. (1998). Definition. On *Mos Def & Talib Kweli Are Black Star.* Rawkus.

Bros. (1991). *When Will I Be Famous?* CBS.

Brother Ali. (2007). Uncle Sam Goddamn. On *The Undisputed Truth.* Rhymesayers Ent.

Buck 65. (2005). Cries a Girl. On *This Right Here is Buck 65.* V2 Records.

Cream. (1968). Politician. On *Wheels of Fire.* Polydor.

Dope Inc. (1991). *The Frontal Attack.* Solid Dope Vinyl.

Doug E. Fresh ft. MC Ricky D. (1985). *La Di Da Di.* Reality Records.

DMX. (1999). What These Bitches Want. On ... *And Then There Was X.* Ruff Ryders, Def Jam.

Run DMC. (1985). King of Rock. On *King of Rock*. Profile/Arista Records.

Eminem. (2002). Haile's Song. On *The Eminem Show*. Aftermath/Shady/Interscope

Eric B. & Rakim. (1990). No Omega. On *Let the Rhythm Hit 'Em.* MCA Records.

Fairport Convention. (1969). Matty Groves. On *Liege & Lief.* Island.

Fugees. (1994). *Vocab (Remix).* Columbia.

Hail Mary Mallon. (2014). Jonathan. On *Beastiary.* Rhymesayers Ent.

Jay-Z. (1996). Dead Presidents. On *Reasonable Doubt.* Roc-A-Fella, Priority.

Jay-Z. (2001). Make the Song Cry. On *The Blueprint.* Roc-A-Fella, Def Jam.

Jay-Z. (2004). Public Service Announcement (Interlude)*. On *The Black Album.* Roc-A-Fella/Def Jam.

Jay-Z (2001). The Ruler's Back*. On *The Blueprint.* Roc-A-Fella, Def Jam.

Jay-Z ft. Eminem. (2001). Renegade*. On *The Blueprint.* Roc-A-Fella, Def Jam.

Jay-Z & Kanye West. (2011). New Day. On *Watch the Throne.* Roc-A-Fella/Roc Nation/Def Jam

Jehst. (2003). ESP (Extra Sensory Perfection). On *Falling Down*. Low Life Records.

Jeru the Damaja. (1998). *Wrath of the Math*. PayDay/FFRR/PolyGram Records.

Kendrick Lamar. (2015). Alright. On *To Pimp A Butterfly.* Top Dawg/ Aftermath/ Interscope.

Kanye West. (2004). Spaceship. On *College Dropout.* Roc-A-Fella Def Jam.

KRS-One. (1997). Step into a World (Rapture's Delight). On *I Got Next.* Jive/BMG.

KRS-One. (1988). *Stop the Violence.* Jive.

Massive Attack. (1998). Teardrop. On *Mezzanine*. Virgin.

Mos Def. (2006). Perfect Timing. On *True Magic*. Geffen.

Nas. (1994). NY State of Mind. On *Illmatic*. Columbia.

Nas. (1994). The World is Yours. On *Illmatic*. Columbia.

Nina Simone (1964). Mississipi Goddamn. On *Nina Simone in Concert*. Philips.

Notorious B.I.G. (1997). Hypnotize. On *Life After Death* Bad Boy Entertainment.

Notorious B.I.G. (1995). The Wickedest Freestyle. On *Unreleased & Unleashed!* Bad Boy Entertainment.

Pearl Jam. (1991). Jeremy. On *Ten*. Epic.

Pearl Jam. (1992). WMA. On *Vs.* Epic.

The Proclaimers. (1988). Sunshine on Leith. On *Sunshine on Leith.* Chrysalis.

Odd Future. (2012). Oldie. *On The OF Tape Vol. 2.* Odd Future, RED Distribution.

The Roots. (1995). DatSkat. On *Do You Want More?!!!??!.* DGC/Geffen.

Skitz. (2001). *Countryman.* Ronin Records.

Skunk Anansie. (1996) Intellectualise My Blackness. On *Paranoid & Sunburnt.* One Little Indian.

Slick Rick. (1988). The Ruler's Back. On *The Great Adventures of Slick Rick.* Def Jam/Columbia.

Snoop Doggy Dogg. (1993). Lodi Dodi. On *Doggystyle.* Death Row/Interscope.

Stormzy. (2015). *Shut Up.* Stormzy.

Sunday Dunt Club. (2016). The Dunt [DUB]. Self-released.

Sugar Bullet. (1991). Demonstrate on Mass. On *World Peace.* Virgin.

The Sugarhill Gang. (1979). *Rapper's Delight*. Sugar Hill Studios.

Frank Zappa. (1967). Brown Shoes Don't Make It. On *Absolutely Free.* Verve.

Filmography

Back to the Future. Dir. Robert Zemeckis. 116 mins. Universal Pictures, 1985.

Chewing the Fat. Created by Ford Kiernan/ Greg Hemphill. The Comedy Unit Effingee Productions, 1999-2002.

Four Weddings and a Funeral. Dir. Mike Newell. 117 mins. Rank Film Distributors. 1994.

The Great Hip-Hop Hoax. Dir. Jeanie Finlay. 93 mins. Vertigo Films, 2013.

Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels. Dir. Guy Ritchie. 106 mins. PolyGram Filmed Entertainment. 1998.

Rodney P Presents… The Hip-Hop World News. Dir. Jaimie D'Cruz. 89 mins. BBC Music.

Ulysses 31: Episode 7 "The Eternal Punishment". 25 mins. Contender Entertainment. 1981.

Appendices

Appendix A: A reflection on the literary mechanics of the first verse of "Let Ma Brain Breathe"

Appendix A

A reflection on the literary mechanics of the first verse of "Let Ma Brain Breathe"

Alim (2003:60) talks of how wordplay, metaphor and narrative in rap contribute to a literary and linguistic creativity that is "highly intertextual and that demonstrates multilayered poetic complexity". As such, revisiting the first verse of Let Ma Brain Breathe to analyse its imagery and content, uncover the level of line-by-line layering and intertextuality. What follows are some less formal reflections on the literary mechanics of the piece.

1	Outmanoeuvring mechanical mainstream fads
2	Magnanimous megalomaniac
3	Forging steel bars with the anvil and the furnace
4	Hammering ma grammar while dismantling the wordsmith
5	Crushing resurgence with murderous urgency
6	Stuttering gurners can suffer in Purgatory
7	I'm a havering switherer
8	Competition get labelled as sinister
9	And tinnitus from the first aid I administer
10	Headphones sound a visit from David in miniature
11	Pharm'd up, spangled, blethering irrelevance
12	While questioning the cost to make the medicine
13	Feel the flow 'til the facemask lifts
14	Digging holes on the graveyard shift
15	Fit the text to the music nae bother
16	Get yir body moving like a grave robber
17	Dispel the myth of a ponderous misogynist
18	Heads bob to this androgynous metamorphosis
19	Kafka cockroach slide the meals under the door
20	Penning love letters to Sylvia Plath, mi amore
21	Mmm... Tastes good
22	Dave Hook cooking that brain food
23	Flambéed verses over sautéed loops
24	Calling the Gods in two languages like 'hey Zeus'
25	Die hard references, naked with a sandwich board
26	Dry parched sentences, playing with the Manticore
27	Perambulating with a target on ma back
28	Simon says, knees jerk and carcasses collapse
29	Pharaoh Monch says "Get the fuck up"
30	Gotham City. Nighty night Edinburgh
31	The weans asleep, don't let the bed bugs bite
32	Tongue-tied hearing these penged up rhymes
33	I pen punchlines 'til it's redrum time
34	That's messed up right?

Verse One of Stanley Odd, "Let Ma Brain Breathe"

The song opens with the alliterative "Outmanoeuvring mechanical mainstream fads," setting up a conflict between populist content and framing me as consciously alternative to that. In line two "Magnanimous megalomaniac," constructs my rap persona as a sort of benevolent dictator, presiding over the state of popular music. Line 3 introduces the wordplay of wordsmith/ blacksmith. In this sense, the writing of my lyrics becomes transported to a physical process with an "anvil and a furnace", physically constructing the words from steel and sweat. The wordplay of steel bars and bars of music is clear here. The following line "Hammering ma grammar while dismantling the wordsmith" continues the imagery while implying the work that goes into creating the lyrics will also destroy that of contemporaries (or take it to pieces). There is another additional meaning here too of the idea of deconstructing what it is to be a writer and remaking it as something new. Aggressive and violent imagery is used to continue the atmosphere of conflict and challenge. The acts of "Crushing resurgence with murderous urgency" are contrasted with perceived opponents portrayed as "stuttering gurners". These lines (5 and 6) also a comprise 12-syllable, full-line rhyme scheme for the first of two points in this verse.

Lines 8, 9 and 10 display multi-layered metaphor, the meaning from the lyrics being that my rap is an antidote to less credible or lower quality work.

> Competition get labelled as sinister
> And tinnitus from the first aid I administer
> Headphones sound a visit from David in miniature

This point is delivered by means of the "sinister" `(questionable) "competition" (my contemporaries) being left with their ears ringing (tinnitus) from the "first aid I administer" (my music as remedy to theirs), which is playing in your headphones (David in miniature). Hence, imagery and metaphor is used to find an original way of addressing a common theme in hip-hop – braggadocio and claims of superiority.

The following lines continue that theme, making wordplay the focus. "Feel the flow 'til the facemask lifts" is a reference to whiteness and locality, and not looking like the definition of rap authenticity. "Digging holes on the graveyard

shift" refers to 'bodying' (beating) emcees while writing my lyrics late at night and this leads onto the wordplay "get yir body moving like a graverobber".

Lines 17 and 18, "Dispel the myth of a ponderous misogynist // Heads bob to this androgynous metamorphosis", criticise the hyper-masculine elements of hip-hop. Finishing on metamorphosis allows me lead into referencing Kafka and his story "Metamorphosis" (1915) about a man that turns into a cockroach. By this point in the verse I have already transmogrified from a benevolent tyrant, to a blacksmith, to a "murderous" punisher, to a miniaturised apparition via headphones, to a drug-addled anti-hero, to a gravedigger and now to a cockroach. Thus, the Kafka reference draws direct attention to these transformations. Maintaining literary references and an air of darkness and despair, the next line refers to "penning love letters to Sylvia Path, mi amore". In shaping the lyrics as love letters to Sylvia Plath I attempt to frame my work as poetic through association. Utilising the same techniques Williams (2013) notes in rappers referencing earlier artists for credibility, in two lines I have associated myself with high literature and poetry.

The following two lines "Mmm… tastes good, Dave Hook cooking that brain food" has a strong euphonious effect (to interject autoethnographically, this line is often quoted to me by other people). Again the "brain food" metaphor is another way of maintaining the links I am making with poetry and literature – claiming my work to be 'highbrow'. The food metaphor is continued with "flambéed verses over sautéed loops", which subtly acknowledge MF Doom's "Mm.. Food" (2004).

Line 24 plays on the line "hey Zeus" being a homophone for the Spanish pronunciation of Jesus. The confusion caused by this creates a storyline in the film Die Hard with a Vengeance (1995), so this is referenced in line 25, with "naked with a sandwich board" referring to another scene from the film. Lines 25 and 26, contain 12-syllable rhymes, making a rhyme scheme that comprises the entire line. Line 26 also creates a link between the literary and the mythological, where my "dry parched sentences" see me playing with the mythical beast, the "Manticore." This imagery implies fearlessness, actions of epic, mythological proportions and metaphorically places me in the world of legend.

Line 27, references being a target due to visibility (i.e. success). Lines 28 and 29 are multi-layered, firstly insinuating that other rappers are like puppets, hence "Simon says" and that their words are empty and lifeless – "carcasses collapse". This line is also a reference to Pharoahe Monch, "Simon Says" (1999). As Alim (2003) notes, Pharoahe Monch is one of the most highly regarded rappers in the world for his lyrical prowess and level of authenticity. As such, referencing him is an attempt to link my work to his, this done while in the middle of an extremely intertextual verse is a dual attempt to link both lyrical construction and metaphorical writing to his style. Line 29, quotes from the same Pharoahe Monch song and directly references him. "Get the fuck up" here is also a link back to the collapsing carcasses of the previous line.

Line 30 reconstructs Edinburgh's towering gothic skyline as "Gotham City" before line 31 explaining "The wean's asleep don't let the bed bugs bite". In the context of the song, this is literally referring to my son sleeping but also builds on the sinister, brooding atmosphere. The combination of dark imagery and gothic referencing, followed by this line evoke childhood horror movie taglines, making for a threatening rather than reassuring tone.

Line 32 picks up a three-syllable rhyme scheme started by "bed bugs bite", through "penged-up rhymes" ("peng" being a London-specific term for good or attractive). Line 33 continues this rhyme scheme noting that "I pen punchlines 'til it's redrum time", this chain-rhyme links writing rhymes to murder, "redrum" being 'murder' pronounced backwards, referencing horror film "The Shining" (1980). The final line of the verse pauses to take apart the whole concept of murderous imagery by way of claiming rap excellence with the line "That's messed up right?" Even here there is a dual meaning, whereby it is observing the wrongness in the content but also basking in it, or using that wrongness as another means to maintain the menacing atmosphere.

This informal textual analysis of the first verse demonstrates the level of intertextuality and metaphor at play. In 34 lines of verse my rap persona morphs through benevolent dictator, to blacksmith, "murderous" punisher, miniaturised apparition via headphones, drug-addled anti-hero, gravedigger, cockroach,

love-stuck poet, crazed public figure and horror-film villain, all the while embodying a rapper. Literary and film references range from Kafka, to Plath, from Die Hard, to Batman, from Pharoahe Monch to nursey rhymes and children's stories. It is this 'scattershot', visual word painting from any and all cultural sources that Holmes Smith (1997) is observing when he discusses the "prolific practice of juxtaposition and intertextuality" (352). The range of interwoven images and references is an example of the cultural hybridity of self, the words representing the overt process of identity construction that rappers demonstrate, which in turn is carried out more subtly in society on a day-to-day basis.