

Global hip-hop culture and the scopophilic spectacle of women in South African hip-hop music videos

ABSTRACT

In many hip-hop music videos, women's value is reduced to sensuous display of sexuality. As a result visual pleasure is created through the representation of women as eager and willing sexual objects. This article assesses the techniques and ways women are sexualised in South African hip-hop music videos, and how their representation attempts to create visual pleasure for those that consume these videos. Four critical elements are adopted from Laura Mulvey's seminal theoretical discourse about the positioning of women in narrative cinema, to study the gender representation and sexual presentation of women in two popular South African hip-hop music videos. The analysis reveals that appealing to the male gaze, processes of objectification, gender division of labour and camera techniques are ways of presenting a sexualised spectacle of women for the visual pleasure of male characters and audiences of the videos.

INTRODUCTION

The representation of women in hip-hop music videos has been a focus of many studies (Miller-Young, 2007, Clark et al., 2016), and for many years studies have examined the representation of women as objects and props in music videos (Seidman, 1992, McClane-Bunn, 2010). The objectification of the female body has permeated social and cultural practices for decades; as MacKinnon (1989:149) states: "all women live in objectification the way fish live in water". Since emerging in the mainstream music culture in the early 1980s, the music video format has generated a fair amount of scholarly attention, with research focusing especially on the harmful imagery found in many music videos and the potential effects of such imagery on adolescent viewers (Seidman, 1992; Sherman & Dominic, 1986; Smith & Boyson, 2002; Wallis, 2011).

Wallis (2011) notes that music videos are an important part of the hugely profitable music industry, with many media stations offering some sort of music video programming, and countless sites on the World Wide Web allowing for music viewing and downloading. The hip-hop music genre is one of the most influential genres that have spread across the globe, resulting in a global culture. Hip-hop culture began as a medium of expression where Black Americans used rap to voice their

Ntebaleng Mpetsi is a postgraduate researcher in Communication Studies at the University of Limpopo. Her research interest focuses on gender issues in communication, specifically the representation of women and how women are situated in cultural spaces. Toks Oyedemi teaches in the communication programme at the University of Limpopo. Aspects of his research interests are the political economy of global media and the media shaping of culture and identity.

social, economic and political concerns. Accompanying the global penetration of hip-hop music is the music video, which often captures the essence of the hip-hop culture, comprising arts, clothing, language, fashion and lifestyle. But critical analysis of hip-hop music tends to consider the elements of violence and sexual objectification of women in the songs and music videos.

Hip-hop started in South Africa in the 1980s in Cape Town with strong politically conscious themes, just like its American progenitor. Within the backdrop of apartheid, the content of hip-hop music was naturally political and critical. Today, hip-hop has developed to be a huge cultural and social practice among many youth. With the growth of hip-hop and a changing political environment, the critical, politically conscious content has given way to lyrics and culture that focus on individual advancement, sensuous pleasure, commercial-mindedness, and boastful display of wealth (Tuulikki, 2017, Watkins, 2012).

Of critical concern in this study is the representation of women in South African hip-hop videos. Following on critical international studies of women in hip-hop videos, this study attempts to assess the way in which women are objectified in South African hip-hop music videos by exploring the presentation and representation of women. This is done by specifically examining the visual roles that women play in two hip-hop music videos by two male artists. Through a case study of the two music videos, *Monate So* by Cassper Nyovest and *Ngud'* by Kwesta, featuring Cassper Nyovest, this study explores the way women are sexualised and analyses how the presentation of women in these videos is aimed at providing visual pleasure for those that consume the videos.

1. THE GLOBAL HIP-HOP CULTURE

The global hip-hop culture has emerged as a culture that inspires and integrates new artistic expressions, knowledge production and social identification (Morgan & Bennett, 2011). The term “hip-hop nation” is used to describe the globalisation and spread of hip-hop globally. It is an international and multiracial community made up of individuals of different ethnicities and races. Hip-hop appeals to youth from different cultures that enjoy a genre that gives them a sense of belonging (Morgan & Bennett, 2011).

Muller et al. (2014) contend that hip-hop culture, which was only expected to last for a short period of time, has grown and developed over many years into what can be called a trans-global phenomenon. In the United States of America hip-hop has been a vehicle used to express the anger, joy, vision and struggles experienced by African American youth. Through hip-hop, people gain a sense of belonging, which makes them realise that they are not alone or singled out. Today, hip-hop is multiracial, and created and enjoyed by people of all races. Sulé (2016) views hip-hop culture as one of the most influential modern cultural trends, which has succeeded in attracting people from diverse backgrounds. Hip-hop has expanded into an international cultural identity representing the voices of those who live on the social periphery – the silenced and stigmatised (Rose, 1994). It is a genre that involves youth and gives them a sense of security. According to Baszile (2009:8), in hip-hop “young people have created an atmosphere and an environment to share personal experiences and negotiate their self-performances”. Nevertheless, hip-hop has a global appeal that resonates with a broad spectrum of people across nations and races (Kitwana, 2005).

Sulé (2016) conducted a phenomenological study to understand individual and personal experiences of hip-hop culture among youth, and found that hip-hop worked as an emotional remedy for most of the participants. Also despite an understanding of hip-hop as a cultural artefact, most of the participants in the study used hip-hop as a form of cathartic release entailing the power of self-expression. Hip-hop culture is called a global or an international culture as it has spread across the globe, influencing countries such as Japan, Australia, Kenya and many developing countries including South Africa. South Africa is a diverse country, where young people differ across geographical contexts in the way they combine and mix the forms of multilingualism in cultural expressions (Williams, 2016). Williams notes how young multilingual speakers, active in the hip-hop community in South Africa, draw on various languages and other semantic resources to form cultural expression.

Hip-hop culture, including rap music, entertainment videos, lifestyle and language, is defined as a form of creative expression of the collective consciousness of youth that cuts across race and class (Kitwana, 2002). Henry, West and Jackson (2010) note that due to the widespread popularity of hip-hop, many youth are introduced to the culture and enjoy this genre of music. Price (2006) also states that hip-hop culture has gone through numerous changes over the past decades. It has grown from a local, non-profit bearing culture to an international, multibillion-dollar industry that is now a model to many. Price (2006) argues that hip-hop culture provides us with the opportunity to explore and better understand the diverse, influential and rapidly growing youth culture. Motley and Henderson (2007) describe the global nature of hip hop as the “global hip hop diaspora” spanning major cities and localities in the world, a diaspora spanning ethnic, linguistic, and geographic boundaries.

2. WOMEN AS SPECTACLE OF SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION AND VISUAL PLEASURE

Although hip-hop has become a powerful tool for self-expression across the world, creating economic success for many who otherwise reside on the periphery of the global economy, it has also generated much social and academic criticism. One such criticism is the treatment of women in hip-hop videos, who are portrayed with heightened and exaggerated sexuality (Brown, 2000).

Scholars such as Kaplan (1987) and McClane-Bunn (2010) have directed attention to how the visual content of music videos that are featured on popular music channels utilises the male gaze, where women serve as mere visual objects for men (McClane-Bunn, 2010). Davis and Tucker-Brown (2013) note that women in hip-hop videos are often portrayed as sex-crazed objects, willing and ready to do anything for money or the attention of a man. Clark et al. (2016) conducted a study analysing violence and sexual content in hip-hop music videos. Their study included music videos with high online viewership. Four music videos were chosen which had 150 million viewers or more. The videos used were *Love the Way You Lie* by Eminem, *Anaconda* by Nicky Minaj, *Pour It Up* by Rihanna, and *Drop the World* by Lil Wayne. They found that *Pour It Up* and *Anaconda* have explicit sexual content: 351 and 376 instances respectively, which include a focus on women’s cleavages, buttocks, pelvic areas, touching and implied sex.

A particular focus of the sexualisation and objectification of women in hip-hop videos is the centralisation of women's buttocks, not only as sexually attractive, but also as a commodity to be sold to consumers in marketing the music. Romero (2017) explores the commodification of African American women's buttocks in pop and hip hop culture, and asserts how this continues the process of exploring the objectification, stereotyping, and exploitation of the female body. A poignant symbolic image of this objectification and commodification is captured in the music video of *Tip Drill* by Nelly (featuring Lunatics) in which Nelly is captured close-up, swiping a bank card in between the naked buttocks of a woman. Schoppmeier (2015:63), in her study of the commodification of race in the music videos of Nicki Minaj (a popular female American hip hop artist), notes that in the *Anaconda* music video, "shaking buttocks abound and are filmed from all angles and in all levels of zoom. Not only because of the twerking dancers – most of which are black – the focus once again is clearly on the exotic".

Miller-Young (2008) examines black sexualities in the new style of hip-hop pornography, stating that hip-hop music videos as advertisements for hip-hop artists have been the primary location for a growing pornographic sensibility that reaches a global consumer audience. The use of women, presented almost naked – often clad in bikinis – has created strong sexual innuendos in hip-hop music videos such that the lines between music videos and pornography have become blurred. In fact, Miller-Young (2008) observes that hip-hop and pornography have partnered to commodify black sexuality in a new genre form by employing black women's bodies as the hard currency of exchange, resulting in a lucrative synthesis that has brought fans of both media together as consumers.

As the culture of hip-hop travels across the world, the misogynistic use of women as sex objects has also become a global trend in hip-hop videos. For example, Oikelome's (2013) study shows that women are used as mere tools and decorative objects by hip-hop artistes in Nigeria as a means of enhancing their celebrity status and commercial viability. Blose (2012) examined the portrayal and sexual objectification of women in Kwaito music lyrics in South Africa. Blose interviewed people between the ages of 16 and 50 who lived in Durban, South Africa, and found that most of the participants reflected the opinion that women are often exploited as sexual objects in Kwaito lyrics.

This sexual objectification has repercussions on the perceptions and attitudes of young people who view hip-hop videos. For example, Kistler and Lee (2010) found that male college undergraduates who viewed highly sexual hip-hop music videos expressed greater objectification of women, sexual permissiveness, stereotypical gender attitudes and acceptance of rape and rape myths than male participants who viewed less sexual hip-hop videos. Similarly, a study conducted by Aubrey et al. (2011) examined the effects of sexually objectifying music videos on college men's sexual beliefs. The findings showed that exposure to sexually objectifying music videos primed male college students' adversarial sexual beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and instances of disbelief in the legitimacy of sexual harassment.

The objectification of women as hypersexual beings in hip-hop videos should be engaged within the critical backdrop of a culture of spectacle that shapes the commodification process in the media industry. As techno-capitalism moves into the seductive information and entertainment society, the media generate spectacle to attract audiences to the programmes and advertisements (Kellner, 1995). Every form of media culture is flooded by the logic of the spectacle. With continuous technological innovations and effects, movies are more spectacular than ever, and society has become driven by a culture of images that permeate the media, including the social media.

Guy Debord, in *Society of the spectacle* (2012), provides a seminal analysis of how the media and consumer society are increasingly organised around the production and consumption of images, commodities and spectacle. Spectacles are those phenomena of media culture which embody contemporary society's basic values, and serve to acculturate individuals into its way of life (Debord, 2012). Debord contends that when the real world changes into simple images, simple images become real beings and effective motivations of a hypnotic behaviour.

Entertainment has always been a primary field of the spectacle. Building on the formation of the media as a spectacle, contemporary forms of entertainment have changed drastically in the way that television, film, music and drama are incorporating the culture of the spectacle. Sex and pornographic imageries, once considered private, have been elevated to the public sphere in the media entertainment for commercial benefit. Sex has also permeated the spectacle of Western culture, prominently on display in Hollywood films as well as in the selling of pornographic videos (Kellner, 2004). As a result, sex and sexualities have become appeals in the marketing and advertising of media and consumer products. Since "sex sells", the pornographic images of women gyrating in music video talk to the culture of media spectacle and the commodification process in the media industry.

The work of critical film theorist, Laura Mulvey becomes relevant to the criticism embarked on in this study. Mulvey's "male gaze" theory, which she introduced in her seminal essay "*Visual pleasure and narrative cinema*", provides a major critical theoretical backdrop for this study. Building on critical psychoanalysis, and specifically the work of Sigmund Freud, Mulvey uses the concept of scopophilia in a critical analysis of the male gaze. Scopophilia, the pleasure of looking at another person as an erotic object, provides Mulvey with a critical lens to examine the positioning of women in narrative cinema. She notes:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalances, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motif of erotic spectacle (Mulvey, 1999:837).

Mulvey engages the techniques used in the objectification of women, the *to-be-looked-at-ness* and positioning of women in narrative cinema toward achieving visual pleasure for the "onlooker".

These techniques are used as an analytical tool in this study to analyse the representation of women in selected South Africa hip hop videos. Mulvey identifies four such techniques or elements. 1) Scopophilia (the gaze), where the pleasure of looking at erotic object is for the spectator as well as for the characters in the film. Conversely, she notes, there is pleasure in being looked at. 2) Objects and the process of objectifying women, which she says happens in two ways: firstly, the woman is made an erotic object within the screen story for the characters, and secondly, as an erotic object for the audience or spectators. 3) Gender division of labour, the active/passive gender division that shapes narrative structure, talks to how masculinity and femininity are presented in narrative cinema. 4) Lastly, there is language of the patriarchal order, which includes the technical narrative structure in creating the erotic objectification of women and the masculine gaze. Mulvey talks about how mainstream film codes the erotic into the language of the dominant patriarchal order, and as a result “woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning” (Mulvey, 1999:834). Mulvey observes how camera technology and camera movements, combined with invisible editing tend to make all these elements work cohesively in a way that the male protagonist is free to command the stage and create the action.

Although Mulvey’s theoretical perspective focuses on cinema/film, it is also applicable to other forms of audio-visuals and imagery in the media. Her argument is based on psychoanalytical feminism and the core element of this is the display of women “as a spectacle to be looked at, subjected to the gaze of the male audience” (Van Zoonen, 1994). The theory shows that pornographic images of women basically sell the idea of women as sexually available, and broadly that the media’s depiction of women’s bodies is as decorative elements in television programmes, videos and advertisements, and presents women as a spectacle for voyeuristic pleasure.

The four elements identified by Laura Mulvey provide both the critical background and analytical tools in studying the way women are represented and objectified in South African hip-hop music videos, with specific focus on two hip-hop videos selected for this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

A textual analysis of two popular hip-hop music videos was conducted to examine the presentation of women in these videos. The music videos are *Monate So* by Cassper Nyovest and *Ngud’* by Kwesha, featuring Cassper Nyovest. The selection of these music videos was motivated by the acknowledgement that the artist in both videos, Cassper Nyovest, is one of South African most successful hip-hop artists and has the cultural power to influence youth culture in South Africa. He is incredibly popular in South Africa; he received most awards in the 2017 South African Hip-Hop Awards, and has attracted the largest crowd to hip-hop shows in South Africa by filling up large venues, including the FNB stadium – the largest stadium in Africa. Accordingly, Cassper Nyovest commands much cultural power among the youth, which includes the ability to shape cultural narratives through his music videos. Apart from Cassper featuring in both the videos selected

for this study, the videos were also selected purposively due to how women are presented in the typical hip-hop trend of sexually objectifying women in music videos. The videos are highly popular in South Africa: as at February 8, 2018, *Ngud'* by Kwesta featuring Casper Nyovest had 5,072,663 views and *Monate So* by Cassper Nyovest had 576,269 views on YouTube. Although *Monate So* has had fewer viewings, the presentation of women in this video makes it a relevant text for analysis of women representation in hip-hop videos.

The analysis of these videos relies on Mulvey's theoretical work as analytical tool. The four elements considered are: (a) scopophilia (the gaze); (b) objects and the process of objectifying women, which includes how the feminine body is juxtaposed with objects in a direct objectification of the body; (c) gender division of labour, where the positioning of the male characters in relation to the female characters is studied in order to situate the location and dominance of power; and lastly (d) the language of the patriarchal order, which in this study focuses on the technical language, the camera language used in the presentation of women in these videos, examining camera positions and angles as a language of storytelling. In the presentation of the analysis that follows, these elements are used as the thematic structure.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 *The gaze (scopophilia)*

Ngud' music video features a popular South African hip-hop artist Kwesta alongside Cassper Nyovest. The video starts with a slow motion zoom on Kwesta, the only male figure, surrounded by six women scantily dressed in bikinis. This opening scene sets the tone for what follows in the video. The male figure is dominant; he is at the centre of the scene and controls the environment, while the six women are strategically positioned as decorative objects around him, waiting on his command. He is the main character who controls everything including the women surrounding him. Most shots of the women operate by directing the viewer's gaze to their bodies. The close-up shots of women's buttocks, or women gyrating in the background behind the dominant male figures, run through the video. The gaze of the viewer is powerfully drawn not only to the sensuality of the women, but to their sexuality through occasional but powerful close ups of the women's buttocks to create scopophilic pleasure for the viewer. For example, at 0.50 seconds into the video there is a close up of a woman's buttocks as another woman sensually pats them to enhance the sexual tone and command the viewer's gaze.

According to Mulvey (1999), scopophilia is not only the pleasure of looking at erotic objects but there is also pleasure in being looked at. The women dancing or walking in the street in bikinis in *Ngud'* seem to be enjoying their roles. They seem to gain pleasure from being almost naked and their bodies being exposed, perhaps being perceived as "sexy". The women smile, dance and seem happy to be having fun. These women are there to be seen, to be passive, submissive, dance around men and be happy doing this. The fact that some of the women in the video are dressed in bikinis, without being anywhere around any body of water, talks to the generic nature of objectification of women in hip-hop music videos. Being adorned

in swimsuits serves one function; it allows the display of their bodies. The men's position as dominant figures is heightened by the socially accumulated power of being surrounded by women. The women depicted in *Ngud* connote what Mulvey calls the *to-be-looked-at-ness*; they are there to add value to the music video by showing their bodies as decorative sexual objects or willing happy participants in the visual pleasure of the video.

If scopophilia is associated with taking other people as sexual objects and subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze, *Monate So* by Cassper Nyovest provides ample instances of this. The video opens with a wide shot of a woman dressed in a bikini, which perhaps foretells what is to happen in the video. Most of the events in the video take place in and around a swimming pool, perhaps a pretentious rational justification for the women to be dressed in bikinis. The sexual connotations and stimulations are strong in this video; instances of women caressing each other or seductively rubbing their bodies against a wall and other objects provide visual pleasure for the male gaze. Scopophilia is associated with taking other people as sexual objects and subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. The male gaze is equally commanded by extreme close ups of female buttocks and cleavages. All the way through, Cassper Nyovest retains his masculine dominance in this video. He is seen in the pool surrounded by about seven women; he controls the scene and the women are passive and submissive to the male character that controls the objectification process (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3pWZK_yGYw).

The women in this video are used mainly for the audience to gaze at, examine their bodies and gain pleasure from looking. Scopophilia is essentially evident and active as the controlling male gaze objectifies and limits the humanness of the women on the screen to their ability to create sexual visual pleasure. The women stand in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male dominance, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his obsessions. The women's sexual antics of turning their buttocks to the camera, blowing kisses at the viewers, touching each other's breasts and implying sex through imitating sex acts (see 1:39; 2:06; and 2:12 minutes time frames in the video), are all mainly aimed at a scopophilic visual pleasure for the viewer's gaze. The women also seem to derive pleasure in their own sexual objectification, the pleasure of being looked at.

4.2 The objectification processes

In *Ngud'* the women are presented as decorative elements of the events, and are reduced to the values of their bodies in the execution of the visual pleasure of the video. Women are largely seen almost naked, while the men who are the dominant characters have their clothes on. Their objectification is not only as decorative elements whose value is reduced to their naked bodies, but the women are also presented as passive ornaments in the video, and are objectified in a sense that they don't assume an active vocal role in the video, they are there to merely pose half naked and be depicted as sexually more active than men. They are there to act as theatrical props and add value to the enjoyment of the music video itself. Another way the objectification takes place is through reducing the values of the women to

an equivalent value with other objects in the video, such as the cars and the houses. The women are presented in the same way as the cars and houses – without agency; they are passive and decorative elements of masculine egos. In fact, a woman's body is reduced to a possession that a man needs to assert his masculinity and wealth. A frame that epitomises the use of objects to enhance the objectification of women or draw equivalent value of objects with that of a woman is the 4:15 minute time frame in the video (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPU5dMC4y-M>). The frame is a low-angle shot that captures an expensive car identified by the brand name Lamborghini on the rear of the car with the almost naked buttocks of a woman in the foreground within a background of luxurious houses; a direct objectifying comparison. The objectification process here is vivid in this scene: fine houses, an expensive car and (the buttocks of) a woman, all material assets of masculine ego. The car, the woman and houses are of equivalent value that highlight the societal connotation that being rich and respected as a man, is often represented as having access to or owning women, houses and expensive cars. A patriarchal culture is endorsed that sees a woman's body as a man's possession and as such she has no control over her own body, but is reduced to an object of desire and property for a masculine sense of achievement.

In *Monate So* the objectification follows the same process. Women are reduced to their sexuality through sexual innuendos; they are placed around dominant male figures as objects of desire, fun and accomplishment. They have no agency, but to arouse visual pleasure both for the male characters and the viewers at home. They dance around objects in a way that reduces their essence to material qualities. In the time frame 2:59 a woman dances seductively leaning on a BMW car while the dominant male figure stands tall on top of the car, majestically dominating his possessions – the car and the woman. Women are reduced to the ability to arouse visual pleasure through the erotic value of their bodies to arouse sexual desire. Also, the sexual objectification is achieved through the use of objects to heighten the objectification process. For instance, in the visual in the time frame from 2:22 to 2:25 minutes of the video (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3pWZK_yGYw), a fully clothed male stands at the edge of a swimming pool pouring liquid bath soap directly on the breasts of a woman. This act extends the sexual objectification of women in the video and highlights how a woman's body is toyed with and used as an object in any manner for the pleasure of not only the male character in the video but equally of the viewers/spectators at home. In the scene, as the liquid soap is being poured, the woman expresses enjoyment because she is meant to show that her act with the liquid soap heightens her value and existence in this music video and at the same time makes her feel "sexy". The female body here is a token of pleasure, a commodified object to attract visual pleasure for the viewer's gaze, dominantly that of the male. The music video is about partying and having fun, but for men, as depicted in this video, such fun comes with lots of alcohol and an abundant number of women outnumbering men, creating an idea of choice for the masculine ego.

4.3 Gender division of labour

In *Ngud'* and *Monate So* music videos, the job of a female character is to be the object of voyeuristic scopophilia in that they dress half-naked, exposing their bodies for the pleasure

of both the characters in the videos and viewers at home. The job of a male character is to be the vessel of narcissistic scopophilia in that they command the stage. This relates to Mulvey's (1999) analysis of the active/passive gender division of labour that shapes narrative structure in cinema. This binary of dominance and subordination is vivid in many hip-hop music videos, where women's role is that of a subordinate and willing participant while the man's is that of a dominant commanding figure. Women are present to abide by the rule of sexual spectacle; their agency is reduced to the ability to use their bodies as object of sexual visual pleasure.

Power is not equally allocated; the women act as background props, at most as cheerleaders to the actions that men carry out. In *Ngud'*, we see women dancing with themselves while the men stand on a pedestal high above them, signifying dominance and higher rank. In this video the women serve no purpose in the lyrical component of the song in the video; they do not sing, or even provide background vocals, rather they accompany the male figures in their movements, they hang around the active, domineering males.

Mulvey (1999) states that the gender power asymmetry is a controlling mechanism in cinema and is created for the pleasure of the male viewer, which is deeply rooted in the patriarchal order of society. The male character is the only bearer of power and authority in the music videos, and the male viewer is the target audience, – his pleasure is paramount to the visuals in the music videos, and therefore his needs are met first. The women in the videos play the role of decorative objects to embellish the background and landscape in which the male figure reigns supreme. For example, the opening scene of *Ngud'* shows Kwesta the rap star with two women, one on each side, with four other women in the background. It is the same in *Monate So*, where the opening shot of Cassper the rap star is him in a swimming pool surrounded by seven women. Women equally play a valuable yet disposable role; their value is not to the lyrical performance in the video but to enhance the visual appeal of the video through their bodies and erotic performativity. In *Monate So*, women's role is not to compete with the dominant male figure, but to command attention by their willing performances as a source of sexual visual pleasure while the man goes about his business of rendering the lyrical vocals. As a result they are restricted to the role Mulvey (1999) calls "the bearer of meaning, and not the maker of meaning".

4.4 Camera language

The scopophilic gaze, objectification process and gender division of labour in the critical analysis of the videos rely to a large extent on the narrative presentation, which is predominantly achieved through a technical language. This includes camera movements, angles of shots, and types of camera shots as the language of movie production, which creates the narrative structure of the music videos.

In *Ngud'* video, a prominent technique used is slow motion and reverse sequence of events. Although this adds to the aesthetic value of its production, it also highlights an emphasis on specific camera shots and scenes in creating a specific narrative. The narrative of sexual

visual pleasure and sexual objectification is mostly created through low-angle shots of women's buttocks, taking attention away from their faces and magnifying the presence and importance of their buttocks. The low-angle shot is a typical technique used to assert the presence of an object and make a subject look powerful in film production. Examples of this angle of shot are the minute time frames of 2:57, 3:54, and from 3:04 to 3:06 when the low-angle shot zooms in on a woman's almost naked buttocks (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPU5dMC4y-M>). In the 4:13 minutes frame there is also a low-angle shot of the pelvic area of a woman providing a voyeuristic scopophilic view of her pubic area. This upskirting shot helps heighten the pornographic and sexual objectification narrative in the music video. Similar shots are also present in the *Monate So* music video. For instance, a similar shot is in the 2:04 time frame of a woman seductively moving against a wall.

The use of close-up shots also highlights the sexual gaze, objectification processes and the gender division of labour in the videos. The camera movements and angles are edited in such a way that only the faces of the dominant male characters are clearly captured in close-up shots, while women's bodies are captured mostly without their faces being shown close-up. When close-up shots are used on women, it is mostly to reduce them to their body parts, which are often their buttocks and breasts. This is to say that these women are not that important but only their body (parts) is important in the visual pleasure of hip-hop videos. Examples of this abound in the videos; in *Ngud'* at 3:45 to 3:49 minutes of the video the viewers see a close-up shot of a woman's rear as she walks in reverse towards the camera, while at 4:15 there is a close-up of a woman's buttocks captured along with the rear end of a car, creating the material equivalence of the car and the woman's buttocks. Similar shots are also seen in *Monate So*, for example 1:19 minutes and 1:39 minutes frames are close-up shots of women's buttocks, while the attention shifts to a close-up of female breasts in the 1:31 minute frame of the video.

Camera techniques are thus used in creating the sexualised spectacle of a sexualised image of women in the video and the positioning of masculine power in relation to the passivity and ornamental role of women. Both videos start with wide or long shots to establish not only the environment but also the gender relations within the scene. The wide shot is used to show the location where the action will take place and to show the interrelationships among the subjects and the objects in the scene. The opening scenes capture the male figure surrounded by many women, either close to him or decorating the background. This thus establishes the gender role and location of power at the onset. Other techniques of zoom, panning and camera movements are also used in creating the narratives in the music videos. For example, in *Monate So* when the camera slowly moves to reveal Cassper in the swimming pool with women, it alluringly captures a woman's buttocks that entice the eyes of the audience before it reveals Cassper. The camera movement indirectly narrates that the women's body is the main tool used to draw the audience's attention or interest to this music video. A reading of the camera language provides the understanding of the technical process in achieving the scopophilic gaze, the objectification process and gender division of labour that describe the visual pleasure derived from the sexualised spectacle of women in music videos.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This analysis sets out to study the representation of women in hip-hop music videos, with focus on two music videos. Equally, the study explores the way that women are sexualised in these hip-hop videos and analyses how the presentation of women is aimed at producing visual pleasure for those that consume the videos. The work of Laura Mulvey provides both a theoretical backdrop as well as analytical tool to analyse these videos. Using four critical elements in Mulvey's analysis of the visual pleasure in narrative cinema, namely, (a) the gaze (scopophilia), (b) objects and objectification process, (c) gender division of labour and (d) the narrative language, the study shows that in both the music videos of *Ngud'* by Kwesta, featuring Cassper Nyovest, and *Monate So* by Cassper Nyovest, women are reduced primarily to a spectacle of sexualised objects. Dominating in this process is the technical language of camera movements, positions and angles that shape the narrative that a woman's value in hip-hop videos is reduced to her sexual performativity. This thus leads to a voyeuristic scopophilic gaze, as women and women's bodies become primarily enticement and sources of visual pleasure in both the hip-hop videos. The objectification of women, as the study reveals, is characterised by the passive and decorative roles they play in the videos. While the male figures retain their socially constructed patriarchal stature of dominance, power and authority, the women 'Other' are mere sexual objects for scopophilic pleasure. As Mulvey (1999:835) notes, this pleasure operates on the "erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object. At the extreme, it can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other".

Another important relevance of this study is that the globalisation of hip-hop as a culture has permeated many cultural forms in the world, and this culture is very present in the cultural expressions of South African youth. But the hip-hop culture is not just the music or fashion – the sexualisation of women and egocentric machismo present in hip-hop videos have equally travelled across media and geographical spaces. So it is not surprising that the familiar narrative of pornographic voyeurism and sexual objectification of women historically noted in American hip-hop videos have made their way to South Africa. Consequently, as shown in this study, objectification of women in hip-hop has become a global phenomenon. As Sulé (2016) notes, hip-hop culture is one of the most influential cultural expressions that has succeeded in attracting people from diverse backgrounds. South African hip-hop artists are not only performing to a local standard, they are equally appealing to a global market. Appealing to a global market in turn dictates playing by the rulebook and script of hip-hop music videos. It is not surprising then that South African hip-hop artists have been nominated in international hip-hop music award events (BET, 2017). As a result, to stay relevant, they conform not only to international styles of lyrical performance with local flair, they adopt screen narratives dominant in international (American) hip-hop music videos.

Socially and culturally, the objectification and sexualised spectacle of women in hip-hop videos has implications on youth cultural practices, perception of women and sexuality. Studies show that young men who view sexual hip-hop videos tend to express greater objectification of women,

acceptance of rape and rape myths, and that exposure to sexually objectifying music videos primes young men's adversarial sexual beliefs, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and instances of disbelief in the legitimacy of sexual harassment (Kistler & Lee, 2010, Aubrey et al., 2011). This sort of finding creates concern with regards to South African youth's treatment of women, particularly noting the rampant level of women abuse and sexual violence in South Africa. South Africa experiences one of the highest rates of women rape in the world (Wilkinson, 2016), and the femicide rate in this country is about five times more than the global rate (Makou, 2017).

In conclusion, it is important to note that the sexual objectification of women is not limited to hip-hop music; studies have shown similar objectification in rock, country and other genres of music (cf. Sherman & Dominick, 1986; McClane-Bunn, 2010). The culture of sexual objectification permeates the media and entertainment industry and culture. The goal is to re-write the cultural script that demeans women, confront the patriarchal cultural order, and provide education that highlights the equality of gender. We should seek to recognise the agency of women that perform and why they perform in this type of representation, and engage how women have also challenged this stereotypical narrative in cultural expressions; these have been the objects of critical feminist analysis of culture.

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