

Kwaito, hip-hop and television in South Africa: a case study of the *Yizo Yizo 3* series and soundtrack

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of kwaito and hip-hop on television in South Africa. It employs the locally produced *Yizo Yizo* as a case study to explore the intertextual relationship between music and television. *Yizo Yizo*, a reality-based drama series, was groundbreaking in propelling the experiences of black youth onto the national agenda. In representing what can be described as ‘authentic township experiences’, the series utilizes kwaito, and to a lesser degree, hip-hop, as signifiers of township and ‘essentially’ black youth experiences. Soundtracks to the series utilize both genres and local kwaito and hip-hop artists feature as themselves. The paper adopts a discursive approach to exploring intertextuality and the ways in which meanings embedded in a television series are related to music and other secondary texts and vice versa. It provides an overview of the television series and analysis of the most recent soundtrack (*Yizo Yizo 3*) specifically, in relation to the series’ educative and educational value.

Keywords: kwaito, youth, township hip hop, South Africa, TV.

Yizo Yizo is a locally-produced South African drama series, meaning ‘this is it’ or ‘the way it is’. It is a multi-lingual series utilising African languages (isiZulu predominantly) and colloquial slang, called tsotsitaal, all of which are translated into English through subtitles. Aimed at youth, parents, teachers and the general public, the first series aired for 13 weeks from 20:30-21:00 in 1999, followed by the second series (*Yizo Yizo 2*) from 20:30-21:30 in 2001 and finally, *Yizo Yizo 3* from 21:00-22:00 in 2004.

While the first two seasons of *Yizo Yizo* revolved around the lives of secondary school learners, *Yizo Yizo 3* focused on the life experiences of the main characters post-school. The series was groundbreaking in many respects, most notably in the consistently high Audience Ratings (ARs) and in reflecting the experiences of black youth and township life in an entertaining and provocative way.

The series was based on real-life occurrences identified through research and adapted in a format that aimed to utilise television as a vehicle for education. The audio-visual text was augmented by supplementary material across print and radio platforms and music, collectively comprising a ‘social action campaign’ (Maslamoney, 2004). *Yizo Yizo*, the gritty drama series elicited immense attention

partially because of its ‘in your face’ approach to reflecting rape, sodomy, bullying and other forms of violence, but principally because it was the first time in post-apartheid South Africa that the experiences of young black African youths were catapulted into the public discourse. Significantly, the series continues to be the subject of on-going discussion and debate in the private and public spheres as well as in and through the mass media, academic papers and Parliament¹.

The series’ creators defended their creative choices as consistent with an educative approach, which aimed to shock audiences about the realities impacting the school experiences of many township youths. Critical to this defence was the claim of authenticity, that *Yizo Yizo* was a reflection of what is really happening in South African schools. Consistent with the reality, the series relied on adaptations of real-life experiences and contributed to skilling real thugs as actors. In addition to the realistic representation of mise-en-scene and language, music and the series’ soundtrack(s) were critical in congealing this reality. As one of the series’ stakeholders has argued, casting, language and (culturally relevant) music are critical to creating resonance (Maslamoney, 2004).

The local music genre, *kwaito*, was utilised extensively across the series for mood creation and to reflect reality. Much is written elsewhere about the origins and politics of this hybrid musical form (Boloka, 2003; Peterson, 2003; Stephens, 2003). Of significance to this paper is the ways in which music (*kwaito* and *hip hop* specifically) are used as part of the series, and the cultural relevance of its meanings and messages to an educative audio-visual text.

The paper begins with an overview of the television series before turning to an analysis of its music. We focus on the most recent soundtrack (*Yizo Yizo 3*) and evaluate this in relation to other aspects of the series – for example, the series’ educative and educational value and potential and aim to bring about positive social change through the use of mass media.

¹ Amongst others, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee quizzed the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA), on the screening of *Yizo Yizo* before the watershed period. (<http://www.pmg.org.za/docs/2003/minutes/031119pchome1.htm>).

The *Yizo Yizo* package

Yizo Yizo was commissioned in the late nineties by the country's public service broadcaster, South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as a means to address what was widely referred to as the 'crisis in education' in township schools. *Yizo Yizo* is a creation of *Bomb* productions (previously Laduma Film Factory), and is a joint initiative with the national Department of Education and the SABC. Consequently, the series aimed to confront the conditions of learning in township schools, in line with national education initiatives such as COLTS² and Tirisano³, and to foster dialogue around factors impacting learning.

The first series, as mentioned briefly above, focuses on the lives and experiences of youth attending secondary school in a township. In the space of one academic year, *Supatsela High*⁴ and its learners endure tremendous change and challenges resulting from (amongst others) lack of leadership and various forms of violence and abuse, all of which directly impact the culture of learning and teaching.

The second series offers closure to some of these challenges, including comeuppance for the notorious thugs, Chester and Papa Action, who terrorised the school and its community in the first series. In addition, *Yizo Yizo 2* highlights the inequalities in access to education and the conditions affecting the right to basic and further education as enshrined in section 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). High levels of illiteracy or semi-literacy and a promotion of learning-cantered teaching - commensurate with national strategies and campaigns – featured prominently in the second series of *Yizo Yizo*.

The final season explored the effects of drug addiction, eating disorders, xenophobia against other black Africans, sexuality, sexual harassment and HIV and AIDS (amongst others). The presence of thugs and brutish behaviour is a critical part of the drama of *Yizo Yizo* – the location/township gangsters who threatened and intimidated learners in the first two seasons are replaced by thugs who terrorise the inhabitants of an inner-city dwelling, *San José*, where some of the main characters now live.

² COLTS refers to the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service, national education campaign

³ This campaign focused on the metamorphosis of schools *per se*, transforming these into places of learning and making them a critical part of community life so as to address the crisis in schools (Asmal, 1999, Phalatsé, 2001).

⁴ The first two seasons focused on life of students/ learners at a fictitious secondary school.

Yizo Yizo 's record-breaking Audience Ratings (ARs) attest to its success and to breaking with the tradition of mediocre productions aimed at black audiences, that were aired on the then 'state broadcaster' (the SABC during apartheid). *Yizo Yizo* is an award-winning, aesthetically well-produced series, whose creativity in form and structure is apparent in its experimentation with colour, camera work and editing⁵. In addition, the series adopted a multi-pronged strategy to engaging its educative potential. This kind of vertical intertextuality is evident in the series' supplementary material, including proactive interventions in the form of talk shows on public (and commercial) service radio and television (*Metro Fm; Take 5; Rea Bua*). The audio-visual product was furthermore accompanied by printed material (in the form of a youth magazine distributed in a weekly, national newspaper), articles in a daily tabloid, and a printed guide for educators.

While the first season's failure to fulfil its counter-hegemonic potential and to deal adequately with gender relations has been argued elsewhere (Smith, 2003b) the official evaluation of *Yizo Yizo 2* (commissioned by SABC Education) showed that audiences did in fact identify with the rape survivor, drug addict and youth struggling with literacy. Presumably this is due in part to the second series' attempts to address matters raised (but not sufficiently explored) in the first series (for example, Hazel's character as a rape survivor). Viewed as a package (the entire series), *Yizo Yizo*'s emphasis on portraying 'real-life' includes exposing the contradictions of education in post-apartheid South Africa and criminal violence like rape and murder for example. Critically however, HIV and AIDS, an epidemic affecting youths, is notably absent in the list of themes publicized on the producer's website⁶ and more importantly, not fully explored across the entire series.

⁵ The series has won numerous awards locally and internationally, including (amongst others) five Avanti Awards, Cinema Tout Ecran Award for Best International TV Series (2001). The second season was invited to the New York African Film Festival (2002) and Walker Art Museum, Minneapolis Film Festival (2002). For more info see: <http://www.thebomb.co.za/awards.htm>

⁶ See: <http://www.thebomb.co.za> (accessed in January 2008)

Representing the real

Notwithstanding the pressing challenges facing young people and schooling that were covered in the series, a national discussion on ‘media effects’ ensued across political and social institutions including academia⁷. This was most pronounced with respect to the violent and graphic scenes in the series, ostensibly used to shock people into addressing the reality. This resulted in calls for the series to be screened after the 21:00 watershed or for it to be censored⁸. Dissidents pointed to copy-acts and the potential effects of violent scenes on youth and child viewers. Supporters of the series highlighted the fact that the series was reflecting real life occurrences, which required urgent attention.

In representing the lives of black youths attending township high schools, *Yizo Yizo* relied on recognizable signifiers of ‘township - youth’ experiences. *Kwaito* is one such example. According to its creators:

Long before Yizo Yizo there was a voice reflecting the joy, anger and hope of young people. Kwaito music. Yizo Yizo embraced the spirit and energy of that voice and introduced it to television drama. We believe that long after the series is over, the music will keep the images and memories of Yizo Yizo alive. (<http://www.thebomb.co.za/yizo2.htm>).

Kwaito specifically is a contributing factor to the success of the soundtrack, which in turn is indexical of the demographic profile of consumers and symbolic of “the spirit and energy” of township youth in particular. *Kwaito* is thus both an indelible part of *Yizo Yizo* and of black South African youth culture. The significance of the music and success of the albums are accredited in the following comments from its creators:

⁷ See Ndlovu and Pitout (2003)

⁸ Consistent with previous calls made with respect to scenes in the first season (Smith 2000), the second season elicited similar observations and directives by the BCCSA in 2002 about the need for parental advisories and for the series to be screened after the watershed (http://www.bccsa.co.za/Updates/AnnualReport/Bi_Annual_Report_2002.htm).

The vital kwaito music of the township was used not just as a soundtrack, but as part of the dialogue with the audience. The first album went platinum. The second album went triple platinum in just four months. Bomb has staged roadshows around the country featuring acting and music performances from the series (<http://www.thebomb.co.za/yizo2.htm>).⁹

Music was thus critical to creating not only the feel of the experiences represented but also to promoting *Yizo Yizo* as a brand and product. The extent of this intertextuality is evident in both the use of ‘real life’ public concerts, and in *kwaito* and *hip-hop* artists performing in the series. The intertextuality of the series vis-à-vis *kwaito* in particular, but also other genres such as *hip-hop* is thus multi-layered.

Firstly, *kwaito* and hip-hop musicians feature as incidental artists, where both genres are played in the background to create an authentic township ambience (*kwaito* principally and hip-hop more so as the series progresses). Secondly, real-life *kwaito* & hip-hop artists perform at functions as part of the series. TKZee appear in the first season, Mzekezeke and Thembi Seete in season three and Hip hop acts such as MXO & Simphiwe Dana also guest star in the final season. Thirdly, *kwaito* artists feature as actors – some as protagonists - in the series. In this regard, Thembi Seete of Boom Shaka¹⁰ fame plays Hazel in the second and third seasons; S’Bu/Mzekezeke is one of the tenants at San José and Kabelo features as himself. While all of these performers were famous prior to being cast in the show, one of the actors (Bonginkosi Dlamini – aka Zola)¹¹ achieved notoriety following the series – arguably as a consequence of *Yizo Yizo*. This explicit relation between the text and secondary texts (horizontal intertextuality) not only solidifies the authenticity, but also adds to the popularity of the series.

⁹ This concurs with an earlier study, which found the overwhelming majority of respondents to survey research in 1999 were familiar with the soundtrack (Smith, 2000).

¹⁰ Boom Shaka’s rise to fame in 1993 with its hit “It’s about time” has led commentators to identify the group as “the first *kwaito* group” (Stephens, 2003:257).

¹¹ The multi-award winning (internationally acclaimed) *kwaito* artist and television personality Zola played Papa Action in *Yizo Yizo 2*. Zola is now a television personality in his own right hosting his own television show, called Zola 7, in which he tries to change the lives of viewers.

Yizo Yizo 3: soundtrack & album sleeve

The production of the CD, *Yizo Yizo 3* - the music soundtrack to the final season - fits into this deliberate attempt to sustain an intertextual relationship between *Yizo Yizo*, the television series and *kwaito* music (specifically). What follows is an analytical examination of the manner in which visual images, written and sound texts (such as the CD sleeve – the ‘paratexts’) are systematically interrelated to sustain the intertextual relationship at the heart of the *Yizo Yizo* project.

Scholarly and public discourses on *Yizo Yizo* have paid little attention to the intersection between the series and its soundtracks and/or album sleeves. This study focuses on the *Yizo Yizo 3* soundtrack, the album accompanying the final season of the series (as a unit of analysis).

The *Yizo Yizo 3* soundtrack album sleeve, is a conscious creation of intertextuality, and contributes a new dimension to meaning-making. It is coded and then transformed as a sign system that is constituted in direct relation to the television series.

As an iconic sign (system), the album sleeve is an artistic assemblage of sequentially arranged digital photographic images resembling the characters and scenes from the television series. Semiotically, the album sleeve as iconic sign system signifies characters and scenes on the basis of “likeness or resemblance” (O’Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2005: 461).

Prominent in these stills on the CD sleeve, is a larger image of one of the characters, Bobo, in his mascot-type chicken suite (without the head of the costume) shot in the San José flat (apartment) that he shares with friends.

The sleeve, through these still images, reconstructs not only the series itself but also a ‘new’ visual narrative whose meaning is dependent predominantly on the familiarity with the series. In the absence of such familiarity - in the world of fragmented audiences - the sleeve, still, serves to ‘advertise’ the series. It was released prior to the series as a marker or signifier of the impending series. To those who are familiar, the sleeve presents/imposes itself as an element that serves to capture memory about the series from fading.

Although the album sleeve, to a considerable degree, manages to immortalize the television series through its artistic visual construction and by

being a text that is permanently within the ownership of the consumer (copyright laws notwithstanding), in the absence of the TV series, its new visual narrative is fragmented. The images it uses to represent the different scenes of the television series from various episodes are not necessarily linked together as structural codes and narrative conventions would command. Notwithstanding, the intertextual relationship between the two is unwavering.

In addition, while there is this rich consciously-created intertextual relationship (staged carefully through digital manipulation of visuals for educational and commercial purposes) between the CD sleeve and the television series, there is at least one fundamental difference between the two, which distinguishes their levels or nature of signification.

The collective hegemonic meaning of the television series as a text, for example, through its repertoire of intersecting signifiers, relates back to the social reality - the township life, which, in the first instance, is its *raison d'être* (as discussed earlier). Where the CD sleeve differs from the series is in its representation of township life for example; it cannot stake an equal claim, in its own right, on the representation of social reality. Its referential value and power are mediated by the series. The album sleeve as sign system, instead, represents and owes its being to the television series, another sign system. The dependence of a sign system on another sign system as a form of intertextuality and in meaning-creation is best explored by Deidre Pribram's assertions on simulation:

In our culture of information and the mass media, we are inundated with an over-abundance of images and signs that no longer have referential value but, instead interact solely with other signs. This marks the advent of simulation. Rather than the previous vertical connection, if you will, between sign and meaning, there is, instead the horizontal relationship of sign to sign (in O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2005:423).

The CD sleeve has two sides that bare resemblance to various scenes in the series. One side (hereafter, side B) of the album sleeve, which includes conventional song credits, is also plastered with quotes that are shortened versions of lyrics from specific songs that constitute the soundtrack. These written texts serve to anchor meanings of the non-verbal still images over which they are superimposed or placed as captions underneath. We are presented here with a multi-purpose album sleeve.

On the one hand, it brands the CD; on the other, it is a text where the broad philosophy of the *Yizo Yizo 3* project is systematically condensed.

The following are some of the written text that anchors some non-verbal messages communicated by visual messages on the second side of the album sleeve:

- *“I am woman of substance; I am a woman of my own. I don’t need you to do anything for me my man, All I need is for you to fall in love with me for real”*
- *“Believe in yourself”*
- *“Don’t give up”*
- *“Be humble like a dove, be clever like a cat. Don’t be afraid to take chances. Respect yourself, so we can respect you”*
- *“Take responsibility for what you do”*
- *“Chase knowledge the rest will follow”*

The careful coordination of images with written texts on the sleeve creates a message that has maximum effect on the recipients or readers. In this, the second side (side B) of the album sleeve succeeds in creating a particular preferred reading, whereas the other side (side A) is far more limited in this regard. Its visuals are not anchored by carefully selected written textual messages; they form an incoherent and fragmented narrative that constructs varied and unsolicited mixed emotional responses. While visuals are by their very nature polysemic, side A of the album sleeve fails to anchor a particular preferred ideological reading.

Themes and messages in the *Yizo Yizo 3* soundtrack

The lyrics of the *Yizo Yizo 3* album constitute another rich source of analysis in terms of the manner in which the *Yizo Yizo* project sustains an intertextual relationship between its various texts. More importantly, however, the music soundtrack is purposefully added to the *Yizo Yizo* project, as an extension of its educative function. The following section, therefore, is examined primarily in terms of the extent to which the soundtrack fulfils this predetermined function.

Broadly, where the third/final television series traverses the contours of the township *life-world* with its target audience through specific exploration of the effects of drug addiction, eating disorders, xenophobia against other African people, sexuality, sexual harassment and HIV and AIDS, the soundtrack is not entirely consistent with respect to themes. Its constitutive songs, differentially, are either not concerned with these themes, contradicts them or develops upon them. The lyrics

of music included in the soundtrack can then be seen in the following way: they are descriptive of township life; are an attempt to offer models of appropriate normative behaviour; they are educational, thuggish, victorious, passionate, sexist, socially responsible, materialistic, etc. These contradictions, inherent in the soundtrack, -some even socially irresponsible- antagonise the overriding claim that the series is an overtly educative and educational drama.

Notwithstanding, though not overtly expressed, the soundtrack focuses on - and aims to transform - the character of a young person. It subtly grounds itself on some Aristotlean notion that good and virtuous social behaviour emanates from a firm/strong unrelenting character. It aims to engage with the character of a young person in a multi-faceted way; in so doing, it subdivides its pedagogy and *modus operandi* into social, spiritual/religious, communal and personal spheres. It has songs that accordingly communicate with each or all of these spheres at the same time. Mandoza's song, *Respect Life*, is a perfect example in this regard:

*Don't forget your ancestors
Don't forget to build the township
Don't accept blood money
Respect women
Look after the poor
Engage with community
Don't be silent
Don't forget to pray
Jehova would surprise you¹²*

The extension of this song *Respect Life* is an offering to audiences of an appropriate moral response to life's challenges. This is reflected in its 'positioning' as a moral guide to the challenges as experienced by Sticks (see below).

There is another factor that makes this song particularly important in the context of the series; it is the only one that attends to one of the themes of HIV and AIDS. Although, HIV and AIDS is inferred through reference to a sexual disease.¹³

Notwithstanding, the song's reference to HIV and AIDS achieves at least two things: first, it cements the intertextual relationship between song, soundtrack and the series; second, it is indicative of series' equally scant attention to HIV and AIDS.

¹² All English translations of lyrics by Musa Ndlovu

¹³This is critical, precisely because of the salience of HIV infection and prevalence amongst young people. In South Africa, HIV prevalence is most pronounced amongst young women, who account for 77% of the total infections amongst 15-24 year olds (Pettifor *et al*, 2004). The 15-24 year olds are Yizo Yizo's audience and characters.

As mentioned earlier, the series (in its entirety) falls short of fully interrogating this challenge. Although Gunman, one of the main characters in the series reveals his HIV positive status in the final season, this message is not as obvious and reinforced as, for example, as the message that ‘crime does not pay’¹⁴.

The constructive and positive messages in the soundtrack appear to consciously support some of the lyrics quoted on the side B of the CD sleeve (see above). Apart from this conscious intertextual relationship, the snippets of the songs plastered on the second side of the sleeve also anchor a particular sub-textual, unexpressed presumption inherent in this *Yizo Yizo 3* series itself and the soundtrack. That is, the series and some of the songs have in themselves redemptive and transformative messages that can facilitate positive behavioural change among young people. The series’ redemptive and character-transforming messages and images are immortalised, in an intertextual way, through the *Yizo Yizo 3* soundtrack which is *kwaito* and *hip-hop* in character.

Kwaito* and Hip-hop in *Yizo Yizo 3

“We believe that long after the series is over, the music [kwaito] will keep the images and memories of Yizo Yizo alive” (<http://www.thebomb.co.za/yizo2.htm>).

The intertextual relationship between *Yizo Yizo 3*, the television series, and *kwaito*, is reflected and arguably anchored by the *Yizo Yizo 3* soundtrack. *Kwaito* functions at different levels to maintain this intertextual relationship. It first functions at a non-diegetic level; that is, the distinctively *kwaito* (and sometimes hip-hop) genre sounds that emanate outside of the specific scenes or narrative frame are used to create audience mood and to sustain that “imposed” emotional response to experiences represented. For example, in episode 4, San José’s main criminals, Angel and Slovas, partake in a housebreaking and robbery (with aggravated assault). The song, ‘S’gebengu’ is used create the mood:

*Sure s’gebengu [Sure thug]
Bazibiz’a ngez’gebengu [They call themselves thugs]*

¹⁴ Like the series, the soundtrack places a disproportionate amount of time on crime – relative to some of the other social challenges impacting the lives of young people. While we acknowledge that crime is pervasive, we argue that the realities of HIV and AIDS, unemployment, drug abuse and all forms of violence against women for example, are equally important.

*Bawubabona yigebengu... [Just by looking at them they are thugs...]
Sure s'gebengu [Sure thug]*

This section of the song further entrenches intertextuality between the series and the soundtrack. In the described scene, this part of the song contributes to and anchors the preferred visual meaning. It is however Mandoza's song *Respect Life* that is used to carry out *Yizo Yizo* series' moral and educational messages (as discussed earlier).

Secondly, *kwaito* and hip-hop are used in a diegetic form; that is, they function as an indispensable narrative device or conduit through which certain scenes create, sustain and anchor visual meanings. In other words, *kwaito* and hip-hop operate largely as 'the scene itself'. This description refers largely to the instances or scenes where *kwaito* is performed by featured musicians (e.g. Skwatta Kamp).

The third level at which *kwaito* functions prominently in *Yizo Yizo 3* is where it is itself as a distinctive subject or theme of on-going discussions between characters in various scenes of the broader narrative. *Kwaito's* existence as a genre and/or a social phenomenon in the South African socio-cultural sphere, particularly the township, is examined in relationship to other social phenomena. These three levels of the application of *kwaito* in *Yizo Yizo 3* attest to the significance of *kwaito* to the series' narrative. This is far more apparent in the very first scene of the third series, *Yizo Yizo 3*, which uses *kwaito* in a non-diegetic form.

The scene is a long shot of a Mercedes Benz vehicle moving through the township. The Mercedes Benz is symbolic of power and of Bobo's preferred socio-economic and cultural status as celebrity - as he dreams of his life as a *kwaito* star. This dream includes recognition from local admirers, 'bling' accessories and his ideal partner/girlfriend, KK.

Kwaito is used throughout this scene (without dialogue) - the track '*what a mess*' is sung by Bobo himself (and Gunman) – until a fade to Bobo's 'real life' context: him asleep in a township shack and not a celebrated *kwaito* star.

Through Bobo's dream, the series' creators elevate *kwaito* as a conduit through which a young person could realise his dreams. However, consistent with *Yizo Yizo's* aim, this dream is subsequently challenged by the portrayal of real-life experiences. The subsequent scene is of Sticks confronting Bobo about being 'real' and the need to complete his secondary education (senior certificate). To which Bobo retorts: "Look at *Kwaito* big shots...Most of them don't have matric (a senior

certificate) but they are making money every day”. To which Sticks responds: “So you think you’ll be like them. Just because Mapaputsi greeted you, you think you’re a *kwaito* star. Forget it. You have to work hard, my man.”

Later, Bobo responds to a similar inquisition from his girlfriend KK by saying: “These days I am concentrating on writing [*kwaito*] songs, that’s it. We are going to be rich love”. To which KK responds: “I am tired of your *kwaito* stories. Which rich songwriter do you know?”

These exchanges reflect the manner in which *Yizho Yizho*’s creators confront the construction and perception of *kwaito* as a quick-fix solution to the hardships of real life. This is reinforced by Sticks’ and KK’s message to Bobo that he should complete his school studies. This message is executed via a genre and social phenomenon familiar to young people themselves

Episode two of *Yizho Yizho 3* focuses on *kwaito* as a genre in a changed socio-cultural sphere. Here *kwaito* is juxtaposed with ‘hip-hop’ specifically as a reflection of socio-economic status. This is evident in the initial conversations between Javas, who is from the township, and Tebza, resident of inner city San José and rich son of Ria (a mafia-like, corrupt landlord who runs San José):

Tebza (to Javas): “You should try hip-hop. I wish they’d play more hip-hop on campus”. “Kwaito is so saturated”.

Javas (who was a kwaito deejay in the township): “You aren’t giving it a chance, it will grow”. Kwaito will grow”.

In this dialogue Javas takes ownership of *kwaito* music as a marker of his identity- only to disown it later. In the subsequent scene, located in the computer laboratory, a prospective friend introduces himself to Javas and commends him on the music that was in the car that Javas was in. Seeing the prospective friend’s orientation towards *hip-hop*, Javas the township *kwaito* deejay sees an opportunity to ‘elevate’ himself; he enthusiastically declares: “*I listen to hip-hop. Hip-hop’s dope man*”. By distancing himself from *kwaito* Javas constructs a new identity and sees the change to a new social class by distancing himself from *kwaito*. It would appear *kwaito* has limited appeal among middle-class students and remains the music of a particular socio-cultural space, the township. This point is further underscored by the fact that hip-hop, in comparison to *kwaito*, has organised cultural spaces within the Wits Tech context where it can articulate itself as a specific art form. At the same time Javas’ rejection of *kwaito* (symptomatic of the ‘tendency’ of black youth to sometimes

disown the township when they enter into middle-class, suburban life) is challenged by *Yizo Yizo* creators through Skwatta Kamp's song *Klaima*.

Re-'klaiming' the township through hip-hop?

Skwatta Kamp's song's *Klaima*, in particular, it is a form of political and cultural protests against the education and assimilation of, middle class black youth.

*Be proud of yourself...
So don't act rapper this rapper that with me
Don't try to be something you cannot be
You see I am not a model C myself
I am from a kasi [township] myself
Just happen to MC*

The song protests against affluent young blacks who have 'migrated' to the upper-class formerly white suburbs and who suffer from 'identity crises'. The song creates an impression that these young people denigrate township life and ingratiate themselves into the 'white' perception of the township in order to 'fit in'.

Skwatta Kamp's song also reflects the ambiguous role of hip-hop in *Yizo Yizo*. Compositionally it is a musical form of the inner city and suburban youth, but content-wise and lyrically it has its 'spirit' in the township.

Generally, hip-hop functions in various ways in the series: first, it is meant to 'literally' make its presence known as a different musical form operating alongside existing music genres in South Africa. Second, it is symbolically representative of the fact that *Yizo Yizo*'s narrative like its protagonists' character development is no longer restricted to the township, but has shifted its focus to inner-city Johannesburg. Third, it is indexical of a 'new' demographic stratum in the South African youth population, black middle class youth. Hip-hop is positioned as a genre through which the 'emerging' middle-class black youth, in particular, also construct their identities. Fourth, as this class's music of choice, it is consciously chosen as a conduit through which this youth's re-education and re-socialisation about the township can happen.

Inherent contradictions in a potentially counter-hegemonic text

Mandoza's *Respect Life*, and that of Hip-hop group H2O's song *i-life* explore the meaning of life as a philosophical concern, not only in the immediate township life-world but also in relation to the choices that young people have at their disposal. These songs speak to and anchor the *Yizo Yizo*'s modus operandi- that of seeing itself as transformative and redemptive.

Unfortunately, while attempting to educate about life's pitfalls, *i-life* fails to transcend some of the stereotypes pervasive in its social world, and thus resembles some of the unintended contradictions inherent in *Yizo Yizo*, the series.

I life ine zinto zayo ezininginingi
And ezibhendisanayo mannyisidingidingi
[Life has its own many things that can get you into trouble or mislead you if you are stupid]
Yile mali, yile cheri... [It's money, it's a girl...]
Kulele kuvena kumele kbethe... [It's up to you to choose]

For example, while the lyrics above caution against the various pitfalls for youths, the stereotyped portrayal of 'woman as temptress' is naturalised through 'warnings' offered via lyrics, against the 'lure of women'. Although constituting only one line in the song, these lyrics form part of the chorus, which is repeated/ reinforced/ anchored several times.

In general, the soundtrack falls short of dealing with issues affecting young women specifically¹⁵. Only one song is dedicated to one particular challenge affecting young women, that of single parenting. Another opportunity is lost to address pressing social challenges affecting young women, such as bottlenecks in maintenance disputes, or violence against women, for example.

Both *Yizo Yizo* and *kwaito* enjoy the potential to exist and operate as counter-hegemonic texts. Both the series and music represent the angst of township youth navigating their way through (amongst others) a divided education system, substance abuse, sexuality, and unemployment. The music, *per se* as a product and reflection of black youths, provides an avenue for entertainment to disseminate an educative message.

¹⁵ Women are also generally under-represented as *kwaito* artists (only two out of seventeen songs are performed by women artists).

As argued above, *kwaito*'s significance to the series is evident in: firstly, the correlation between the series, its young characters and youth target market and *kwaito* as a form of cultural expression for 'youth'; secondly, in the representation of reality/ real life experiences of township youth and the need to express real life challenges and concerns as articulated in the series and the music; thirdly, in reflections of authentic, 'real-life' township experiences; and finally, the potential of local series as counter-hegemonic texts.

While the music, lyrics, artists and other forms of cultural expressions do indeed reflect part of the township youth culture that the series aims to reflect, the series' educative potential is at times distorted by some of the meanings and messages of a key signifier of its authenticity - the music.

Significantly, however, in as much as the *Yizo Yizo 3* soundtrack is dominated by *kwaito* music and artists (Halbrick, Mandoza, Bouga Luv, Brown Dash, Mzekezeke), its representation of other music genres and artists bears testimony to the reality of the heterogeneity of real-life township experiences and simultaneously questions the essentialism generally reflected in the portrayal of black youth experiences.

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