INTERROGATING HIP-HOP IN TRACIE MORRIS'S LYRICS

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Abstract
The origin of performance poetry is debatable because of the several possible connections to the African oral tradition. Poetry has developed into a politically charged medium utilised by many poets to undertake in-depth conversations on major societal issues as a result of the early difficulty of overlapping subjects. African oral traditions include music like rap and hip-hop. African-Americans were able to speak out against decades of injustice and segregation by taking part in traditional African rituals. At first, the Afro-American woman was not welcome in the suffragist or feminist movements due to her race and gender, but she finally found her place there. The Afro-American diaspora might provide some insight on these types of literature. Tracie Morris's dynamic and introspective sound poetry uses echo and cumulative adjustments or replacements to probe such themes as Black identity, oppression, sexuality, and the body. Tracie Morris advocated for other hip-hop artists to utilise hip-hop as a tool for social change. This focus was rekindled during the to question long-held connections between certain words and concepts. Tracie Morris, in her poetry book Project Princess from 1998, wholeheartedly embraced the notion of infusing musical aspects into her writing. The purpose of this research is to examine how Morris's self-identification with the hip hop and hip hop movement influenced his use of intertextuality in his spoken word poetry. Power, violence, sex, and sadness are all explored in five of her poetry.
***Key words**: Tracie Morris; Hip-Hop; rap; hip-hop feminism; Sound Poetry.*

INTRODUCTION

Morris is well known in the poetry community as a performer and poet, especially for her work in the Nuyorican Poetry Slam. she took home the Nuyorican Grand Slam Trophy. Morris started out singing in bands and recording with notable artists she had met while performing with the Black Rock Coalition Band. Her poems have a slam tone, and she is well known among modern poets in the slam and performance poetry scenes, as well as among sound poetry Poets. The 2008 Conference on Conceptual Poetics exposed her to the community. She won the Creative Capital Award for Performing Arts in 2000. Tracie Morris creates dynamic and personal sound poetry work by using reverberation and accumulative adjustments or substitutions to discuss issues such as Black culture, power, racism, gender, abuse and the body.(Jenkins, 2014).

Morris is accomplished in a wide variety of artistic fields, including poetry, music, performance art, sound installation art, writing and academia. Morris shrugs this duality off, stating, 'I just follow my passion and it's taken me to some really interesting places'(2006, p.223). Morris followed her passion and took what may have been the most untraditional route for a working poet today,

Morris's early work reflects the influence of the new hip-hop music that was rapidly gaining popularity in the united states at the time. She says, 'Growing up in the early days of hip-hop, I was very inspired by the aural and textural features, as well as the descriptive parts .(Morris, 2012b). On the other hand, as part of her feminist messaging obsession, she used hip-hop to perform her own music. In the words of Christine Hume, 'Morris employs the kind of fierce, active repetition that might make even veteran Stein readers dizzy, but she does so with electric phrasing, lightning-fast tonal shifts, an uncanny sense of time, and a stampede of ligatured sounds that provides a literal vocal bridge between musical improvisation and poetry' (Morris, 2006, p. 423).

In the present study, the researcher provides insights into the poetry of Morris's intertextual usage as it relates to her exploration of gender identity and feminism. Her soud poetry represents experiences in which audience shares accounts of her life and the social realities.

I. RAP AND HIP-HOP

Hip-hop and American popular culture would not be the same without the inclusion of rap music. Rhetorical rhyming and the creative rearranging of words are what define rap. Rap originated in the 1970s in New York and, through the efforts of African Americans, spread all across the nation and then the globe. Although rhyming is central to rap music, rap existed long before hip-hop. In general, the requirements are the rhythms of the music itself and lyrics of the song rather than the voice of the singer or vocalist; rap may be recited with or without a beat and can bridge the gap between traditional musical forms and spoken or written words. Since the eighteenth century, the verb rap has been defined as 'to say' in British English. According to Tricia Rose, rap is just 'a process of cultural literacy and intertextual reference [that] affirms Black musical history and locate[s] these "pasts" sounds in the present' (1994, p. 89).

Hip-hop culture is a response to the injustice and racism that Black people have experienced from white people , as well as a way of communication among Black people throughout the United States. One may think that hip-hop teams and contests in dance and singing would divert Black youth in the United States away from gangs, violence and drugs. Instead, hip-hop events became places where weapons and drugs could be openly displayed. Indeed, there was a rise in the presence and dominance of gangs at these events.

The term 'hip-hop' is often used to describe the music and lifestyle of today's urban youth. Rapping originated as a means of establishing a man's manly identity and introducing himself to a potential mate. Rap evolved into a ritualised type of storytelling in which the rapper would brag about his charisma and eloquence with ladies 'in the toasts, long-standing narrative epics from oral tradition' (Smitherman, 1997, p. 12). Rap lyrics have been studied by Stephens and Wright (2000), who have shown that these lyrics provide an outlet for urban men's frustration with American society.

There is a widespread misconception among white Americans that hip-hop encourages or condones obscenity, violence or antagonism against whites and women. However, when examining the rap scene more closely, we see that the vast majority of rappers are men who utilise the female aspect simply as a vehicle for sexual expression and that the number of Black women involved is surprisingly low. Although most African Americans who engage in hip-hop do so in English, the popularity of the genre has led to the adoption of numerous slang terms. Among them is the prefix 'diss', which originally meant 'disrespect' but is now more widely employed by rappers as a phrase of challenge and rivalry.

In recent years, hip-hop's popularity among youngsters all over the world has increased, especially among those of African origin. Rap music is unique because of the ease with which lyrics can be written and music produced by anybody using premade computer tools. Moreover,Hip-hop has been more popular among youth all over the globe, particularly those of African heritage, and it has even made its way to Europe, Africa and Asia in recent years.

II. HIP-HOP FEMINISM

Hip-hop feminism is a subculture within hip-hop and Black feminism that focuses on the ways in which a woman's love of hip-hop may coexist with her knowledge of the oppression Black women suffer because of their race and gender. *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks it Down*, written by Joan Morgan, was the first book to explain the notion of hip-hop feminism, addressing the struggles of Black women in the 1960s and 1970s. Morgan says that she exemplifies 'hip-hop feminism', which she defines as 'Black feminism' that recognises the conditions experienced by Black women who enjoy hip-hop music while also acknowledging that she recognises the feminist issues but is marginalised from participating in the movement because of her Black skin (Morgan, 1999).

Hip-hop feminism, as defined by Durham et al. in their paper 'The Stage Hip-Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay', is a branch of Black feminism that has its origins in the oppression of women of African descent across the globe. It is widely acknowledged that Black women benefit culturally from hip-hop. Hip-hop feminism acknowledges the exclusion of Black women from feminism as a

cultural issue and empowers Black women, who have historically been silenced in mainstream American society. (Durham et al., 2013).

Thus, As a result, the artists often concentrate on the sociopolitical circumstances that affect the lives of Black Americans. \ In order to ensure that these individuals are not forgotten and to highlight the struggles\. these artists have a tendency to identify and laud historical and current personalities.

Motion (2003) features hip-hop influenced rhymes while drawing attention to the issue of gender within this sector because she believes that that it is crucial that female can do rhymes. Motion's reference to Queen Latifah suggests that the diasporic solidarity celebration of women is an effort to save blackness from the stereotypical stereotypes of Black manhood used to promote hip-hop.(p.39)

III. TRACIE MORRIS AND THE INFLUENCE OF HIP-HOP FEMINISM

Hip hop artists dissect mainstream discourses into manageable tales and tailor their reimaginings of those stories to the preferences of their audience as they write songs about their own lives, as noted by Tammie Jenkins (2014). Morris uses the intimate, dynamic space she creates in her sound poetry or hip-hop songs to change and deepen her themes of abuse, power and the body. Morris, too, defines herself in part by the words she raps and the poetry she writes. She tailors the delivery of her poetry without rhymes to the preferences of her audience.. In a setting analogous to a classroom, Gioia sees word poetry as a strategy for politicking people's thoughts, attitudes and experiences. Where language and conventional meanings play a significant role in social exchanges, Gioia proposes using a literary democracy to expose hidden facts through public readings by poets. According to Gioia (2004), 'It seems like out of nowhere, these new popular poetry styles have emerged as major cultural influences in the United States' (p. 6), popular poetry such as rap, hip hop, and jazz have had a broad and surprising return in recent years.

Tracie Morris's early sound poetry was inspired by hip-hop. Five of Morris's poems—'You Startingin' Wif Me' (1993), 'A Little' (2012a), 'From Slave Sho' to Video' (2002; or 'Black but Beautiful'), 'The Mrs. Gets Her Ass Kicked' (2008; or 'Heaven') and 'Chain Gang' (2006)—are discussed and evaluated to demonstrate her progression from just reciting poetry to writing poetry influenced by hip-hop feminism. All of these poems feature explicit sexual content, crude language, simple themes, and multiple layers of meaning in their lyrical arrangements.

IV. TECHNOLOGY WITH SOUND PATTERN

The film *Project Princess* (1998) acknowledges the significance of sound in Tracie Morris's work. She has a large corpus of spoken poetry, including the well-known piece 'You Startin' With Me', in which she lets the sound patterns and rhythmic repetitions stand on their own as poetry. The poem's first line shows the chaos of a movie projector, horns blowing and chanting, evoking the syncopation of jazz poetry and African oral storytelling. The word 'startin'' is stretched in the title of the poem by omitting the letter 'g', Morris plays with words and uses innovative terminology taken from hip-hop and the Blues; for example, she uses the word 'wif' for 'with', giving a familiar phrase from the Black Arts Movement a new meaning. A teenage girl starts talking about her sexual wants with the term 'only a taste of it' but in a naïve way that harkens back to her younger self. After hearing the taped readings Bernhisel finds that Participants' enhanced knowledge of poetry and poets may be attributed to four main variables.. The poet's reading style comprises pace, fluency and tone of voice; comments on the poem's context; and the poet's reading of the poem's words. Hints from the audience, "including both the reactions from the video audience and the other participants viewing the video; and appearance, including the physical appearance of the poet as well as his or her movements" (Bernhisel, 2008, p.107), Bernhise adds performer's appearance as a factor in getting hip-hop to wit.

V. SEXUAL ABUSE

In contrast to 'You Startin' Wif Me' (1993), wherein the narrator, while being sexually oppressed, investigates her own sexual curiosity, Morris in 'A Little' utilises the words and diction masterfully to portray the violation and pain of the body. The poem starts with the voice of a young girl lamenting about the disruption of her childhood by unwelcome sexual advances. Despite the child's

protests and the abuser's reminders that she is "only a young girl," the abuse continues, An example of Tracie Morris's early sound-based spoken-word poetry, sexual abuse of young girls, in the family, confronts this topic head-on in a single phrase (Humes, 2006). A breath may be heard at the beginning of the composition, as noted by Humes. As it develops and dissolves in our ears—especially considering that language resides in the crisis of communicating beyond its usual means—the iambic performance quickly fibrillates into a jagged isochronicity, a derangement of the refrain. Morris's agile voice punctures the superficial reference, adding tactile depth and texture. There are word limitations in the poem , like the girl, who is disregarded when extreme emotions take control.

To perform the girl's raw feelings, Morris resorts to a mimetic procedure that involves the abuse of phonology, morphology and syntax. The fluctuating tempo of the composition sometimes speeds up into a quick and scarcely audible delivery symbolising a pulse that is feeble yet strong. The story is shattered and streamlined into a monologue on the girl's isolation. Morris's concentration on blending disparate personas into one sentence creates a palimpsest. Each time we listen, it is as if spectral sounds and phrases are oozing out of the punctures in words in an effort to immunise us with fresh information. Words and phrases relative to injustice and sex are instances of elliptical or cryptic speech that manage to persuade us of their meaning without our knowledge. This puts us in the same situation as the girl, who knows what happened to her but cannot say it directly. Instead, as the language evolves, it creates novel forms that are sufficiently alien so that they manifest a strong materiality.

As can be observed in the lyrics, by the time Tracie Morris performed this six-word poetry in public, it had been reduced from words to a mixture of sounds. Because she tears and speaks in a very high voice. When the narrator's voice changes from that of a young girl to that of an adult woman, the audio stops. The adult woman is attempting to describe the trauma of childhood sexual abuse as noted by Jenkins (20014). The 'physicality of words' (Morris, 2007b, p. 211) propels the six-word poem 'A Little' (2012a), capturing the attention of the reader or listener. The song 'I Am Just a Little Girl' uses musical riffs from jazz poetry and hip-hop, as well as repetition, a refrain and a catchy chorus. Tracie Morris combines scat singing with spoken speech. Both 'lit-it-it-tle' and 'lee-tle' are alternate spellings of 'little' that are used in this poem. In many lines, Tracie Morris "gives word "lee-tle" long intonation to draw attention to littleness of mentality. Sound emphasises the girl's physical form more than it does her voice. (Hume, 2006, p421).

In addition to the regular spray of groans, rasps, throat-clearings, and unexpected enjambments, there was the scared and spooky tone. all of which serve as even finer detectors of abuse. There is a greater impact and intensity of feeling when the original rigorous illocutionary performative, in which speaking is doing, mixes with the theatrical performative, in which vocalisations resemble talking.

VI. VIOLENCE

The narrator's voice and accent, as well as her stopping and increasing pitch, convey the pervasiveness of violence in her life and the profound loss and pain she experiences as a result. She expresses her regret in a poem titled 'The Mrs. Gets Her Ass Kicked (aka Heaven)' for having accepted physical abuse, despite its increasing regularity and severity. Tracie Morris's poetry darkens the tone of the story by using garbled and warped language to express the physical violence and silence the narrator is feeling. To do this, she varies her tempo, volume and inflection. Indeed, Tracie Morris's voice and intonation are crucial components of her innovative use of sound.

According to Jenkins The narrator tells how she and her abuser moved from publicly partying to fleeing into alone, using phrases like "and I can't describe the hap," "and I can't describe the," The narrator utilises expressions like "and hard bea" and "I-I-awe-awe/can't hardly talk" to convey the depth of her pain. Tracie Morris attempts to use "humour to show terror" by rephrasing "heartbeat" and "I" as "hard-bea" and "awe" (Hume, 2006, p. 417). The problem of domestic violence is brought up again by Tracie Morris's use of the metaphor of "the sound of a beautiful laugh" and other noises. Here, she employs tensions or breaks in the rhythm to generate large spaces of poetic performing

impedance. Morris (2012b, p.391). Middleton (1998), a critic of poetry readings, "complains about the naive listener's belief that he is getting closer to a poem by hearing it from the poet himself," and claims that "the educated inward ear can do more with the rhythms, vowels, syncopations, and stresses of any poem than the amateur human voice can hope to do" (p. 19). Thus, Morris's use of sound design encourages misconceptions, which lengthen our engagement with the piece as a whole in terms of its ideological demands.

VII. RACISM AND CLASS DISCRIMINATION

Her poem 'Slave Sho' to Video aka Black but Beautiful' addresses the intersections of race, sexism and class. Through the use of animation and mobilisation, this piece activates and mobilises the competing cultural discourses loaded into the words 'Black' and 'beautiful'. One may assume that connotations from the Morris's past get embedded in the poem's structure. Rambsy (2008) investigates the techniques used by Black poets to allay ancestor ghosts in their works. He argues that, during their public performances, Black poets draw inspiration from their own experiences when creating their narratives.

Thus, Tracie Morris manipulates words and conventional meanings by including sounds, which allows for the emergence of new interpretations and meanings. The term 'slave sho'' takes the elongation technique from jazz poetry by leaving out the letter 'w'. "Ain't she gorgeous?' shifts its meaning from an outward conversation to an inward enjoyment of beauty thanks to the usage of 'ain't' in place of 'isn't' matches the visual language of hip-hop. The words lose their fluidity and become rigid. Whether to say 'tutu' or 'too too?' 'But' or 'butt?'—the sounds are full of choices that listener does not have to make while listening to them. Which one is better: 'bootyful booty' or 'booty full-booty?' Many of the sounds are also indistinguishable from those of two different words, making a composite listening experience the only reliable one.

Additionally, Rambsy (2008) contends that black rap authors gave supporters material that helped them ground language and meaning in a very own cultural template.. Tracie Morris, for instance, examines how dominant discourses based on Western ideals of beauty have historically marginalised Black women. When referring to the colour black, she draws out the "beautiful" sound. Through a combination of interconnecting rhythms, pauses, and tone bending, Tracie Morris conveys a wide range of emotions. She then quickly transitions into an a beat chamber of sound of suppression and expansion. Hence, the connotations associated with the words pasts might be integrated into their conceptual framework (Hume, 2006, p. 425). Morris alters the tone of her voice, as well as the intonation of the words, in the last verses of the poem. She breaks down into pieces and spews gibberish.

Listening to this song may induce a trance-like condition because it is a performative discourse in opposed to empirical descriptions or discursive authorisations. Morris gives voice to this conflict, starting with 'Ain't she beautiful/She too black' while going through a plethora of rhythmic auditory correlations that reveal intricate semantic liaisons before closing with 'beautiful and black'. By publicly repeating words as "black" and "beautiful" , Morris dissolves the boundaries between the mental/physical and material/linguistic. In other words, the subject 'she' has to be a potent enough symbol to absorb, contain and symbolise the collective body of African American women.

VIII. CHAIN GANGS AND SLAVERY

In her 2006 poem 'Chain Gang', Tracie Morris revisits historical discourses of slavery to investigate the relationship between oppression and the marginalisation of an individual. As a neutral observer, Tracie Morris looks into the myth that this age-old custom was brought to the Americas from Africa. Tracie Morris improvises the poem 'Chain Gang' (2006) in order to "[protest] the revival of chain gangs in the United States" by adding words "outside the texts that weren't extrapolations of the original phrases" (Morris, 2007b, p. 212). When performing her lyrics, Tracie Morris employs a wide range of physical and verbal signals. Tracie Morris uses a thick, breathy voice to execute the term 'same chain', chanting the syllables 'same-same-chain/same-same-chain' over and over. To get an extended effect, she sings the word 'chain' as 'chaiga-ang' and omits the letter 'g' from 'sitting' in

her reciting of the lyrics. According Oshinsky (1997), this poem recounts the historical reality of Black people, from slavery through chain gangs and prison labour camps. Including "isn't that Agun sittin' on a chain," "isn't that Kunta sittin' on a chain," and "isn't that Kizzy sittin' on a chain," among other lines. Tracie Morris uses the term 'nigger' to describe a gang member in the phrase 'saw that nigger sittin'. This term, which originated during slavery, is still used by certain organisations to refer to Black people in the United States (Wendt, 1985). As Hume pointed (2006) that both Kunta and Kizzy's ancestry can be traced back to a father and daughter slave pair, but only Kunta's can be directly traced to Africa. As she moves through broader cultural discourses about the Black experience, Tracie Morris employs the metaphor of a train to show mental captivity. She creates a feeling of growing tension via the poetry by recreating a variety of decibel levels, from whisper to roar. Appreciating visual tone poetry requires an awareness of tone. Tone may be difficult for readers of the poem to grasp because it requires them to 'listen' to an impersonal speaker. That which is "most closely related to envisionment, or the creation of mental images," is "attending to the voice of a text," as Bomer puts. (2006, p. 525). When a poem is read aloud, it creates opportunities for individual and collective identification and interpretation within the poem's semantic space. This performance event serves as a template for

IX. CONCLUSION

To sum up, early on, hip-hop served as an inspiration for Tracie Morris's sound poetry. Five of Morris's poems have been discussed and analysed to showcase her varied body of work, which can be referred to as hip hop poems and all of which have lines that are blatantly sexual in subject matter and language and are not excessively subtle or delicate. By manipulating their tonal qualities, Tracie Morris gives rise to fresh interpretations of familiar words and concepts. Morris creates music that is imbued with memory, prophesy and ecstasy that can transcend the physical. Hip hop music, like is an all-rhythmic 'explanation' of the words, aiming to elaborate and complicate what the speaker has already said. Linguistic intelligence as alliteration, assonance and rhythm can reveal hidden meanings, and here, her own moral and artistic discernment are put to use. Language serves as both a source of inspiration and irritation, revealing a lexicon of functions that Morris uses to weave together ever-deeper layers of enthusiasm for herself. The improvised form of the work connects it to rap and hip-hop feminism, in a very cultural phenomena as speaking in tongues and ritual possession from the African diaspora. The rhythmic trance allows the medium to access the synesthetic, spiritual, metaphysical and emotional states associated with cultural memory. Morris's hip hop poetry has a hypnotic and feminist rhythm that diverts attention away from the listener's dissatisfied sense of the words, allowing it to float between awareness and feeling.. Fears of losing control and feeling powerless underlie and mix themes of sex, race, violence, and hegemony that all allure of surrendering to another's authority,

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