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Source: *Popular Music*, May, 2006, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 2006), pp. 265-282

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3877562>

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‘Wrapped up’: ideological setting and figurative meaning in African-American gospel rap

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Abstract

In this article I shall attempt to demonstrate the application of an ideology-critical framework designed to give a comprehensive and differentiated account of textual ‘contradictions’ and ‘tensions’ in symbolic forms. Based on Johann Visagie’s figurative semiotics of ideological discourse, this theoretical schema is demonstrated via an extensive analysis of the gospel rap video WRAPPED UP by the African-American group Dawkins & Dawkins. As a metaphorically mediated enactment of contemporary-religious meaning, this instance of gospel rap is analysed as a forthright yet complex example of structural ambiguity. Allowing for a detailed reading of the semiotic layering surrounding and infiltrating all dimensions of this text, my interpretation problematises its reading as an uncomplicated, commercialised excursion into the pleasures of an embodied, danced religion. In both ‘highlighting’ and ‘hiding’ the layers of cultural meaning built into the metaphor of danced religion, WRAPPED UP celebrates black religious identity without distancing it from underlying ideological formations associated with collective suffering and social injustice.

Introduction

At first glance, the gospel video WRAPPED UP¹ by the African-American duo Dawkins & Dawkins is an uncomplicated and entertaining contemporary-religious mass culture text. However, subjected to a detailed scholarly analysis, this instance of gospel rap provides a visible site of conflict, offering an arena *par excellence* for the forging and negotiation of ideologies. Scholars such as Richard Shusterman (1992, p. 201ff) and Houston Baker (1994, p. 186) consider rap music and its analytical and pedagogical entailments a perfect case study for cultural criticism. As a trans-cultural and trans-national phenomenon, rap music is a particularly viable universal medium for such a theoretical/methodological endeavour. The special case of gospel rap presents a powerful embodiment of symbolic reproduction in its deployment of ritual activity, each symbol encompassing multiple, often contradictory meanings. As I would like to demonstrate in this article, it is exactly within these textual ‘contradictions’ and ‘tensions’ that strategies of symbolic construction and ideological modes of operation unfold.

For this reason my analysis of WRAPPED UP evolves around a speculative design for theorising the relationship between symbolic content and discursive socio-cultural

contexts. This theoretical framework draws on the combined interpretative strengths of ideology critique and the analysis of figurative meaning, a methodology based on the philosopher Johann Visagie's (1994, 1996) approach to ideological culture.² Allowing for a detailed analysis of the semiotic layering surrounding and infiltrating all the various performative events that constitute symbolic expression, Visagie's interpretative framework furthermore facilitates the integration of relevant aspects of other theoretical models and approaches. This allows for the application of a relatively wide-ranging, even eclectic selection of analytical tools and methods, an aspect that is of considerable import for detailed musical and/or multimedia analysis.

While this strategy may appear to be no different from the generalised procedure of allowing disparate elements from different signifying practices to co-exist within cultural analysis, the most potent aspect of Visagie's framework is the fact that it focuses not only on the figurative content of texts, but more specifically on *relations of domination* between explicit or implicit images, metaphorical meanings, archetypal symbols, narrative representations, and so on. This kind of analysis is particularly productive in terms of a detailed and multi-layered reading of a complex text such as *WRAPPED UP*, illustrating that methods of formal or discursive analysis need to engage both creatively *and* critically in the construction of meaning for an interpretative explication of what is represented or 'said' by symbolic forms. The primary aim of this article is thus to provide a scholarly reading of a commercialised mass-culture text – a reading that depends methodologically on a specialised theoretical approach.

Following the Cambridge ideology theorist John Thompson (1984, 1990), Visagie's notion of the concept of ideology is broadened to include the analysis and critique of important sites of domination and power *other* than those institutionalised in the modern state. Thus, the phenomenon of ideology is construed to be of more than merely political significance. Consequently, it facilitates specialised forms of discursive analysis in that it specifically enables the intensive exploration of links between all forms of conceptualisation (and thus all forms of 'language') and ideology. In this broadened context, the complex 'asymmetries' of social power relations may be interpreted in terms of a wide range of social forms and actions. These may include symbolic forms of various kinds, from everyday utterances to complex images and texts, as well as the contexts within which they are employed and deployed. Thus, the analysis of ideology is brought into a domain of conceptual and methodological issues of a considerably more general scope than was the case in the orthodox Marxian view (for instance).

Returning to the phenomenon of rap, it may be noted that a number of recent studies on rap music, including those of Rose (1994), Warner (1998), Griffin (1998) and Brown (1998) convincingly argue that consistent patterns of rhetorical appeal in rap music may be traced back to the traditions of African tribal music. As a powerful *aide-memoire* of black experience, rap music ignites an African cultural memory by drawing compellingly on such (figurative) strategies as story-telling, boasting, toasting, loud-talking, testifying and signifyin(g). While fully acknowledging features of African-American and diaspora discourse in rap and gospel music (and the more or less 'culture-specific' approach of analysis they imply), my reading of *WRAPPED UP* simultaneously takes cognisance of the fact that rap texts are thoroughly postmodernist in their characteristic stylistic features. These include the flamboyant practices of sampling and recycling, the eclectic mixing of styles, and the enthusiastic embracing of technology and of mass culture (cf. Shustermann 1992, p. 201ff). Thus, I am convinced that syncretic popular forms (such as rap and the more commercialised

forms of black gospel music) can no longer be studied only in terms of 'traditional' cultural traits, but rather through heterogeneous, ideology-critical modes of inquiry. For this reason, I integrate in Visagie's framework an eclectic mix of critical interpretative grids, the most important of these being Adam Krims's (2000) system of rap genres, as well as Nicholas Cook's (1998) theory of multimedia analysis. Incorporated into Visagie's overarching framework, these theories serve to both specify and intensify a multi-layered ideology-critical analysis of 'dominating discourses' in Dawkins & Dawkins's WRAPPED UP.

'Wrapped Up'

The song 'Wrapped Up' by the brothers Anson and Eric Dawkins was first released on their album *Focus* during 1998. Distributed by Christian Art Music, the album was issued by Harmony Records, a division of Relativity Entertainment Inc. The song was written by Rodney Jerkins and the Dawkins brothers, and produced by Raina Bundy. A remix was included on the *WoW Gospel 2000* album, rating thirteenth among the year's thirty top gospel songs. The soundtrack of the promotional video is a combination of the initial release on *Focus* and the remix version on *WoW Gospel*.³ Liner notes on the *WoW Gospel* album describe Dawkins & Dawkins's style as 'urban/contemporary'.

The musical structure of WRAPPED UP conforms to standardised popular song structure. However, a Bridge and the already mentioned portion of rap text inserted between the third and fourth appearances of the Hook (chorus/refrain) disrupt this structure in terms of both meaning and musical style. Since these sections of the song are particularly significant in terms of figurative content, I shall return to them in more detail below.

For all the slickness of its deceptively smooth surface, the musical style of WRAPPED UP is a complex mix of styles drawing on both contemporary and earlier African-American and Latin American models. Already evident from the instrumental introduction, contemporary rhythm & blues is intermingled with a dominant Latin-American influence featuring a provocative rumba/tango mix. The sensuous mood of the music is intensified by a tight, prominent beat, directly traceable to an African rhythmic influence inherent in both the dance-styles featured and the intensive rhythms of rhythm & blues. The ensemble styles of the vocal and instrumental units are typical of this idiom, which, together with rap, is immensely popular in current gospel production. However, this subtle fusion of styles is dramatically disrupted by an aggressive 'gangsta' rap idiom, representing the climax of the song as a whole. While such rap interventions are almost standardised features in rhythm & blues styles, in this specific context, the rap section fulfils an important function in terms of the figurative construction of meaning since it powerfully evokes the grim certainties of black urban ghetto life as embodied in the outlaw figure of the 'gangsta'.

My analysis below allows the figurative aspects of independent intra-textual levels of meaning (lyrics, visuals, and music) to interact performatively with one another. In this regard, I follow Nicholas Cook (1998, p. 24ff) in examining the various media components first as independent variables and consequently as interactive elements of the video text. Working systematically towards the final, most intuitive phase of my analysis, formalist aspects of my reading are creatively extended towards a speculative theorisation of figurative content. The first 'level' of analysis concerns a

discussion of the lyrics, the visuals, and the music of *WRAPPED UP* as multimedia constituents of this video.

The Lyrics

A discursive analysis of the lyrics of *WRAPPED UP* necessarily refers to both socio-historical contexts and to metaphor and narrative, woven so tightly into the fabric of the text that it becomes impossible to dissect it in terms of separate topics. These contextual frameworks, however, all work together in constructing meaning in this text, particularly with regard to its ambiguous representations of black religious identity. For this reason, I focus explicitly on historical hymnological models reverberating in this particular instance of gospel rap – a context often overlooked in studies of commercialised forms of contemporary hymnody. It should be noted, however, that despite its powerful projection of religious content, the lyrics of *WRAPPED UP* simultaneously construct implicit and explicit ‘bids’ for ideological power through a constant contextual ‘refiguration’ of metaphor and narrative.

Representing a testimony of confession and faith, the opening lines of *WRAPPED UP*’s lyrics are typical of the beginnings of life-story narratives, thematically symbolising a transformation from darkness to light. This concurs with the tendency of gospel hymnody, drawing mainly on the hymnological model of Revivalism, to focus on individual spiritual experience, applied personally and re-lived inwardly and subjectively by the convert.

In representing the believer as ‘hopeless’, ‘helpless’, ‘even senseless’ (complementing the metaphor of ‘Lord you’ve got me wrapped around Your finger’), the content of Verse I links this section of the lyrics with Wattsian hymnody rather than with the somewhat later model of Revivalist hymns, which are the historical precursor of gospel hymnody.⁴ The rap lyrics reinforce this doctrinal orientation in presenting a range of Hebrew God-descriptions in rapid succession, all emphasising the greatness, the glory and the sovereignty of God (‘Alpha, Omega’; ‘El Shaddai’; ‘Elohim’; ‘the great Addonai’). Note also that ‘Lion of Judah’ refers to Christ the Messiah, again a focal point of Wattsian hymnody.

Influenced by Calvinistic theology, the content of Wattsian hymns was scriptural in nature, focusing on Christ as the very centre of objective worship. In the lyrics of *WRAPPED UP*, a Calvinist influence is also present in the connotations of power adduced by the metaphorical model of the ‘King’ implicit in the Hebrew descriptions of God (also sustained by the reference to ‘Lion of Judah’). In itself, this kind of model or metaphor of God reduces the status of a complementary ‘intimate love’ model: God as ‘Father’; ‘Friend’; ‘Husband’; ‘Shepherd’.

Metaphorical content also points to a certain dualism between a ‘problem-filled’ and a ‘Grace-saved’ life. However, the phrases ‘how You always seem to come around ... in the nick of time ... to save the day’ indicate a rather realistic approach acknowledging that life is (and even after the turn to faith remains) a ‘struggle’. This moment reminds us of the assortment of metaphors serving to picture the essential content of life in relation to some or other origin or destination. One of these ‘master’ metaphors does indeed depict life (in relation to God or another Ideal) as struggle, conflict or war.

In stark contrast with the model of the ‘King’ the content of the Hook represents a subjective, emotional love-song to Jesus which, in the context of the video as a whole, is loaded with erotic suggestion (‘You’ve got me wrapped up, tied up, tangled up’;

and 'You've got me wrapped around your Finger').⁵ It is interesting to note that the content of the Bridge ('Lost here I am inside Your Love') also points to an underlying transformational duality (being lost in the Spirit, yet 'found' in complete surrender – 'Wrapped, tied up, tangled up'). Simultaneously, the 'inside' metaphor may also serve to emphasise both the intimate closeness *and* the power of the Loving God: an example of two God-metaphors 'deconstructing' each other, as it were.

In representing a very existentialist kind of spirituality, the rap lyrics present yet another doctrinal model, the highly personal nature of which is evident from the 'real-life testimony' by rapper T-bone, who refers openly to himself ('the Boney bone'; 'I'm gone T-Bone') and to his conversion. Here, various metaphors are used to represent the Fallen Sinner, all relating to the metaphor of the streetwise gangster ('harder than concrete'; 'playas, hustlas and addicts'; 'put down the weed and the automatic'). However, in a manner appropriate to the medium of rap, the miracle of conversion is represented metaphorically by speed ('Fed Ex packages') and by heat ('type of heat movin' thugs on the street'). T-Bone's testimony also references the merits of Rhythm & Blues and rap as media for preaching the gospel:

type of heat movin' thugs on the street that's harder than concrete
with these R & P beats, baby

Note that the content of the rap also refers to the theme of religious transformation: 'playas hustlas and addicts actin' charismatic'.

The line 'When I stop and meditate' (Verse I) suggests a contemplative posture, while 'got me wrapped around your finger' (Verse I) is indicative of 'falling and being held'. The figural posture of suffering is suggested by the lines 'Looking for solutions I can't find; any answers to my questions why' (Verse II). The content of '... I gotta let you know just how I feel about you noon and day', on the other hand, is suggestive of praise, as is the line '... so throw your hand in the sky when we rockin' (Rap).

In terms of figurative content that may be linked with earlier hymnological models and with the blues, I interpret the 'gangsta' images and the specific thematic figurative patterns in the Rap lyrics as indicative of suffering in the specific context of black experience. These stereotypes point to an identity politics suggesting the hardships of particular social, economic, and cultural experiences:

Take it from this rap sanga, ex-gang banga
I'll be wrapped around Your finger
Like the Police, styles obese got playas hustlas and addicts actin' charismatic
Put down the weed and the automatic
my grammatic, fanatic steelo guaranteed to get you high like the addict

The visuals

Drawing on ideology critique as well as on analysis of metaphor and narrative, I shall focus in the following sections not only on the 'contest' between the different media (cf. Cook 1998, p. 106ff), but also on the *conflict* between different levels of signification.⁶ Nicholas Cook's notion of media contest is an important interpretative tool for the analysis and critique of ideology, rendering possible an analysis of the way in which contest deconstructs media identities and familiar media hierarchies (and thus 'meaning'). This approach dispenses with an ethics of autonomy, implying that no particular media entity is automatically privileged, or involuntarily assumed to 'speak the truth' (Cook 1998, p. 128). My discussion of figurative meaning in WRAPPED

UP includes both general and specific features, illustrating that levels of signification and their dialogic interaction with music, image and word performatively 'negotiate', 'highlight', or 'hide' meaning in this text.⁷

In WRAPPED UP, two powerful narratives operate simultaneously on the visual level, influentially altering (refiguring) the musical metaphor that is operative throughout this text. On the one hand, there is the star text, the meta-narrative framing the 'story' of the gospel duo Dawkins & Dawkins.⁸ At the same time, a transformation story relating to the Biblical master narrative of Creation, Fall and Redemption unfolds in the Bridge and Rap sections of the video. These divergent narratives are intertwined in a very complex way, influentially complicating (yet balancing) metaphorical and narrative allusion in the video.

The art historian Mieke Bal (1985, p. 142ff) describes narrative texts in which at a second or third level a complete story is told as 'embedded' texts. In such cases, the secondary story/stories may explain the primary narrative, or resemble it. Often, the 'mirror text' (or texts) may determine the function of the primary text for the reader/listener/viewer. This function, Bal (1985, p. 146) describes as 'significance enhancing', implying that the second (or third) narrative contains a suggestion as to how the text as a whole is to be understood.

Traceable from the very first shots of the video clip, the so-called star narrative strongly dominates the visual materials of WRAPPED UP. Arriving by helicopter, Dawkins & Dawkins, clothed in white, emerge on a beach set in an exotic location. While quite a few MC's have featured helicopter landings in their videos, the white outfits of the stars seem to suggest an intertextual referencing of the famous rap star P. Diddy's arrival by helicopter in BEEN AROUND THE WORLD.

Interpreted in terms of Andrew Goodwin's (1992, p. 50ff) notion of the star meta-narrative, a number of factors are of import here. First, by referencing well-known symbols associated with a powerful 'gangsta' rapper image, it is subliminally suggested that gospel duo Dawkins & Dawkins too are 'men of the world' and part of the star system of performers arriving in jets, limousines and helicopters. The arrival scene is set (as is often the case in the star narrative) in an exotic location, suggesting the relaxed atmosphere and the luxuries associated with the vacationing styles of the rich and famous.⁹ Mieke Bal (1985, p. 43ff) observes that spatial elements indeed play a crucial role in narrative structures, pointing out the predominance of space and location in the human imagination. In this video text, as will become clear below, locational oppositions are also indicative of ideological conflict. Indeed, it may even be argued that, in WRAPPED UP, space is ideologically thematised. From these perspectives, it is clear that the visual parameters of the video, within its first few seconds, powerfully construct a particular identity (and the location of that identity) by suggesting difference and social boundaries by means of the phantasmagoric otherness of stardom.

Read in terms of the links between rap conventions and earlier Afro-centric rhetorical strategies, the opening shots of the video also signally represent an identification with *and* a challenge to 'baadman' secular rappers. Potter (1995, p. 83ff) explains that, unlike Western signification, signifyin(g) assumes 'a mistaking of meaning' (cf. Gates 1988), resulting in semantic slippages which function as a primary mechanism for meaning-making in rap. It may be argued that the ambiguous construction of figurative identity in this mass culture text represents an outstanding example of this rhetorical device through a deliberate 'misconstruction' of meaning, and thus of the 'product' being sold. This points to a profoundly 'trans-

actional' exchange where narrative and ideology interact, powerfully framing 'interpellations' between text and implied listeners/viewers. In terms of Bal's (1985, p. 35ff) narrative theory, such 'mistaking' of meaning may indeed be seen as an important element of narrative suspense.¹⁰

The projection of star identity is maintained throughout the entire video clip, the 'journey' ending with the stars departing and the helicopter captured in a long shot against a magnificent sky. As Goodwin (1992, p. 107) observes, in music video, performance imagery is far from an innocent realist representation of the music itself. This implies that the various performance clips featuring the gospel duo Dawkins & Dawkins are actively part of the narrative strategies of the star text, intervening in a significant way in the construction of meaning in this text. The visual elements constructing the stage scene (subtle backlighting, the glamorous backing vocal team, professional dancers and an exuberant audience), all work together to create a generalised discourse of stardom-as-otherness. As will become clear in the ensuing argument, these (visual) narrative exchanges are not ideologically neutral, but reciprocally 'transactional'. Thus, in contrasting the different ideological 'angles' of the star text, visual content powerfully establishes 'relations of domination' in this video.¹¹

It is also primarily in the visual content of this video text that certain (ideologically slanted) roles of fans are constructed or implied. As Berger's (1991, p. 4) study of media techniques emphasises, interpreters have to supply (both synchronically and diachronically) part of the meaning of texts.¹² Meaning thus construed, however, is complicit in establishing systemic asymmetries implied by the text. Even in the kind of camera shots employed, or in the angle that is used, ideology is present. An example of this kind of visual 'manipulation' in WRAPPED UP is the series of performance scenes (stage scenes; see below), which are, in most cases, shot from an angle where the camera 'looks up' at the stars. While this is typical of the 'beatdown' scene (a common visual strategy of rap videos) from an ideology-critical point of view it may also be interpreted as an indication of the power and authority of the performers, established via a clichéd media technique that seduces fans into the implied role of enthralled 'admirers'. Simultaneously, the audience is 'viewed' by way of close-up shots. These suggest closeness and intimacy, implying that the camera acts as 'representative' of individual 'onlookers'/'participants' in the video 'act'.

Considering the structuring strategies of this video text, it is interesting to note that the first appearance of the gospel stars in the stage scene (medium long shot: stage scene with band and four professional dancers; dissolve and zoom-in: star duo centre stage) is used as a kind of visual hook. Featuring directly after the instrumental Introduction, it replaces the musical hook which is only featured after Verse I. Note that the visual hook of the stage scene is part of the materials building the star narrative framing this text, already suggested by visual materials displayed during the Introduction. This narrative is powerfully sustained throughout the video clip, and takes on special significance during the Bridge and the Rap.

The star narrative projected by the visual track of WRAPPED UP is complicated by the message of the lyrics and by the second embedded narrative, which tells not of glamour and stardom, but of the grace, love and sacrifice of God. Presented via the naïve realist 'gangsta' narrative of the Bridge section, it tells the story of a gangster (later morphed into real-life rapper T-Bone) being 'literally' struck by the grace of God, and subsequently converted (monochrome close-up shot of gangster leaving car and donning a mask; panning monochrome long shot of robbery scene with masked

gangster returning to car; dissolve to stars, colour returning and star duo appearing miraculously in flare). Following the Bridge section, the Rap text relates the story of T-Bone's conversion, and of how the media of R&B and rap are used to convert 'thugs on the street that's harder than concrete'. This reference to 'R & P beats', together with the visuals of the Bridge, strongly suggest that the story of rapper T-Bone's conversion has been brought about by the gospel ministry of Dawkins & Dawkins.¹³

From the perspective of narrative theory and ideology critique, what is of importance here is that different kinds of oppositions are set up by these two 'clashing' narrative structures, including opposing locations (slum scene/liturgical space/stage scenes), and the opposition between what Bal (1985, p. 37) calls 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Describing characters as complex semantic units, Bal (1985, p. 79) suggests the ideological impact of *predictability* within the narrative structure. In this regard, the figure of the gangster functions as a powerful referential element, rhetorically not only presenting the myths and rituals of present-day gansterism, but also referencing its lineage in earlier black cultural forms such as 'baadman' narratives and the 'blaxploitation' movie genre (cf. Kelley 1995, p. 127).

It is precisely at the point of rapper T-Bone's conversion that the ulterior motives of the star narrative interlock with the 'gangsta' narrative in a highly complex manner. Used as a metaphor for the Fallen Life, the 'gangsta' sequence takes a drastic turn as the grace of God, metaphorically represented by light, 'strikes'. Transformed from the ghetto scene to liturgical space, the visuals of the Bridge and the Rap metaphorically represent a spiritual version of the rags-to-riches narrative. However, in the very moment of conversion, it is not an image of God (or some God symbol) that is featured, but rather the star duo Dawkins & Dawkins; this is a striking case of the star text dominating the gospel ('gangsta') narrative. From the standpoint of ideology analysis, this moment indeed represents an ideology analogy as it literally 'enacts' relations of domination within narratology.¹⁴

The Music

In the interpretation of structural and figurative meaning in the soundtrack of WRAPPED UP, I shall attempt to demonstrate that the musical parameters, at the above-described narrative point of 'crisis', mirror the ideological complexities forged by this intersection of star text and 'gospel' narrative. Moving between surface elements and deeper structure in the last subsection of this article, I shall discuss the meaning of this video as an emergent property of the musical text. Note that I follow Lawrence Kramer (1992, p. 140) in understanding musical representation in a very broad sense, acknowledging its rich interpretative ties to both musical and cultural processes. Kramer's (1992, p. 161) conviction that music becomes representational not in direct relation to social or physical reality but in relation to tropes is, to my mind, an analytical observation particularly pertinent to a figurative analysis of WRAPPED UP's soundtrack and to my analytical strategy as a whole:

A musical likeness is the equivalent of a metaphor, and more particularly of a metaphor with a substantial intertextual history. Once incorporated into a composition, such a metaphor is capable of influencing musical processes, which are in turn capable of extending, complicating or revising the metaphor.

In WRAPPED UP, interrelated layers of cultural signification contribute by shaping not only surface textural elements, but also structural events and, eventually, meaning in this text. Intertextuality is at play on various levels, specifically involving the

musical soundtrack and the visuals.¹⁵ Conforming to the practices of musical appropriation in jazz, the chordal and melodic structure of WRAPPED UP's Hook and Verses, already featured in the instrumental introduction, is based on the materials from a rumba by the group Shaft, 'Mucho mambo'. In turn, this song borrows from the earlier dance-hit tune 'Sway'. It should also be noted that the song 'Wrapped Up' explicitly tropes the Police song 'Wrapped Around Your Finger'. This trope might be interpreted to strengthen visual intertextuality referencing P. Diddy in that the rapper's first hit sampled a Police song as well. In terms of the construction of figurative meaning, it should be noted that the Police song to which 'Wrapped Up' alludes refers to a reversal of a dependence relationship.

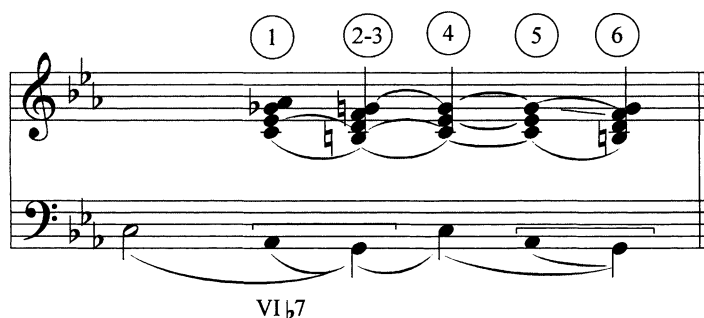
The multi-level layering of WRAPPED UP's musical soundtrack, while building on simplistic formulas prescribed by clichéd, standardised song structure, reveals a surprisingly complex formal texture, even an inclination towards formal experiment. Moreover, these compositional layers, apart from performing structural functions, refer on different levels to metaphor and narrative, and thus, ultimately, to the construction of meaning in this text.

As has been pointed out above, the soundtrack of WRAPPED UP conforms to standardised popular song structure, with the exception of the Bridge and the Rap text inserted between Hooks 3 and 4:

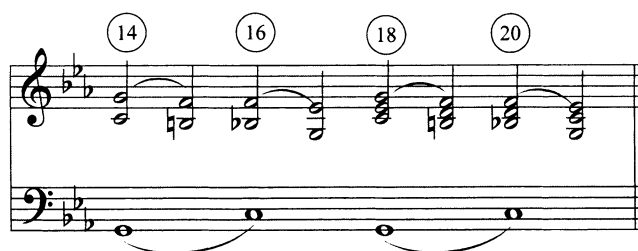
Instrumental Intro (bars 1–5)
 Verse I (bars 6–13)
 Hook I (x2) (bars 14–21)
 Verse II (bars 22–29)
 Hook I (x2) (bars 30–37)
 Bridge (bars 38–47)
 Hook II (incomplete) (bars 48–51)
 Rap (bars 51–67)
 Hook II (x6) (bars 68–91)

The soundtrack of WRAPPED UP powerfully emphasises relationships of V and I. Indeed, throughout the song, V may be seen as figuratively representing 'expectation' while I is 'resolution'. Introduced by the rhythm section, the first bar of the instrumental Introduction is based on I of C minor, except for an A-flat augmented VI neighbour-note chord on the upbeat of bar 2 (strummed on acoustic guitar), immediately resolving to V7. The rest of the five-bar Introduction consists of two-bar appearances of V and I respectively. The elided resolution of the A-flat augmented VI chord in bar 2 (to V7 of C Minor) heightens the sensuous timbral and rhythmic effect of the first guitar chord, prolonged in a syncopated strumming effect almost reminiscent of the flamenco style, and intensified also by the overall rhythmic impulse of the music. This A-flat–G neighbour-note figure, the beginning of the melodic progression G–A-flat–G–F–D–E-flat–C,¹⁶ a slightly varied melodic progression of the clichéd 'tango' progression G–A-flat–G–F–E-flat–D–C, is also a structural figure in the musical text of WRAPPED UP, acting not only as a recurring feature of the bass line of the Hook, but also as a middle-ground prolongation in the Bridge (Example 1).

The main melodic materials of Verses I and II may be reduced to sequential two-note figures descending from G to E-flat, built on the melodically embellished suspension figures G–F; F–E-flat, pointing both to melodic materials from 'Sway' and 'Mucho mambo' and to the neighbour-note motif A-flat–G of bar 2.¹⁷ The melodic content of the Verses is a slight improvisational elaboration of Hook I. On the word 'defenceless' in Verse I, the melodic movement G–F, F–E-flat deviates to B-flat,



Example 1. WRAPPED UP, simplified voice-leading reduction bars 1–6.



Example 2. WRAPPED UP, voice-leading reduction, Hook I (bars 14–21).

lending the music a somewhat ecstatic affect.¹⁸ This effect is intensified on the word ‘finger’, where the melodic line rises to C, followed by G, as well as on the word ‘so’ at the end of the Bridge. In Hook I, these ecstatic effects are echoed in rhythmic interjections by the backing vocals (among others) on the words ‘You got me tied up’, rapidly moving between B-flat and G. Note that these (and other) interjections are part of the typically African heritage of call-and-response patterns, as well as the shouting practice (‘getting happy’; ‘getting religion’; ‘having church’; ‘like fire shut up in my bones’) typical of Holy Ghost Pentecostal singing in early African-American worship (Spencer 1990, p. 194; note that these are representative of the ‘transformational’ theme). This ‘singing-testifying’ formed part of the spiritual, mental and physical transmutation into the ritual celebration called ‘danced religion’, inextricably bound with the shouting practice, a ritual Cusic (1990, p. 87) describes as ‘a physical and emotional activity at fever pitch’.¹⁹

I have already alluded to the structural significance of the neighbour-note figure A-flat–G, first occurring in bars 1–2 of the Introduction. This figure functions as a ‘precursor’ to its recurrence on the bass-line upbeat of respective versions of Hook I (Example 2). Its effect is intensified by an increase in percussive effects (the maraca is added), and by interjections by the backing vocals accompanied by an arpeggiated version of the underlying chordal structure, performed on an electronic keyboard. Again, these devices create effects of ecstasy and celebration, enhanced by the rhythmic effect of the backing vocals moving in parallel chord motion. However, from a structural viewpoint it should be noted that, in Hook I, the resulting neighbouring chord is now a major seventh, resulting from a C minor triad superimposed above the A-flat bass. On the melodic ‘chunks’ G–F, F–E-flat, two parallel triads are featured, representing a kind of ‘sectional’ harmony typical of jazz idioms. The G suspension features a C minor triad, while on the F suspension, a B-flat triad is present, forming a

Example 3. WRAPPED UP, Bridge, oscillating harmonies, bars 38–47.

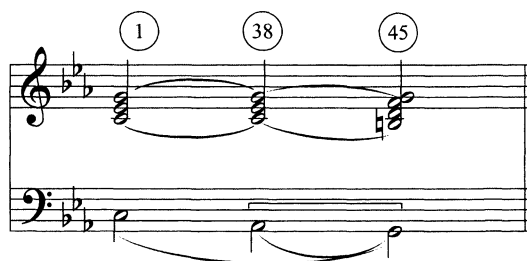
polychord. As will be illustrated below, these polychordal elements take on special significance in the Bridge.

The Bridge is musically the most intricate part of this text, simultaneously highlighting and protracting elements from Hook I, while at the same time featuring materials which anticipate elements from the Rap section. Starting on B-flat, the melodic line moves to G via A-flat, referring again to melodic materials used earlier (compare 'defenceless' in Verse I), appearing here, however, in a different tonal context. The melodic materials F–D–E–flat–F following this progression form an inversion of the same motif.

Harmonically deviating from the now familiar V–I chord structure, the Bridge starts on VI, involving both the bass A-flat and the C minor triad already mentioned (Example 3). While referencing the neighbour-note figure of bars 1–2, this A-flat does not immediately resolve to G, but instead moves to C with a B-flat major triad above it, thereby facilitating a recurrence of the C minor and B-flat major triads featured earlier on the G–F suspension in Hook I. Indeed, the Bridge continuously oscillates between the pitches A-flat and C. This tonal context seems to highlight the C minor triad above the A-flat bass, not only as part of the A-flat major seventh chord, but also as part of an oscillation of the C minor and B-flat major triads, respectively positioned above A-flat and C in the bass. Thus, the A-flat major seventh chord may also be interpreted (albeit rather precariously) as an A-flat/C polychord which is complemented by the C/B-flat polychord, performing an 'inward' motion. With the motion of C back to A-flat, however, it moves 'outward' again.

Characterised by tonal ambiguity, even a sense of tonal 'loss', there is a further surprise in the Bridge.²⁰ After the third occurrence of the A-flat/C oscillation, the C/B-flat polychord unexpectedly moves up half a tone to D-flat/C-flat, apparently functioning as a secondary VII harmony on D-flat which instead of resolving to the presumed G-flat I harmony, suddenly reverts back to V of C minor, with the bass plunging down a tritone (D-flat–G-natural). However, this dramatic plunge must be regarded as a 'surface' harmonic motion. At a deeper level, a case may be made out for a resolution of the A-flat major 7th harmony to G, representing a large 'middle-ground' parallelism of the A-flat–G harmonies in bars 1–2, 5–6, and the A-flat 7–G motions in Hook I.

This implies that the underlying prolonged harmony throughout the Bridge is A-flat, VI of C minor, a finding which may be substantiated in two ways. First, the A-flat/C bass motions must be regarded as motions to and from an inner voice of A-flat major, while the B-flat major triads in the triadic oscillations serve as lower neighbour chords to the C minor constituent of the A-flat/C polychord. The subsequent motion to D-flat is a further outgrowth of the C/B-flat polychord, which



Example 4. Middle-ground voice-leading graph, bars 1–47.

is, in turn, embedded within the A-flat prolongation. Thus, the harmonic progression which might have moved from A-flat to D-flat to G is in fact a massive prolongation of A-flat to G, but with chord interpolations. It is interesting to note that the vocal style of the Bridge is unison, the chords being more sustained and presented without rhythmic patterns. This lends the music a certain starkness. Below, I will return to the figurative meaning of this musical gesture.

On the level of the foreground, at the point of conversion projected in the visual narrative in the Bridge, a 4–3 suspension is featured on V, representing a kind of shock element emphasising both V and the cadential plunge to D. This may be interpreted as a musical narration of the dramatic impact of the conversion. The conversion is very crudely symbolised by a crude scratch sound familiar to rap music,²¹ with the musical style now featuring a hard-core, secular rap-rock style. While the spiritual transformation is effectively portrayed by this radical break in musical style, from the viewpoint of ideology critique, this simultaneous referencing of spiritual transformation and secular star text powerfully highlights the ambiguities of this text. The musical portrayal of a radical conversion and a break with the past furthermore symbolises a particular kind of triumphalist theology underlying the text of *WRAPPED UP* as a whole.

The musical style of the Bridge references the theme song of the film *Men in Black*.²² This metaphor (the 'black' men; the 'thugs on the street') is juxtaposed with the metaphor of light in the visual materials, metaphorically representing the conversion. Note that the juxtaposition of the monochrome colours of the Bridge to the rich visual contrast of the liturgical space is also part of this metaphorical allusion to the spiritual transformation from darkness to light, simultaneously referencing a 'being lost' and 'being found'.²³

By way of a very crude tonal gesture, the Rap section abruptly moves to D minor, tonally representing a radical break with all previous materials. This musical transformation also manifests itself in a somewhat increased tempo and an electric guitar chord continuously emphasising I of D minor. The Rap consists of a descending baseline, moving between I and V (D–C–B-flat–A), and functioning as an ostinato figure accentuated by syncopated rhythmic figures.

The Hook of the Rap section (Hook II) also features an ostinato figure in the accompaniment. Here, a riff featured on the keyboard accompanies the words 'Keep on wrappin' me, keep on wrappin' me with your love, Lord'. The riff consists of a two-part figure in D minor with F in the upper voice, while the lower voice moves from A–B–C and from C–B–A. This is a transformation of the ecstasy motif featured on the word 'defenceless' (G–B-flat–G) in Verse I, also referencing the melodic material from the Bridge.²⁴ The riff repeatedly ends on a B and F, referring to the tritone

implicit in the V7 chord of C minor and the dramatic tritone motion from D-flat to G at the end of the Bridge. At the same time, it functions as a colouring device typical of jazz idioms.

The ground bass movement in both the Rap section and the repeats of Hook II featuring the above-mentioned progression of I to V reverses the tonal axis of the music, creating the impression that the music stays in I. This effect is intensified by a riff in the vocals featuring a melodic progression D-F-A-G-A-G-F, the last three notes of which refer to the underlying melodic motion of the Verses. This continuously circling movement of the music, also represented by the repetition of Hook II (repeated six times before it is faded out) is intensified by the repetition of the ground bass figure and an 'endless' repetition of the two riffs, creating the impression that the music is moving in a cycle based on I. Within the particular symbolic context, this musical gesture is traceable to African religious aesthetic and elements symbolic of traditional African music practices, and in particular to the African religious ring ritual. Note that Hook II does not 'end', but is eventually faded out. This is of course also a clichéd strategy of popular music, presenting us once more with an ambiguous mix of cultural layering and symbolic capital.

Finally, perhaps the most startling tonal symbolisation of WRAPPED UP can be seen in the relationship between the descending ostinato bass of the Rap section and Hook II and the overall middle-ground progression of the first part of the song (bars 1–47). Not only are the underlying harmonies the same (I–V), but the essential notes in the ostinato bass (D–B-flat–A) match the C–A-flat–G bass tones of the middle-ground progression. In fact, it is as if the ostinato bass reiterates the essential tonal motion of the first part of the song on the musical surface, enhanced by its 'endless' repetition, while at the same time, it is retrospectively 'wrapped up' tonally by the large middle-ground progression.

In terms of Krims's (2000) categories of rap flows, it is interesting to note that, in the rap section, speech-effusive and percussion-effusive styles are mixed, and that a sung rhythmic style is used only on the ecstatic words 'wrapped around Your Finger'. The latter expression suggests a certain sustainability in the text, linking it also with the lyrics of the R&B song. On the other hand, a consideration of word-tone relationship reveals that a percussive delivery is most often present when the lyrics project a sense of urgency (for instance 'Fed Ex packages'; 'I know You trippin I come up with lyrical styles/you never heard in English or Espagnol, mommy/that's how we spread the Word').

Music, words and images

In the above discussion of the musical parameters of WRAPPED UP, I have mentioned that the chordal and melodic structure of the soundtrack of this video draws on the earlier dance hits 'Mucho Mumbo' and 'Sway'. By way of a number of musical gestures, the most important of which is a rhythmic, timbral and melodic reference to the tango style, a 'subliminal' tango is suggested.²⁵ In terms of marketing ideology, I believe this representation to be an example of a certain (implicit) propositional syntax, both 'highlighting' and 'hiding' erotic associations explicit in the musical text of this video clip.²⁶

The quotation of tango elements and of well-known dance-hit chord progressions, points to the presence of an all-pervasive structural metaphor in this work. In terms of metaphor and narrative analysis, it is important to note that narrative

'development' in the music is powerfully sustained through a 'composing' with style and genre, evoking figurative content overabundant in cultural meaning and associations.

Though expressed by way of mass-cultural structural clichés, a metaphorical interpretation of the subliminal tango in *WRAPPED UP* unveils the spiritual dimensions of this text, in which it functions as a metaphor for 'being touched by the grace of God'. The many references to African religious ritual celebration and African-American cultural memory point to the ring ritual and the phenomenon of holy dancing, also known as the 'walk in Egypt' (Spencer 1990, p. 194). Thus dance, in secular idioms often a sexual metaphor, becomes here a powerful metaphor for spiritual liberation, pointing to the phenomenon of 'danced religion'. Referenced in both the superficial and the deeper structural elements of the musical text of *WRAPPED UP*, this metaphor is predominantly and almost constantly represented by a mixture of African and Latin American dance elements. Towards the end of the Hook, however, the rhythm becomes less Latin American and more African; more basic, as it were. Here, the two riffs (based on transformations of the ecstasy figure) mentioned in my musical analysis above, 'endlessly' move in a circular motion, the former tonal emphasis on V (expectation) now replaced by a continuous resolution into I (transformation).²⁷ Note that the concept of transformation is also present in the quotation of black religious suffering culminating in the musico-dramatic construction of an ecstatic 'danced' liturgy.²⁸

Returning to Bal's (1985, p. 142) notion of the 'embedded' text, one may argue that *WRAPPED UP*'s musical parameters, in performative alignment with the visuals of the star text, figuratively construct a third narrative level through the extended narrative emplotment metaphor of 'danced religion'. Similarly, the 'gangsta' narrative may be viewed as an extended metaphor, representing in its compact structure a narrative 'crisis' that constructs a certain (ideological) perspective on reality (cf. Bal's 1985, p. 100ff concept of 'focalisation' – the monochrome visuals; the slum environment; the implied socio-historical 'construction' of ghetto life – drug-related crime, 'numbers running', prostitution, fencing and robbery). Thus, both the 'gangsta' narrative and the narrative emplotment metaphor of danced religion powerfully determine meaning in this text.²⁹

On a figurative level, *WRAPPED UP*'s primary message is that of spiritual transformation, illustrated via metaphors of darkness and light, but also via a structural metaphor pointing to the phenomenon of danced religion and its elements of physical and spiritual transmutation. Thematically, transformation is present also in various motivic, topical and structural events of this text. These 'transformations', however, reflect a certain ambiguity, primarily by means of the conflict imposed by a constant foregrounding of the frame narrative, the commercialised star meta-narrative.

I have argued that a figurative analysis of *WRAPPED UP* highlights ideological tensions and ambiguities inherent in this text. In closing, I interpret this video clip as an exceptionally complex example of metaphorical emplotment, moving from the surface to deeper levels, and connecting spheres of figurative and prefigured meaning operative at various levels of the text. In this regard, I view the typical framing devices of gospel video (symbols, signs, icons, models, images, metaphors, etc.) as surface metaphors, connecting meaningfully in this text with archetypal figures which function as 'root metaphors'. Again, my focus is on ambiguity, and on a constant contextual refiguration of metaphor and narrative.

First, it should be noted that the lyrics of the rap section powerfully portray the (Calvinist) model of God as 'King'. This God model is in tension with the commercialised Lord (compare the Hook) who appears as 'Lover' ('Wrapped up, tied up, tangled up'; 'You've got me wrapped around your Finger').³⁰ More importantly, however, it clashes violently with the musical poetics of the rap soundtrack that represents the so-called hip hop sublime of 'hardness' (cf. Krims 2000, p. 15). In the ambiguous erotic context of the video, however, the concept of God as 'King' may be linked with the notion of sublime 'hardness', opposing the concept of the Lord as 'beautiful Lover'.

The star text of the duo Dawkins & Dawkins projects the archetypal figure of the 'Player'. While in terms of religious archetypes this figure may be linked to the archetype of the carefree 'Child' (finding acceptance and love in his Father's home), its symbolic entanglement with secular 'gansta' rap styles strongly emphasises the role of the 'Player' not only as an 'Entertainer', but also as a 'Power Player', possibly involved in real-life gangster activity.

A figurative and ideological analysis of WRAPPED UP highlights not only its ambiguous juxtapositions of 'God as King' and 'Lord as Lover' as well as those of 'King' and 'Player' (= 'Star'/'Entertainer'), but, in particular, *relations of domination* in terms of these identity-related 'roles' in the text, of which the most dramatic and critical instance is the domination of the star text over the Biblical narrative in the Bridge – indeed, a striking and most ambiguous instance of Johann Visagie's (1996, p. 94) notion of power as an effect of autonomisation, that is, power as an effect of value domination.

In terms of clashing identities, the ambiguous presence of both the dominating star narrative *and* the all-pervasive danced religion metaphor evokes a complex set of dominating ideological discourses within this text. While structural relationships visually foreground associations related to the star text and the commercialised pleasures of musical performance and dance, a more sophisticated (embedded) metaphorical cluster invokes the darker dimensions of black religious life and African-American cultural history, acting powerfully through the application of the 'gangsta' figure.

Read in terms of the link between specific Afro-American rhetorical strategies and authenticity in gospel rap, the 'gangsta' narrative, by 'being real', powerfully suggests a variety of ideological discourses by means of an implied social criticism. Note that, again, the 'gangsta' narrative is musically supported via a persistent application of style and genre in positioning oppositional figurative constructs as ideologically conflicting discourses.

The above interpretation of WRAPPED UP problematises its reading as an uncomplicated, commercialised excursion into the pleasures of an embodied, danced religion. In both 'highlighting' and 'hiding' the layers of cultural meaning built into the metaphor of danced religion, it celebrates black religious identity without distancing it from underlying ideological formations associated with collective suffering and social injustice. I believe that this 'balance' between human hardship and the 'lightness' of redemption is represented in this video, as a thoroughly commercialised mass-culture 'intertext', in a highly complex fashion. The ambiguous figure of the 'gangsta' with his darker socio-historical dimensions is powerfully counterpoised by the metaphor of ecstatic, eroticised danced religion. As an African-religious figurative construct framed by a commercialised mass-produced star text, the concept of danced religion is constantly suggested by densely layered intertextual mass-cultural clichés

and Afro-diasporic significations, as well as by a spectrum of figural postures related to Christian praise and worship.

Copyright acknowledgements

I am indebted to Anson and Eric Dawkins for permission to quote lyrics and musical transcripts from the *WRAPPED UP* music video. Written and Produced by Rodney Jerkins and the Dawkins brothers, Executive Produced by Raina Bundy.

Endnotes

1. Following Andrew Goodwin (1992), I identify music videos by small uppercase letters in order to distinguish them from song titles, which appear in quotation marks. Following the conventions of scholarship and cultural criticism, album titles are italicised.
2. See Viljoen 2004c for a detailed explication of this interpretative framework. In Viljoen 2004a and 2004b, the model is applied in the context of multimedia analyses of gospel rap and kwaito music.
3. The video was produced for promotional purposes, and was not marketed commercially. The rendition used in this analysis was broadcast during 2000 as part of the BET Gospel programme 'Lift Every Voice'. BET Gospel is a twenty-four-hour cable channel offering spiritual and uplifting programming which showcases gospel videos, religious programming, motivational speakers and high-profile musical artists, interspersed with intensive advertising of all these various religious 'products'.
4. Though Revivalist hymns represent practically every mood of the Christian soul in an expressive, even passionate way, their style is simple and direct, suggesting an intimacy in addressing God as 'Friend' (cf. Eskew and McElrath 1980, pp. 124–5). The Wattsian hymn, on the other hand, emphasises the glory and sovereignty of God, the depravity of human nature, and the all-sufficient atonement of Christ on the Cross for the sins of humanity.
5. The phrase 'You've got me wrapped around Your finger' has, arguably, misogynistic connotations. The unconcealed corporeality of gospel music is directly traceable to the African-religious model; see, for instance, Floyd's (1995, p. 27ff) discussion. Sylvan (1998, p. 67ff) links West African possession religion with all manifestations of beat-driven contemporary popular music.
6. As part of his extended theory of meaning in multimedia, Nicholas Cook (1998, p. 100ff) proposes a metaphor model in which asymmetries between multimedia components may be ascertained via the principles of *conformance*, *complementation* or *contest*. Cook observes that conformance tends towards essentialism and stasis, and, as mentioned above, he finds that contest, an intrinsically dynamic and contextual model of meaning, is the paradigmatic model of multimedia. Among these hypothetical positions, complementation is the uncontested 'mid-point'.
7. Within these two 'visible' narrative levels, yet another (embedded) level figuratively unfolds; see the discussion below.
8. I classify the Rap section as belonging to both star and 'gangsta' narratives.
9. Typical rags-to-riches narratives, on the other hand, often feature slum scenes. As I will explain below, in the rap-section of *WRAPPED UP*, such a ghetto scene takes on special significance in terms of metaphor, narrative and ideology.
10. Bal suggests that secret, lie and suspense are important structural strategies of the *fabula*, that is the series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors in a narrative.
11. The star text constructed by the performance imagery is already intertwined with a second 'embedded' narrative unfolding through the metaphor of 'danced religion'; see the discussion below.
12. This is a view propounded commonly in early video theory; cf. Kinder (1984) and Jones (1988). Cook (1998, p. 104ff) emphasises the 'gapped' nature of multimedia texts which he describes as 'zones of indeterminacy that allow readers to fill in the missing aspects and so interpret the text in the light of their own experience and inclination'; cf. also Iser (1978) and Jauss (1982).
13. In fact, the title of the song 'Wrapped Up' may be a play on words meaning also 'rapped up', the latter pointing to the black American preaching style which is a poignant influence on the virtuoso verbal style of rap. In the context of this song, the rap text indeed takes on dimensions of both testifying and preaching.
14. Fowles (1996, p. 6) critically observes that, in advertising, the symbol representing the product may never take on too large a significance in its own right, for fear of overwhelming what is being sold.
15. Here, I refer to intertextuality in its more conventional sense, alluding to a text's quotation of

- prior texts. However, the notion of intertextuality may be understood also in Culler's (1981, p. 103) broader definition, that is, as a designation of the text's participation in the discursive space, and its relationship with the various signifying practices of a culture which articulate possibilities of meaning for a culture; see also under 1. For an exploration of this (broadened) kind of intertextuality in relation to mass-culture texts, see Viljoen (2004A, p. 80ff).
16. In the longer Introduction of the CD version, this progression is anticipated by a 'mirror' melodic progression in the guitar, C–D–E-flat–F–G–A-flat–G.
 17. These figures are a stylisation (not a transcription) of melodic materials from 'Sway' and 'Mucho Mambo'. I am indebted to Nicol Viljoen for this observation, as well as for his generous contribution towards the musical analysis of WRAPPED UP.
 18. The B-flat is a typical case of the so-called blue note; a flattened note, usually the third or seventh degree of the scale, recurring frequently in jazz or blues.
 19. Multi-layered backing vocals and shouts are part of the black gospel tradition, the latter referring to the practice of the so-called ring-shout in African religion.
 20. Note that tonal ambiguity is a normal condition of some popular music styles. In this tonal context, harmonic progressions are not only structurally ambiguous, but also tonally conflicting.
 21. Davis (1995, p. 92) points out the cultural links between the practice of scratching in rap music and the buzzing textures produced by home-made or non-musical instruments in African ceremonial music.
 22. Note again the pertinence of Bal's (1985, p. 79) notion of 'character predictability' as a narrative agent.
 23. I am indebted to Nicholas Cook for pointing out that monochrome colours may signify not only loss and sadness, but also 'long ago', which, in this religious context, points as much to gain as it does to loss.
 24. Transformation, on many different levels, is a salient feature of this text.
 25. *Tangere*; to touch.
 26. In advertising, visual displays are often used to convey meanings that would be unacceptable if they were spelled out verbally. With regard to musical multimedia, Nicholas Cook (1998, pp. 16, 22) observes that verbal messages may be subordinated by 'a series of far more comprehensive attitudinal messages that are communicated by means of music'. This implies that music is a profoundly powerful medium, generating meaning beyond anything that, as Cook puts it, 'can be said in words'.
 27. As pointed out above, this is also a thoroughly commercialised cliché.
 28. This interpretation links the metaphor with ideological formations of a moral and political nature.
 29. However, such speculatively constructed meaning does not necessarily determine the functions of the text for implied listeners/viewers; see my discussion below.
 30. The image of Jesus as a 'Lover' is found in heavily commercialised gospel music; compare, for instance, Andraé Crouch's 'Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus' (1999).

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