

Constructing a hybrid identity through music:

On Typhoon's "practice of self-styling" in *Lobi Da Basi*.

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Abstract

Musical artists often use their music to express how they feel, what they think, and who they are. For musical artists in diaspora, their music is often a way to express, and shape their hybrid identities. On the basis of Marleen de Witte's concept of the "practice of self-styling", this thesis focuses on how the Surinamese-Dutch rapper Typhoon actively *self-styles* his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi*. In the album, he evidently explores his Surinamese heritage, his Dutch heritage, and his connection to the "Black Atlantic": Paul Gilroy's proposed counterculture to modernity that centralizes the trans-Atlantic movement since the era of colonial slavery. This exploration takes place visually, lyrically, and musically. With a focus on the album's lyrical, and musical content, this thesis aims to bring to light how hybridization and the Black Atlantic *movement* lies at the heart of Typhoon's hybrid identity formation.

Introduction

Over the last seventy years, since *identity* became a popular term in social sciences, a tremendous amount of scholarship on identity formation in social, cultural, and postcolonial research areas, as well as in the humanities has been established.¹ The scopes of the study areas may differ, the majority of these researchers agree that identities can be best understood as changeable instead of definite; practicable instead of fixed; always in process instead of an accomplished fact. Especially within diasporic communities, it is important to recognize that identity and hybridity need not be opposites. These identities exist “with and through, not despite difference; by *hybridity*” and therefore are “constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.”² By negotiating between, and combining the cultural practices that are connected to the country where they live, and the country where they (or their ancestors) came from, people in diaspora often create new, hybrid identities.³

The literature on diaspora identities may be abundant, case studies on the topic are still underrepresented, especially in the context of the Netherlands, and especially with regard to music. Thereby, studies on diaspora identities in the Netherlands mainly focus on how people with non-Dutch roots are racially oppressed, rarely considering how these people empower themselves and create new hybrid identities. Aiming to contribute to the already existing research on diaspora identities in the Netherlands, this thesis zooms in on Typhoon – the most prominent Dutch rapper with Surinamese roots (arguably tied with Ronnie Flex, whose prominence is much more recent). From a musicological point of view, I focus on how Typhoon shapes his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi*. Especially *Lobi Da Basi* suits well for investigating Typhoon’s hybrid identity formation, as compared to his previous musical works, he more prominently engages with his Surinamese heritage.

I argue in this thesis, in line with De Witte’s concept of the practice of self-styling, that with, and throughout *Lobi Da Basi*, Typhoon actively shapes his hybrid identity.⁴ Typhoon’s hybrid identity is not captured within the album, moreover, it is

¹ Philip Gleason, “Identifying Identity: A Semantic History,” in *The Journal of American History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 910.

² Stuart Hall, “Cultural identity and diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 225.

³ Keri E. Iyall Smith, “Hybrid Identities: Theoretical Examination,” in *Hybrid Identities: Theoretical and Empirical Examinations*, edited by Keri E. Iyall Smith and Patricia Leavy (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2008).

⁴ Marleen de Witte, “Heritage, Blackness and Afro-Cool Styling Africanness in Amsterdam,” in *African Diaspora* 7 (2014), 260.

explored and deepened throughout. The focus in this thesis does not lie on how Typhoon expresses his hybrid identity as an accomplished fact, but on how Typhoon actively *self-styles* his hybrid identity with, and within *Lobi Da Basi*. The main research question of this thesis is: How does Typhoon self-style his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi*?

Typhoon, the stage name of Glenn de Randamie, was born in 1984 and grew up in 't Harde, a small village in the east of the Netherlands that is located closely to Zwolle. As a second-generation immigrant from Surinam, he grew up as one of the few black children in the village.⁵ Typhoon's parents raised him, his brothers, and his sister with Protestant-Christian and Surinamese norms and values that taught Typhoon to be respectful, grateful, and "stand out as little as possible."⁶ Talking about feelings and emotions was not a daily habit in his family, which made Typhoon write about it instead.⁷ His poetic rap lyrics are mostly self-reflexive, introspective, soul-searching, socially concerned, and often express Typhoon's vulnerability.

After a long period of personal struggles, which was also a period in which Dutch national identity and the Netherlands' role in colonialism were at the forefront of public discussion, Typhoon proclaimed in an interview:

I intensely live through [my music], it is many things at the same time. The music that I like the most has to do with personal processes. But politics is also about human processes, so you touch on everything.⁸

From this statement, it becomes clear that Typhoon identifies himself with his self-reflexive, introspective, soul-searching songs, but also with the political ones.⁹ It

⁵ Glenn de Randamie, "In onze opvoeding ging het om zo min mogelijk opvallen," interview by Minou op den Velde, *Zin* 8, May, 2020, <https://www.zin.nl/2020/06/24/typhoon/> (accessed October 17, 2020).

⁶ All translations of Typhoon's quotes in discussions and interviews, as well as the translation of *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrics in this thesis are mine. "[In onze opvoeding ging het om] zo min mogelijk opvallen." In Glenn de Randamie, "In onze opvoeding ging het om zo min mogelijk opvallen," interview by Minou op den Velde.

⁷ Saskia Bosch, "Hiphop zonder blingbling," *Trouw*, August 15, 2007, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/hiphop-zonder-blingbling~b604832c/> (accessed October 17, 2020).

⁸ "Ik doorleef het helemaal, het is heel veel dingen tegelijk. De muziek die ik het mooiste vind, zoomt in op persoonlijke processen." In Glenn de Randamie, "Typhoon is terug: 'Ik moest de lobi herdefiniëren,'" interview by Timo Pisart, *3voor12vpro*, February 20, 2020, <https://3voor12.vpro.nl/artikelen/overzicht/2020/februari/Typhoon-is-terug-interview.html> (accessed October 17, 2020).

⁹ Raymond R. Macdonald, David J. Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell, "What are musical identities, and why are they important," in *Musical identities*, edited by Raymond R. Macdonald, David J. Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

affirms that his music reflects his identity, and specifically for *Lobi Da Basi*, his hybrid identity.

Lobi Da Basi is categorized in the genre of hip hop – a genre with which Typhoon is engaged from his teens. Around 2000 CE – approximately twenty years after the first Dutch hip hop generation emerged in the metropolitan Randstad area (covering Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) – the hip hop formation Opgezwolle built the foundation for the regional hip hop scene in Zwolle. Typhoon’s rise on the Dutch hip hop scene has been part of this burgeoning regional hip hop scene, that came to dominate the Dutch hip hop scene between 2005-2007.¹⁰ According to Typhoon, Rico and Sticks of Opgezwolle brought regional pride to Zwolle and its surroundings.¹¹ Moreover, this formation, with which Typhoon intensively collaborated throughout his musical career, provided Typhoon a musical base on which he is still building.

Typhoon released *Lobi Da Basi* In 2014, seven years after his debut album. He performed at many of the Dutch most renowned festival stages and pop music venues in his album tour that same year. Between both album releases, Typhoon felt he could not find new inspiration in his familiar environment anymore.¹² For this reason, he went on a trip to Surinam with his friend Herbert Alfonso, who also filmed the trip and edited the recorded materials in a documentary named *Blues and Blessings*.¹³ On this trip, Typhoon found the title *Lobi Da Basi*, which means “Love is the Master” in Sranan Tongo (the Surinamese lingua franca). From only the album’s title, one can reckon Typhoon to be actively engaged with his Surinamese heritage in *Lobi Da Basi*.

Next to the Surinamese cultural heritage, Typhoon also explores the “Black Atlantic”.¹⁴ Gilroy constructed the Black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity, and suggests that culture is not captured within nations’ (inner) dynamics, but emerges in encounters that take place between imaginative constructs like races, cultures, national

¹⁰ 3voor12vpro, “Opgezwolle grijpt zes keer raak bij Gouden Greep 2006,” 3voor12.vpro.nl, December 30, 2006, <https://3voor12.vpro.nl/artikelen/overzicht/2006/december/opgezwolle-grijpt-zes-keer-raak-bij-gouden-greep-2006.html> (accessed October 16, 2020).

¹¹ NPO Start, “De Wereld Draait Door – 7 december 2015,” *NPO Start* video, 12:59, December 7, 2015, https://www.npostart.nl/WO_NPO_5264968 (accessed October 25, 2020).

¹² Glenn de Randamie, “The bigger picture: Typhoon over de Surinaamse invloed op Lobi Da Basi,” interview by Atze de Vrieze, *3voor12vpro*, September 17, 2014, <https://3voor12.vpro.nl/artikelen/overzicht/2014/The-Bigger-Picture/The-Bigger-Picture--Typhoon-over-de-Surinaamse-invloed-op-Lobi-da-Basi.html> (accessed October 17, 2020).

¹³ Herbert Alfonso, *Typhoon, Blues & Blessings*, directed by Herbert Alfonso, aired on BNN on February 16, 2016, <https://www.bnnvara.nl/documentaires/videos/549342> (accessed July 20, 2020).

¹⁴ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), xi.

identities, and other interrelated constructs.¹⁵ The Black Atlantic centralizes the *movement* that took place during and after the trans-Atlantic slave trade as a central component of black identity and understands black identities to have been influenced by the exposure of the ideas of a variety of cultures they encountered during, and since that time. Still, black identities in diaspora are positioned in post-colonial societies in which they are confronted with the consequences of slavery.

How Typhoon self-styles his identity in *Lobi Da Basi*, resonates with the Black Atlantic. His identity formation in *Lobi Da Basi* can be perceived as a journey with encounters between the colonial and the post-colonial time, between the cultural heritages of the Netherlands, Surinam, and the Black Atlantic, between various musical genres that are connected to different places around the Atlantic Ocean. Throughout his journey, Typhoon is receptive to the “inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas.”¹⁶ Moreover, he self-styles his own hybrid identity on the basis of a variety of world views and cultural heritages. This is apparent not only throughout the stories that are told within the lyrics on *Lobi Da Basi*, but also throughout the album’s musical content that is connected to various places.

This thesis is divided into two chapters: chapter 1 focuses on the lyrics that relate to Typhoon’s hybrid identity formation, and chapter 2 focuses on the incorporated musical genres’ link to Typhoon’s hybrid identity. Both chapters aim to give insight on how Typhoon self-styles his hybrid identity. Only the songs in which Typhoon evidently explores the Dutch, the Surinamese, and/or the Black Atlantic’s heritage are taken into account in the chapters. Some songs are analyzed twice, for the reason that their music and their lyrics reflect both on these heritages. If analyzed twice, in chapter 2 the interrelations between the song’s lyrical and musical content is considered.

¹⁵ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 99-103.

¹⁶ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, xi.

Chapter 1: How does Typhoon self-style his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrical content?

In 2013, Typhoon was asked to write a song for the Netherlands' 200th anniversary. Standing face to face with the Dutch royal couple, Princess Beatrix, and prime minister Mark Rutte in the Ridderzaal, the primary location for Dutch state ceremonies, Typhoon sang about his ambiguous perception of the Netherlands in "Van de Regen naar de Zon (From the Rain to the Sun)". In this second-to-last song of *Lobi Da Basi*, on the one hand, he praises the beauty of the country and the rich diversity of people within the Netherlands; on the other hand, he laments racial discrimination, addressing the figure of Black Pete – the servant of Sinterklaas (a similar figure to the American Santa Claus) with stereotyped blackface makeup, big golden earrings, and a black frizzy hair wig – as well as the Netherlands' prominent place in the history of colonial imperialism.

In "Van de Regen naar de Zon", as well as in the Dutch public debate on racism – Typhoon is one of the most prominent black voices in this debate – the duality of Typhoon's Surinamese, and Dutch heritage comes to the foreground. Apart from "Van de Regen naar de Zon", Typhoon explores these heritages and his position towards them throughout the lyrics of six other songs on *Lobi Da Basi*: "We Zijn Er (We Are Here/We Arrived)", "Als de Hemel Valt (When the Heaven Falls)", "Glenn 1984", "Zandloper (Sandglass)", "Ochtend Weer (Morning Again)", and "Niets Verwacht ([I have] Expected Nothing)". In these songs, he directly, or indirectly refers to his Surinamese and/or his Dutch roots. When bringing up his Surinamese roots, Typhoon mostly addresses and reflects on Surinam as a former colony.

To better understand the references and reflections on his Surinamese heritage, section 1.1 briefly explores Surinam's colonial history and its legacy of racism. Section 1.2 elaborates on De Witte's concept of the practice of self-styling that lies the foundation for the analysis of *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrical content in section 1.3 (as well as for *Lobi Da Basi's* musical content in section 2.3) – the core section of this chapter. This analysis aims to demonstrate how Typhoon forms and reflects on his hybrid identity throughout the aforementioned seven songs on *Lobi Da Basi*. With the gathered information, section 1.4 aims to answer the question that is central in this chapter's investigation: How does Typhoon self-style his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrical content?

1.1. Surinam's colonial history and its legacy of racism

Typhoon's performance of "Van de Regen naar de Zon" in the Ridderzaal took place well over a month after Rutte stated that Black Pete's skin color is simply unchangeable.¹⁷ Seven years later, Rutte claimed that he acknowledges the pain that children can experience during the yearly celebration of Sinterklaas on (and leading up to) 5 December in the Netherlands. Although this acknowledgement seems to be a progression, he still denounced that Black Pete is racist.¹⁸ In the same debate, Rutte (mis-)used the label of a "Dutch children's tradition" to hide the feast's colonial history. He denied that Black Pete is racist, by emphasizing that Black Pete is just a symbol.¹⁹ However, it is hard to claim that this "symbol" is not racist, for Sinterklaas' relation to Black Pete resembles the white master/black servant paradigm that explicitly comes to light in the history of slavery.²⁰

Surinam was a colony of the Netherlands from 1667 to 1954. In about the first 200 years from the moment that Surinam was colonized, the Surinamese national economy almost totally depended on the exploitation of plantation products, first mainly sugar, and later also coffee, cacao, cotton, and tobacco.²¹ On these plantations, which were owned by Dutch planters, enslaved people with African roots worked and lived under barbaric conditions. Many enslaved people escaped the plantations and fled to the forests of central Surinam. To this day, these are known as marron communities. To say the least, the societal structure of Surinam in this colonial period was highly hierarchical; the more European your bloodline was, the higher you were on the rank.²² Still, white people have a privileged position in the countries of the erstwhile Dutch colonial empire; a statement that is widely discussed, scrutinized, and supported in e.g. *White Innocence* by Gloria Wekker and in the essay bundle *Intersecting: Place, Sex, and Race*, edited by Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving.

¹⁷ "Rutte: Piet is nou eenmaal zwart," NOS, October 18, 2013, <https://nos.nl/artikel/564038-rutte-piet-is-nou-eenmaal-zwart.html> (accessed October 5, 2020).

¹⁸ ThePostOnline TPO, "Mark Rutte: Mijn standpunt over Zwarte Piet is geen kabinetsbeleid," YouTube video, 3:41, June 5, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WISVWRY3sI&ab_channel=ThePostOnlineTPO (accessed October 25, 2020).

¹⁹ Jan Hoedeman, "Mark Rutte: 'Zwarte Piet: dat lossen we op,'" *Het Parool*, June 6, 2020, <https://www.parool.nl/nederland/mark-rutte-zwarte-piet-dat-lossen-we-op~b0396703/?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.nl%2522> (accessed October 3, 2020).

²⁰ Yvon van der Pijl, "Black Pete, 'Smug Ignorance,' and the Value of Black Body in Postcolonial Netherlands," in *New West Guide* 88 (2014), 276.

²¹ Rudolf Asveer Jacob Van Lier, *Frontier Society: A social analysis of the history of Surinam*, 2nd edition, translated by Maria J. L. van Yperen (Berlijn: Springer-Science+Business Media, B.V., 1971, 6 and 20.

²² Van Lier, *Frontier Society: A social analysis of the history of Surinam*, 7.

In "Innocence, Smug Ignorance, Resentment: An Introduction to Dutch Racism," Essed and Hoving state that "dominant discourses miss historical explanations and dismiss the connection between present ethnic humiliations and the brutality of colonization, slavery, and antisemitism."²³ Although the power imbalance between the former colonizers and the former colonized is less extreme than during the colonial era, the hierarchical structure is still similar in the present postcolonial society of the erstwhile Dutch empire. Despite the abolition of slavery in 1863 in Surinam (after which plantation holders could still hold enslaved people for up to ten years when they had not still found new contract workers to replace them), one can still speak of a "Dutch sense of moral and cultural superiority" towards the former colony.²⁴ Even though Surinam has been independent since 1975 and the Netherlands host approximately 350.000 Dutch citizens with Surinamese roots, there is still a strong sense of the Dutch self and the Surinamese other; two concepts "that came into being in the Western modernity [that] were dependent on the politics of colonial relations."²⁵

The sense of moral and cultural superiority, as well as the sense of the self versus the other underlies Dutch racism (as well as that in other European countries). 25% of the Surinamese-Dutch citizens, against 4% of the autochthonous citizens in the Netherlands feel discriminated.²⁶ Racism is institutionalized in the Netherlands. Ethnic profiling occurs in various work fields, for example, at the Dutch government's tax department they check people with a second nationality more strictly. Racism is anchored in the Dutch language on race and ethnic relations in terms like allochthon and autochthon, and in indications like ethnic minorities. People of color are often referred to as people with a *little* color (in Dutch: mensen met een kleurtje) – the diminutive betrays a sense of discomfort, and obviously tries to minimize the issue. The terms and indications are placed against a white majority and contribute to the

²³ Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, "Innocence, Smug Ignorance, Resentment: An Introduction to Dutch Racism," in *Dutch Racism*, edited by Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2014), 11.

²⁴ Essed and Hoving, "Innocence, Smug Ignorance, Resentment: An Introduction to Dutch Racism," 24.

²⁵ Gloria Wekker, *Witte Onschuld: Paradoxen van kolonialisme en ras*, translated by Menno Grootveld (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 106.

²⁶ Joanne van der Leun and Maartje van der Woude, "Etnisch profileren in Nederland: wat weten we nou echt?," in *Tijdschrift voor de politie* 7 (2014), 26, <https://www.politieacademie.nl/kennisenonderzoek/kennis/mediatheek/pdf/89936.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2020).

establishment of a white normativity that rests on “the definition of whites as the norm or standard for human, and people of color as a deviation from that norm.”²⁷

Like Typhoon’s parents, many Surinamese migrants came to the Netherlands during the influx around Surinam’s independence day in 1975.²⁸ These people enjoyed certain privileges compared to those that stayed in Surinam, that Oostindie calls the “postcolonial bonus”. This postcolonial bonus involved “both ‘hard’ judicial civil rights, advantages in the realm of cultural capital (knowledge of and familiarity with the Dutch language and culture) and the space that could be demanded for cultural specificity.”²⁹ However, this postcolonial bonus, as well as the interest in the colonial background of Dutch citizens with roots in former colonial countries is evaporating.³⁰ Throughout the songs on *Lobi Da Basi* that refer to Surinam, whether or not emphasizing this country’s colonial past, Typhoon urges to instigate the listener’s interest in his Surinamese-Dutch identity.

1.2. Self-styling an identity

In “Heritage, Blackness and Afro-Cool: Styling Africanness in Amsterdam,” De Witte recognizes a trend of young people, born in the Netherlands, of African and Afro-Caribbean descent that search for ways to express their Africanness.³¹ These people emphasize African styles in their clothing, expressions throughout performing arts, and media presence. The way in which Typhoon emphasizes his Surinameseness in *Lobi Da Basi* resonates with this trend.³² It begins with the album cover – the consumer’s first impression of the album – that with its mainly yellow and orange colors, the sunglasses that Typhoon is wearing, and the parrot that is sitting on his shoulder, emits a Caribbean ambiance.

De Witte focuses on the aspect of self-styling and designing when considering identities, and posits “that any assessment of whether or to what extent something is ‘authentically African’ [or in this research’s case ‘authentically Surinamese’] makes

²⁷ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 25; Philomena Essed and Sandra Trienekens, “‘Who wants to feel white?’ Race, Dutch culture and contested identities,” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008), 53 – 55.

²⁸ Glenn De Randamie, “Typhoon eindelijk op het droge,” interview by Rens Lieman, *Esquire*, April 2015, <https://rensliean.nl/artikelen/esquire/typhoon-eindelijk-op-het-droge-glenn-de-randamie-lobi-da-basi-vpro-zomergasten/97> (Accessed October 20, 2020).

²⁹ Gert Oostindie, *Sixty-Five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 15.

³⁰ Oostindie, *Sixty-Five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing*, 241 – 242.

³¹ De Witte, “Heritage, Blackness and Afro-Cool Styling Africanness in Amsterdam,” 260.

³² I do not understand “Surinameseness” as a pure, distinct national quality. I approach Surinameseness in the same way as De Witte approaches “Africanness”: a *process of becoming*, and a *practice of self-styling*.

little sense.”³³ In line with De Witte’s theory on the practice of self-styling, this thesis focuses on how Typhoon *actively* engages with – not *passively* receives – his Surinameseness in *Lobi Da Basi*. I approach Typhoon’s Surinamese heritage as a resource from which he visually, musically, and lyrically self-styles his hybrid identity throughout the album.

The greater part of *Lobi Da Basi*’s references to Typhoon’s Surinamese heritage centralizes Surinam’s (colonial) past. Via these references, he explores and self-styles his identity that is not “grounded in the archaeology, but in the *re-telling* of [this] past.”³⁴ In the exploration of his roots, Typhoon not only connects himself to the location of Surinam but also to the location of the Netherlands and the local environment in which he grew up. Contemporary rap is often characterized by explicit references to places and locations; via “socio-spatial information” in their lyrics (e.g. particular street names or neighborhoods), rappers embed their identity in their local region and signify a home.³⁵ I approach Typhoon’s local/Dutch heritage as a second resource from which Typhoon self-styles his hybrid identity in *Lobi Da Basi*.

Apart from Surinam and the Netherlands, also other locations serve as a resource from which Typhoon draws for the formation of his identity on *Lobi Da Basi*. Most explicitly via shout outs, that are commonly used in hip hop to verbally show respect “to members of someone’s crew or to significant people, based on childhood or family ties, or a certain style that the artist must acknowledge,” Typhoon connects himself to many parts of the world.³⁶ The local and the global seem to go hand in hand in these shout-outs, as well as within Typhoon’s other lyrical expressions. Typhoon educates his listeners about the beauty of diverse cultures, at the same time attempts to unite seemingly separate worlds. He verbally creates a world within *Lobi Da Basi*, that is based on a cosmopolitanism that envisions “a form of global citizenship; a membership in and identification with a world community that transcends locality – whether that locality be tribe, culture, race or nation – and which respects differences nonetheless.”³⁷

In the following section, I scrutinize *Lobi Da Basi*’s lyrical references to Typhoon’s Surinamese, and Dutch heritage, as well as the lyrics that bring to light his cosmopolitan ideology. With this, I aim to clarify how Typhoon textually self-styles

³³ De Witte, “Heritage, Blackness and Afro-Cool Styling Africanness in Amsterdam,” 264.

³⁴ Hall, “Cultural identity and diaspora,” 224.

³⁵ Murray Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, space, and place in rap and hip-hop* (Middletown and Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), xvii.

³⁶ Elaine Richardson, *Hiphop Literacies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 62.

³⁷ Julian Go, “Fanon’s Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism,” in *European Journal of Social Theory* 16, no. 2 (2013), 5.

his hybrid identity within *Lobi Da Basi*. The purpose of the lyrical analysis in section 1.3 is not to find out to what extent Typhoon is Surinamese, Dutch, African, or any other nationality, but to demonstrate that the phenomenon of hybridization lies at the heart of Typhoon's practice of self-styling his identity.

1.3. Typhoon's roots exploration in *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrical content

The majority of the songs on *Lobi Da Basi* – seven of the twelve songs (of which one is an instrumental) – touch on subjects that have to do with Typhoon's Surinamese heritage, his Dutch/local heritage, and his perceived friction of these two heritages. In the first song of the album, "We Zijn Er", Typhoon explores and self-styles the black part of his hybrid identity. Typhoon plays the main role in the video clip of the song, that visualizes a story of a slave couple escaping a plantation. For the making of the clip, he chose to experience how it is to be a slave – as far as this is possible – by letting people whip him like slaves were whipped in times of colonial slavery.³⁸

Typhoon's poetic lyrics leave the storyline more to the imagination of the listener, though, the first verse's relation to the history of slavery is obvious:

As beautiful as the forest is, so dangerous is the escape route / But anything better than returning to the master / Long ago that I could speak freely free / We will not go back, never go back / We arrived / Yes we arrived.³⁹

Within these lyrics, Typhoon fluently switches from past time to present time; from the perspective of a black slave to the perspective of a freed black slave; from an I-perspective to a we-perspective. In the way he switches from perspectives in this verse, as well as throughout the whole song, it is not immediately clear when this story takes place and about who this story actually is. In an appearance on the television show *RTL late night*, Typhoon clarified that the song is about a loving couple in times of slavery, though, he also affirms that the story can be interpreted in different ways.⁴⁰

In Dutch, the title of the song "We Zijn Er" can have two meanings: 1) we are here, and 2) we arrived. In relation to the second last sentence of the first verse ("We

³⁸ RTL Late Night met Twan Huys, "Typhoon over zweepslagen: "Ik wilde het echt ervaren" – RTL LATE NIGHT," YouTube video, 3:11, March 9, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rPUv7CK-Fbs&ab_channel=RTLLateNightmetTwanHuys (accessed September 9, 2020).

³⁹ "Zo mooi als het woud is, zo gevaarlijk de vluchtroute / Maar alles beter dan naar de baas terug te moeten / Lang geleden dat ik vrij, vrijuit kon spreken / Wij gaan niet terug, nooit meer terug / We zijn er / Ja we zijn er."

⁴⁰ RTL Late Night met Twan Huys, "Typhoon over zweepslagen: "Ik wilde het echt ervaren" – RTL LATE NIGHT."

will not go back, never go back”) the latter translation is most appropriate.⁴¹ From the first verse and the song’s chorus (“We arrived / Yes we arrived / We are still here”) one can understand that “we” refers to black people that arrived, and are still here after a long journey of colonialism and slavery.⁴² It makes explicit the association of the black diaspora with travel, while also emphasizing that black people are (and have long been) part of Dutch society.

Except for Typhoon’s Surinamese-Dutch identity, there is no reason to claim that this “we” refers to people with Surinamese roots, moreover, Typhoon speaks from a general post-colonial black we-perspective. Further, the references to the escape route for slaves from Mississippi to the north, “the railroad Underground”, and the American Gospel song “Wade in the Water” within the song’s lyrics (“to the underground, followed by dogs / waiting in the water”) affirm that it is not only about Surinam’s history of slavery, but about expressing and connecting to a broader black diasporic identity.⁴³ With this broader scope, the song resonates with pan-Africanism: a movement that aims to strengthen the bonds of people of African descent.⁴⁴

Also the lyrics “Oh god, give me strength” that are repeatedly sung in a casual call-and-response kind of way (resembling the style of a work song / gospel song) by a small choir establish the song’s pan-Africanism.⁴⁵ The presence of the gospel choir affirms that Typhoon is not the only person going through slavery. With this choir, and the “we” that he sings about, Typhoon constitutes a community of black people buried with the history of slavery. In an interview, De Randamie explains that he always identified himself as a descendant of slaves, “the underdog, [and] the black pages of Dutch history.”⁴⁶ In “We Zijn Er”, he expresses this suppressed part of his hybrid identity, at the same time letting go of it. With the song’s last words, “yes, we arrived,” Typhoon symbolically closes this chapter of colonial slavery, and opens the possibility to focus more on a “‘we’ [that] is defined by where we go / not where we were” within the album.⁴⁷ Still, in the remaining songs further on in *Lobi Da Basi* that

⁴¹ “Wij gaan niet terug, nooit meer terug.”

⁴² “We zijn er / Ja we zijn er / We zijn er nog”

⁴³ “Naar de ondergrondse / Achtevolgd door honden / Wachtend in het water”

⁴⁴ Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 1.

⁴⁵ “Oh god, geef mij kracht.”

⁴⁶ “Van de underdog, van de zwarte bladzijdes in de Nederlandse geschiedenis.” In Glenn de Randamie, “Typhoon: ‘Niets is zwart-wit,’” interview by Timo Pisart, *3voor12vpro*, July 11, 2014, <https://3voor12.vpro.nl/artikelen/overzicht/2014/juli/Typhoon-interview.html> (accessed September 9, 2020).

⁴⁷ “ja, we zijn er”; “‘Wij’ wordt bepaald door waar we gaan / niet waar we waren (in “Van de Regen naar de Zon”).”

refer to Typhoon's Surinamese roots ("Glenn 1984", "Niets verwacht", and "Van de Regen naar de Zon"), Typhoon memorizes the colonial history of Surinam.

Setting aside the subject of colonial slavery, Typhoon opens a new chapter of love and inclusiveness. In the second song of the album, "Als de Hemel Valt", Typhoon most obviously advocates his cosmopolitan ideology. The openness for a variety of truths is exactly what Typhoon stands for within the song, as he denounces the opposite: "Yes, we want to be right / and back it by the ideas of preferably one truth."⁴⁸ In the chorus of the song, he plays with the dogmatic truths of the Christian and the Islamic religions – Typhoon himself is Christian – by making God feminine, and friends with Allah.

When the heaven falls, the heaven fails / the pressure on God increases, and she carries it all / But when heaven falls, we will have to carry it together / and then she and Allah can get away together for a while.⁴⁹

With his (religious) syncretism, Typhoon attempts to fade the boundaries between different world views. He actively practices hybridization.

By specifically referring to the Dutch economic crisis in 2008 ("We want more / plus the crisis has made everyone stingy"), Typhoon uses the local to strengthen his cosmopolitan stance.⁵⁰ Same as in "Als de Hemel Valt", one can perceive a strong relation between the global and the local in "Glenn 1984" (Typhoon's first name and birth date). Next to naming artists from all over the globe – Jean Michel Basquiat, Margritte, Dali, and Satchmo (Luis Armstrong) – Typhoon also emphasizes his position in the Dutch hip hop music scene. In the song's lyrics ("What my first elpee means for a generation / is for me Binnenlandse Funk / Or Documents and a bit later Eigen Wereld"), he places his first album next to the albums of the three (former) prominent Dutch hip hop formations, Extince, Postmen, and Opgezwolle.⁵¹ With these shout-outs, Typhoon linguistically embeds his identity in the Dutch hip hop realm. At the same time, this connection to the local is itself simultaneously a way to draw a

⁴⁸ "Ja, we willen ons gelijk / opgehangen aan ideeën van het liefst één waarheid"

⁴⁹ "Als de hemel valt, de hemel faalt / De druk op God wordt groter en ze draagt het allemaal / Maar als de hemel valt, zullen we het samen moeten dragen / en kunnen zij en Allah samen even weg."

⁵⁰ "We willen meer / plus door de crisis is iedereen skeer"

⁵¹ "Wat m'n plaat is voor een generatie / is voor mij Binnenlandse Funk / Of Documents en wat later Eigen Wereld"

connection with the hip hop of the US, that from the genre's very beginning was closely linked to urban environments.⁵²

In other lyrical fragments of *Lobi Da Basi*, Typhoon refers more specifically to his local roots. In the two songs "Zandloper" and "Ochtend Weer", references are made to the Fakkelfbrigade: a hip hop formation that is build up around Opgezwolle – a prominent hip hop formation from the local hip hop scene of Zwolle – of which Typhoon is a member since 2008. The two co-members of the Fakkelfbrigade, Phreako Rico and Sticky Steez, collaborate on respectively "Zandloper" and "Ochtend Weer". These collaborations with Typhoon's friends from Zwolle, as well as the references that are made to the Fakkelfbrigade within these two songs, affirm that Typhoon stays close to his local roots.

"Niets Verwacht" – the tenth song on the album – is the only song that explicitly notes Surinam; "Glenn 1984" shortly and indirectly refers to Surinam as his mother country and as a former colony ("I talk with my homies about going back to the mother country / though this seems comical / We miss the financial support like old colonies"), and "Van de Regen naar de Zon" only shortly notes the Surinamese people.⁵³ "Niets Verwacht" is the song on *Lobi Da Basi* in which Typhoon most elaborately explores his Surinamese heritage. In the song, he engages with the country and his familial relationships: "About my parents, about the sun / abandoned plantations and the marrons / These are the heroes like Anton de Kom / These are the days, this is my ground."⁵⁴ Here, he praises Anton de Kom, who was "one of the first in the Caribbean [...] to rewrite the history of his country in an anti-colonial manner"; later in the son, he mentions Carlo Jones, who is a Surinamese saxophonist and doyen of the kaseko music.⁵⁵

With these explicit shout-outs to his parents, Anton de Kom, and Carlo Jones, Typhoon engages with the Surinamese cultural heritage. Thereby, he creates a Surinamese space within his lyrics, that strengthen the mentioned people's "group identity" – the Surinamese identity. He emphasizes his father's relation to the country by mentioning that he "lived from, and worked on the field," and that he was a

⁵² Lidia Kniaż, "My City, My 'Hood, My Street: Ghetto Spaces in American Hip-Hop Music," in *New Horizons in English Studies* 2 (2017), 114.

⁵³ "Ik praat met m'n homies over teruggaan naar het moederland / al lijkt het komisch / We missen de financiële middelen als de oude kolonies"

⁵⁴ "Over mijn ouders, over de zon / verlaten plantages en de marrons / Dit zijn de helden als Anton de Kom / Dit zijn de dagen, dit is mijn grond"

⁵⁵ Peter Meel, "Anton de Kom and the formative phase of Surinamese Decolonization," in *New West Indian Guide* 83, no. 3&4 (2009), 249 – 280.

“Sranang kondre mang!”; meaning Surinamese compatriot in Sranan Tongo.⁵⁶ Together with the title of the song, this is the only expression in the Surinamese lingua franca that Typhoon makes on the album. Typhoon explains that as part of the colonial legacy he did not learn the language at home: “[t]hat also stems from slavery, if you spoke Surinamese you must be a bit dense. The better your Dutch was, the better your reputation.”⁵⁷ Instead of giving in to the language’s lower status, he uses the language to self-style his Surinamese-Dutch Identity. By citing a Dutch poem in the song’s chorus, Typhoon does not fully give in to his Surinameseness, moreover, he opposes both his mother country’s cultural heritages to emphasize his hyphenated identity’s duality.

As Surinamese-Dutch person that experienced Dutch racism from the marginalised position, Typhoon tells a story in the second last song on *Lobi Da Basi*, “Van de Regen naar de Zon” – the song with which this chapter opened – that is closely related to himself. First, the story gives a quite positive account of Dutch history and contemporary society. Typhoon praises the typically Dutch town canals that are lighted by night, the Dutch financial safety net, and the place that is offered to freedom searchers. However, as for example comes to light in the first sentence of the song’s second verse (“So beautiful, so fresh / but also the exact opposite”) his praising words are always put in context.⁵⁸

The song brings to light the dark side of the colonial history that for a long time has been underexposed in the historiography of the Netherlands.

For the grain, for the spices / ware houses, canal houses, shipping companies / We saw so much, are so big, but when it turns / we see mass murder, apartheid, slavery and slave-trade / Without darkness, the light would not know itself / Hence, the ignorance around 5 December.⁵⁹

Typhoon takes in the role of the narrator of Dutch history, including the silenced part of it. With this, he facilitates the basic knowledge that is needed to understand how racism manifests in the Netherlands. With his Surinamese heritage, Typhoon can “claim greater global authenticity in terms of the discourses of marginalization and

⁵⁶ “leefde en werkte op het land.”

⁵⁷ “Dat komt ook nog voort uit de slavernij, je sprak dom als je Surinaams sprak. Dus hoe beter je Nederlands was, hoe beter je aanzien.” In Glenn de Randamie, “In onze opvoeding ging het om zo min mogelijk opvallen,” interview by Minou op den Velde.

⁵⁸ “Zo mooi, zo schoon / zo ook precies het tegenovergestelde.”

⁵⁹ “Voor het graan, voor de specerijen / pakhuizen vol, grachtenpanden rederijen / We zagen zoveel, zijn zo groot, maar als ’t kantelt / zien we massamoord, apartheid, slavernij en de slavenhandel / Zonder donker kan het licht zichzelf niet kennen / Vandaar de onwetendheid rond 5 december.”

racial identification.”⁶⁰ The song’s message on racism would not resonate as much when performed by a white person.

In the song, Typhoon only once directly addresses Surinam when he states that “the Surinamese, Anti’s, Turkish, Moroccan, Indonesian, and Polish people / give color and make [the Netherlands] bigger.”⁶¹ Herein, Surinam is placed next to other countries that are linked to the Netherlands for their former colonist-colonized relationship, as well as to the countries from which migrant workers came to the Netherlands between 1960 and 1980. In this reference, one can observe that Typhoon does not only stand out for his own position in the Netherlands as a Surinamese-Dutch person, but also other marginalized citizens of the Netherlands. In this call for (cosmopolitan) inclusiveness, he attempts to create an openness to the Dutch “others”, including himself.

1.4. Typhoon’s hybrid identity construction throughout *Lobi Da Basi’s* lyrical content

From the opening song, “We Zijn Er”, to the second to last song of the album, “Van de Regen naar de Zon”, Typhoon makes a journey that begins in times of colonial slavery and ends at the present time in which he stands up against slavery’s legacy of racism. Within these two songs, and the five songs “Als de Hemel Valt”, “Glenn 1984”, “Zandloper”, “Ochtend Weer”, “Niets Verwacht”, Typhoon constructs his hybrid identity by referring to, and reflecting on his Surinamese and/or his Dutch roots. As shown in section 1.3, he does so by focusing on different aspects: some songs more deeply reflect on colonialism, slavery, and racism, whereas other songs refer just briefly to Typhoon’s local roots.

From the hybrid identity that Typhoon constructs throughout the album, he is able to speak from different vantage points. The enslaved person and black person in diaspora in “We Zijn Er”; the Surinamese-Dutch person in “Niets Verwacht”; and the all-knowing professor of Dutch racism in “Van de Regen naar de Zon” – all these persons are Typhoon, not despite, but “with and through” the different vantage points.⁶² Especially these three songs (“We Zijn Er”, “Niets Verwacht” and “Van de Regen naar de Zon”) relate to Typhoon’s position in the Netherlands as a Surinamese-

⁶⁰ Alastair Pennycook, “Language, Localization, and the Real: Hip-Hop and the Global Spread of Authenticity,” in *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 6, no. 2 (2007), 102.

⁶¹ “Surinamers, Anti’s, Turken, Marokkanen, Indo’s en Polen / Het geeft ons kleur, het maakt ons groter.”

⁶² Hall, “Cultural identity and diaspora,” 225.

Dutch person and the internal conflict that he experiences for being different than the normative white Dutch person.

With these songs, Typhoon opened up a dialogue on racism. Moreover, he created a base upon which he can reflect within the Dutch public debate on racism and (as part of this) the “Zwarte Pietendiscussie” – the heated public debate on whether Black Pete is racist or not. In this public debate, as well as in the interviews that concentrate on his personal experiences on the topic of racism, Typhoon is not afraid to be open, vulnerable, and share his emotions.⁶³ In a way, *Lobi Da Basi*'s songs interplay with his expressions in the media: the songs strengthen Typhoon's expressions, as well as vice versa. Therefore, *Lobi Da Basi*'s lyrics concerning his hybrid identity cannot be properly understood as isolated within the album.

Via the sociospatial references and shout-outs in *Lobi Da Basi*, Typhoon created Surinamese and Dutch “spaces”. In the album, he tries to become “more Surinamese”, as well as “more Dutch” by actively connecting himself to both spaces. As he negotiates between both identities, he creates a space in-between from which he self-styles his hybrid identity. From this space, he tries to fade boundaries by hybridizing different world views that “belong to” different nations, cultures, and religions. At the same time, he self-styles his hybrid identity by combining these world views. For Typhoon, it is more about sharing his journey to his self with his listeners, than showing his listeners this self. This journey to his self resonates with the journey of black diasporic communities, hybridizing their different heritages.

⁶³ VPRO, “Typhoon in het kort,” *VPRO Zomergasten* video, 19:49, July 19, 2020, <https://www.vpro.nl/programmas/zomergasten/zomergasten-2020-in-het-kort.html> (accessed October 9, 2020).

Chapter 2: How does Typhoon self-style his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi's* musical content?

Two years after *Lobi Da Basi's* release, together with his friends and colleagues Rico & Sticks, Typhoon organized the biggest Dutch language hip hop show in the Dutch hip hop history until thus far in Amsterdam's Ziggo Dome. The show became a milestone for the three artists, the genre, and the fans.⁶⁴ Within the show, Typhoon effectively programmed his softer repertoire (or in Rico's words "his spiritual soul-jazz songs") against Rico and Sticks' simpler and rawer hip hop beats, emphasizing the contrast between his music and that of his colleagues.⁶⁵ This searching for contrasts, as well as the incorporation of a variety of musical genres, clearly are central for Typhoon's work style, especially in *Lobi Da Basi's* musical content.

During his musical career, Typhoon collaborated with various artists and initiatives. To name a few: his hip hop friends Rico and Sticks, the jazz formation of the New Cool Collective for the album *Chocolade*, the interdisciplinary artist Neske Beks for the song "Sprokkeldagen" on his debut album, and the Dutch children's television program *Klokhuis*. This range of activities shows that Typhoon has an exploring character, and therefore Rico describes Typhoon as an adventurer.⁶⁶ Typhoon explains that all these collaborations in some way contributed, and still contribute to his artistic works.⁶⁷

Lobi Da Basi is based on the musical inspiration that Typhoon obtained from the variety of collaborations that he had throughout his musical career. In addition, the inspirational journeys he made to Surinam and New Orleans were of direct influence on the album. Typhoon incorporated kaseko (considered as the national popular music of Surinam) in *Lobi Da Basi*, and various other musical genres that he rediscovered on these journeys.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Sticks (Junte Uiterwijk), "Rico & Sticks x Typhoon in de Ziggo Dome," interview by editors of BNNVARA, BNNVARA, October 4, 2018, <https://www.bnnvara.nl/artikelen/rico-sticks-x-typhoon-in-de-ziggo-dome> (accessed October 5, 2020).

⁶⁵ "[...] zijn spirituele soul jazz nummers." In BNNVARA, "Rico x Sticks x Typhoon," BNNVARA video, 50:07, October 8, 2018, <https://www.npo3fm.nl/nieuws/3fm/386203-kijk-terug-rico-sticks-typhoon-in-de-ziggo-dome> (accessed October 5, 2020).

⁶⁶ BNNVARA, "Rico x Sticks x Typhoon."

⁶⁷ HIJSTUBE, "Interview: Typhoon 'Live muziek is leven,'" YouTube video, 9:34, July 19, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMCIEC1LfnC&ab_channel=HIJSTUBE (accessed October 19, 2020).

⁶⁸ Terry Agerkop, Kenneth Bilby and Peter Manuel, "Suriname, Republic of. [Surinam]," in *Grove Music Online*, edited by Deane L. Root et al. New York [etc.] (Oxford University Press, 2001-2020). <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000047445?rsk=y=xVDwmM&result=1> (accessed May 30, 2020).

After an exploration on kaseko music in section 2.1, in section 2.2, I define how I consider the relation between popular music and the black diaspora. This perception functions as the theoretical framework of section 2.3, in which I demonstrate how various musical genres come together in *Lobi Da Basi*. The three songs “We Zijn Er (We arrived)”, “Als de Hemel Valt (If Heaven Falls)”, and “Niets Verwacht ([I have] expected nothing)” are central in this analysis. From the gathered information, and with the perspective of identity construction as a practice of self-styling, section 2.4 aims to answer the question that is central in this chapter’s investigation: How does Typhoon self-style his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi*’s musical content?

2.1. Kaseko music

The music of the enslaved in Surinam has been of main importance in the formation of the present Surinamese musical identity. Due to the vast amount of musical interactions that have been taking place between various groups of different backgrounds since Surinam was colonized in 1667 by the Netherlands, the musical genres from Surinam have undergone multiple transformations. These transformations have led to a variety of musical genres (among others: winti, kawina, bigi pokoe, lobi singi, bazuinkoren, and kaseko) that are generally perceived as belonging to the Surinamese musical identity. Of these musical genres, kaseko has been acknowledged as the national popular music of Surinam.⁶⁹

Kaseko music is a hybrid creole music, that has undergone transformations due to inland, and outland contributions to the genre. The term “creole” operates on two levels here: 1) on the level of the people that themselves are the children of parents with different ethnic backgrounds and 2), on the level of kaseko music that is the child of differently rooted antecedents. As a consequence of the emergence of the radio after WO II, more and more people were getting exposed to other countries’ music. Guyanese *badji*, Trinidadian calypso and soca, Latin American salsa, Jamaican reggae, and North American funk all took their part in what is now considered the national popular music of the country.⁷⁰

The rhythmical core section of the kaseko ensemble, the drums, and the skratji (a big bass drum with a little cymbal on top of it), are central to kaseko music. Together with the drummer, the skratji player steers the band with “typical Surinamese swing

⁶⁹ Agerkop, Bilby and Manuel, “Suriname, Republic of. [Surinam].”

⁷⁰ Agerkop, Bilby and Manuel, “Suriname, Republic of. [Surinam].”

rhythms.”⁷¹ A bass guitar (replacing the double bass), at least one electrical guitar (replacing the banjo), at least one wind instrument (most commonly trumpet, saxophone, and/or trombone), a key instrument, and additional percussion (maraca’s, a cowbell, sometimes congas) complete the kaseko formation.

A kaseko song is mostly introduced by a (3-voiced) choir or wind section. The lead singer takes over, and the choir repeats him, whether or not with a slightly different rhythm and/or melody. The lyrics are mainly based on traditional songs in Sranan Tongo (sometimes combined with African languages), or on Dutch folk and children’s songs.⁷² On a certain moment in the music, the call-and-response themes occur in shortened versions, after which a wind instrument takes over the lead singer in his “calls”; an improvisation from the electric guitarist or one of the wind instrumentalists follows on the basic scheme of 2 or 3 chords; vocals interfere again and often bring the song to a sudden end.

The big role of call-and-response in kaseko comes from African music’s influence on the musical genre. Via winti and kawina, this call-and-response technique found its way to the musical genre (kaseko songs are often re-arranged kawina songs).⁷³ In kawina, call-and-response is even considered as the main principle. The genre’s motto “Wan man e troki, den trawan e piki’ means: one singer introduces the theme, and the others repeat this.”⁷⁴ Via its antecedents, Kaseko music can be traced back to Africa. Though, the genre cannot be understood without considering the encounters that took place in its development. Kaseko is itself reflective of an engagement with the music of the black diaspora, underlining the relation between travel and identity.

2.2. The relation between popular music and the black diaspora

People always tend to categorize music, and associating music with national, cultural, or racial identity is common. Why people categorize music in this way, cannot be understood without considering modern thinking’s tendency to fixate and categorize nations, cultures, peoples, ethnicities, race, and gender. When one delves into the

⁷¹ [...] typische Surinaamse swing ritmen.” In J. Nelom, “De ontwikkeling van de muziek,” in *Honderd jaar Suriname: Gedenkboek in verband met een eeuw immigratie 1873 – 1973*, edited by J.H. Adhin (Paramaribo: Nationale Stichting Hindoestaanse Immigratie, 1973), 69.

⁷² Bert Bouquet, “Kaseko-muziek in Nederland: Een vorm van populaire Surinaamse muziek in verandering – een terreinverkenning,” (Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1985), 86.

⁷³ Jan Voorhoeve and Ursy M. Lichtveld, *Creole Drum: An anthology of creole literature of Surinam* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1975), 54.

⁷⁴ Michiel van Kempen, *Een geschiedenis van de Surinaamse literatuur Deel 4* (Paramaribo: Uitgeverij Okopipi, 2002), 35.

relation between music and the black diaspora, the categories of “national”, “cultural”, and “racial” music become less relevant. On the base of Gilroy’s counterculture of modernity, the Black Atlantic, this section aims to give grip on how I understand the musical diversity within *Lobi Da Basi*.

In cultural criticism, a nationalist focus on nations’ (inner) dynamics has been dominant. According to Gilroy, this focus has come with (and is part of) modernity. With his *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, he proposes a different focus when considering social structures and cultural dynamics, namely, the Atlantic Ocean. Gilroy argues that people, ideas, and countries around the Atlantic have been shaped by movement; the movement of ideas, ships, and thinkers. This movement includes the brutal forced migration of black people from Africa to the Caribbean, America, and Europe; the migrating of black people in our post-colonial world; but also the ideas, and knowledge that came along with them.

As became apparent in the first chapter of this thesis, the history of slavery and the “re-telling” of this history plays a major role in the identity formation of black people in diaspora. Gilroy centralizes the shared core of the experience of slavery, though, at the same time states that there is no such thing as an essentializing identity for all black people. With his proposal for an “anti-anti-essentialist” perspective on the matter of identity, Gilroy fills in the theoretical gap between anti-essentialism and essentialism. His anti-anti-essentialist view acknowledges and centralizes the lived reality of historically and socially constructed identities, at the same time undermines the essentializing aspect of these identities.

Both essentialist and anti-essentialist positions are present in the discussion on black music. Whereas the first ascribes black music’s qualities to “the ethnic essence of blackness, [the second resists] the existence of any such unifying, organic phenomenon.”⁷⁵ With his anti-anti-essentialist perspective on the topic of black music, Gilroy focuses on the movement around the Atlantic Ocean throughout history, that one can literally hear back in all popular music. Although jazz, ragtime, gospel, swing, bebop, r&b, rock and roll, soul, pop, and hip hop can be all eventually traced back to blues that itself “evolved out of the slave hollers, spirituals, and free-styling, melismatic improvised melodies,” these genres cannot be understood without recognizing the trans-Atlantic cross-fertilization around the Atlantic Ocean.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 100.

⁷⁶ William C. Banfield, *Cultural Codes, Makings of a Black Music Philosophy: An Interpretive History from Spirituals to Hip Hop* (Lanham, Toronto, and Plymouth: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 2010), 101.

In the previous chapter, I scrutinized how Typhoon self-styled his hybrid identity throughout *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrics based on the inspirational resources of his Surinamese, and his Dutch heritage, and the ideology of cosmopolitanism. Although less explicitly, also *Lobi Da Basi's* incorporated musical genres link to locations, all in the area of the Atlantic Ocean. In line with Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic, the following section focuses on the encounters, the coming together, and the *movement* of the musical genres in *Lobi Da Basi*. To concisely illustrate this movement, only respectively "We Zijn Er", "Als de Hemel Valt", and "Niets Verwacht" – the three songs that most densely alternate between musical genres – will be taken into account in this analysis.

2.3. *Lobi Da Basi's* incorporated musical genres

Lobi Da Basi's musical journey departs from the beginning of the history of slavery. After the filmic introduction of the album's opening song "We Zijn Er" in which birds softly sing and footsteps generate sounds from crunching branches on dry grassland grounds, a spiritual-like song with the text, "Oh God, give me strength," fades in. Some choir singers are softly improvising melodies on the same text, which contributes to the informal setting. The link is easily made to a group of enslaved people that are working on the plantation. The background noises in the song establish this scenery and contribute to the song's story that alternately takes place in the colonial, and post-colonial time.

After the first verse in which the choir is still singing the spiritual on the background, a double bass starts to play an improvised blues line. Resembling the historical development of hip hop, "We Zijn Er" progresses from a spiritual to a bluesy jazz kind of style, and eventually to hip hop (in exactly the middle of the song the hip hop beat kicks in). The choir is present throughout the whole song, continually alternating between different musical genres that are tied to black diaspora identities: sometimes they shout in the way that was done in slave hollers; sometimes they sing soulful background "oohs" and "aahs"; sometimes they double Typhoon's rap texts like it is done in regular hip hop songs.

At the end of the song, only the choir (singing the spiritual) remains, which suggests the song to end at the same place as where it began: the plantation. Differently now, Typhoon is not departing, but looking back to this place where his musical journey, as well as the musical journey of popular music in general, began. At the same time, he looks back to four hundred years of trans-Atlantic slavery. In the music video

of the song, this is visually emphasized: after Typhoon played the role of an enslaved person during the whole clip, the last shot of the clip is that of Typhoon holding his fist up high at a live show, while his audience is singing “We Zijn Er”.

The album version stays closer to the world view of black identities by repeating the spiritual of the song’s introduction. The video version broadens the scope by involving the voices of the (mainly white) people in the audience and seems to have an easier ending for a broader audience. It closes the chapter of black slavery more evidently, at least, for a white audience. The video clip is extended with a musical fragment of the fourth song of the album, “Ijswater”, that strongly resembles the energetic Dick Dale’s surf rock song “Misirlou” from *Pulp Fiction*. Also for the energizing quality of this tail, the video clip version emits a more positive look to the future.

Whereas in “We Zijn Er” only musical genres that originated in America are incorporated, the second song of the album, “Als de Hemel Valt”, also includes kaseko. Typhoon states that the Surinamese warmth pervades throughout all *Lobi Da Basi*’s songs, still, “Als de Hemel Valt” is the only song that explicitly includes Surinamese music.⁷⁷ It does so, by incorporating the music of Lieve Hugo (alias for Julius Theodoor Hugo Uiterloo), generally regarded as the king of kaseko.⁷⁸ The introduction of “Als de Hemel Valt” is a slightly adjusted version of the introduction to Lieve Hugo’s “Profosang”, originally performed by a bazuinkoor and performed here by Typhoon’s own horn section.” For Typhoon, the introduction of the song emits the need for support, inspiration, and devotion: three concepts that are of main importance in Protestantism – the religion that Typhoon upholds.⁷⁹

After the solemn introduction of “Als de Hemel Valt”, the song fluently transitions into groovy rap-music. From this point, various genres are mingled up throughout the song. Just after the drum takes over the bazuinkoor, funky rhythmic jazz-chords tune in from the guitar. A strong hip hop beat steers Typhoon’s rap lyrics, and soon high-pitched violins and 3-voiced female backing vocals (a sample of Aretha

⁷⁷ RTV Rijnmond Extra, “Bekijk hier het interview met rapper Typhoon,” YouTube video, 4:04, July 13, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGVp6xhwqEc&ab_channel=RTVRijnmondExtra (accessed September 15, 2020); Glenn de Randamie, “The bigger picture: Typhoon over de Surinaamse invloed op Lobi Da Basi,” interview by Atze de Vrieze.

⁷⁸ Glenn de Randamie, “The bigger picture: Typhoon over de Surinaamse invloed op Lobi Da Basi,” interview by Atze de Vrieze.

⁷⁹ RTV Rijnmond Extra, “Bekijk hier het interview met rapper Typhoon.”

Franklin) give the song a jazzy and soulful touch.⁸⁰ The fragment of the song's bazuinkoor introduction that is played on the background when Typhoon sings "Everything is already inside," implies that this message is rooted in the Surinamese cultural heritage.

At the end of the second chorus, a trumpet line in swing precedes the kaseko-like coda of the song. Whereas earlier the drums accentuated the second and the fourth beat in 4/4 time, now the drums ruffle occasionally on the second beat, which is a typical kaseko feature. Just like the drum patterns, the melodies that are played by the horn section are full of syncopations. Although the coda clearly resembles kaseko music, the music's main feature, call-and-responses, is lacking. Typhoon explains that the coda of "Als de Hemel Valt" is the band's interpretation of Surinamese music and that together with the introduction of the song, it functions as a homage to Lieve Hugo and kaseko music in the first place.⁸¹

"Als de Hemel Valt", like most kaseko songs, abruptly ends. In the seven songs that follow, the musical genres rhythm and blues, surf rock, reggae, gospel, jazz appear but most of all hip hop is central. The tempo in which the musical genres alternate, is nothing compared to the rapid musical genre alternations within the antepenultimate song of the album, "Niets Verwacht". This song begins with a rubato jazzy improvisation on saxophone by Benjamin Hermans (to whom Typhoon also gives a shout-out in the lyrics of the song); a counterpoint accordion melody accompanies the saxophone and smoothly transforms into a typical waltz motive over which Typhoon sings the Dutch poem, "De Nachtegalen", on a melancholic melody. A comparison to "smartlap" – typical Dutch folk music that can be best compared to "tear-jerkers" or "croon songs" – is not far-fetched for this introduction.

As came to light in the first chapter, "Niets Verwacht" contains the lyrics that most explicitly indicate the duality of Typhoon's hybrid identity. This duality within the song's lyrics is enforced by the contrast of the song's incorporated musical genres. The style of smartlap is recognizable in the first two verses, where the style emphasises the Dutchness of the poem and contributes to the nostalgic effect of Typhoon's retrospection on his familial roots in the second verse. The Memphis soul kind of riffs on the electric guitar, bass guitar, and saxophone that pop up after the first two verses,

⁸⁰ Glenn de Randamie, "Groot interview met rapper, filosoof en priester van de liefde: Typhoon," interview by editors of For Him Entertainment, *FHM*, October 16, 2014, <https://fhm.nl/groot-interview-met-rapper-filosoof-en-de-priester-van-de-liefde-typhoon/> (accessed October 17, 2020).

⁸¹ RTV Rijnmond Extra, "Bekijk hier het interview met rapper Typhoon;" Glenn de Randamie, "The bigger picture: Typhoon over de Surinaamse invloed op Lobi Da Basi," interview by Atze de Vrieze.

abruptly take the listener, as well as Typhoon, out of the sentimental bubble that is not coming back to this extent in the song. The rhythmical rap texts of Typhoon and his brother Blaxtar that follow still reflect on their familial roots. Though, supported by the hip hop beats in quadruple time, the lyrics emit a more down to earth vibe. It is the “hip hop that is not stuffed, but gives space to the story.”⁸²

2.4. Typhoon’s hybrid identity construction throughout *Lobi Da Basi*’s musical content

Lobi Da Basi is appreciated among a broad audience – in 2015, the album gained an Edison for the best hip hop record, as well as one in the category best album.⁸³ As came to light in section 2.3, the extent to which Typhoon incorporated other musical genres than hip hop is unconventionally high in *Lobi Da Basi*. Whether authentically hip hop or not, this genre to which Typhoon engaged from his teens is the basis of each of the album’s song. Various musical encounters take place throughout the album, and sometimes even more than two musical genres outside hip hop are incorporated in one song.

Section 2.3 focused on the three songs in *Lobi Da Basi* that contain the most musical encounters: “We Zijn Er”, “Als de Hemel Valt”, and “Niets Verwacht”. Throughout the analysis on these three songs’ incorporated musical genres, it comes to light that Typhoon used different techniques to musically explore his hybrid identity. Whereas in “We Zijn Er” the development of popular music is central, in “Als de Hemel Valt” Kaseko music was the main inspiration from which Typhoon wrote the song. In “Niets Verwacht”, Typhoon positioned the contrasting musical genres of jazz, Dutch smartlap, Memphis soul, and hip hop next to each other. All three songs in their own unique way expose that Typhoon wrote his eclectic hip hop music on the basis of the musical catalogues of different “imagined communities”.⁸⁴

From the music of slave hollers, spirituals, blues, bebop, gospel, reggae, jazz, soul, funk, smartlap, to hip hop – In his musical journey, Typhoon mostly draws from the musical genres that are uniquely tied to the Black Atlantic *movement*. Typhoon took hybridization to a new level, by combining a variety of popular musical genres, the

⁸² “Hiphop die niet wordt volgepropt, maar ruimte laat voor het verhaal.” In Glenn De Randamie, “Typhoon eindelijk op het droge,” interview by Rens Lieman.

⁸³ Edison sinds 1960, “Edison Pop 2015,” Edisons.nl. <https://www.edisons.nl/pop/edities/2015/> (accessed October 30, 2020).

⁸⁴ This term was introduced by Benedict Anderson in his treatment of nationalism. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (Montreal: Quebecor World, 2006), 5 – 7.

kaseko music that is part of the Surinamese musical identity, and Dutch smartlap music. Throughout the musical encounters within *Lobi Da Basi*, Typhoon constructs a hybrid identity, from which he can reach a broad audience with more than only hip hop fanatics.

Conclusion

Focusing on respectively *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrical, and musical content, this research aimed to demonstrate how Typhoon expresses his hybrid identity throughout the album. With the perspective on identity formation as a practice of self-styling, I analyzed how Typhoon *actively* engages with – not *passively* receives – his Surinameseness in *Lobi Da Basi*.

For this practice of self-styling his hybrid identity within *Lobi Da Basi's* lyrical content, Typhoon combined the resources of his Surinamese, and his Dutch heritage. First, via his shout outs to Dutch rappers – with whom he has collaborated or not – and the references to their artistic works, Typhoon embedded his own identity in the local space of the Netherlands. Second, via his shout outs to the people with Surinamese roots and the sociospatial references to Surinam, Typhoon shows his listeners his connection to his parents' motherland. Third, via the album's songs that discuss colonialism, slavery, and racism, Typhoon expresses the struggle that he experiences for having to relate himself to both sides of the stories on these topics. Throughout these three kinds of references that interrelate with his Surinamese-Dutch roots, in combination with his cosmopolitan ideology that comes to the foreground in his call for inclusiveness (“Als de Hemel Valt” and “Van de Regen naar de Zon”) and the shout-outs to artists from all over the world, Typhoon shapes his hybrid identity.

Within the album's musical content, Typhoon used the technique of eclecticism to self-style his identity. Kaseko, jazz, blues, spirituals, soul, reggae, smartlap, rock, and of course hip hop – they all meet within *Lobi Da Basi*. With its incorporation of a variety of musical genres, *Lobi Da Basi* echoes the *movement* of the Black Atlantic. Typhoon travels from place to place throughout his music, staying close to the area of the Atlantic Ocean. He does not stick to hip hop, but musically informs his listeners about the variety of musical genres that are part of, and came into existence during the Black Atlantic *movement*. *Lobi Da Basi's* musical journey reflects the history of black people, moreover, it resonates with the identity construction of black people in diaspora, like himself.

With his practice of self-styling his hybrid identity, Typhoon is part of the by De Witte recognized group of Dutch-born black people of African or Caribbean descent that engage with the “‘Afro’ part of who they feel they are” by “actively and creatively [shaping] who they are and want to become, combining a variety of cultural

recourses from Europe, America and Africa.”⁸⁵ Not only throughout *Lobi Da Basi*, but also via his expressions in the media, Typhoon actively engages with the “Surinamese part” of who he feels he is. In the public debate on Dutch racism, he uses this part of his identity to strengthen his arguments on racism, inequality, and discrimination. With the abundant “lobi” expressions in his social media appearance, he uses his Surinamese heritage to consolidate his role as the professor of love.⁸⁶

The album title, *Lobi Da Basi*, is in Sranan Tongo, which implicates that its message is rooted in Surinam – as Helma Lutz writes: “children learn the lessons and guidelines born of the experiences of their parents and grandparents.”⁸⁷ De Witte’s concept of the practice of self-styling centralizes choice – everyone has the choice to bring to light different aspects to which they identify themselves. However, this research also brought to light that the engagement of people with hyphenated identities on the topics of racism, colonialism, and inequality cannot only be understood as a free choice. Dutch rappers with hyphenated identities deal with these topics all in their own manner. Their experiences with this phenomenon constitute in different manners, and to their own extend within their artistic works.

Since hip hop set foot on Dutch ground, the Dutch hip hop scene has increasingly been dominated by people of Caribbean, African, and (mostly seen as separate from non-Arabic countries) north-African descent. With the increasing popularity of Dutch hip hop, the exposure of these hip hop artists has grown. The in 2015 emerged group of “New Wave” rappers of Caribbean, central-, and north-African decent engage with the non-Dutch part of their hyphenated identity by incorporating “afrobeats” and “Caribbean beats” within their songs (the majority of their songs is about love, flirting, dancing, street life, or money). Other rappers like e.g. Akwasi, Manu, Fresku, and Chivv most evidently do so via their politically engaged rap lyrics on racism, inequalities, and white privilege.

To clarify the similarities and the differences between how these rappers engage with their non-Dutch heritage, further research needs to be done. I am most curious about what comparative research to the practice of self-styling of a “social media generation” rapper, and a more politically engaged rapper would bring. As this research has shown, scrutinizing one’s identity construction not only gives new

⁸⁵ De Witte, “Heritage, Blackness and Afro-Cool Styling Africanness in Amsterdam,” 283.

⁸⁶ In times of writing (the time when Typhoon released his third solo-album *Lichthuis*), Typhoon uses the expression “lobi” in abundant, for example in his public messages on FaceBook.

⁸⁷ Helma Lutz, “The legacy of migration: immigrant mothers and daughters and the process of intergenerational transmission,” in *Caribbean migration: globalized identities*, edited by Mary Chamberlain (London: Routledge, 2002), 103.

perspectives on the person of research, it can bring to light histories, stories, and alter the messages that they transmit.

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