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Univerzity Palackého

Hip hop in American Culture

Bakalářská práce

Autor: Olga Jírová (Anglická – Německá filologie)

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jiří Flajšar, Ph.D.

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Poděkování

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1. Introduction

There are a couple of reasons why I decided to choose this topic for my thesis. One of these reasons is that I have been listening to hip hop for many years and it is nice to write a thesis about something one is related to. The second reason is that when one says the word hip hop today, people usually visualize some people festooned with spectacular jewellery rapping about becoming rich and successful. The truth is that this is just what people can see on TV today, but this kind of style and making music relates just to a fraction of all hip hop artists. In the upshot, it will be explained later, why this topic is so popular among rappers. The third reason is that I wanted to deepen my knowledge about the origin and the history of hip hop and also about everything that is an integral part of it, because that someone listens to some kind of music, does not necessarily mean that they know everything important that is connected with it.

In these days, hip hop surrounds us really everywhere, whether it is on TV in the form of movies, music shows, or commercials, on the radio, or just in the streets, where various public places are tagged, or when groups of young people make shows by breaking or rapping in front of randomly passing people in order to either make some money, or just have fun and show what they can do. Shortly, nearly everyone has a certain idea about what is hip hop. But in my opinion, hip hop is such a complex area that includes music, dance, art such as graffiti, fashion, and many other fields which are connected with it, which still needs to be introduced and therefore the aim of this thesis is to make the further acquaintance of hip hop not only as a musical style, but as a whole phenomenon of hip hop culture which has been spreading among youth especially through the media across the whole world.

For a start, this thesis will define and explain further the terms hip hop and rap, will describe what these two words stand for, and also will make clear that there is a basic difference between them, although it does not have to seem so at the first sight.

In this study will be also introduced and described in detail the four essential elements of hip hop culture – Djing, MCing, graffiti art, and b-boying – which each of them existed separately for some time, but whose combination was crucial for the birth of hip hop.

There will be also included information about the characteristics of hip hop as a musical style regarding on the one hand the music part and on the other hand the part of lyrics. This thesis will introduce some of the important and popular subgenres of hip hop, into which this musical style is divided, and which differ in their sound properties and the thematic focus of lyrics.

It is also important to discuss the origin and the history of hip hop to be able to understand its development and also the point, to which hip hop got in recent years. In this display of history, which is about four decades long, will be included the dates of the significant events that somehow influenced and changed hip hop, or were important for its development such as releases of many influential and key albums and records, an information about successes and failures of various hip hop artists, and many other types of data, which are connected with hip hop culture. The causes and the course of the two major conflicts between American hip hop artists from either different cities, or even the opposite coasts such as The Bridge Wars in the 1980s and the East Coast vs. West Coast rivalry in the 1990s will be also mentioned.

The last chapter of this thesis will occupy itself with several themes that very often become the topics of lyrics in a large number of American hip hop songs. There is always a reason, why a particular theme becomes popular or widely used among hip hop artists, and it is very important to know this cause, because it can be very helpful for understanding the lyrics that rappers use to create their songs. The reasons, why rappers chose the themes, which will be mentioned at the end of this study, will not be omitted too.

2. What is Hip Hop?

There are several mistakes that circulate among people. For example, a lot of people think that hip hop is only a musical style and that hip hop and rap is the same thing. Therefore, I would like to explain some terms that are concerned with hip hop at the beginning of this study.

Firstly, hip hop definitely is not only a musical style, it includes a large number of areas and music is just one of them. It is quite difficult to define hip hop because of its complexity, but there are several definitions of this phenomenon such as “a US pop culture movement originating in the 1980s comprising rap music, graffiti and break dancing”¹ or a “popular urban youth culture, closely associated with rap music and with the style and fashions of African-American inner-city residents.”² In my opinion, the most precious definition of hip hop can be found in Martin Fiedler’s *Hip hop Forever*: “Hip hop is a lifestyle with a developed and colourful culture, its own language, and fashion style, specific kind of music and thinking, which is constantly developing.”³ Another interesting opinion of what hip hop is, belongs to DJ and MC TC Izlam, who claims: “Hip hop is just a way of thinking, state of mind. To be a hip hopper means to think freely.”⁴

The second mistake that hip hop and rap can be used synonymously is also very common among people who do not understand this issue. From the definitions that are mentioned above is clear what hip hop means. Rap is “a rhythmic monologue with a musical backing,”⁵ which means that rap is just a lexical part of hip hop music which is just one of the several parts of whole hip hop culture.

¹ *TheFreeDictionary*, s.v. “Hip-hop,” accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hip-hop>.

² *TheFreeDictionary*, s.v. “Hip-hop,” accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/hip-hop>.

³ Martin Fiedler, *Hip hop Forever*, Olomouc: Hanex, 2003, 11 (my translation).

⁴ Petr Dorůžka et al., *Beaty, Bigbeaty, Breakbeaty* (Praha: Mat’a a Dharma Gaia, 1998), 97 (my translation).

⁵ *TheFreeDictionary*, s.v. “Rap,” accessed November 29, 2012, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/rap>.

2.1 Characteristics of Hip Hop Culture

This chapter will occupy itself with the characteristics of hip hop culture that are represented by its basic components and other fields, which are in this culture included. Hip hop culture contains four essential elements: DJing, MCing, graffiti art and b-boying. DJing and MCing symbolize a musical part, b-boying stands for a dance component, and graffiti represents a visual art constituent of this culture. Of course, these four elements did not originate at the same time, but their combination enabled hip hop to come into existence.

2.1.1 DJing

DJing is a fundamental means to produce hip hop music. The *DJ* is the abbreviation for the phrase ‘disc jockey’ – a person, who plays recorded, not live, music or sound for an audience. The very first disc jockeys were radio DJs, who played the music to radio listeners and in 1950s, DJs started to perform “live” at various parties. Americans were always used to dancing at a bar to music from a jukebox, but paying for a DJ not playing “live” music was not very common.

In 1973, DJ Kool Herc took two turntables, which he connected to a mixer and he laid two identical records on the turntables. The mixer helps DJ in the smooth transition of sound from one turntable to the second one. Kool Herc played a break of one record and the same break of the second record, which he could easily repeat. This method is known as “mixing breaks”⁶ or “creating break beats”⁷. Herc played the music for an audience of dancers who are known as b-boys, or break boys, and b-girls, or break girls. Under the influence of DJ Kool Herc, some of the b-boys such as Grandmixer DXT and Kurtis Blow became DJs too. Herc contributed to development of DJing by creating a huge mobile sound system, because he knew how to connect more speakers and generate more electrical power to be able to make a louder sound.

Another innovative DJ was Grandmaster Flash, who brought to perfection the Herc’s way of mixing two records. He developed a theory called a “quick mix

⁶ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 22.

⁷ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 22.

theory,”⁸ which is based upon marking records and using a headset to be able to hear how the second record combined with the first one before the audience can hear it via the loudspeaker and make a fluent transition from one record to the other.

Grandwizard Theodore, a pupil of Grandmaster Flash, accidentally created a technique of DJing called “scratching”. One day of the year 1975, when he was improving his DJing skills at home, his mother told him to turn down the volume. Because he did not hear it, she entered his room and he tried to stop the music by laying his hand on the playing record to stop its spinning. By moving it back and forward to keep the record quiet and be able to listen to his mother’s words, he noted that this movement creates a unique sound. It is necessary to mention that this technique is commonly used by DJs up to this day.

In the mid-1990s came to the rise of the turntablism movement, which caused the DJing became again one of the essential elements of Hip Hop. It was a new generation of DJs, who wanted to regain the dominant role of the DJ in the music and make the turntable to be a musical instrument again.

The advances in technology in the twenty-first century moved DJing to the next level. Because of digital technology, DJs are allowed to play music through digital music files saved in notebooks or the use of CD players. These technological advances allow to almost everyone to become a DJ, because DJs do not need to have a wide collection of records any more, which require a lot of space and also can be expensive.

Over time, DJs started to use microphones and talk to their audiences to keep them interested and MCs, to whom the next chapter is devoted, took the role later.

2.1.2 MCing

MCing is often used as a synonym for rapping, but it is just one part of what an MC does. The *MC* is the acronym of the phrase ‘master of ceremonies’

⁸ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 24.

and over time, the title *MC* began to be used as an abbreviation for phrases such as ‘microphone controller’ or ‘microphone checker’. The role of MC is the assistance to DJ in keeping the audience excited and entertained and encouraging b-boys and b-girls to dance. To be an MC provided an opportunity to express one’s feelings and opinions of society and environment in which one lives.

Coke La Rock, who cooperated with DJ Kool Herc, was the first significant hip hop MC. In the mid-1970s, MCs were not only helpers of DJs, but they became their partners. From the combination of DJ and MC evolved a large number of groups.

The advances of technology changed the relationship of DJ and MC. Thanks to the digital audiotape and the cassette, MCs of the 1980s were able to perform without the presence of DJs, because they could play recorded music through these cassettes and tapes.

The value of MCs also rose in the eyes of record labels, who sought out talented MCs such as KRS-One, Kurtis Blow, Queen Latifah or Rakim. Thanks to them, MCs became hip hop superstars and icons of popular culture. The growing importance of MCs caused that they gained the success and grabbed all the money.

No wonder that MCs became so significant in hip hop culture, when they are supposed to have a number of skills to be able to fulfil their roles. As MC Kool Moe Dee says, “the best MCs have a high degree of originality and versatility; attain a high level of mastery over substance, flow, and ‘battle skills’; have a significant social impact; and possess outstanding live performance abilities.”⁹

2.1.3 B-boying

B-boying is a kind of street dance and it is often called ‘breakdancing’ or ‘breaking’. It was inspired by dance elements of other dance styles that already existed, but breakers except that they adapt old moves also invent a large number

⁹ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 37.

of new ones. It is a very difficult kind of dance and keeping balance and being flexible play an important role when doing breaking.

History of b-boying goes back to the 1970s, when each gang contained a crew of dancers. The old-school rap historians claim that “the first break dancers were... street gang members who danced upright.”¹⁰ These dancers were predominantly African American and they took breaking only as a way of dancing. The question is, whether breaking would have still existed if Hispanic teenagers had not become excited about it. It was the Hispanics, who brought competitiveness into b-boying. Crews of b-boys and b-girls dared other breakers to meet them at a specific place, where they created a circle in which pairs of dancers alternate in dancing, till one of the dance crews is recognized as the winning one.

In 1982, b-boying/b-girling got to the mainstream by performing of Rock Steady Crew on *ABC News*, where they battled against the Dynamic Rockers.

Among the fundamental techniques of b-boying belong toprock, uprock, downrock, power moves, and freeze.

2.1.3.1 Toprock

At the beginning of b-boying, breakdance was all about the toprock. It is the most basic technique, which includes all kinds of moves done in a standing position. Toprock is usually the first step of a dancer, who then carries on going downwards. A b-boy historian called Jorge “Popmaster Fabel” Pabon says about the beginnings of breaking: “It was all strictly top-rocking, interesting drops to get down to the floor, incredible blitz-speed foot-work. It was actually really unpredictable. Bouncing around, pivoting, turning, twists, front-sweeps, you know? And very aggressive, really aggressive, to the point that I thought it was a gang dance at first.”¹¹

¹⁰ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 15.

¹¹ Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 115.

2.1.3.2 Uprock

This technique arose before b-boying itself, just to be more specific, it came into existence in Brooklyn during the 1960s. When breakers were doing uprock, “rivals lined up across each other, and went head-to-head – making as if they were jiggling, stabbing, battering each other.”¹² The uprock style requires two rival breakers or crews who dance toprock alternatively whole time the song is playing. It looks like the dancers were fighting with each other, but there is not any physical contact allowed in this dance. The winning dancer or crew is the one that shows better and faster dance elements and combinations.

2.1.3.3 Downrock

The downrock is a dance technique which is also called “footwork”. The pioneer of this style was the crew called Rock Steady Crew, which was established in the South Bronx in 1977. It describes all kinds of movements which are performed on the floor and the emphasis is put especially on feet, but hands are commonly used to support the dancer. The 6-step is the basic move of the downrock and it simply reminds of walking in a circle on the floor with one hand touching the ground. Except the use of feet and hands, the legs and knees can be also involved in performing this technique.

2.1.3.4 Power moves

The power moves are more complex even acrobatic breaking moves that sometimes remind of gymnastics rather than a dance. This technique is very difficult and requires a great deal of speed, momentum, strength, and endurance. The power moves include moves like the windmill, headspin, backspin, or flare.

When doing the windmill, breaker spins on the floor, from his back to his chest and back again, and his legs move in the air in a V-shape. There are many starting positions and also many variations of this move.

¹² Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 117.

The headspin is a kind of power move in which the dancer rotates on his head often using a cap. During performing this technique is required to be able to keep a perfect balance of the whole body, especially the legs. It is usually performed without any other support, but the use of hands to keep or gain the speed is described as “tapping”.

2.1.3.5 Freeze

The freeze technique is commonly used to end a power move. It is kind of a pose, when the dancer puts his body into a unique position usually holding on his hands and simply stops. There is probably infinite number of variations of this technique, which is strongly connected to the rhythm of music.

Primarily b-boying took credit for the birth of hip hop, because it was the b-boys and b-girls who were the inspiration for DJ Kool Herc in creating the breakbeat. Nevertheless, b-boying or b-girling will probably never be as much important and prominent again as in the era of early hip hop.

2.1.4 Graffiti

Nelson George in *Hip Hop America* writes that “graffiti has been around since man encountered his first stone wall.”¹³ It is true that graffiti has been in existence for centuries, but this kind of graffiti has nothing in common with hip hop culture. The style of graffiti that is liked to hip hop was born in Philadelphia at the end of the 1960s, where graffiti writers such as Cornbread, Cool Earl and Top Cat had been painting the walls since 1967. This modern graffiti art is also called ‘writing’ or ‘aerosol art’.

The term ‘tag’ referring to the graffiti is commonly used among graffiti artists and it stands for new names, which artists gave themselves in order to protect them from revelation. A verb ‘to tag’ was derived from this noun and it means ‘to paint’ or ‘to mark’. The tagging is concerned not only with painting

¹³ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 11.

walls, but also buses, trains, subway cars and stations, and many other places in cities.

In 1970, a Greek-American teenager started to tag his nickname “TAKI 183” in subway stations of Manhattan. On July 25, 1971 an article in *New York Times* named Philadelphia as the “Graffiti Capital of the World,”¹⁴ because graffiti was so widespread there. In the very same year *New York Times* described “TAKI 183” as the creator of graffiti phenomenon in New York City.

There are many styles of graffiti around the world. The best known styles such as tag style, throw-up, wild style, and others will be introduced in the following paragraphs.

2.1.4.1 Tag style

This style is also called “tagging” and it is the oldest of all graffiti techniques. It is a writer’s signature depicted on the streets’ walls or in public places in order to be seen by as much people as possible. To be able to perform this technique one needs just a marker. The main representative of this style was already mentioned TAKI 183. From the beginning it was just a regular signature, but today, when graffiti is more developed, every writer has its own style of writing.

2.1.4.2 Simple style

“It is the basic technique and the first step for a beginning writer.”¹⁵ Separately written letters of simple shape are characteristic for this style, in which the basic task is to create one’s own personal style and improve one’s skills, because the letters should have a form of a certain style without any additional elements. This technique is often used by writers when writing a longer text or creating a signature.

¹⁴ Mickey Hess, *Hip hop in America: A regional Guide*, vol. 1 of *East Coast And West Coast* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010), xi.

¹⁵ Martin Fiedler, *Hip hop Forever* (Olomouc: Hanex, 2003), 28 (my translation).

2.1.4.3 Throw-up style

This technique is more advanced than tagging. The throw-ups usually consist of two colours and they are created through the use of spray paint. Throw-up letters have a shape similar to bubbles or even clouds. This technique is often used in “bombing”, which means tagging a large number of areas in a night, or when writers want to cover previous works of other artists. The advantage of the throw-up style is that it is very easy and quick to do; it means that it could be done in one stroke and in two minutes or less.

2.1.4.4 Blockbuster style

The title of this graffiti technique describes the way how letters are written. A blockbuster picture consists of big and square letters and usually of two colours. It is also used to cover earlier works of another artist and this style has the advantage of being easy to write and also easy to read. It is possible to see it on cars, trains, or in places with plenty of space to be able to write the letters nice, big and readable. Because of quite clearly defined square letters, there are not many possibilities how to be creative, and therefore there did not occur any significant changes in this style.

2.1.4.5 Wild style

The wild style is considered to be one of the most difficult techniques. It is a style of complicated, abstract, and very colourful pictures with various additional elements like spikes, arrows and many others. It depends on the writer’s own imagination, how the paint will look like. The paintings consist of letters of a certain style, which can drive off in various directions and are connected with each other in some way. It is usually very hard to read paints in this style for the wide public and therefore it is intended especially, but not exclusively, for other graffiti writers, who can without too much trouble decipher these paints on the basis of the connections between letters. Semi wild style is a kind of wild style graffiti, which is very popular with graffiti writers and hip hop

community. It is very much like wild style, but it is readable and not so time-consuming to paint.

2.1.4.6 3D Style

The 3D style graffiti is a completely different from the other techniques. It is also very complicated technique with an amazing three-dimensional effect by which shadows play the key role. To be able to do 3D graffiti, a writer needs to know how light and shadows work together. In Martin Fiedler's *Hip Hop Forever* is stated that "this technique is highly controversial."¹⁶ The problem is that there are writers who think that 3D style is the cream of the graffiti art, and on the other hand, there are writers who do not consider the 3D graffiti artists as writers, but painters.

The process of becoming a graffiti writer is difficult and takes a long time. At the beginning, one has to pick a nickname, create one's tag and then it is possible to learn other techniques and develop a personal style. It is also important to learn how to use and apply spray paint, and adhere to the certain rules concerning graffiti. The process of creating a graffiti painting also is not as easy as it may seem. It includes a lot of effort and imagination of writers, who usually create a sketch before they go tagging.

Graffiti is still highly controversial today. On the one hand, a lot of people think that graffiti is just vandalism, because it is possible to see a large number of public places that are tagged. On the other hand, there are people who consider graffiti as art and visit galleries and various expositions for that.

2.1.5. Additional Elements

Over time, as hip hop was rising and spreading, another element began to enter the hip hop culture. In the 1980s, Afrika Bambaataa, a one of the excellent DJs, tried to enforce a fifth element that was called "Knowledge, Culture and Overstanding."¹⁷ It consisted in comprehending the principles laid by the hip hop pioneers and the conceptual history of the preceding elements. The term "overstanding" contained a positivist ideology taken from Rastafarianism, which

¹⁶ Martin Fiedler, *Hip hop Forever* (Olomouc: Hanex, 2003), 29 (my translation).

¹⁷ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 37.

put the emphasis on a superior positive power, not on the negative one. Others wanted “beat boxing,” which is vocal percussion imitating various musical sounds and instruments, to be the fifth element, but it continues to be an underground phenomenon within hip hop culture.

In the 1980s, as hip hop became national music, the people listening to this kind of music had a need to identify with it by selecting a particular kind of clothes. Clothing companies and shoe manufacturers such as Adidas, Nike and Timberland gave them this opportunity. This specific clothing includes pieces such as saggy pants, oversized T-shirts, hooded coats and sweatshirts, and hip hop caps.

Because hip hop culture arose and evolved on the street, a particular language style is an integral part of it. It is the slang, because of which hip hop has often been criticized, but as hip hop became mainstream, a lot of expressions got into wider society and also current dictionaries. For example in the Oxford English Dictionary, we can find a definition of the noun and the adjective *bling bling*, which sounds: “denoting expensive, ostentatious clothing or jewellery, or the style or materialistic attitudes associated with them.”¹⁸

This chapter brought in several elements of hip hop culture that are its essential part. It is important to mention that the four basic elements did not arise along with hip hop. They existed independently of it, but their combination enabled birth of this culture.

¹⁸ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. “bling,” accessed November 29, 2012, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/bling?q=bling+bling>.

3. History of Hip Hop

It is difficult to say at what point exactly originated hip hop. The proof of that rap historians do not have the same opinion of when hip hop was born, lies in books that are related to hip hop.

For example, Nelson George writes in *Hip Hop America* that hip hop is a result of post-civil rights era in America, which he describes as “a set of cultural forms originally nurtured by African American, Caribbean American, and Latin American youth in and around New York in the ‘70s.”¹⁹ Black people made significant progress in economy and politics at that time. This decade produced a “new black middle class”²⁰ – a class of black people who lived in suburbs like a majority of Americans belonging to middle class, and they were allowed to graduate.

In *Hip hop in America: A regional Guide* written by Mickey Hess, you read that the story of hip hop starts with immigration, when Grandmaster Flash moved from Barbados to the Bronx, and DJ Kool Herc, who moved to New York City from Kingston, and that hip hop sprang out of a mixture of immigrants from Puerto Rico and Caribbean, South Americans, and New York natives.

3.1 1970s

It is exactly the decade of 1970s when hip hop came to light through block parties on the streets of New York City. In 1970, Afrika Bambaataa, the “godfather of hip hop culture”²¹ started with DJing.

It is widely accepted that hip hop was born on August 11, 1973 on the west side of Bronx, when DJ Kool Herc, the brother of Cindy Campbell, who gave a block party, where this new music style came into existence. DJ Kool Herc is

¹⁹ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), viii.

²⁰ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 2.

²¹ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 105

often called the “father of hip hop”²² because he originated the breakbeat so that he used two turntables and also two copies of an identical record to create a beat loop. Thanks to DJ Kool Herc, music that has been called hip hop, developed. The Bronx, one of the five boroughs of New York City, was often called “America’s worst slum”²³ because of the poverty and crime rate that were high there at that time.

On the 12th November of the same year Afrika Bambaataa founded the Universal Zulu Nation, an organization based in the Bronx River Center, which collected DJs, MCs, b-boys and b-girls, and graffiti artists. With the motto “Peace, Love, Unity, and Having Fun,”²⁴ the aim of this organization was to lure young people away from violence and crime committing by gangs and spread hip hop across the country. Thanks to Universal Zulu Nation, members of gangs got rid of their aggression by the help of dance and other means, and hip hop has expanded into many countries all over the world. In *Hip Hop Culture* written by Emmett G. Price III is stated that the establishment of this organization “marks the formal beginning of hip hop culture.”²⁵

In 1974, a significant DJ and MC, LoveBug Starski started to use the term “Hip Hop” and he is one of the people who used this term to name the culture.

In 1975, Coke La Rock and Clark Kent, the first team of MCs, DJs Timmy Tim and Kool Herc formed the first hip hop group called The Herculoids.

In 1979, Sylvia Robinson founded the first record label that focused on rap music. It came to release of several rap records such as “Rapper’s Delight” recorded by a group called Sugar Hill Gang, which became the first international rap hit record with two millions of sold copies. Thanks to the release of the record “Christmas Rapping”, Kurtis Blow became the first rapper who signed a big deal with some of the major record labels, in this case, Mercury Records. “To The Beat, Ya’ll” was the first hip hop single released by a female rapper called Lady

²² Mickey Hess, *Hip hop in America: A regional Guide*, vol. 1 of *East Coast And West Coast* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010), xi.

²³ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 4.

²⁴ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 13.

²⁵ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 108.

B. Tanya Winley nicknamed as Sweet Tee, who was the first famous female rapper, released the record called “Vicious Rap”.

Although the date of the birth of hip hop was not decidedly determined, it was in the 1970s, when hip hop started, first hip hop crews were established, record labels began to release first hip hop songs, thanks to which hip hop left its hometown New York City and began to expand.

3.2 1980s

By the 1980s, thanks to the broadcasting of numerous radio stations throughout the country, making films and documentaries about hip hop, and publishing magazines influenced by hip hop, the local culture spread across the whole country. This decade is characterized by number of successes of many hip musicians, which will be mentioned in following paragraphs. In 1980, Kurtis Blow’s rap record “The Breaks” was the first rap song that was certified gold and later even platinum. His rap album was the first one that was on one of the major labels and Blow himself was the first rapper who performed on national television. The female singer of the band called Blondie, Deborah Harry, brought rap to mainstream by recording a song “Rapture” and was acknowledged as the first white rapper.

In 1981, Funky 4 Plus One was the first rap crew that turned up on national TV when performing their record “That’s The Joint” on NBC. On the 1st August of the same year, the MTV, a music television channel running twenty-four hours a day, starts to broadcast, which was very important for spreading hip hop culture across the nation. In the very same year, one of the members of Universal Zulu Nation, Afrika Islam created the first radio show occupying itself with hip hop, Doug E. Fresh invented beatboxing, and a drummer Kate Schellenbach founded the first white rap crew called Beastie Boys.

In 1982, the first universal hip hop tour called the Roxy Tour was held in Europe. It consisted of Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmixer DXT & the Infinity

Rappers, graffiti artists such as Phase 2, and b-boys and b-girls like Rock Steady Crew.

In 1983 was released a hip hop documentary *Wild Style* that captures all of the four basic elements of hip hop. DJs, MCs, graffiti artists, and dancers performing in this movie took part in a tour, where they introduced this film and the whole hip hop culture to the world.

In 1984, the first album of a hip hop crew Run-DMC, which is called Run-D.M.C., was the first rap album that became gold, and their second album with the name King of Rock was the first rap album that went platinum a year later. In the same year, Uncle Ralph McDaniels starts the first TV show, which focused primarily on hip hop.

In 1986, MC Shan released a record “The Bridge,” which initiated one of the most long-lasting battles in the whole history of hip hop, the Bridge Wars. This rap feud was taking place between the already mentioned MC Shan from the Juice Crew in Queens and KRS-One from Boogie Down Productions’ through a series of released records. They were arguing about where hip hop really began, whereas MC Shan claimed in “The Bridge” that hip hop started in Queens, and KRS-One reacted with the records called “South Bronx” and “The Bridge Is Over”.

A year later, a hip hop trio Salt-n-Pepa produced a record “Push It” that was one of the first rap records nominated for the Grammy Award.

In 1988, hip hop grabbed attention of mass media, when rap artists DJ Jazzy Jeff & The Fresh Prince from Philadelphia won with their single “Parents Just Don’t Understand” the first Grammy Award for Best Rap Performance. In September of the same year, the MTV started to broadcast a rap show *Yo! MTV Raps* and two students from Harvard University, David Mays and Jon Schecter, founded a rap magazine called *The Source*.

During the 1980s, hip hop artists released a large number of records and albums, filmmakers made a couple of movies concerning this culture, and several shows started to broadcast on American TV and radio stations. All this helped hip

hop to be brought into mainstream society. The proof of accepting hip hop also by the Grammy Awards, MTV Awards, and American Music Awards is that hip hop was given its own category in each of them in 1989.

3.3 1990s

“By the 1990s, hip hop was the dominant force in popular culture...”²⁶ After releasing successful records and albums, appearing on national TV and radio stations, and winning some of the highly regarded awards, numerous hip hop artists became icons of popular culture.

At the beginning of this decade, gangsta rappers such as Tupac Shakur, Ice-T, Ice Cube, and Snoop Dogg got a chance to get into the spotlight of major record labels which found out that they can earn a lot of money by selling something scandalous, and this paralyzed music production on the East Coast scene for a certain period of time.

In 1990, an album *Please Hammer Don't Hurt 'Em* of MC Hammer was nominated for the best album. It contained a song called “You Can't Touch This,” which won for the best rap performance.

In 1991, Tung Twista was registered in the Guinness Book of Records for being the fastest rapper in the world. In the same year, 2 Live Crew published the first live rap album called *Live in Concert*.

In 1993, Quincy Jones started to publish *Vibe* magazine that became the major competitor of the *Source*. A hip hop duo Arrested Development won a Grammy Award in category of the best new artist and with their record “Tennessee,” they won another Grammy Award for the best rap performance by a group or duo.

A documentary about hip hop *Rhyme & Reason*, which, besides other things, dealt with the increasing popularity of hip hop culture in the course of time

²⁶ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 16.

and its forms such as “East Coast,” “West Coast,” and “Southern,” was released in 1997.

In August 1999, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum organized the first dominant exhibition concerning hip hop culture, which is called “Roots, Rhymes, and Rage: The Hip Hop Story”. In the same year, Lauryn Hill was nominated for 10 Grammy Awards, whereas she won five of them. She hereby “legitimized” rap and also hip hop. Jay-Z won a Grammy Award for the best album, but he proclaimed that the Grammy Awards did not honour rap and refused to appear on the show.

During this decade, hip hop had a lot of trouble with police and censorship, which began already in 1989, when a hip hop group NWA released the record “F*** Tha Police” that according to the FBI, incites to violence and disrespect to police. On 6th of June 1990, the U.S. court decided that the 2 Live Crew’s album *As Nasty as They Wanna Be* was obscene. In September of the same year, the FBI delivered a special report to U.S. Congress, whose topic was “Rap music and its effects on National security”. In the same year, Professor Griff, a member of a hip hop group Public Enemy, left the group because of his controversial anti-Semitic comments.

In 1991, when a hip hop group Cypress Hill released an eponymous album, its members supported the legalization of marijuana and became the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws’ spokesmen.

One year later, a hip hop crew Success-N-Effect released a record “The Ultimate Drive-By,” where the narrator of song visualizes killing of President George Bush.

Due to increasing problems culminating in lawsuits that were caused by controversial lyrics, record companies began to check up song lyrics included on albums that were ready to release, and in the first half of the 1990s, it was difficult for numerous hip hop artists to publish their albums according to schedule and for some of them was very hard to publish an album at all.

According to Zbyněk Heřmánek who writes in the book *Beaty, Bigbeaty, Breakbeaty* that “the hip hop history of the first half of the 1990s is a history of its dying.”²⁷ It is important to say that there is a talk about mainstream and consumer-driven hip hop, but not about the underground scene. This statement confirms the fact that even some artists such as Nas and Monie Love complain about the death of hip hop. In accordance to lyrics of Nas, “hip hop died because it strayed too far from its origins.”²⁸ In 1994, Common released the record “I Used to Love H.E.R.,” which stood up for an idea of making hip hop with love and for fun, but not for money. Zbyněk Heřmánek says that since 1993, hip hop was really dead, because Snoop Dogg released his new sound album called *Doggystyle*, consequently emerged the new hip hop subgenre called g-funk (gangsta-funk), and then other artists were either trying to break its hegemony, especially artists from East Coast, or sound like him.

As in the previous decade, a hip hop conflict arose also in 1990s. The East Coast vs. West Coast rivalry was going on between artists from Bad Boy Records based in New York, Death Row Records residing in Los Angeles, and their fans. The central figures were West Coast rapper Tupac Shakur and East Coast rapper The Notorious B.I.G. (Christopher Wallace).

The initiator of this conflict was rapper Tim Dog who released a record “Fuck Compton” in 1991, which was pointed to several artists from Compton such as N.W.A. that started to gain attention of hip hop fans. One of the responses to this single was of one Compton rapper called Tweedy Bird Loc, who released a record “Fuck South-Bronx”. These two songs were enough for causing this inter-coastal conflict. The Death Row Records, whose owner was Suge Knight and Dr. Dre, became to be more successful and important, especially after releasing Dr. Dre’s album *The Chronic* in 1992 and Snoop Dogg’s album *Doggystyle* a year later, and West Coast hip hop got into the spotlight. In 1994 Bad Boy Records released an album of Notorious B.I.G. *Ready to Die*, by which he managed to bring East Coast hip hop into focus again, but on November 30, 1994, Tupac

²⁷ Petr Dorůžka et al., *Beaty, Bigbeaty, Breakbeaty* (Praha: Mat’a a Dharma Gaia, 1998), 98 (my translation).

²⁸ Mickey Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, And Future of America’s Most Wanted Music* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 2.

Shakur was shot several times and robbed in New York's studio, and he accused Notorious B.I.G. and Puff Daddy (Sean Combs) from Bad Boy Records of attempted murder. "This was the key event, or at least the most potent symbol, of the so-called war."²⁹ Shortly after shooting at Tupac, Notorious B.I.G. released a song "Who Shot Ya?," on the ground of which Tupac suspect the two of the shooting, although B.I.G. and Puff Daddy said that they had nothing to do with the shooting and the single had been recorded before someone shot at him. In 1995, Tupac was found guilty of sexual assault and after eight months in jail, Suge Knight paid the bail in an amount of 1.4 million dollars. As a result, Tupac Shakur, who was born in New York, signed to Death Row Records, which worsened the whole situation that ended in several deaths. Another boiling point of this hip hop conflict was the Source Awards in the same year that took place in Madison Square Garden on the 3rd August 1995, when local audience was loyal to the artists from East Coast and booed the rap star from West Coast Snoop Dogg off. In 1996, Tupac released the record "Hit Em Up" pointed at people from Bad Boy Records, and later in the year, more precisely, on the 7th September 1996, he was shot to death In Las Vegas by an unknown suspect. In 1997, Notorious B.I.G., released the record "Hypnotize," and on the 9th March 1997, he was shot to death in Los Angeles also by an unknown assailant. Many years after the end of East Coast vs. West Coast conflict, the identity of the murderers is not known, and the connection between the murders and East Coast/West Coast rivalry is also not proven. Several questions are still not answered, for example: "Was there ever truly an inter-coastal war, or were these just personal feuds gone awry that were depicted as such by the media?"³⁰

One the one hand, the 1990s were for hip hop culture very successful, because thanks to TV and radio stations, magazines, and a large number of records and albums, hip hop got definitively into mainstream society. On the other hand, hip hop experienced its own death when g-gunk was established, whose popularity seemed to be unbreakable, and hip hop artists were not able to make some significant innovations, which would help hip hop music to move on. When we add the the East Coast/West Coast conflict that culminated in death of its two

²⁹ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 141.

³⁰ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 52.

central figures Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G., the 1990s were for hip hop also very tragic.

3.4. 2000s

The 2000s was the fourth decade of hip hop culture. Emmett G. Price III aptly described in one sentence what happened to hip hop in the course of time: “It has grown from a local, non-profit-bearing culture to an international, multibillion-dollar industry that is now to many a model of success.”³¹ Because hip hop in 2000s and today is not what it used to be in its very beginnings anymore, when DJing, MCing, and b-boying/b-girling was just fun and a way of spending leisure time better than in gangs, except for graffiti, that was usually used to mark a territory or to express a discontent with the current political or social situation. Hip hop has become an integral part of many kinds of industries such as fashion and shoe industry, music and film industry, radio and television industry, publishing industry, and others.

Hip hop in 2000s built on its successes, especially in the area of music, when hip hop artists were very often nominated for numerous music awards and they won many of them. As example serve Eminem, who thanks to his album *The Marshall Mathers Lp*, which sold approximately two million pieces during the first week, became the first white rapper that won a Grammy Award in the category of rap in 2000, concretely for the best rap album and the best rap solo performance, a hip hop duo Outkast that released the album *Stankonia*, which sold about five million pieces and was nominated as the first rap album for the Grammy Award in category of the “Album of the Year” a year later, a hip hop group Color Changin’ Click that won with the album *Get Ya Mind Correct* an award of the magazine *The Source* for the best independent album in 2002, a hip hop group Three 6 Mafia, and Wyclef Jean, whose song “Million Voices” won a Golden Globe Award in 2005.

Among other hip hop achievements belong the induction of Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G. into Hip Hop Hall of Fame in 2002, and the putting the song

³¹ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), xi.

of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five called “The Message” together with the first forty-nine records into the National Recording Registry that serves to preserve important recordings across genres.

From September to December 2000, a great exhibition relating to hip hop called “Hip Hop Nation: Roots, Rhymes, and Rage” was taking place in Brooklyn.

In this decade, several important conferences concerning hip hop culture took place. In 2002, the Hip Hop Super Conference and Expo called “the world’s largest all business hip-hop conference”³² was held in New York, and the “Feminism and Hip Hop” conference and the “Hip Hop Conference 2005: Political Action and Social Responsibility in Hip-Hop” took place three years later.

In the 2000s, hip hop became significantly involved in fashion and shoe industry. A large number of companies and people including hip hop artists started their clothing and shoes lines. During the decade a record label the Ruff Ryders, artists like Outkast, Snoop Dogg, Nelly, 50 Cent, Eminem, Ice-T, Master P, Afeni Shakur, the mother of Tupac Shakur and the fashion designer Karl Kani, created their own clothing lines. In addition, a business magnate Russel Simmons, Karl Kani, and Puff Daddy’s fashion company Sean John won prestigious awards in fashion. The hip hop group Wu-Tang Clan built their own shoe collection, for a change.

During the first decade of the 21st century, came to a connection of hip hop and the entertainment industry in the sense that numerous hip hop documentaries, movies, and shows were made, and several hip hop artists became actors by having the chance to shine in number of these hip hop-related and other hip hop-non-related movies, documentaries and series. There were made approximately 30 films or documentaries connected with hip hop culture in this period. For example, in 2001, rappers Method Man and Redman starred in the movie called *How High*, and a year later was released the semi-autobiographical film called *8 Mile*, in which the rapper Eminem was the leading actor. Furthermore, the song

³² Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 133.

“Lose Yourself” created by Eminem, which is part of the soundtrack to this movie, was the first rap single that won an Oscar. Other hip hop artists that appeared on TV were, for example, Ice-T who acted in a TV series called *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, and Mos Def who starred in the two movies called *Bamboozled* and *Monster’s Ball*.

Except for movies, documentaries, shows, and series, hip hop musicians began to appear in number of commercials such as Method Man and Redman in Right Guard’s commercial for deodorant, The Roots in Coca-Cola advertisement, Jay-Z in a commercial for Heineken USA, Missy Elliott in Gap’s and Coca-Cola’s commercials, and Nelly and Tim McGraw in a commercial for Budweiser. Lil’ John even released his own energy drink named “Crunk”.

Hip hop culture in 2000s, got also into the spotlight of publishing industry, when several books on the topic of hip hop such as *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* written by Jeff Chang, and Terence McPhaul’s *The Psychology of Hip Hop*, were published.

The 2000s was a decade when hip hop was immensely popular. On the ground of new hip hop fashion and shoe brands, movies, documentaries, shows, books, and other products, hip hop culture consolidated its position in popular culture and mainstream society. Numerous hip hop musicians began to earn a lot of money by selling their albums, acting, appearing in commercials, and starting their own business. Money began to play a major role in this culture.

4. Hip hop music

In this chapter will be discussed the musical element of hip hop culture, which consists of two elements that were already mentioned – DJing and MCing. There are many subgroups into which hip hop music can be divided, but it depends on that according to which criteria the division is made. In the following paragraphs will be introduced and described the basic types of hip hop music divided in two categories. Hip hop music can be divided, with reference to location, in East Coast and West Coast rap, within the United States, and for example, French, German, Japanese, British, and Cuban hip hop worldwide, but it is not an object of interest of this thesis. In accordance to lyrical content and properties of musical sound hip hop can be divided into several subgenres such as gangsta rap, jazz rap, underground rap, and others.

4.1 East Coast Rap

East Coast rap is one of subgenres that are divided on the basis of location. This style emerged in New York City in the early-1970s and it is rooted in old school hip hop. Nelson George describes the old school rappers as “a loose community of energetic, creative, and rather naïve young people from the Bronx and upper Manhattan who reached adolescence in the ‘70s.”³³ To the “old school” belong people who actually founded hip hop such as DJ Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, and Grandmaster Flash. This subgenre is strongly influenced by jazz and reggae. To East Coast rap artists belong, for example, Jay-Z, KRS-One, LL Cool J, and The Notorious B.I.G.

4.2 West Coast Rap

West Coast rap is a regional hip hop subgenre that was brought to California from New York City by DJ Tony Joseph who moved there in 1979 and showed to local DJs his DJing skills and taught them how to work with two

³³ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 20.

turntables and a mixer. In comparison with East Coast scene, this style is influenced by rhythm of funk, which was a music genre in 1960s and 1970s, and therefore g-funk and gangsta rap are very popular in this region. Among West Coast hip hop musicians belong Tupac Shakur, Cypress Hill, Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, and many others.

4.3 Gangsta Rap

Gangsta rap is one of the hip hop subgenres that started at the end of the 1980s and was very popular in the mid-1990s. A Philadelphia artist Schoolly D recorded the first gangsta rap song “P.S.K (What Does it Mean?)” in 1985 and by this song, he influenced Ice-T, who released the first Los Angeles gangsta rap record called “Six N the Mornin” two years later. Since then, this hip hop style has been associated with Los Angeles and West Coast. Gangsta rap is distinguished by the hard-core sound and raw lyrics containing usually topics such as drugs, crime, and prostitutes. In the book *Hip Hop Culture* is stated that gangsta rap is “the hard-core music influenced by the actions and lifestyle of gangstas,”³⁴ but Nelson George mentions in his book that “not all rappers who write violent lyrics have lived their words.”³⁵ For example, Lil Wayne belongs to gangsta rap artists, but he does not commit crime like other gangsta rappers in real life. The main representatives of this subgenre are Dr. Dre, N.W.A., and Ice-T.

4.4 G-funk

G-funk, or gangsta-funk, is a hip hop subgenre that evolved from gangsta rap in the period of the early and mid-1990s by Dr. Dre’s album *The Chronic*. Deep bass sound and female vocals are typical for this style. With Dr. Dre as the main representative and other hip hop artists such as Snoop Dogg and Warren G, “g-funk became one of the most famous and the most popular music styles of the 1990s.”³⁶

³⁴ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 319.

³⁵ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 46.

³⁶ Martin Fiedler, *Hip hop Forever* (Olomouc: Hanex, 2003), 20.

4.5 Jazz Rap

Jazz rap, according to the title, is a subgenre of hip hop that is influenced by jazz music and it evolved at the end of the 1980s and in 1993, a rapper Guru released an influential jazz-rap album called *Jazzmatazz*. Jazz rap was beneficial for the area of hip hop called sampling, which means “taking excerpts of prerecorded music and using them in a new work,”³⁷ because the jazz parts were not played live, but they were just samples of recorded music that were inserted in jazz rap records. To jazz rap artists belong Guru, The Roots, Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, and others.

4.6 Underground Rap

Underground rap is a hip hop subgenre that broke out in the late 1990s and “remains below the radar of the media and mainstream public awareness and is not highly commercialized.”³⁸ This style is distinguished by intelligent rhymes and lyrics containing social and political criticism of independent artists, who are usually highly innovative. Among such independent artists could be included, for example, a producer from Netherlands called Nicolay and a rapper from Houston named Kay, who met first on the Web site www.okayplayer.com, and since then co-operate on composing of hip hop songs through the Internet without the necessity of any record label, and many others.

In previous paragraphs, the two groups containing some of the fundamental subgenres of hip hop music were interpreted and depicted. By each subgenre, the basic characteristics concerning date and/or place of their origins, sound, lyrical content, or influence, and also names of several representatives were stated.

³⁷ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 325.

³⁸ Emmett G. Price III, *Hip hop Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 327.

5. Evolution of Lyrical Content of Hip Hop Songs

Song lyrics as we know them today did not exist at the beginning of hip hop. First signs of rapping in hip hop music were, as Nelson George writes, when “over time DJs began to ‘toast,’ or talk during their performances about their prowess as lovers or DJs,”³⁹ but it was not any continuous speech full of rhymes like today.

As mentioned before, the role of MC was originally just to help the DJ in keeping the crowd full of dancers excited and engaged the whole time. To get a better idea of how early MCing looked like, there are some of Coke La Rock’s phrases like “Ya rock and ya don’t stop!,” “Rock on my mellow!,” “To the beat y’all!,”⁴⁰ and the famous phrase of DJ Hollywood “throw your hands in the air and wave them like you just don’t care...”⁴¹

The freestyle rap, which is an improvised rap, is also an important part of rapping. It developed in time, when hip hop existed just in a form of DJs and MCs performing live. The artists called on each other to battle in order to find out who can throw a better party, and according to the reaction of audience the winner was chosen. As regards to battles of rappers, meter and rhyme became crucial in this hip hop style.

On the one hand, there are topics in hip hop lyrics that are often used and remain the same all the time, and on the other hand, there are themes that are not very common or change in the course of time.

One of the fixed topics of hip hop songs is definitely place and region, where artists live or to which they speak. As Mickey Hess writes in his book that “American rap artists emphasize representing the place they come from.”⁴² They use various means how to inform what place they represent such as direct information of their hometown, or use of slang that is typical for a certain region.

³⁹ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 7.

⁴⁰ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 18.

⁴¹ Mickey Hess, *Hip hop in America: A regional Guide*, vol. 1 of *East Coast And West Coast* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010), 33.

⁴² Mickey Hess, *Hip hop in America: A regional Guide*, vol. 1 of *East Coast And West Coast* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2010), viii.

It is possible to see this phenomenon, which became very important during the Bridge Wars in the 1980s or in the East Coast vs. West Coast conflict in the 1990s, in lyrics of artists such as Boogie Down Production in a song “South Bronx” (1987), N.W.A. in a track “Straight Outta Compton” (1988), The Game in a record “Where I’m From” (2005), Jay-Z and Alicia Keys in a song “Empire State of Mind” (2009), and many others.

Another theme appearing in hip hop lyrics for a long time discusses Mickey Hess in *Is Hip Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, And Future of America’s Most Wanted Music* when he says that “hip hop lyrics often trace the development of the artist through childhood poverty to wealth and celebrity in the music business.”⁴³ Plenty hip hop lyrics are considered as autobiographical, because a large number of hip hop artists write a story of their lives, how they grew up in poverty, dreamed about getting rich, and came to their careers as rappers. Artists such as Biz Markie in a record “The Vapors” (1988), The Notorious B.I.G. in a single “Juicy” (1994), Jay-Z in his record “Dirt Off Your Shoulder” (2003), The Game in a song “Dreams” (2005), and lots of others “celebrate their wealth in lyrics.”⁴⁴ In The Game’s song “Money” (2008) it is possible to find the name Benjamin, which stands for a hundred dollar banknote, on which the former U.S. president Benjamin Franklin is depicted. Puff Diddy used this metaphor in the title of his song “It’s All About the Benjamins” (1997). Although hip hop songs are mostly written in the 1st person, sometimes can occur a problem with the term “autobiographical”, because there are artists such as Sugarhill Gang, who did not write their lyrics on their own and were accused of stealing lyrics from Grandmaster Caz.⁴⁵

Hip hop artists often react to social events like poverty, which was already mentioned, and their lyrics are sometimes connected to politics such as Cypress Hill’s “I Wanna Get High” (1993), who supported marijuana legalisation. Artist’s lyrics can also respond to things that are happening around them, for example

⁴³ Mickey Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, And Future of America’s Most Wanted Music* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 45.

⁴⁴ Mickey Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, And Future of America’s Most Wanted Music* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 46.

⁴⁵ Mickey Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, And Future of America’s Most Wanted Music* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 33.

songs in album *Hip Hop is Dead* (2006) released by Nas, who is “considered by many hip hop heads to be one of the best lyricist ever,”⁴⁶ which contain a Nas’s complaint about that hip hop died because it proceeded in a direction that is too far from its roots. One of the responses to this album belongs to a southern rapper Ludacris who began to wear a T-shirt with the inscription “Hip Hop Ain’t Dead. It Lives in the South.”⁴⁷

Some artists also use lyrics for criticism. Rappers often criticize the way of work of record labels like Mos Def in “Mathematics” (1999), their own hip hop contemporaries like Del the Funky Homosapien in the track “Fake as Fuck” (2000), and already mentioned Success-N-Effect, who criticized the reign of the president George Bush in the record “The Ultimate Drive-By” (1992), where they fantasize about a his murder.

Under the influence of human rights activist Malcolm X and his assassination, also the theme of one’s own death appears in lyrics of several artists like in Tupac Shakur’s song “If I Die 2Nite” (1995) and The Notorious B.I.G.’s album *Ready To Die* (1994), who “fantasized their own murders in lyrics.”⁴⁸

In previous paragraphs, various topics of hip hop song were presented. It turned out that there was always some real basis that explained particular artists chose certain topics for their songs. By each theme, several artists with titles of the concrete songs or albums and their date of release were listed, in which the given topics occurred.

⁴⁶ Nelson George, *Hip hop America* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1998), 70.

⁴⁷ Mickey Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, And Future of America’s Most Wanted Music* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 1.

⁴⁸ Mickey Hess, *Is Hip Hop Dead?: The Past, Present, And Future of America’s Most Wanted Music* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 43.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to make the acquaintance of hip hop. After introducing the most suitable definitions of the terms hip hop and rap and explaining of the basic difference between these two words, which prevents from making the mistake of considering hip hop and rap as synonyms, one should have a better idea of these terms.

This thesis helps to imagine the complexity of hip hop culture that consists of four fundamental elements – DJing, MCing, b-boying, and graffiti – which are described in detail including the information of their origins, characteristics, and main representatives. A few other elements concerning this culture such as fashion and language were also briefly mentioned. It is the DJing, thanks to which hip hop originated, because DJ Kool Herc invented the breakbeat, which is the basis of hip hop music. MCing attached itself to DJing later. His primary function was to keep the crowd excited and in the course it developed into rap. Although graffiti has existed for centuries, just after the form of graffiti emerged in Philadelphia at the end of 1960s, it began to be connected with hip hop culture. The basic techniques of this kind of art and their functions are narrowly described too. Rap as well as graffiti has also the function of expressing the disagreement with social and political events and the proof of that lies in hip hop lyrics and the content of graffiti pictures placed in various public places. In this chapter is also described in detail the b-boying element with its basic techniques. It is very important to know that it was just b-boying that takes the biggest credit for the birth of hip hop, because DJ Kool Herc created and adjusted his music just for the dancers, who then formed his audience.

Hip hop history that is displayed in this thesis contains the information concerning the birth and the development of hip hop. In this section is listed a large number of major events that are important for development and the direction of this culture. There are presented numerous achievements of hip hop artists such as dates of release of significant songs and albums, nominations and winnings of the most prestigious awards, et cetera. It was also necessary to mention issues that helped hip hop to get into mainstream and spread across the country and later also

all over the world such as launched TV and radio stations, released magazines, books, movies, and documentaries concentrating on hip hop. There were displayed the causes and courses of the first major hip hop conflict in the 1980s called the Bridge Wars and the controversial feud of the 1990s named the East Coast vs. West Coast rivalry. This history overview, which is about four decades long, simplifies the process of understanding of the whole development of hip hop and the direction it took in recent years..

A part of this thesis is devoted to music part of hip hop and it divides hip hop music into several groups or subgenres such as East Coast rap and West Coast rap that vary in terms of representing the two coasts in the United States, and the other subgenres – Gangsta rap, G-funk, Jazz rap, and Underground rap – that differ in sound and lyrical qualities. There is also included the information about the origins of these subgenres and their characteristics in this chapter. Thanks to stating several musicians by each subgenre, it should be easier to categorize other artists into appropriate hip hop styles.

There are presented several topics that very often appear in songs of the major hip hop artists in the last section. After a connection of these themes and real events that preceded their usage in songs and albums of various artists, it should help to understand numerous lyrics, and more importantly, the reasons why artists chose these topics for their songs. For example the choosing of theme of being rich and successful and the emphasis on the value of money, for which hip hop is often criticized in these days, seems quite logical to me now, when I realize that a big part of hip hop artists grew up in poverty and social injustice, and it is obvious that they want to rap about their dreams and what they achieved in their lives. In my opinion, hip hop artists through their songs especially focused on this topic could inspire their fans to make their lives better and make their own dreams come true too.

7. English Summary

This thesis is occupied with the topic of hip hop in American culture. At the beginning, several definitions of the term hip hop are stated and a difference between hip hop and rap is explained. It shows that the term “hip hop” stands not only for a style of music, but it represents the whole culture that includes numerous elements.

It displays four decades of hip hop history including its birth, major achievements of American hip hop artists, and description of its major conflicts – the Bridge Wars and the East Coast vs. West Coast conflict.

The next chapter introduces the phenomenon of hip hop culture that consists of a large number of elements, from which was necessary to describe in detail the basic four – DJing, Mcing, graffiti, and b-boying. Except for these, some other additional elements were mentioned.

This thesis deals also with hip hop as a style of music and divides it into several subgenres, where two of them are subjects of locational division and the rest of them is divided according to features of sound and lyrics.

The last section devotes itself to lyrical part of hip hop music, where several themes appearing often in hip hop lyrics are introduced. There are also mentioned artists who used a particular theme in their songs or albums, whose titles and dates of release are there listed too.

8. České shrnutí

Tato práce se zabývá hip hopem v americké kultuře a jejím cílem je bližší seznámení s tímto tématem. Přestože je hip hop v dnešní době vidět téměř všude, kam se podíváme, ať už jsou to filmy, hudební pořady v televizi nebo v rádiích, reklamy, internetové servery nebo graffiti kresby a nápisy na různých veřejných místech, hip hop je, podle mého názoru, téma, které je stále nutno představit veřejnosti, i když o něm snad každý má určitou představu.

Po uvedení nejužitečnějších definic pojmů hip hop a rap na začátku této práce, které mimo jiné ukazují, že hip hop není pouze hudba, kterou lze slyšet v rádiu nebo v televizi, ale že ztělesňuje celou kulturu, která zahrnuje velké množství prvků, je vysvětlen naprosto zásadní rozdíl mezi těmito dvěma slovy. V této kapitole je dále rozebírána celá hip hopová kultura, která se skládá, mimo jiné ze čtyř základních prvků – DJing, MCing, graffiti a b-boying – které bylo nutno podrobněji popsat. Kromě těchto čtyř prvků byly krátce zmíněny některé další přídatné prvky. Lze říci, že hip hop začal díky DJingu, protože DJ Kool Herc vytvořil breakbeat, který je typický pro hip hopovou hudbu. Později se k hudební složce hip hopu připojil MCing, jehož úkolem bylo povzbuzovat publikum a ze kterého se postupně vyvinul rap. Přestože graffiti existuje již po celá staletí, s hip hopem bývá spojována teprve ta forma graffiti, která vznikla na konci šedesátých let ve Philadelphii. Rap stejně jako graffiti měl, mimo jiné také funkci vyjádření nesouhlasu a nespokojenosti se sociálními a politickými událostmi a jako důkazy mohou sloužit texty hip hopových umělců a graffiti kresby na různých veřejných místech. Jsou zde podrobně popsány základní techniky umění graffiti, jejich charakteristické znaky a základní funkce. Pozornost je také věnována b-boyingu, kde jsou detailně rozebrány a popsány základní techniky tohoto druhu tance. Největší zásluhu na vzniku a vývoji hip hopu měl právě b-boying, protože to byli hlavně tanečníci breakdance, pro které DJ Kool Herc hrál a přizpůsoboval svou hudbu.

Dále je zde zobrazen vznik a čtyři desetiletí historie hip hopu, ve které je jsou uvedeny události, které jsou pro vývoj a hlavně šíření této kultury napříč

Spojenými státy americkými a později i po celém světě velmi důležité. Mezi tyto události patří především zahájení televizních a rádiových pořadů věnujících se hip hopu, publikování časopisů a natočení filmů a dokumentů zaměřujících se na hip hopovou kulturu, vydání zásadních alb a písní předních amerických hip hopových umělců, jejich nominace a výhry prestižních hudebních ocenění a také jejich činy a podnikatelské aktivity, které úzce souvisí s hip hopovou kulturou. V této historii jsou také zmíněny dva hlavní spory mezi hip hopovými umělci z různých měst, jako je spor Bridge Wars v osmdesátých letech dvacátého století, a dokonce z obou amerických pobřeží, jako je tomu v případě rivalství mezi umělci z East Coast a West Coast v devadesátých letech dvacátého století. Pozornost je věnována hlavně průběhu těchto dvou sporů a jsou zde uvedeny také příčiny jejich vzniku.

Tato práce se také zabývá hip hopen jako hudebním stylem a rozebírá hlavní poddruhy, do kterých je hip hop rozdělován. Dva z těchto poddruhů – East Coast rap a West Coast rap – podléhají rozdělení podle lokality a zbylé poddruhy – Gangsta rap, G-funk, Jazz rap a Underground rap – jsou rozděleny podle zvukových vlastností a zaměření textů písní. U každého poddruhu je uvedeno, kdy vznikl nebo byl nejvíce populární, jaké jsou jeho charakteristiky a jsou zde zmíněna také jména umělců, kteří bývají do daného poddruhu zařazováni.

Poslední oddíl této práce se věnuje tematickému zaměření textů hip hopových písní, kde je představeno několik témat, které se velmi často objevují v textech hip hopových písní. Vždy existuje příčina například v podobě určité události, na základě které se dané téma objeví v textech hip hopových umělců. Proto je potřeba znát kontext, ve kterém daný umělec vyrůstal a ve kterém žije, aby došlo k pochopení obsahu textů, které používá ke tvorbě svých písní. U každého tématu jsou zmíněna jména autorů, kteří určité téma použili ve svých písních nebo albech, jejichž názvy a data vydání jsou zde uvedena také.

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10. Anotace

Autor: Olga Jírová

Název fakulty a katedry: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci,
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Hip Hop v americké kultuře

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jiří Flajšar, Ph.D.

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Anotace: Tato práce pojednává o tématu hip hopové kultury, která se skládá z několika prvků. Popisuje vznik a čtyři dekády historie hip hopu, která obsahuje události a jména osobností, které byly důležité pro vývoj této kultury. V další části se práce zabývá hudební složkou hip hopu, která je rozdělena do několika podskupin. Pozornost je věnována také textové složce, kde jsou uvedena témata, která jsou typická pro texty hip hopových písní.

11. Abstract

Author: Olga Jírová

Faculty and Department: Philosophical Faculty of Palacký University in Olomouc, Department of English and American Studies

Title in English: Hip Hop in American Culture

Supervisor: Mgr. Jiří Flajšar, Ph.D.

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Abstract: This thesis deals with the topic of hip hop culture, which consists of several elements. It describes the origin and four decades of history of hip hop, which contains events and person's names that were important for the development of this culture. In the next part, this thesis is occupied with a musical part of hip hop, which is divided into several subgenres. Attention is paid also to lyrics, where themes typical for hip hop songs are stated.