Written by Hip Hop Linguistics ID3340 Saturday, 17 February 2007 02:28 -

Hip-Hop has historically existed as a male-dominated industry. Being a reflection of urban life and struggle, past Hip Hop artists have been forced to maintain a certain level of masculinity in order to be accepted by their urban communities. Old school rappers who talked about love were often viewed as soft or corny.

Because of this perception, the existence of love in Hip-Hop is a fairly new concept. As the movement has gained support and recognition throughout the world, love has become an increasingly common theme in Hip Hop music and poetry.

However, the taboo still exists. Even today, Hip Hop artists and poets present their love stories in a manner that allows them to maintain socially acceptable identities. Hip-Hop stories about love must still meet the masculine ideology in which the movement is rooted in order to be perceived as real and true.

The purpose of this study is to analyze Hip-Hop love narratives and how artists present these love stories in order to construct socially acceptable identities. I believe personal narratives are closely tied to the construction of identities. It is through personal narratives that people can recount life-changing events, realize socially acceptable behavior and create individual identities.

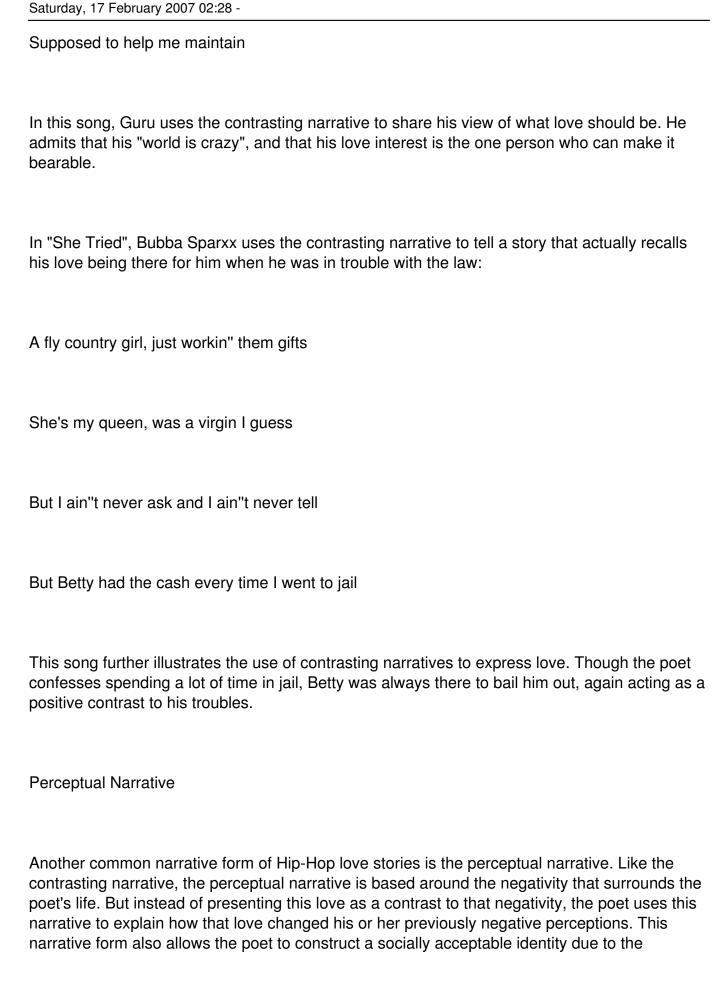
I have researched and studied several Hip-Hop love songs and analyzed the lyrics as text and poetry. In my research, I have found five common narrative forms used by Hip-Hop poets to tell their love stories: contrasting, perceptual, spiritual, conversational and metaphoric. These five narrative forms are used not only to present the story correctly, but also to maintain positive perception among a society that might view this sensitivity as weak or disrespectable. I plan to demonstrate each of these narrative forms and show how the poets use them to tell their love stories while establishing acceptable identities.

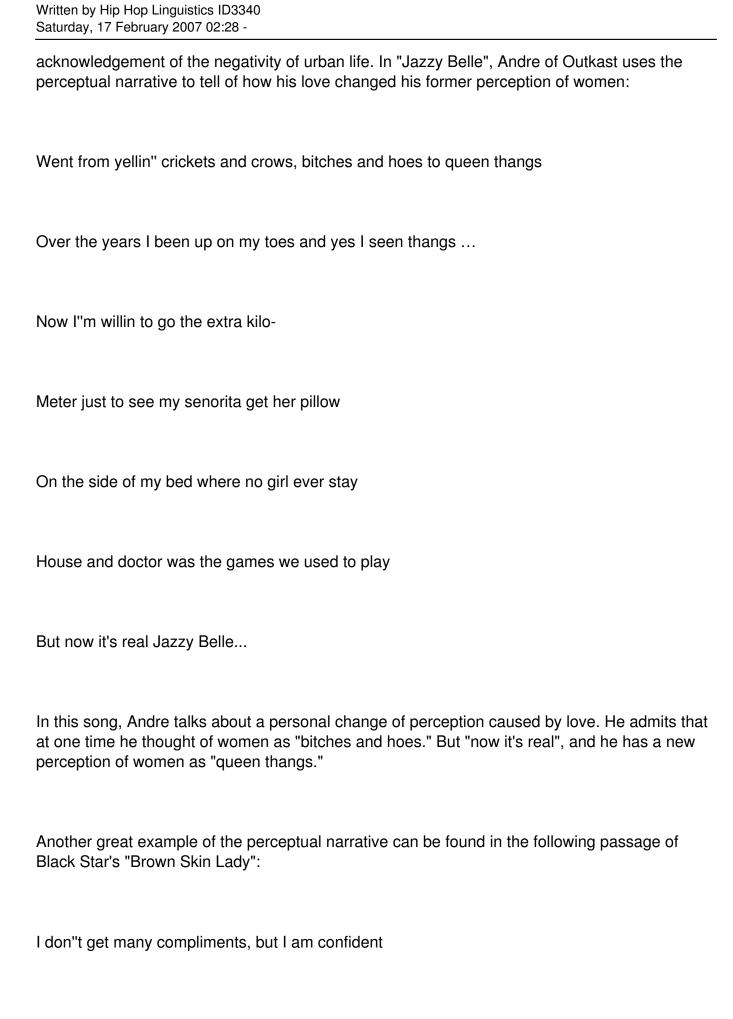
# **Contrasting Narrative**

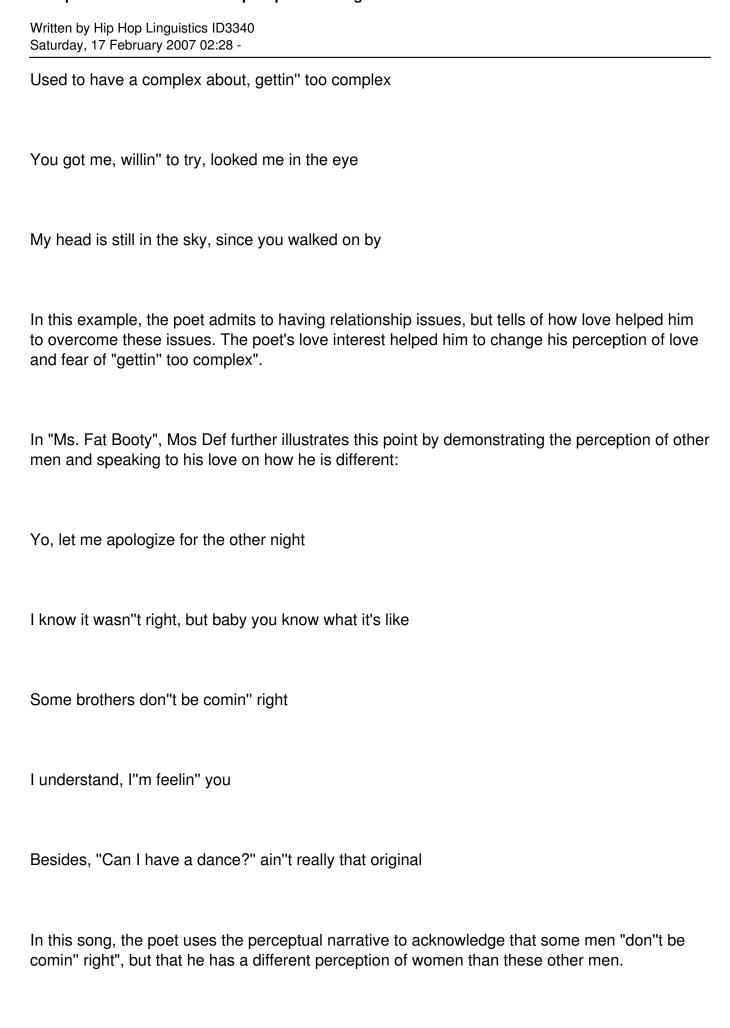
One of the most common forms of Hip-Hop love stories is the contrasting narrative. Many artists use Hip-Hop music and poetry to tell stories about the negativity surrounding their urban

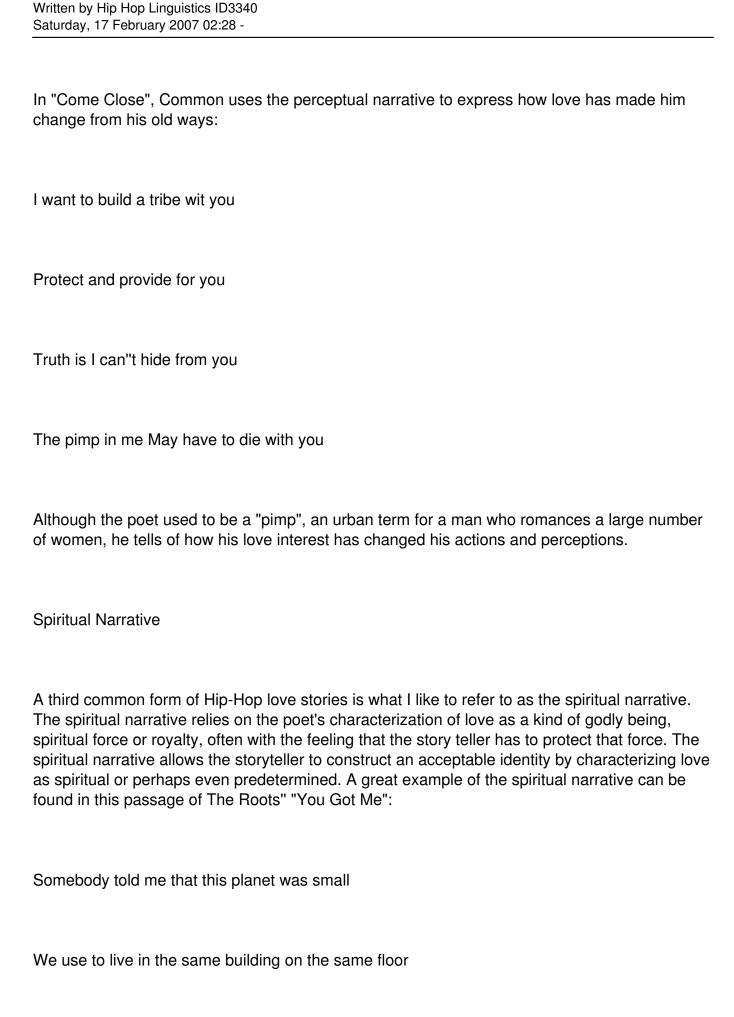


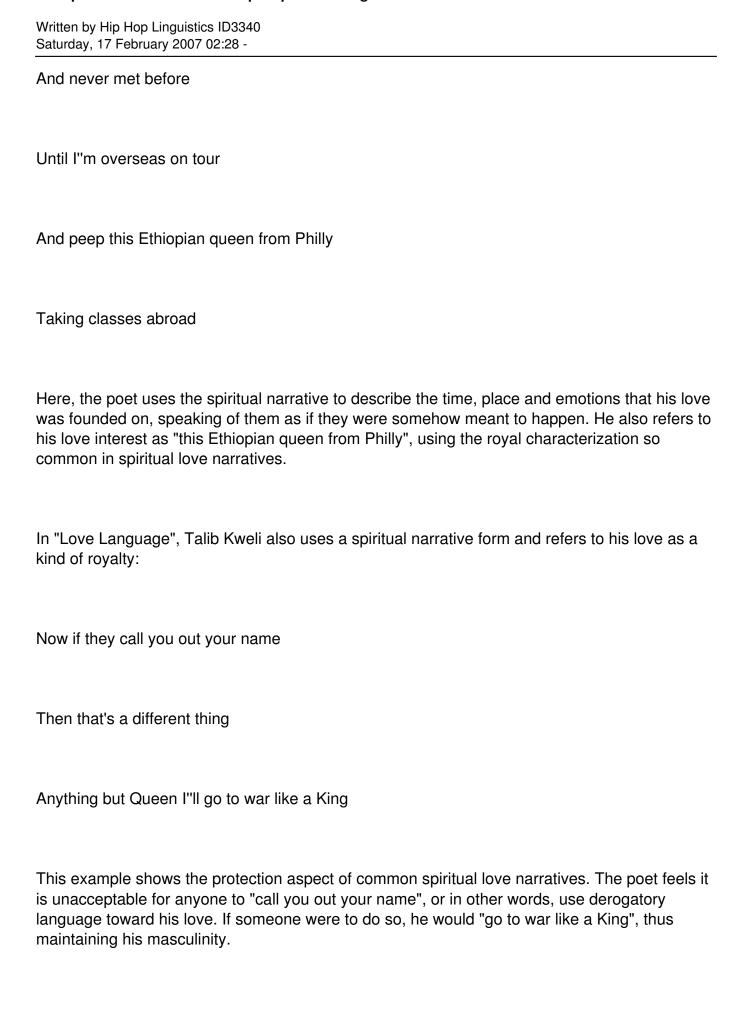
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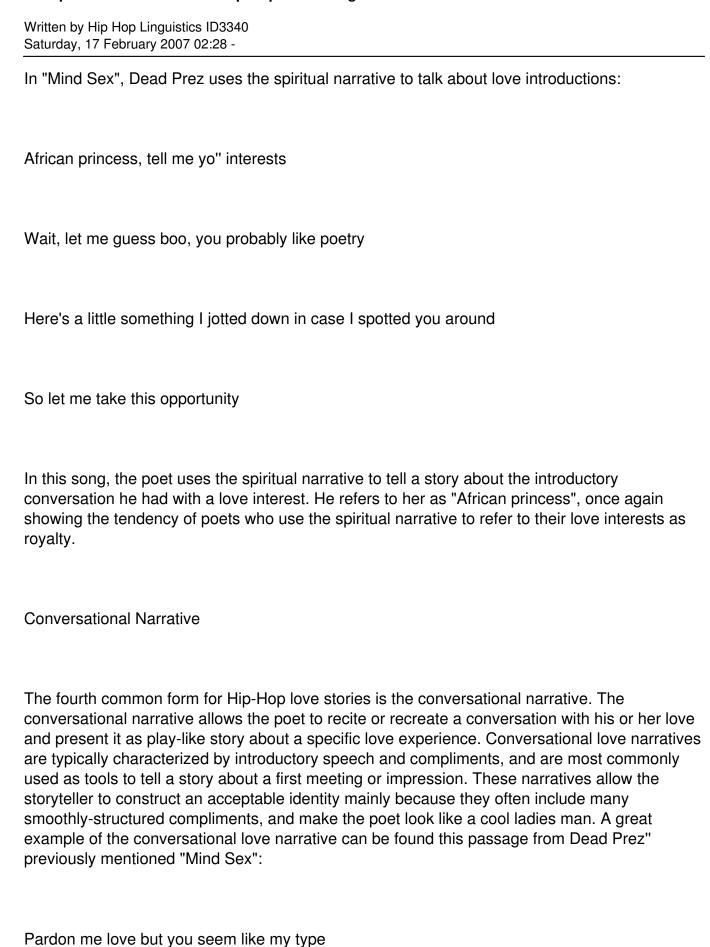


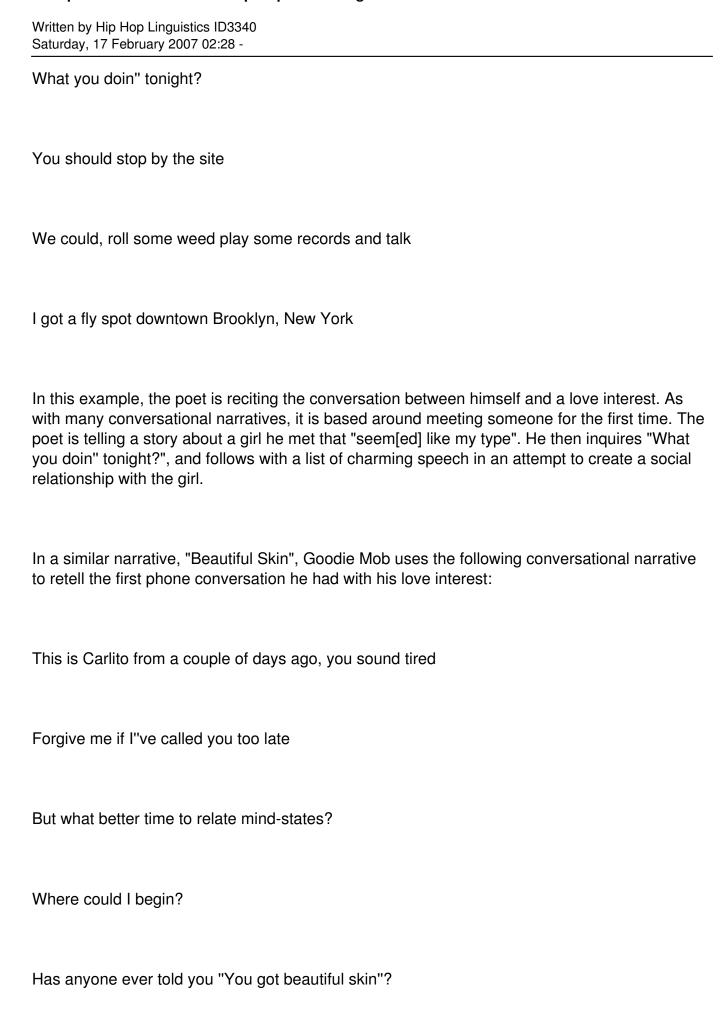










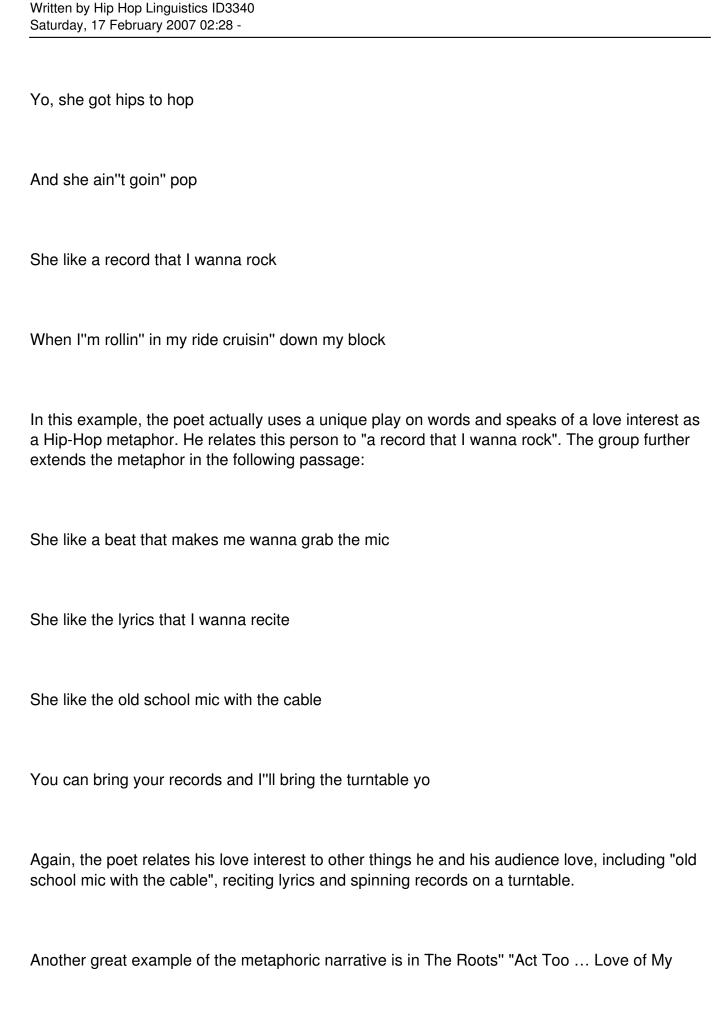


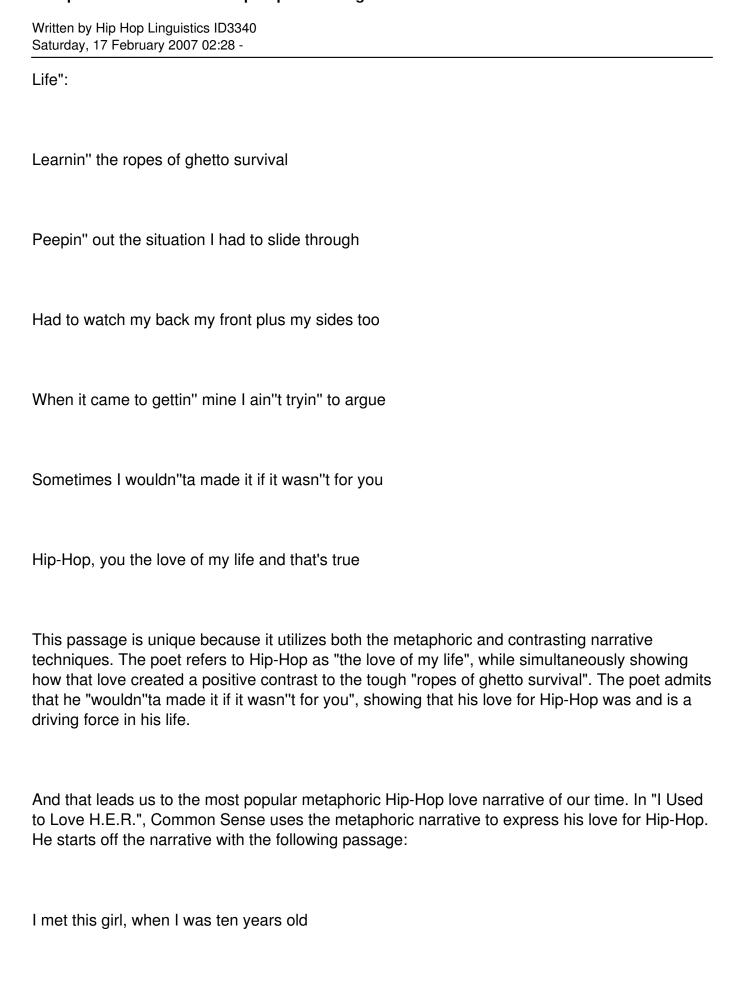
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This example further illustrates the use of introductory language in conversational narratives. The poet asks his love interest if she would like to "relate mind-states", or get to know each other. He then tells her that she has "beautiful skin", an often successful introductory complement given to women.

complement given to women. Cee Lo uses the following conversational narrative in "Slum Beautiful": Look at you, unbelievably, brilliant beautiful you You"re looking deliciously divine darling you really and truly do The very thought of has got me running at the speed of love Exploring everything about you from the ground to the God above In this song, the poet uses the conversational narrative to speak directly to his love interest through the song. Note the wide range of compliments offered in this passage, as well as the charm, again illustrating a common aspect of the conversational narrative. Metaphoric Narrative

The fifth form of Hip-Hop love stories is possibly the most fascinating. It is the metaphoric narrative. The metaphoric narrative is used when the poet speaks of love in a metaphor of some kind. The most popular and socially acceptable form of metaphoric narrative is using Hip-Hop as the metaphor. Many followers of the movement view Hip-Hop as a driving force of love and happiness in their lives. Thus, many metaphoric love narratives revolve around Hip-Hop itself. A good example of such a metaphoric narrative is the following passage from Black Eyed Peas" "Rap Song":



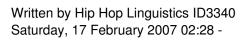


Written by Hip Hop Linguistics ID3340 Saturday, 17 February 2007 02:28 -And what I loved most she had so much soul She was old school, when I was just a shorty Never knew throughout my life she would be there for me In this example, the poet starts off telling a story about a girl he met when he "was ten years old", and how she was always there for him. The poet continues to use the metaphoric narrative to speak of this girl, including the good times and hardships they faced together. Not until the end of the poem does the listener actually realize that the entire song is a metaphor. The song ends with the following passage: I see rappers slammin" her, and takin" her to the sewer But I'ma take her back hopin" that the shit stop Cause who I'm talkin" bout y"all is Hip-Hop In this song, the poet used the metaphoric narrative to tell a story about the love of his life, the struggles she faced, and his desire to save her. In the end, he admits that this love is not a real person, but instead his love of Hip-Hop. The presentation of Hip-Hop love narratives and their relation to identity construction is a very difficult task. In order to talk about love and still construct a socially acceptable urban identity, artists tend to implement one of the five successful love narrative forms. I believe that our

society's analysis of Hip-Hop music and culture is lackluster at best. The Hip-Hop love

narratives presented above could provide a great basis for linguistic and sociolinguistic studies. Not only are they presented in a variety of styled narrative forms, but they also include deep thought, perception and analysis of the urban environment that characterizes an increasing majority of American society. Through the analysis and study of these love narratives, linguists





Method Man. Tical. Def Jam Records, 1994.

Mos Def. Black on Both Sides. Priority Records, 1999.

Outkast. ATLiens. La Face Records, 1996.

Outkast. Stankonia. La Face Records, 2003.

Talib Kweli & DJ Hi-Tek. Train of Thought. Rawkus Records, 2000.

The Roots. Things Fall Apart. MCA Records, 1999.