

UC Riverside

UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

From the Bronx to the Banlieues: The Crosscultural Commodification of Hip Hop

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5bc3t9r8>

Author

Copi, Susannah

Publication Date

2016

Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5bc3t9r8#supplemental>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

From the Bronx to the Banlieues: The Cross-Cultural Commodification of Hip-Hop

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

by

Susannah Copi

August 2016

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Mariam Lam, Chairperson

Dr. Vorris Nunley

Dr. Michelle Bloom

Dr. Sabine Doran

Dr. Joseph Diémé

Copyright by
Susannah Copi
2016

The Dissertation of Susannah Copi is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Drs. Mariam Lam, Joseph Diémé, Vorris Nunley, Sabine Doran, and Michelle Bloom for all their guidance and support in the writing process.

This work would not have been possible without them.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Barbara, David, Jamie, Joshua and Sam Copi as well as Alex Pandjiris for their unflagging support over the years.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

From the Bronx to the Banlieues: The Cross-Cultural Commodification of Hip-Hop

by

Susannah Copi

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Comparative Literature
University of California, Riverside, August 2016
Dr. Mariam Lam, Chairperson

This dissertation explores the commodification of rap in the United States and France. Specifically, this project examines the devolution of hip-hop into a neoliberal practice in which original messages become drowned out by sales pitches, or a neocolonial self-fulfilling prophecy. Specifically, I situate French and American rap historically to highlight the how the commodification of hip-hop reflects complicated and entwined relationships between social constructions of gender, race, and nationality. Especially central to this historical situation of hip-hop's commodification is how creative expression is raced and gendered in different cultural contexts. This project finds productive sites of cultural and expressive dislocation through which French and American identity constructions are deconstructed through hip-hop.

Table of Contents

Introduction: Hip-Hop as a Minor Literature	1
Chapter 1: The Transnational Nature of Hip-Hop	20
Chapter 2: Features Films, Television, and the Commodification of Blackness and Hip-Hop	57
Chapter 3: Feminism and Sexism in French and American Hip-Hop	82
Chapter 4: Queer Hip-Hop Speaks Out	116
Conclusion	134
Works Cited	142

Introduction

Hip-Hop as a Minor Literature

Hip-hop studies is strongest at the locus of hip-hop's beginnings: New York City. While the field of hip-hop studies in the United States is still a nascent one, it is impossible to find hip-hop studies within the French academy. There have been discussions recently at NYU about offering a minor in Hip-Hop Studies, and NYU has begun hosting hip-hop studies conferences. Slowly but surely hip-hop studies is building and growing in France just as it is in the United States. The interventions made in this dissertation are breaking new ground in an inventive fashion, as the debates in transnational hip-hop studies are just beginning. Cultural critics such as Tricia Rose in *Hip-Hop Wars* (2008) help complicate the arguments that circulate around hip-hop in the United States. She believes that both hip-hop fans and those critical of hip-hop have got it wrong, if they refuse to inflect their arguments with the more complicated questions within American culture.

It is obvious that American hip-hop has had a tremendous influence on the birth and growth of hip-hop in France. This dissertation interrogates those moments of symbiosis in which cultural exchange occurs both in French and American hip-hop. To what extent, if any, does American hip-hop borrow from the French? Writer Saul Williams relocated to France, in the tradition of many of the United States' most talented African American writers and artists. CNN called Williams "hip-hop's poet laureate." What is interesting in this statement is the implicit recognition of hip-hop as a nation.

One cannot be a poet laureate without one's nation. The hip-hop nation is, like individual identity, always in the process of creation, growth and renegotiation in terms of its borders. Individual and collective identity is always already in flux, recreated daily in accordance with the experience and ideas of the individual or collective.

Awad Ibrahim recently began using the term "global hip-hop nation." This is a beautiful idea, and a laudable one, but we are far from that at this point in time. To be sure, hip-hop's origins and many hip-hop fans remain political and would seek to glocalize—to remain local and grassroots within the community while acknowledging the globalizing influence of—hip-hop, as opposed to continuing to allow the unfettered globalization of hip-hop, in which many artists are sold down the river by the multinational corporations who are more interested in the bottom line than the lines of the lyrics. In Kjeldgaard and Askegaard's "The Glocalization of Youth Culture: The Global Youth Segment as Structures of Common Difference" (2006), they state:

We treat youth culture as a market ideology by tracing the emergence of youth culture in relation to marketing and how the ideology has glocalized. This transnational market ideology is manifested in the glocalization of three structures of common difference that organize our data: identity, center-periphery, and reference to youth cultural consumption styles. . . . [G]lobal homogenization and local appropriation [show] the glocal structural commonalities in diverse manifestations of youth culture. (231)

It would seem that this can be looked at in terms of hip-hop as well, that there are these glocal commonalities in diverse manifestations of hip-hop culture throughout the world.

Using Benedict Anderson's analysis of imagined communities, this dissertation discusses the ways in which hip-hop has been and is beginning to be imagined and constructed in the 21st century as a nation. His idea of national consciousness is easily

applied to the hip-hop nation. I argue that the globalization of hip-hop operates within a neoliberal system, in which the only thing that matters is the market value, and I reveal the cross-pollination of hip-hop film, lyrics and music between France and the United States, in which cultural producers who want to intervene must contend with global forces of multinational corporations. The vast majority of the hip-hop music sold in the United States and France is sold by a handful of corporations: Universal, Sony, BMG, EMI and Warner Music Group. Over the last several decades, we have seen unprecedented consolidation of ownership of the means of cultural production. As is becoming more evident, the corporatization of rap is global. The 90's were the most lucrative period for rap in France, but its influence and production does continue to proliferate there now, with great interest still being shown in hip-hop as a dance form, and to hip-hop film and video. Just as in the United States, there have been grumblings in France about the death of hip-hop, but clearly there is no real danger of that at this point in time, since France's hip-hop market is the second-largest in the world. Corporate sponsorship of the arts is a necessary evil, but also ultimately corrupts the art made if the artists are not careful to negotiate their limits within corporatization. Corporatization of hip-hop can be seen as commercialism winning out. There is no substance left. In spite of this ever-increasing corporatization of hip-hop, there is an argument to be made that hip-hop can be seen as a minor literature.

In order to include hip-hop lyrics as a minor literature, according to Rupa Huq in *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth, and Identity in a Postcolonial World* (2006), we must first argue its inclusion in the category of literature (127). The three characteristic

elements of a “minor literature” according to Deleuze and Guattari are the deterritorializations of a major language through a minor literature written from a marginalized or minoritarian position, a political nature, and its collective, enunciative value. The latter two are inseparable. I would argue that much of French hip-hop is actively engaged in deterritorialization of the French language. As Huq points out: “Rap has also been used in a learning context in teaching the French language, even though breaking with linguistic convention is one of the most noteworthy features of French rap” (127). Another example of this breaking with linguistic convention is the use of the English word “black(s)” to talk about Black experience within France, rather than using “noir” or “noirs.” According to the popular website *Dailymotion*, French people also use the American term “battle” to describe the faceoff between emcees, rather than using the French term “une bataille” (http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xhv003_aix-en-provence-le-hip-hop-a-l-honneur_creation). In the second edition of the *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five are included on the spoken word side (not the music side) of the audio companion CD included in sales of this volume. Hip-hop is written in the major (colonizer’s) language albeit with slang terms often only known to a particular social group or subculture. Even when it is not explicitly endeavoring to be political, its reception is always political. Hip-hop from its inception was political, as well as having collective enunciative value. By analyzing hip-hop as a minor literature, this project makes a theoretical intervention into the current discussion in hip-hop studies as a literature of the vernacular, in both English and French. For hip-hop to survive and thrive, hip-hop artists must embrace both

“becoming-minor” and “becoming-woman” in order to truly endeavor to achieve deterritorialization. These two becomings converge and are important steps in the creation of the minor literature that is hip-hop. While it is true that some might say it is a stretch to call hip-hop a literature, there are also many people who do define it as such, the lyrics in particular.

In recent years, there has been increased study focused on hip-hop culture, both globally and nationally. In looking more closely at the two largest national producers of hip-hop music, the United States and France, it is surprising that more studies are not yet published which employ a comparative perspective (Bradley and Dubois 794.) Thomas Blondeau and Fred Hanak’s two books, called *Combat Rap* (2008) and *Combat Rap II* (2008), were published in France, yet each focused separately on one nation, the first on the United States and the second on France. Some comparisons are made within individual national studies, but it is harder to find work comparing the history of hip-hop culture in the United States and in France. This project endeavors to find points of comparison that can be seen in hip-hop’s increased commodification in both nations from a historical perspective, analyzing gender difference within hip-hop, and addressing concerns of feminism and homophobia vis-à-vis hip-hop. It will focus on the commodification and cultural interplay between filmic and poetic/musical texts in American and French hip-hop culture, and argue that hip-hop in France has been commodified to a lesser extent than in the United States, with the result that in some ways it has stayed truer to hip-hop’s original political aims in the 1970’s and subsequent two decades.

This project focuses on the commodification of hip-hop in both the United States and France in order to help elucidate the corporatization of rap and hip-hop, and contribute to the growing field of hip-hop studies, which should not be limited to African American Studies departments, but can now also be included in French and Francophone studies as well as Comparative Literature/Film/Cultural Studies. In this way, the field of Hip-hop Studies can also grow beyond the limiting borders of Ethnic Studies/African American Studies, and take its rightful interdisciplinary place bridging these departments which ought to include aspects of hip-hop culture. French/Francophone Studies can be revived and enlivened by recent and relevant cultural practices which help the students engage more deeply with their study of French/Francophone language and culture. Increasingly, literature scholars are including hip-hop in their poetry research and database building (their “archives”.) So not only can hip-hop breathe new life into many more traditional departments, but it can also help bridge departments that are not so used to working together and help foster important interdisciplinary connections and productive cooperative theoretical and practical work. Rupa Huq recommends the use of hip-hop specifically with regard to French language teaching, in a chapter titled “Rap and the Uses of Hip-Hop Culture” in *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth, and Identity in a Postcolonial World* (2006).

Thus far there have been very few comparative studies of hip-hop that focus on the American and French cultural industries. I hope to add to the growing field of hip-hop studies by using a diasporic studies approach, employing the work of theorists such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. This will improve current scholarship in hip-hop studies,

which often remains limited within a national framework, most often within the United States. An African diasporic approach will help shed light on the interplay between the United States and France's diasporic members in the cultural production of hip-hop against a background of always already fluid and hybridized identity, along multiple axes of intersectionality.

There are several transnational networks at work in the globalization of hip-hop. As MK Asante points out in his recent book *It's Bigger than Hip-Hop* (2008), a ghetto in Soweto or Paris or New York relates to all other ghettos, and there are many links across nations which can be expressed through hip-hop. The familiar refrain "It's just a ghetto thing" doesn't refer only to one particular ghetto, but to the ghetto experience, anywhere. The link is formed through survival of ghettoization. Unfortunately, the corporatization of hip-hop has tended to void such connections of any deeper meaning, reducing them to superficial surfaces. Kwaito (South African fusion of hip-hop, house and reggae) music, like hop hop in the United States and France, has been grossly commercialized in South Africa. It is clear to most that hip-hop has been overly commodified in American culture, and everywhere it has been sold/spread. To some extent, this has also taken place in France, where one of the Paris-based groups, NTM (Nique ta mère, or F*** your mother) became the second hip-hop group ever to sell so many albums in France. The deeper meanings found in many hip-hop songs in France in the 1990's have been buried beneath heaps of gold albums, based on the sale of debased views of women and female sexuality as well as an overvaluation of violence and commercialism, much as in the United States. Thus we see songs from 2001 such as "Nique tout" ("Fuck Everything"), whereas in the

1990's, artists such as MC Solaar were rapping lyrics like "Dieu ait son âme" ("May God Have His Soul"). There has been a steady dissolution of politically meaningful lyrics in rap since the 1990's. The result of this has been flight from mainstream rap by so-called "backpack rappers," who endeavor to produce more politically meaningful lyrics.

Television is a productive place to look to in searching for meaning in the reception of hip-hop. France had a show about hip-hop on television before the United States did (Charnas 254), produced by a female Tunisian French immigrant. The producers of shows like *Yo! MTV Raps* were, by contrast, Euro-American (white) men. What are the factors resulting in the less extensive or extreme commodification of hip-hop in France? What is the cultural interplay between American hip-hop culture and French hip-hop culture (beyond shared terms like "old school"), and to what extent is the African Americanization of French hip-hop culture responsible for the continued rise in commodification of hip-hop within France? Does or did France have its own unique style of hip-hop, or was it always already American because of hip-hop's hybridized roots in the Bronx? Because of French hip-hop's influence by American hip-hop, has it also been influenced by the commercialization found in the American hip-hop industry? It has certainly been inspired by the politics in hip-hop in the US.

While this dissertation will not spend too much time on censorship, government censorship of rap both in France and the United States is significant, while very limited. Due to the strong political nature of some rap music, such as Sniper's "Nique le système" (2001) or NWA's "Fuck tha Police" (1988), there have been media maelstroms in both countries about what is politically correct or appropriate to sell, to the public as well as to

minors. To some extent Obama and Sarkozy's time in power had an effect on the reception of hip-hop in both countries. Obama claimed to like Jay-Z and Kanye, yet when he invokes the term "old school" he is referring not to old school hip-hop, but to Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye.¹ Obama claims to love the "art of hip-hop" although he "doesn't always love the message." These comments were made not during his presidency, but while a US senator. Across the Atlantic, Sarkozy has had a negative effect on hip-hop's influence or power within popular culture. His incendiary and racist/classist comments, such as publicly referring to inner city French youth as "scum" in 2008, fueled the fires of fandom within French hip-hop, adding to their numbers by polarizing France ever more starkly.² In 2002, French group La Rumeur was interviewed in a magazine and quoted by the *New York Times* as follows: "Hundreds of brothers were beaten by the police force who are nothing but assassins." After this interview, the Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy responded by taking them to court. These hip-hop artists are staying true to the original politically transformative aims of hip-hop.

At its inception, hip-hop was a movement. It was deeply political, connecting people across cultures, a grassroots coalition of young and old people of many ethnicities fighting for a better future. Since that time it has been warped beyond recognition through corporatization and commodification. Many still love hip-hop, in spite of the obvious clashes which can arise between feminist sensibilities and some of the gangsta rap style lyrics, in which women are excoriated as "bitches" or "dykes." Artists such as Queen Latifah have tried to discourage misogyny in hip-hop over the years, in a way far different than the tactics of PMRC or Tipper Gore. Rather than categorically censoring

rap as something negative, like Tipper Gore and PMRC did, Queen Latifah embraces hip-hop and performs her critique from within, through her 1993 lyrics in “U-N-I-T-Y” exclaiming “you gotta let ‘em know you ain’t a bitch or a ho.”

Because of the ways in which hip-hop often now refers to an industry rather than an art form, in the American context, we must look to global producers of hip-hop (those outside of the United States) to rediscover its original intentions. This is why scholars and educators such as Asante speak now of the “post hip-hop movement” and try to discourage identification solely with hip-hop, since many have tried to limit those in the movement to a target market. This is why we must look to artists such as Dead Prez or Immortal Technique, Boss or Nicki Minaj to redefine hip-hop, or move into a post-hip-hop movement, which would signify a break with the forces of the market. These artists challenge the norms and expectations within hip-hop, forcing fans to look more closely at social issues and societal expectations. When people discuss “post-hip-hop,” they are referring to the hip-hop industry, and suggesting a change in the genre based on a break with the industry and market forces driving it.

In Jeff Chang’s *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop* (2007), he explores and delineates the history of hip-hop beginning with the commodification of reggae coming out of Jamaica when he writes: “Reggae music was not only a socially stabilizing force, it had become a commodity” (38). Originally begun to help create social change, reggae and hip-hop have been bastardized nearly beyond recognition through a combination of factors (gold albums and the increased commodification which creates a vicious circle of consumerism), not the least of which is neoliberalism in this postcolonial moment and its

political economies of governance. Neoliberalism is often assumed to mean America's world dominance. Yet it is much more than that, that definition is too simplistic. Neoliberalism is a way of governing that reduces humanity to the lowest common denominator as it relates to the market. The market is the most important thing under neoliberalism. The music changes to fit the market as commodification increases. Neoliberalism works similarly in both France and the United States, teaching citizen consumers that they are what they buy, and connecting cultural forms with economic forms. Buying demographics showing hip-hop's consumption revealed in the 1980's that the largest-growing target market for hip-hop were white children in suburban areas with expendable income for buying albums. They wanted to buy "coolness."

Run DMC was the first group to go platinum with a hip-hop album in 1985 with *King of Rock*. Soon after they began signing with major advertisers like Adidas and Sprite. Corporate censorship reared its ugly head with 2Live Crew in their 1989 album. The American state smashed its fist down on freedom of expression with Ice-T's song "Cop Killer," which came out shortly after NWA's "Fuck tha Police" in 1988. Mirroring the difficulties of these artists with the police in the US, Ministère AMER and NTM in France had significant problems with the French police. NTM were eventually ordered not to perform for six months and fined for their anti-police lyrics during a concert. In 1995 Pasqua requested censorship of Ministère AMER's album "Off the Pigs." This would require an analysis of the similarities and differences in censorship and hip-hop in both the United States and France, or policy analysis, which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

With the continued decline of the importance of certain ideological state apparatus, and the rise of the cultural production as the most influential ISA these days (because the U.S. state controls much of the media shown on network television), media studies becomes an ever more important subject in the academy. Media and cultural studies need to be not only taught in a department in their own right, but also taught in interdisciplinary courses across the curriculum, from French/Francophone Studies to Africana Studies to Comparative Literature. Within the French academy, it will be more difficult to overcome the marginalization of hip hop studies. It simply doesn't exist within the French academy as of yet, with French hegemony still resting on Francophone shoulders much of the time.

While in the United States hip-hop has become a multibillion dollar industry, its offshoots, such as French hip-hop, are multimillion dollar businesses. The commodification of hip-hop reached its apotheosis in the US with corporations promoting everything from clothing to Sprite. Lines have often become blurred between culture and commerce, between criminality and creativity. Confusion has resulted from efforts at censorship of songs railing against police brutality, and the distortions that are performed and disseminated by police departments in conjunction with the American media, to vilify young concertgoers and make excuses for police intimidation and brutality. Abuse of power comes as no surprise. Physical abuse by police is an old tradition in both American and French society. Quincy Jones characterizes hip-hop as renegade, and from its roots, it truly was and continues to be.

Hip-hop has often been compared to bebop, as Paul Gilroy describes in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) when he references Quincy Jones: “Hip-hop is in many ways the same as Bebop, because it was renegade-type music. It came from a disenfranchised sub-culture . . . we’ll have our own language” (108). The connection was also evident in the recent documentary by Michael Rappaport, *Beats and Rhymes*, in which Qtip raps that his father used to talk to him about how hip-hop reminded him of bebop. I will lay the groundwork for my study of hip-hop, transnationalism and commodification by outlining the history of hip-hop and putting it in the context of other American music, such as the blues, jazz and funk.

Further, this project interrogates the circulation of blackness as a commodity, paralleled with the ways in which femininity circulates as a commodity within hip-hop culture. Both blackness and femininity are commodified in order to neutralize them as potential threats to both France and the United States. Recently, colloquia have been organized more often in France than the United States to address the symbiotic relationship between French and American hip-hop. I hope to find a way to change this imbalance in the years ahead, so that we can foster productive debates within hip-hop studies in the US which explore the “hip-hop nation” in a transnational context. Because the commodification and corporatization of hip-hop has gone global, so too does its politics and creative (often underground) cultural production, as well as its critique and scholarship.

One of the most innovative and radical groups in recent years is Immortal Technique, who on the album *Revolution 2* exhorts emcees to know their true value and

stop acting like a commodity. This project will look to MK Asante, who states in *It's Bigger than Hip-Hop: The Rise of the Post-Hip-Hop Generation* (2008) that “hip-hop has been transformed into a consumer movement” and will try to find the liminal spaces in which hip-hop has room to grow out of this tiny box, exemplified by American rapper Big Boi’s endorsement of Crown Royal liquor, part of the consumer movement which Asante mentioned above (71).

There is now a growing academic interest in hip-hop in France, with colloquia and the yearly “Hip-hop Campus” in Paris. The ethnic diversity of hip-hop in France reflects that of hip-hop worldwide (Durand 32). This project will deploy Sarkar, who deftly analyzes the nationalism of the “hip-hop nation”:

[E]ach body of Hip-hop scholarship, both the American and the French, seems hermetically sealed. This is especially true of early American work on Hip-hop, which has, by and large, completely ignored the importance of the Hip-hop phenomenon outside the United States border. (142)

By bringing a postcolonial perspective into American Studies/African American Studies/Hip-hop Studies, I will be better able to situate and analyze the productive interchanges that go on within and across national borders in the now global hip-hop nation. Employing a postcolonial and also transnational approach will include overarching analyses which draw connections between different nations and national identities, situated in a historical context which relies on postcolonial theory for its foundations.

In their book *Combat Rap II*, detailing the history of hip-hop in France, Thomas Blondeau and Fred Hanak describe some of the smaller hip-hop groups such as Rockin’ Squat or Solo using Marxist theory. But these hip-hop groups are not marketed in the

same way as the more commercially successful artists such as MC Solaar, whose *Prose Combat* album sold over a million copies (this album included his hit song “La fin justifie les moyens,” or “The End Justifies the Means”). After this, multinational corporations began swiftly signing the French rappers, such as Epic (Sony) signing NTM.

The mid-1990s were very successful financially, not only in the United States but also for the French hip-hop industry. The groups given the most attention, both in France and the US are of course the top selling groups. These are not often, or not always, those with the strongest political messages. Some of the rap distributed solely on the internet out these days is extremely political, but remains unsigned and unmarketed.

Suprême NTM, also distributed by Sony, took their infamy in France and tried to put it to good use with their song “Pose ton gun,” in which they mix English and French as they rap, explaining that drive-bys don’t solve anything, and imploring the “boys” to put down their guns. Sniper is signed by Warner, Akhenaton is signed by Virgin, Saian Supa Crew by BMG, Arsenik by Virgin, Oxmo Puccino by Virgin, Kheops by Virgin, and Fonky Family (who produced the song “Marseilles Invades”) by Virgin. When a group called Sniper is produced and distributed by the largest media conglomerate in the world, what effect, if any, does that have on the message of the group’s songs? They were publicly excoriated by then Minister of the Interior Sarkozy for their supposed Antisemitism, particularly in their well-known song, “La France.” In it they speak frankly about the “farce” that is France, about the hatred by the extreme right of increasing Islamicisation. As Sarkar points out in his article “Still Reppin’ Por Mi Gente,” there is much mention of American hip-hop in French hip-hop studies, but the reverse is quite

rare, and limited to a few self-aggrandizing comments about American hip-hop's influence abroad. Hip-hop is always already global, in spite of Perry's arguments in *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip-Hop* (2004) to the contrary, with Perry stating that hip-hop must be local (173).

From the moment the widely popular rap group Public Enemy's album went gold over two decades ago, the industry of hip-hop has not stopped growing and becoming globalized. The question "who is global?" is emblematic of hip-hop culture, a multiracial, multiethnic, multinational movement despite extreme corporatization. In August 2011 in San Bernardino, rapper Immortal Technique exhorted the audience to express their anger, to blame George W. Bush for the demise of the Twin Towers, to start a revolution, and to honor women. He spoke out against rape, exploitation of youth of color and many other ills in today's society. He rapped about the international drug trade and the U.S. government's involvement in it in order to control our cities. He had the crowd roaring for more, a sea of young people of myriad ethnicities, listening to him rap in Spanish about so-called "immigration policy," too angry to continue in English.³ In Christopher Vito's Master's thesis at San Diego State University, he explores the links between Marxist theory and Immortal Technique's lyrics/message. While not explicitly Marxist, Immortal Technique does advocate revolution. More important to my project, he advocates unofficial/illegal downloading of his own music: "Burn it off the internet and bump it outside" ("Obnoxious"). In addition, he has funded a new orphanage opened in Afghanistan in 2009. Such phenomena require an analysis of underground hip-hop that is fighting for change.

Chapter 1 explores the commodification of rap in the United States and France and the devolution of hip-hop into a neoliberal practice, in which the original messages became drowned out by the sales pitches, a neocolonial self-fulfilling prophecy. I will also situate French and American rap historically and discover the ways in which it, too has been commodified from Marseilles to Paris, using Adorno, Althusser and Marx. The chapter will investigate different cultural theoretical traditions and trajectories, while tying together the ways in which the social construction of gender, race and nationality relates to hip-hop, as well as how creative expression is raced and gendered. This chapter will find productive sites of dislocation through which we can break down the socially constructed nature of identity and better understand the systems at work in French and American societies. It will also elucidate how hip-hop culture and its cross-cultural commodification plays a part in those systems.

Chapter 2 demonstrates how blackness gets commodified and essentialized in France, so that a young Greek rapper is often assumed to be of African origin. I will look at hip-hop feature films and music videos released in France or the United States, the most well-known being *La haine*, by Jewish banlieue director Matthieu Kassovitz, which is not typically studied as a hip-hop film. This chapter will show the ways in which hip-hop's commodification is furthered by the film and television industries, which are historically racist in both the United States and France. Mainstream hip-hop films and music videos perpetuate racist and sexist stereotypes in both national cultures, profiting from these terrible essentialist reductions of American/French/black identity at everyone's expense.

Chapter 3 addresses Imani Perry's arguments against viewing hip-hop as a transnational musical form, acknowledging her privileging of its American origins while also demonstrating the effects that globalization and corporatization have had on the hip-hop industry. It outlines some of the debates that have gone on in the United States and France regarding the commodification of black bodies, particularly female black bodies, in hip-hop commodity fetishism, as well as delineates some of the strategies female hip-hop fans use in order to peacefully coexist as feminists, too. Cultural producers such as Boss, The Conscious Daughters, Queen Latifah, and Psalm One will be analyzed closely. The discussion of feminism and hip-hop will manifest some of Rose's arguments in *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (1994) about decrying sexism while simultaneously remaining sex-positive (171).

Chapter 4 analyzes and compares Boss and Queen Latifah before she went pop. It will demonstrate the ways in which homo hop and feminist hip-hop have been shortchanged within the hip-hop industries, as well as the ways in which it is more radical than other types of hip-hop, politically and artistically. In videos such as "Imma Homo" or "Talk of the Town," by lesbian-owned Rainbow Noise entertainment, with lyrics such as "Yeah I bone her, but I don't own her," queer females embody postmodern feminism which sometimes incorporates female masculinity (Halberstam 97). Fiona Simone of Atlanta's homo hop scene is proudly political in her official music video for her song "Grind from the Bottom," in which she states "we need a revolution," and deploys the term "crooked police" in the tradition of NWA. She exemplifies queer subculture in her song "tomboy fresh." The chapter engages with Lady Laistee, Diam's, and Casey in a

search for queer female hip-hop artists from France. One of the more famous homo hop stars is Samy Messaoud. French rapper Laistee makes use of verlan, the French type of pig latin, creating her name from the word “stylée,” meaning styled. Of course homo hop or even mainstream female rappers in France are even less well known here in the states than their corporatized straight male counterparts. It is important to look at the complete picture of the hip-hop nation, including its queer subjects and subjectivities, in order to adequately analyze cross-cultural effects. The conclusion explains how hip-hop has been misappropriated and misunderstood globally and heartbreakingly co-opted and how artists and critics can continue to work against this. We must remember that the blues did not cease to exist just because they became heavily commercialized, neither did bebop and neither will hip-hop.

Chapter 1

The Transnational Nature of Hip-Hop

In the summer of 1989 my brother wasn't old enough to drive, so I drove him to Detroit for his birthday, where we saw De La Soul, NWA and LL Cool J perform. By the end of the night, the event (or at least the exterior perimeter) was televised, and my mother was frantically calling, searching for my brother and me. I was dismayed that night to see LL Cool J's sports car parked on stage (it was Detroit...what did I expect if not cars onstage?). The spectacle of excessive conspicuous consumption seemed sad. To add insult to injury, De La Soul had been booed offstage, unused to a hardcore audience such as the one before them awaiting Eazy E and LL Cool J. LL stood on stage, basking in his glory and shouting out, "How many ladies in the house want to get with LL tonight?" to the adoring shrieks and cries of the female fans that night. The most politically important part of that summer night was when NWA took the stage. They had hardly gotten through half their song, "Fuck tha Police" when they were swiftly removed from the stage by police. The way those on the floor experienced it was much more chaotic and sinister. The police had manufactured their very own riot, first by locking the stadium from the inside with padlocked chains, second they intimidated the crowd outside with police mounted on horseback. When *they*, the police, fired a gun inside the stadium, they began *their* own riot. The fans didn't want a riot; we wanted a concert. We didn't get to hear NWA because of police censorship and intimidation. I was dancing up near the stage, enjoying "Fuck tha Police," when my friend and I heard the shot ring out.

We dove for the floor, terrified. It was then we realized we were locked in. The police opened only one door for people to get out, causing a great amount of panic. Then, of course, local news networks were called to put their spin on the latest “riot among young Black youth in inner city Detroit.” My brother and I drove back to Ann Arbor, stunned into silence by the night’s events, having learned better how far the police will go to prevent anyone from rapping about police brutality and injustice. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught us many years ago in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (1963), “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

In Rupa Huq’s chapter on rap¹, she mentions this particular concert in contrast to one after which NTM was prosecuted in France. She refers to the “hustling offstage of NWA by the police” which has been documented by others (119). What I saw that night was much more insidious than simply forcing the group offstage and denying them their First Amendment rights. They revealed a pattern of police brutality and corruption that became more apparent nationwide to the mainstream American public through the government crackdowns on freedom of expression with respect to the Occupy movement. The developments we are seeing will be of utmost importance as well for the rights of artists and writers and musicians to speak freely.

This chapter explores the commodification of rap in the United States and France and the devolution of hip-hop into a neoliberal practice, in which the original messages became drowned out by the sales pitches, a neocolonial self-fulfilling prophecy in which

¹ Huq, Rupa. *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth, and Identity in a Postcolonial World*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

hip-hop exists for the market rather than the other way around. As Wendy Brown argues in *Undoing the Demos*², “neoliberalism is best understood not simply as economic policy, but as a governing rationality that disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life...” (176) Neoliberalism lessens the meaning of freedom, since everything is for the global market. Hip-hop becomes divided between those artists who seek out neoliberal promise and those who divest from it. Using Althusser and Adorno, this chapter will situate French and American rap historically, and discover the ways in which it, too, has been commodified from Marseilles to Paris, and New York to Los Angeles. It explores the transnational nature of hip-hop that is alluded to, but not explored by Tricia Rose in her recent *Hip-Hop Wars* (2008)³. Rose puts transnational in parentheses with a question mark, leading me to believe that both she and Imani Perry are skeptical of the transnational nature of hip-hop. Perry considers a postcolonial hip-hop community to be a “fantastic aspiration” instead of a reality. In the years since *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip-Hop* (2004)⁴ was published, that fantastic aspiration has become more and more real. Perry brings many valuable arguments into the current hip-hop debates. Perry tells us in her introduction to *Prophets of the Hood* that not only does

² Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone, 2015.

³ Rose, Tricia. *The Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip-Hop—and Why it Matters*. Philadelphia: Basic Civitas, 2013.

⁴ Perry, Imani. *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip-Hop*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.

hip-hop sometimes “further American vices on the airwaves,” but that it also “aggressively introduced progressive politics . . . into popular culture” (2).

Hip-hop’s transnationality was present from its very beginnings. In the 1970’s, hip-hop’s cradle was found in the Bronx in New York City, where African, African American and Jamaican music were melted down and recombined to create hip-hop music. With the current worldwide explosion of hip-hop still going strong, artists in many more countries have joined the hip-hop nation. Paul Gilroy tells us that “hip-hop’s . . . success has been built on transnational structures of circulation and intercultural exchange established long ago” (87)⁵. When Gilroy references these structures, it helps us to recall the history of slavery, which was a central point for intercultural exchange, including the stories and storytellers from Africa who were brought to the United States. Much American music, such as the blues or spirituals owes its existence to the slaves who created these musical forms as a mode of expression and resistance. Hip-hop at its best continues this tradition.

To understand the flow of hip-hop worldwide, it is necessary to look not only to the origins of hip-hop, or to the current debates surrounding it, but to look at hip-hop as a transnational phenomenon and at the political narratives which substantiate these notions of transnationality. Hip-hop has always already been transnational, but some theorists such as Imani Perry do not identify it as such. She argues instead that Afro-Atlantic theories such as Gilroy’s fall short when they are applied to hip-hop in the United States

⁵ Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

(18). In her parsing out of Caribbean music from African American music, she rejects the theories of the Afro-Atlantic migration and cross-cultural sharing that occurred and continues to appear musically. Gilroy reminds us that “hip-hop culture grew out of the cross-fertilization of African-American vernacular cultures with their Caribbean equivalents rather than springing fully formed from the entrails of the blues” (103). The tradition of storytelling in West Africa by their griots is carried on both in the United States and France, through hip-hop.¹ Many hip-hop artists are our modern day griots, or truth-tellers. No one can prevent hip-hop artists from telling their truths. They are not only musicians, but also teachers, just as the griots were and continue to be in Africa.

French/Guadeloupian rapper Doc Gyneco has sometimes schooled audiences about important topics such as in his song and video “Né ici,”⁶ in which he sings, “My mother was born there, my father was born there, I was born here, in misery,” proceeding to describe Paris. The video was shot in Guadeloupe, where his family hails from. He raps about leaving Paris to be in Guadeloupe on the beach, enjoying this place not “grey like Paris.” He expounds on the problems of life in Paris, where drug and alcohol abuse are taking over his downtrodden neighborhood La Chapelle, and he is trying to protect his son from similar vices. Acknowledging his roots in les DOM-TOM (Départements ou Territoires d’Outre Mer), he illustrates the ways in which hip-hop is already transnational, as he himself is with origins in Guadeloupe and ties to France as well. Yet he falls into the trap of the colonialist gaze as he romanticizes the DOM-TOM in this

⁶ Doc Gyneco. “Né ici.” *Première consultation*. Compact Disc. 1996.

music video, making himself the to-be-looked-at object of the colonialist gaze without analyzing this power imbalance. In this way, he plays into the neocolonial power structure existing at present. In nostalgizing the DOM-TOM, he reifies neocolonialism through the camera's gaze.

Many great French hip-hop artists are not only French, but also hail from West Africa or the Caribbean, or from North Africa. They remind us of France's colonial history and the ways in which they have tried to overcome the French legacy of colonialism, as well as bringing to the public's attention French neocolonialism and the many race-based or socioeconomic class limitations that those of African or Caribbean descent often find living and working in the metropole. In 1986, Homi Bhabha rearticulates this problem, stating "[it is] not Self and Other, but the Otherness of the self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity" (xv)⁷. When we look at Bhabha's idea in relation to the postcolonial situation in France, it helps elucidate the cyclical trapped despair of postcolonial immigrants' situation in France and the former French colonies. The otherness of the self is ever present in the identities of France's postcolonial citizens. They know that even those born in France are still maltreated. In a country where job applications are accompanied by attached photographs, it is easy to see that racism still holds sway throughout the metropole and France's former colonies as well.

⁷ Bhabha, Homi K. "Remembering Fanon. Introduction to the English edition of *Black skin white mask*." *Black skin white mask*. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

In Perry's focus on hip-hop as strictly an African American phenomenon, she remains myopic about the growth and spread of hip-hop throughout the globe. Robin Kelley explains in the foreword for *The Vinyl Ain't Final*⁸ the following:

[T]he global and transnational character of hip-hop's origins is not simply a matter of style. It was born global because it erupted in the midst of a new stage of globalization . . . since the 1970's The music and the art continue to embrace, even celebrate, its transnational dimensions while staying true to the local cultures to which it is rooted. (xiii)

Gilroy helped support the theory of transnationality of hip-hop by discussing the "debt to Caribbean forms, which can only undermine the definition of hip-hop as an exclusively American product" (85). De la Soul's recent album *First Serve*⁹ was made by French producers and released on a small French label. So does this make it a French album or an American one? Or is it a transnational album, just as so many films are these days, with international co-producers? This kind of transnational coproduction shows the outdated-ness of producing or reviewing music along national lines. What's important now is not whether an album is French or American, but the ways in which a transnational product will be received by audiences.

Hip-hop is part of some cultural ideological state apparatuses in the context of Althusser's definitions of ideology in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971)¹⁰, in which he states that "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to

⁸ Kelley, Robin. *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture* edited by Dipannita Basu and Sidney Lemelle. London: Pluto Press, 2006.

⁹ De La Soul. *First Serve*. Compact Disc. Jesgrew Records, 2012.

¹⁰ Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review, 1971.

their real conditions of existence.” Having hip-hop on national television in shows such as *Empire*¹¹ helps to underline this connection to conditions of existence, through its representation of a “real” family that is its own corporation. With the growth of multinational corporations controlling the means of cultural production, the hip-hop artists become corporatized.

In both the United States and France, freedom of speech was called into question with relation to hip-hop. In the United States this happened concerning the group NWA, while in France the state litigated against the French group NTM. While the groups had the backing of the multinational corporations that produce their work, the police in each country responded very negatively to some of the messages expressed by the groups. In the United States, NWA was warned by the FBI that they found NWA’s song¹² to be degrading to police officers, and that they should understand the FBI’s official position vis-à-vis the song. In France, not only NTM but also Ministère Amer were taken to task by the authorities. Ministère Amer were attacked in court by then Ministry of the Interior in France for their song lyrics (to the song “Pig Sacrifice”¹³). NTM’s song “Police”¹⁴ drew the ire of the police in France. The courts eventually sentenced NTM to a six-month period in 1996 in which they were not permitted to perform at all in France.

¹¹ *Empire*. Fox. 2015- Television.

¹² N.W.A. “Fuck Tha Police.” *Straight Outta Compton*. Compact Disc. 1988.

¹³ Ministère AMER. “Sacrifice de poulets.” Compact Disc. Paris. 1995.

¹⁴ NTM. “Police.” *J’appuie sur la gachette*. Compact Disc. Paris. 1993.

Detroit police in 1990 made an agreement with NWA that it would not perform “Fuck tha Police,” but the group performed it anyway, and the cops responded by setting off M80’s and rushing the stage, later arresting all members of the group. The audience was cordoned off within the venue and corralled out of there by police mounted on horseback. “Distraction without effort” was ineffectual in this case. It is not clear whether the agreement with the Detroit police force was legally binding or not for NWA at the time.

Theodor Adorno discusses in his theory of listening the reasons why people seek distraction without effort in his essay “On Popular Music” (1941)¹⁵. He states, “This obedient type is the rhythmical type . . . Any musical experience of this type is based upon the underlying, unabating time unit of the music—its ‘beat’” (72). He goes on to explain the listeners’ need for distraction that does not require too much effort on the listener’s part. It is unclear that hip-hop would fall under his description, as it often takes extended effort on the part of the listener to follow the wordplay and keep up with the rhyming of hip-hop. However, the ontological engagement of the beat of hip hop is undeniable, one of the pleasures of listening to it and/or dancing to it. Within a hip hop song there is usually the staccato beat of the rapper, revealing the moment of a beat that also intervenes in the production of the meaning of the song. This intervention into the song’s meaning is key, allowing a point of entry for the listener. It is important to take into account Adorno’s undisguised hostility for contemporary music and not to take his

¹⁵ Adorno, Theodor. *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, New York: Institute of Social Research, 1941, IX, 17-48.

criticism too much to heart in that he so strongly privileges so-called high art over low art for the masses. It is also crucial to imagine this beat of hip hop as one of ambiguity.

Hip-hop sometimes exposes an ambiguous moment in which the beat does not only create distraction yet also undercuts or undermines what is at stake. Sometimes the beat can be in direct conflict with the meaning that the lyrics bring. This ambiguity is largely hidden within the beat of hip hop, allowing for it to escape the confines that the music industry has created for it. It is possible to listen to hip-hop as popular music according to Adorno's description. Yet it is also possible to listen very carefully, with effort to understand the complicated wordplay of much hip-hop. There are so many different levels at which hip-hop can be accessed, depending on what the listener brings to it. The ambiguous moment is present in that it can be received in a multiplicity of ways. The ambiguity is available to the listener varying according to what is brought to the beat. The beat vibrates in one's being, creating an ontological experience for the listener. The beat creates an active engagement with the listener who can access it on multiple levels. What is awaited, what is discerned from hip hop's very ambiguity is not always clear. Different meanings could be ascribed to it depending on the listener. There is great potential in this moment for varying understandings of the same piece of music, which can be received at several different levels depending on the listener and what s/he brings to it. In Adorno's essay "On Jazz"¹⁶, he could easily have been talking about hip hop:

¹⁶ Adorno, Theodor. *Essays on Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2002.

“Its overpowering propaganda apparatus hammers the hits into the masses for as long a period as it sees fit, although most of these are the worst examples, until their weary memory is defenselessly delivered up to them”. This idea of hammering the (hip hop) hits into the masses is still in effect, particularly on satellite radio and mainstream radio’s airwaves. Still some decoding must be practiced in order to better understand the messages of hip hop.

The pleasure of what Roland Barthes calls, in *S/Z: An Essay* (1975)¹⁷, a “writerly text” is in the readability of the lyrics and their performance, in the exploding of boundaries, allowing the listener/reader to share another’s experience through the text (4). Gaining mastery by decoding lyrics is one of the joys in listening to hip-hop. There are moments of undecidability which reveal an emancipatory discourse within hip hop which could help rescue the hip hop movement. Jay-Z worked towards this end in his book *Decoded* (2010)¹⁸, in which he deciphers many of his lyrics for the public. It is part of popular music, to be sure, but it has its own unique place within the world of popular music. The legibility of the hip-hop lyrics are part of the pleasure of listening to them. This is modulated by the performance of the voice, adding meaning through the tone and supplementing the feeling of the knowledgeability of hip-hop. The performativity is

¹⁷ Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

¹⁸ Jay-Z. *Decoded*. New York: Random House. 2010.

central to hip-hop's message, as well as being central to what Barthes discusses as the language-poem-song's performance.¹⁹ On p. 186 he states,

What is engaged in these works, is, much more than a musical style, a practical reflection...on the language; there is a progressive movement from the language to the poem, from the poem to the song and from the song to its performance. Which means that the *mélodie* has little to do with the history of music and much with the theory of the text.

Here Barthes could very easily have been discussing rap or hip hop, and I think certainly that his theories apply equally to rap. Although I would say that hip hop has equally to do with the history of music as with the theory of the text. With these twin focuses, hip hop is able to reap in performance what was sowed in language, poem, and song.

In spite of its important role in furthering progressive politics both here and abroad, some hip-hop has come to embody the values of neoliberalism, in which the global market is the most important thing above all else. Neoliberalism has taken over, both here in the United States and in many other countries. Certainly France has experienced the same effects, resulting in less critical distance than should be in place with the reception of music. Music's performance within the market is all that matters any more and is all that is taken into account when determining if an artist is successful or not.

The danger in much reception of hip-hop is that it is not listened to with the critical distance intended. Young people purchasing and listening to the music are often less aware of the critical message contained within. They take the lyrics at face value. An example of this is some young fans of Eminem who are listening to the narratives and violent actions of Eminem's characters. These fans take in these stories as personal tales

¹⁹ Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1977.

of which Eminem has bragging rights rather than meta-critical use of characters' voices as a creative critique of American society, classism, racism, sexism and homophobia.

Anthony Pecqueux explains a shift in the language²⁰ used in French rap in recent years, describing the change from “verlan” to “veul” and explaining linguistically how that shift occurs. For the past few decades, French young people have often used a slang called verlan, which is often used throughout the film *La haine*. The words are created by switching the consonant sounds within the word, so that a word such as “fou” becomes “ouf.” It could be called French’s answer to American English’s pig latin. Veul takes verlan one step further, creating a second inversion in addition to the previous verlan one in words with more than one syllable. Ultimately, Pecqueux sees French rap as less opaque than much American rap, using fewer slang or veul expressions and so being more easily understood by the average listener. Additionally, censorship restrictions in France are less strict than those on American television and radio airwaves. Pecqueux states that American use of slang in rap is “much more systematic,” allowing fewer or less diverse uses of it.

French and American hip-hop have had an intertwined relationship, but with the power heavily weighted on the American side. For example, Afrika Bambaataa was seen on French television early on in the 1980’s, but the early French rappers were not given airtime on American television. Rap arrived in France in the early 80’s. At this time, rap seemed not like a movement, but more like a commercial coup (Boucher 63). The first French rap compilation was called *rappattitude* (67). While French rappers often sample

²⁰ Pecqueux, Anthony. *Le rap*. Paris: Revues 2009.

or cite American ones, rarely does the opposite occur. We hear very little French hip-hop in the United States, even though France boasts the second largest market in the world for hip-hop. As Basu and Lamelle remind us, “Rap music, after all, is a global commodity distributed by U.S. dominated networks of production and exchange. Young people around the world are bombarded with commercial rap from the U.S.” (xv)²¹. Even if rap is not produced in the United States, or by American rappers, still its dissemination is regulated by multinational corporations which are typically dominated by the United States. Thus, much international or transnational rap has an American hand in its production. To what extent does this make the product American? It does not seem to any more than shooting a film on American soil makes that film American.

The commodification of French hip-hop, which most often is produced in Marseilles and Paris, is less all-encompassing than the commodification of American hip-hop. In France hip-hop artists were not often asked to endorse products as many American hip-hop artists have been. France doesn’t have its hip-hop artists in commercials for other products, like LL Cool J doing a commercial for the Gap here in the United States, in 2007. While France is the second biggest hip-hop industry in the world, that market is still very different from that in the United States. In France the star system in place treats hip-hop artists as separate from youth and not as representatives of youth in revolt (Boucher 133). The star system prevents smaller artists from being heard,

²¹ Basu, Dipannita, and Sidney Lemelle, eds. *The Vinyl Ain’t Final: Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Black Culture*. London: Pluto, 2006.

instead endorsing a few stars who become larger than life. Rap does not want to be overtaken by the economy of the market (8).

As Boucher reminds us, “French rap is, today, a real social phenomenon and an important means of expression for urban youth of the country” (69). While this is true it suggests that French rap is limited to urban spaces such as the banlieues, which it isn’t. Even one of Sarkozy’s sons is now a hip-hop producer. Despite French hip hop’s easy accessibility to the listener, it can still be taken seriously as a tool of political change. Many of the French rappers reference the power of the state or other political topics. When we look at the most well-known and successful hip-hop artists in France, such as MC Solaar, they don’t necessarily come from the banlieues. MC Solaar went to college and used his education to imbue his lyrics with interesting wordplay and punning.

MC Solaar was born in Senegal but raised in France. He exemplifies the transnationality of hip-hop, as he went on to sign with English labels and produce several albums with them. He has Chadian roots and is Senegalese. His popularity also spread to the United States, where he is often mentioned in French textbooks too, emphasizing his acceptance in the French mainstream. As Boucher explains, “Rap became a commercializable and exportable product” (121).

Like MC Solaar, Immortal Technique also crosses many borders. Like Gloria Anzaldua sometimes did with her poetic writing, he refuses to translate whole sections of his songs, preferring that the audience feel what it is like not to know the language. He crosses back and forth from Spanish to English, not translating. Like MC Solaar, Immortal Technique was born in a different country (Peru) from where he was raised (the

United States). He is a highly politicized hip-hop artist, crossing cultural boundaries continually and taking on topics that few hip-hop artists dare touch these days, such as in his song “Peruvian Coke” on the album *Revolutionary Vol. 2* (2003)²², which discusses cocaine trafficking:

I’m on the border of Bolivia, working for pennies, treated like a slave, the coca fields have to be ready, the spirit of my people starving, broken and sweaty, dreaming about revolution, looking at my machete.

The hypercommodification of hip-hop culture has resulted in great confusion and proliferation of hip-hop albums, in which the market is no longer as open as it was at hip-hop’s beginnings, inspiring increasing numbers of underground hip-hop artists to follow Immortal Technique’s lead and go with small distributors. Immortal Technique fights against globalization of hip-hop by self-producing his albums in order to retain more creative control. He is fortunate to have the means to be able to do this. Not every rapper is able to self-produce to avoid the hypercommodification.

The divide between “conscious rap” and “mainstream rap” is widened by American record companies, trying to divide and conquer hip-hop artists for maximum profit. Once a group has been named as “conscious” or “political” rap in the United States, the death knell sounds for its possible inclusion within mainstream rap. They are then marketed and distributed differently, and treated differently. One such group is A Tribe Called Quest, the subject of the 2011 film *Beats Rhymes and Life*.²³ They formed

²² Immortal Technique. “Peruvian Coke.” *Revolutionary Vol. 2*. Compact Disc. Viper Records, 2003.

²³ *Beats, Rhymes & Life: The Travels of a Tribe Called Quest*. Dir. Michael Rapaport. Film. 2011.

their group in 1985 and were one of the Afrocentric hip-hop groups of the 1980's. The group was highly critical of the music industry even as they were supported in part by it. They have found it difficult to attract or maintain a mainstream following due to the label they were given of "conscious" hip-hop.

Similarly, a great divide began to form in the beginning of the 21st century in French rap, between mainstream and independent rap. France's rap scene started only about ten years later than the American rap scene, in the 1990's. Artists like Oxmo Puccino (a rap artist who began in the Parisian rap underground but became a breakthrough success commercially) and Booba represent the mainstream big selling rappers. Booba has sold over 10 million CDs thus far and racism is a frequent topic of his raps, while other groups, like La Rumeur, are independent.

This divide mirrors what was happening in the United States at the same time, with the "conscious" vs. mainstream division within the hip-hop industry. So-called "conscious" rap denoted a political consciousness which was often lacking in mainstream hip-hop. According to a 2015 BBC report, there was more support for rap on the airwaves in France due to French laws requiring at least 40% of the music played on the air to be in the French language and half of this 40% has to be "new groups."² This gave French rap a boost in radio play, as well as Francophone rap from France's former colonies. It also began to clarify the extent of the globalization of hip-hop.

What effects has globalization had on the hip-hop industry? In a *New York Times* article in 2011²⁴, Jon Caramanica explained the ways in which LL Cool J took hip-hop “from gritty to global” by endorsing the Gap. Still he managed to get in some free advertising for FUBU, of which he is part owner. Hip-hop was, of course, always already global long before LL took it “to global” through his commercial endorsement.

The globalization of hip-hop has continued unabated for many years now. Calling it globalized is of course a very different thing than admitting the transnational nature of hip-hop. Globalizing hip-hop is the purposeful marketing and selling of the hip-hop product. Globalizing tries to exploit to the maximum whichever artists it can, with the end in mind of maximum profit. Transnational hip-hop such as that of Immortal Technique does not begin with profit as its ultimate goal, but seeks to disseminate its message globally, even if that means giving away the music sometimes. “Burn it off the internet and bump it outside,” goes one of Immortal Technique’s songs entitled “Obnoxious.”²⁵ He encourages fans to “steal” his music during his concerts. This stealing works very well in popularizing and furthering Immortal Technique’s own goals.

Hip-hop’s commodification and globalization have aided in its dissemination the world over, particularly of mainstream rap. Glocalization (mixing the global with the local) affects hip-hop at every level, including in the United States and France, where

²⁴ Caramanica, Jon. “Two Titans Share The Seat of Power: Kanye West and Jay-Z, Kings of Hip-Hop, Merge Empires on ‘Watch the Throne.’” *New York Times* (New York), August 14, 2011.

²⁵ Immortal Technique. “Obnoxious.” *Revolutionary Vol. 2*. Compact Disc. Viper Records, 2003.

microcommunities of hip-hop are present in various cities, such as Atlanta or Detroit in the United States and Marseilles or the suburbs of Paris in France. Glocalization rejects globalization that would render hip-hop artists powerless, instead embracing the local alongside some aspects of globalization, and all the inherent differences of rap the world over which make its glocalization so unique and inspiring. Rescuing hip-hop from globalization's relentless path, we return it through glocalization to the local communities much like those in which it began a few decades ago. There it has the possibility once again for real social change, as hip-hop tried to have at its outset.

Since 2013, American cable television has had a new channel called the Real Hip-Hop Network, whose mission is to be the "television destination for a growing multi-racial Hip-Hop generation." Their ads claim, "The Revolution Will Be Televised," referencing the Last Poets' words in their song "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." Their website also claims that hip-hop is the "voice of the voiceless," which arrogantly implies that the rappers speak for those who have no voice themselves. This new channel, with its RHN credit card tied in, epitomizes the commodification of hip-hop even as it purports to speak revolution and overcome voicelessness through social change.

In addition to new television cable channels, there are now courses offered in the literature of transnational hip-hop, at renowned universities in the United States like University of Pennsylvania (AFRC221: Hip Hop History) or Harvard's Hip-Hop Research Institute. As it grows and changes, it will be incumbent on us as scholars and teachers to make sure it is taught with respect as well as criticism.

At an international level, postmodern protest songs such as NWA's "Fuck tha

Police” are now circulated in contexts as varied as Poland’s Solidarity movement or the Occupy movement in the United States. The lines between freedom of expression and freedom of the market blur more every day. It was not until police in the US felt targeted by the free speech of gangsta rappers that the move toward censorship of music grew strong, backed by police officers and their supporters. Hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons made his support of the Occupy movement official during his appearance at OWS, stating, “We don’t want Wall Street to control our future, and that’s why we’re on Wall Street. And what we’d like is for the people to control their future” (www.democracynow.org/2011/11/18/hip_hop_legend_russell_simmons_member). Yet there is strong critique of moguls such as Simmons co-opting the Occupy Movement, and taking advantage of their own privileged position in order to have an “activist photo op.” Under neoliberalism, we really do live in an America in which one’s economic and social class seem to determine all as filtered through the market. But when we look more closely, the elision of ethnicity in America’s melting pot is very sinister. Oakland’s former mayor Jean Quan and hip-hop’s largest mogul Russell Simmons pay lip service to their ethnic origins, while wielding their power without regard to the ways in which their own privilege manifests.

Hip-hop, most often produced and marketed under the rubric of multinational corporations, is then deployed as part of an international protest movement fighting for power to the people, or at least this is what Simmons is attempting when he makes an appearance at Occupy Wall Street. It’s no longer possible to make simplistic arguments based on “commercial” hip-hop versus “underground” hip-hop. Under neoliberalism,

these lines have become blurred, since everything is for sale, including political activism.

It would be too simplistic to say French hip-hop is more political than that produced in the US. French hip-hop too has its “gangsta rap” voices, as well as more progressive hip-hop. The group Assassin from France is one of the more political French rap groups, but Pecqueux mentions La Rumeur as “focusing its verbal attacks on immigration politics and neocolonialism to further postcolonial theorists such as Fanon.” Franz Fanon, a revolutionary political theorist, is one of the most frequently cited theorists in hip-hop, regardless of where that hip-hop is produced. Over half a dozen hip-hop songs mention Fanon in their lyrics. We have to be careful and watchful for the commodification not only of hip-hop, which is unavoidable, but also the commodification of revolutionary ideals. As Crouch reminds us, “Neoliberalism is an international, even global, phenomenon. Neoliberalism is devoted to the dominance of public life by the giant corporation” (4). According to Crouch’s definition, neoliberalism has already won the fight. In a time in which corporations are treated by law as individuals, with rights that even sometimes supercede those of individuals, it appears unseemly to question the tenets of neoliberalism, which are now so ubiquitous.

It is also complicated to explain in America that one does believe in Karl Marx and his theories. In her book *The Witch’s Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense* (2007)²⁶, Kara Keeling advances the following:

[Roderick] Ferguson’s creative and astute reading of Marx draws out the

²⁶ Keeling, Kara. *The Witch’s Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007.

implications of capital's ravenous drive to find cheaper and cheaper labor to exploit, a drive that enables 'social formations marked by interesting particularities of race, gender, class and sexuality' by encouraging the migrations of a nonnormative familial and communal relations between members of racialized ethnic minority groups. These populations (on which capital relies to produce surplus value) are racialized in such a way that gender and sexual transgressions are constitutive components of that racialization. (104)

This insight becomes clear as we look at the more extreme manifestations of "transgressions" in hip-hop lyrics or music videos, which further racialize and sexualize the subjects and objects of those discursive moves.

In discussing transnational aspects of hip-hop, this dissertation does not try to further discussions which try to use "post-race" discursive maneuvers. Instead, it wishes to be inclusionary in the study of hip-hop, while acknowledging the important role that race continues to play in the production and reception of hip-hop in societies worldwide. Hip-hop heads are increasing their cultural capital through acquisition of and time spent listening to hip-hop albums, or watching hip-hop films. This time is unpaid affective labor, invested in with each hour we spend listening to or watching these productions, that helps keep the cogs of the capitalist machine turning. For those of us who came of age in the 80's, these processes are tremendously normalized. The worship of wealth and consumerism seems natural. Only now in the morass of our current system, as worldwide recession and unemployment begin to erode the ramparts of consumerism are people beginning to question these tenets en masse. As Keeling references Landy, "labor time invested in the consumption of cultural narratives, images and sounds is a necessary labor in the maintenance of social life under capitalism" (97). Keeling helps to link hip hop with futurity through her theories on affective labor. As we move into hip

hop's future, it is important to consider what directions it will be taking as it grows and changes, emerging in more and more of the world's countries.

Through these processes people themselves become commodities, offering their labor up to augment their worth and exchange value. Anthony Pecqueux discusses the study of hip-hop within Black Studies in the American academy, and mentions the differences in language usage in French and American rap, suggesting that rap's reach in France is thus broader or larger than that in the US. Meanwhile, hip hop is unheard of within the French academy. While hip hop studies has been growing exponentially in the American academy, it does not even exist in the French academic context. Economically, rap seems to have a broader reach in the US; even with the extreme slang used by many rappers under corporate rap, they still go platinum. Perhaps it is even in part because of the specialized slang that hip-hop often sells so well, appealing to an equally specialized group (or to those who would like to include themselves in that group).

There is an interesting trend in writing about hip-hop to use religious terms in speaking about it. In *The Tanning of America* (2012)²⁷, Steve Stoute describes hip-hop as a religion with followers and in *Combat Rap II* (2008)²⁸, Thomas Blondeau describes French hip-hop as “quasi-religious . . . with its adepts.”(157) This idea of hip-hop as religion is an important one, showing the depth of devotion for many hip-hop fans, including those who are also critical of some trends in hip-hop. In Patricia Hill Collins's

²⁷ Stoute, Steve. *The Tanning of America: How Hip-Hop Created a Culture that Rewrote the Rules of the New Economy*. New York: Avery, 2012.

²⁸ Blondeau, Thomas, and Fred Hanak. *Combat rap II: 20 ans de rap francais*. Paris: Le Castor Astral, 2008.

book *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism and Feminism* (2006)²⁹, she includes a chapter called “Black Nationalism and African American Ethnicity: Afrocentrism as Civil Religion.” In this chapter, she makes clear that, in our society, everything, including religion, is commodified, even so-called civil religions such as Afrocentrism or hip-hop. Subjects are treated as commodities by our government, and if judged inadequate, are simply ruled out, or willed out of existence.

Just as corporations are now treated as people, and people as commodities, corporate rule and ownership of hip-hop has bastardized it beyond recognition from its origins in the Bronx. Rose asserts that hip-hop still manages to defy corporate control, despite earning corporate profits. In her book *Hip-Hop Wars*, she brings in the question of the transnationality of hip-hop without adequately exploring it (41). Imani Perry argues against the transatlantic or transnational outlook on hip-hop, which of course must be problematized, as she disagrees with the work of Gilroy. This can prove very useful in an analysis of the history of hip-hop. Rupa Huq, on the other hand, sees productive uses for Gilroy and possible applications of his theories in a French context. She discusses the transnational nature of black cultural production, and though Gilroy does not explicitly mention France, it could logically be included along the lines of Gilroy’s argument as part of the Black Atlantic. Hip-hop has always already been transnational in nature, and has cross pollenated since its beginnings with other musical forms and myriad vocal styles which now are found in hip-hop the world over. Gilroy’s theories of

²⁹ Collins, Patricia Hill. *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism and Feminism*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2006.

transnationalism are integral to an understanding of French hip-hop, in that the Black Atlantic is instrumental to its existence. The hybridization of different hip-hop forms involves the postcolonial moment in France and its former colonies, the ebb and flow of style from places such as Senegal to Belgium to France. Gilroy's theories of the mutability of identities are of importance to hip-hop in both the United States and France. His discussions of hybridity and the black diaspora are essential to hip-hop studies. Gilroy points out the contrast between the local and the global with regard to black authenticity. How is such authenticity created? How is it supported?

Davarian Baldwin tells us that the backlash against gangsta rap "understands hip-hop to be over-commodified and calls for a return to the roots of street parties . . . of a pre-commodified era" (Forman and Neal 231). It is too simplistic to refer to the 1970's and 80's as pre-commodified in the world of hip-hop. In American society, there is nothing outside commodification. There was never a time when hip-hop music operated outside of the realm of the market. Even when people were passing around mix tapes back in the days of old school hip-hop (much as they pass around discs they have burned to friends now, or playlists), hip-hop was not exempt from commodification. Even as hip-hop artists referenced and criticized the American obsession with wealth and consumer culture, they remained a part of it, since nothing can exist as totally separate from the consumer-citizen culture. As Da Brat, a Grammy-nominated rapper from Illinois, sings in her single "Sittin' on Top of the World" (1996)³⁰:

³⁰ Da Brat. "Sittin' on Top of the World." *Anuthatantrum*. 1996. Compact Disc.

Sittin' on top of the world
Sittin' on top of the world
With 50 grand in my hand
Steady puffin' on a blunt
Sippin' hennessy and coke
Gimme what you won't
Sittin' on top of the world
Sittin' on top of the world
With my legs swingin', jewelry jingling baby
Go 'head baby.

She embraces the commodification of hip-hop, turning it to her own ends. The character she embodies in this song proudly displays the money and luxuries she has earned through her work in hip-hop. She indeed seems to believe that she is on top of the world, and lording it over everyone else all the while. She incorporates corporate branding in this song, with the line about Hennessy and Coke. Earlier in the song, she also references corporate car brands and television shows, as well as other brands of alcohol. With multinational corporations cited in so many rap songs, it cannot avoid its transnational beginnings or present existence.

Even if one tries to deny the transnational beginnings of hip-hop, in its blended Afrodiasporic birth in the Bronx by groups like Sniper and NTM, it has most definitely become a transnational movement as well as a corporate category. Typically, NTM is not a progressive political rap group. Rather, they welcome controversy in whatever form they can find it. This is similar to NWA's saying in *Straight Outta Compton*³¹, "All publicity is good publicity". These groups are less likely to frame a critique of consumer society, but so are the groups more popular in the 1990's in the United States, such as the

³¹ *Straight Outta Compton*. Dir. F. Gary Gray. New Line Cinema. 2015. Film.

gangsta rap which caused so much controversy throughout the country, leading to greater government crackdowns on civil liberties which sowed the seeds for the police repression which is metastasizing so quickly in the United States today. How do French hip-hop artists negotiate meaning and transnational identity in their songs, lyrics, music videos and films? The closest NTM, or Nique ta mère, a French gangsta rap group, comes to critiquing society in their song “Pose ton gun”³² (1998), which, interestingly, uses the English word rather than French or French slang for “gun”:

Look, look at the future that you risk
Look, look at all the names on the list
Of those who were fallen before the age of twenty
Without knowing what life gave them
Too immature, this sound boy it’s certain
Too immature
When you’re drunk. (Translation the author’s own)

The lyrics of rap songs form their own minor literature. Can hip-hop arguably be included in Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “minor literatures”³³? It is obvious that American hip-hop has had a tremendous influence on the birth and growth of hip-hop in France. There are moments of symbiosis in which cultural exchange occurs both in French and American hip-hop. To what extent, if any, does American hip-hop borrow from the French? Kanye West and Jay-Z (two of the most widely known rappers in the United States) evoke France in their song “Ni**** in Paris” (2011)³⁴ as follows:

³² NTM. “Pose ton gun” *Suprême NTM*. Compact Disc. Paris. 1998.

³³ Deleuze, Gilles. *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*. Paris: Les Editions du Minuit, 1975.

³⁴ West, Kanye and Jay-Z. “Niggas in Paris.” *Watch the Throne*. Compact Disc. 2011.

Bougie girl, grab my hand, fuck that bitch she don't wanna dance
Excuse my French but I'm in France, I'm just sayin'
If you escaped what I've escaped, you'd be in Paris getting fucked up
too (ball so hard) let's get faded, Le Meurice for like 6 days.

France has a long history of being a refuge for American artists, as well as a playground sometimes, such as at the luxury hotel Le Meurice. Writer Saul Williams relocated to France, and still spends part of his year there, in the tradition of many of America's most talented African American writers and artists. CNN has called Williams "hip-hop's poet laureate." What is interesting in this characterization is the implicit recognition of hip-hop *as a nation*.

Awad Ibrahim recently began using the term "global hip-hop nation." This is a beautiful idea, and a laudable one, but we are far from that at this point in time. To be sure, hip-hop's origins and many hip-hop fans remain political and would seek to glocalize hip-hop, as opposed to continuing to allow the unfettered globalization of hip-hop, in which many artists are sold down the river by multinational corporations who are more interested in the bottom line than the lines of the lyrics. Glocalizing hip-hop is the alternative, nurturing it at the grassroots level the world over. In this way, hip-hop would grow stronger, encouraged at the local level and hopefully we would be able to find ways to increase distribution of smaller and newer groups.

Hip-hop has been and is beginning to be imagined and constructed in the 21st century as a nation, such as we see in the naming of poet laureates of hip-hop such as Saul Williams. As Benedict Anderson writes, "I have tried to delineate the processes by which the nation came to be imagined, and, once imagined, modeled, adapted and transformed. Such an analysis has necessarily been concerned primarily with social

change and different forms of consciousness”³⁵ (141). The hip-hop nation has been imagined and also transformed through the process of coming to exist as a nation.

Anderson’s theory of imagining a community as a nation applies directly to hip-hop and its worldwide nation. One can also situate the globalization of hip-hop under the rubric of neoliberal rhetoric, and reveal the cross-pollenization of hip-hop film, lyrics and music between France and the United States, in which cultural producers who want to make positive interventions must contend with global forces of multinational corporations. In the hip-hop nation, many negotiate meaning and deploy their new visions and versions of hip-hop in transnational cultural contexts. Has deterritorialization of the major language(s), French and English, in hip-hop’s two largest centers of production in the world been successful? To what extent have they affected social change? In exploring this question, it is useful to turn to Kara Keeling and her work on identity formation.

Keeling’s suggestion following Landy’s work on affectivity and labor is important to consider in the context of hip-hop, not only hip-hop films but hip-hop music. Keeling discusses identity formation through affectivity. This is a key piece of the puzzle of hip-hop culture in all its various modes across national lines, glocalized, taking place in transnational spaces including but not limited to the internet, outdoor spaces within cities, concert venues in various countries, as well as countless private spaces. Satellite radio, television networks, and fashion companies are all home to hip-hop in the 21st century. As Keeling explains:

³⁵ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso, 1983.

Of course, rap music itself might be understood as a highly commodified and commodifiable artistic articulation of a particular conception of the world that has enabled a sociocultural movement. (121)

The sociocultural movement in transnational spaces is fertile ground for dissent, debate, as well as immense state, corporate and police repression whenever the powers that be can manage it. So the global hip-hop nation, with Saul Williams as its poet laureate (per CNN), inhabits multiple political nations simultaneously, always trespassing everywhere. With slavery never far from the collective unconscious of a Black-inspired movement, the citizens of the hip-hop nation feel comfortable acting as citizens of the world, rather than merely of the nations in which they were born or reside.

In the book *Black Europe* (2012)³⁶, Tyler Stovall discusses the impact on France of hip-hop culture:

The rise of hip-hop culture from its African American roots to global prominence during the 1980s and 1990s had a particular impact upon France, which soon became the second largest producer of rap music in the world after the United States... The first TV show in France ever hosted by a Black man, Sydney Duteil, was a dance show entitled Hip-hop. The trendy use of the English-language term “Black” in France also reflected a new awareness of blackness as a social and cultural fact. (188)

Stovall suggests that life in African American society started to show “traits of French communities” with stronger identification with Blackness growing in France. Thus far, it seems that the relationship between American and French hip-hop is far from symbiotic. American hip-hop has had a much longer gestation and growth period, whereas French hip-hop is still coming into its own. Gangsta rap’s complex critiques pointing out the

³⁶ Hine, Darlene Clark. *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 2009.

similarities between the corporate gangsters and the gangster criminals have not been as completely developed in French hip-hop. While French hip-hop is tied to specific licensing or endorsements far less often than American hip-hop artists are, they are also more immune to the type of criticism which has been leveled at some of the biggest success stories (financially speaking) in American hip-hop culture. Gangsta rap in the United States took on symbols of American commodity fetishism and mocked these values through hyperbolic performance. Davarian Baldwin takes it a step further in saying, “This version of gangsta rap questions the fictive boundaries placed around class status as a means of social exclusion” (Forman and Neal 238). Those boundaries of course appear less fictive these days. Gangsta rap needs to be examined from a sociohistorical perspective, twenty years ago when it was produced. Five years ago, in France, gangsta rap was still alive and well. We have only to look to Booba for evidence of this, with his third album, *Ouest Side* (2006), exemplifying French gangsta rap with such hits as “Gun in Hand”³⁷ (original song title). With this album he manages multiple references at once, simultaneously referencing Malcolm X as well as the Western banlieues of Paris, where Booba was raised.

Not only for French and American youth, but also for youth worldwide, “blackness . . . becomes a transnational site of identification and self-making; one made most immediately tangible for many diasporic youth by way of hip-hop” (Forman and Neal 296). With the exponential growth in hybridized identities (as more and more mixed

³⁷ Booba. “Gun in Hand.” *Ouest Side*. Paris. Compact Disc. 2006.

couples exist since American laws against this were abolished fifty years ago) in the 21st century, as the census is forced to change its categories to include “mixed race,” this transnational site becomes ever more important for youth who self-identify as Black or biracial to reclaim those identities and lay claim to a cultural heritage that is rightfully theirs. Marc Perry goes on to add an important dimension to this concept of diasporic identification:

social significance of hip-hop not simply in terms of its international circulation and consumption but . . . self-formation [T]he space of diaspora . . . has been instrumental in enabling transnationally engaged strategies of black self-fashioning and action in response to new, globally conditioned modes of racialization. In doing so, these young people not only marshal black selves but ultimately realize the Afro-Atlantic itself as a lived social formation. (Forman and Neal 310)

In order to counter increasing racialization in globalized societies, young people must embrace local community as part of their identificatory practices, including, but not limited to music and performance. If they only identify with cultural practices from afar, they will never become intrinsic parts of their own communities, and will never gain acceptance as such. In recent years, hip-hop studies has made a slight shift away from merely focusing on cultural politics and has begun to explore the commodification and globalization (or sometimes glocalization, in which an individual reflects not only global, but also local standards) of hip-hop, now a multibillion dollar industry worldwide. Changes need to be made in the global hip-hop nation for it to return to the roots, and avoid increasing corruption in its ranks.

During the 1990’s huge leaps in profits were made, particularly in the early 90’s as gangsta rap gained so quickly in American and worldwide popularity. As for the

90's in the French rap market, Blondeau and Hanak remind us:

From there to considering that the end of the '90s saw the emergence of a rap more sold than ever before. At this time, there are financial partners who invested huge amounts of money, which logically proportionally increased the amount of corruption. (158; *Combat rap II*, author's translation)

The profits of hip-hop have continued to climb. Yet rappers like Keny Arkana, a female rapper from the Marseille banlieues, continue the fight against capitalism and for worldwide revolution with their words inciting protest and resistance around the world. With their lyrics and music videos questioning the status quo, they help to undermine the practice of neoliberalism, as well defined by Wendy Brown. For example, consider the lyrics from Keny Arkana's 2008 song "Civil Disobedience"³⁸:

Multinationals and growth
make their roads on our liberties
They swore that nothing will hinder theirs
when the dictatorships will hide
because of their "instantaneous profit" the future is wasted
that group of ungratefults reduced the Earth to a large marketplace.

Arkana directly takes on multinational corporations in this song, blaming them for the exploitation of the masses. She reveals that there is no longer any public good, only consumer good.

Subcultures communicate through commodities and so are part of a capitalist system. How can we make use of overcommodified realms such as hip-hop has become and reclaim their potential for social change? It is hard to discern at times whether Run DMC's idea was to "practice the art of conspicuous consumption," or whether or not they

³⁸ Arkana, Keny. *Civil Disobedience*. Compact Disc. L'esquisse 2, 2015.

were voicing an ironic critique of patterns of consumption in 1980's America (Huq 115). Since commercialism is often seen as the opposite of authenticity (except for uproars over knockoffs in the world of fashion, these meta-authentic products are the triumph of commercialism in many ways). Things get complicated and confused indeed in the world of hip-hop, in which authenticity debates rage while commercialism reigns supreme.

The hip-hop concept of knowledge of the self is important to consider in this context in order to ground the authenticity debates within hip-hop. An interesting borrowing happens in French rap when “a dog is a dog for life” is left in the original English in the middle of a French rap song. Perhaps “dogs” doesn't translate well into French, or *verlan*. In NTM's “Pose ton gun,” some of the lyrics are said in English, such as “put down the gun.” The referencing of American hip-hop in French hip-hop is unapologetic; it would seem to add to the authenticity of the product and/or culture. It is unsurprising given the myopic nationalism in the United States, often including the hip-hop nation, that the reverse is not often true. American hip-hop rarely references anything concerning France or French hip-hop.

In fact, American hip-hop moguls are more likely to think of Paris in the same terms as mainstream America, as the capital of fashion and luxury. The lines become blurred these days, with hip-hop success stories such as Kanye West or Jay-Z debuting their new fashion lines in Paris. You cannot get much better advertising than being called a jackass by the president of the United States, such as West was. The lines between licensing, endorsement, sales, and ideology are all merging and blending in a huge soup of neoliberalist promise. West embraces neoliberalism, even by critiquing his own

position at times, such as in his song “All Falls Down”³⁹. Of course, with his “Watch the Throne” tour in collaboration with Jay-Z, even the names of the concert venues, such as the Izod Center, reveal that neoliberalism is in the process of dominating, as the venues are now named after different corporations, which control nearly everything there. In France, Izod has become ubiquitous in urban hip-hop fashion, so the irony for French hip-hop fans watching “the throne” from afar is not lost.

With “Ni***s in Paris,” the symbiotic nature of French and American hip-hop seems hidden. Hip-hop does not even make an appearance in the lyrics or images of this video. West uses metanarrative critique within the video. Meanwhile, it is difficult to see any irony inherent in their lyric, “You know how many hot bitches I own?” American flags figure prominently not only in the music video but also on the “Watch the Throne” concert tour t-shirts, reinscribing the United States as a land of patriarchal promise, with freedom and justice for all... By naming their album *Watch the Throne*, they ask the public to look at them as royalty, American royalty as our moguls have come to believe they are. They are removed from the masses by their great wealth and power, close to kingly in the way in which they are treated by their entourages.

Only with lesser known hip-hop artists such as Boss or Keny Arkana are neoliberal values questioned. Because they are still struggling, not hip-hop moguls with multinational corporations to their names, they are conditioned differently than the big names in hip-hop. Boss discusses her inability to survive financially, and Arkana

³⁹ West, Kanye. “All Falls Down”. *The College Dropout*. Compact Disc. 2004.

describes the political travesties of our time, advocating revolution in ways that mirrored the Occupy movement in the United States.

Is glocalized hip-hop fighting neoliberal hegemonic systems, or coopting countercultural expression? Of course not all hip-hop is a voice of resistance. Interestingly, in spite of housing the second largest hip-hop industry in the world, France does not have hip-hop studies in its institutions as of yet. It exists in the American academy, with academic conferences, professorships and study abroad programs originating in the United States. A few are taught in France, these are under the rubric of various American universities. Also, hip hop can be brought into the American French or Francophone Studies classroom to augment the curriculum there.

This dissertation contributes to the current feminist debates within hip-hop studies by helping interrogate the assumptions we make in the academy about the cultural production and origins of hip-hop. By approaching it from a more inclusionary perspective, and looking at not only female and male hip-hop artists in both the US and France, but also some transgender rappers in the homo hop movement, this dissertation endeavors to broaden the scholarship within hip-hop studies and help contribute to this growing and exciting field.

In Anthony Pecqueux's recent monograph *Le rap* (2009), he calls attention to the limited inclusion of hip-hop studies within the United States, explaining that rap in the United States is understood as almost exclusively "Black culture" and also taught chiefly under the rubric of "Black Studies" (35). This dissertation problematizes this narrow definition or deployment of hip-hop studies, working for its inclusion across the

academy, in departments including but not limited to Queer studies, French and Francophone studies and Postcolonial Studies. With the “Queerness of Hip-hop” conference in September 2014 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which had an international group of scholars working on questions at the intersection of queer studies and hip-hop studies, it is clear that hip-hop studies is broadening and changing. Is there growth in the French academy as well? Will they continue to ignore the field of hip-hop studies, other than as visiting American scholars or in study abroad programs (such as CEA’s “Paris: Hip Hop Capital of Europe”) in the country with the second-largest hip-hop market in the world?

Chapter 2

Feature Films, Television, and the Commodification of Blackness and Hip-Hop

The film and television industries are the biggest proponents of American and French hip-hop culture. Hip-hop culture is still thriving in the United States and France, but there have been fewer and fewer hip-hop films in recent years. Hip-hop films have not really been formally recognized as a genre yet, but they exist as a layman's term in the wider world. It is difficult to define what makes a hip-hop film. What continues to thrive is corporate rap on American satellite radio, and newer television shows such as *Empire*, which exemplify corporate rap. Because multinational corporations are in control of most of the films and television shows that get produced, hip-hop has transformed from an art form into an industry, thereby reducing hip-hop's sociohistorical meaning. While hip-hop is always renegotiating its own borders, this is less true of corporatized hip-hop films and television shows, which have to answer more to their executive producers for these identitarian questions. The corporatization of hip-hop films reduces hip-hop from an art form encompassing music, dance and the visual arts to an ahistorical consumable product, which has divorced hip-hop from its street roots for the film and television industries, and contributed to the globalization of hip-hop.

Furthermore, through many hip-hop films, blackness gets commodified, essentialized and even criminalized. In American cinema hip-hop culture is often simplified by blurring the lines between crime/hood dramas and hip-hop films through linking blackness and violence, especially in those filmic texts produced by Hollywood

like Dennis Hopper's *Colors*¹ (1988) and Craig Brewer's *Hustle and Flow*² (2005). In contrast, French hip-hop films such as Matthieu Kassovitz's *La haine*³ (1995) and Albert Pereira-Lazaro and Emmanuel Klotz's *Lascars*⁴ (2009) have portrayed hip-hop culture as an art form and have managed to achieve wide box office success. Their filmic and televisual texts build on hip-hop culture, glorifying hip-hop music and a lifestyle founded in hip-hop. *La haine* has not typically been read as a hip-hop film but seems to fit into this newer genre due to the existence of breakdancing, beatboxing and also hip-hop in the soundtrack of the film. It also fits into the category of banlieue films, which are similar, though not identical, to American 'hood films.'

How have French hip-hop films been influenced by American commercialization and by globalization? In the coming years, we must look to smaller films and television shows as examples of glocalised film to help return to the deeper meaning which hip-hop originally had and to explore hip-hop as "becoming-minor." I will analyze hip-hop feature films and television shows released in France and the United States, the most well-known French one being *La haine*, (1995) by Jewish banlieue director Matthieu Kassovitz, which highlights differences in racism towards French people of African origin and French people of Arab origin. Dominique Bluher describes *La haine* as a

¹ *Colors*. Dir. Dennis Hopper. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1988. Film.

² *Hustle and Flow*. Dir. Craig Brewer. MTV Films, 2005. Film.

³ *La Haine*. Dir. Matthieu Kassovitz. Canal Plus, 1995. Film.

⁴ *Les Lascars*. Dir. Emmanuel Klotz. Canal Plus, 2009. Film.

‘banlieue film’ in her article “Hip hop cinema in France”⁵, from *Camera Obscura* 46 (2001), pp. 77-97. Bluher asserts that *La haine* is a banlieue film rather than a hip-hop film due to its refined cinematography. I do not think that is adequate grounds for defining *La haine* as exclusively a banlieue film, and would classify it as a hip-hop film for the reasons listed in the paragraph above. Mainstream hip-hop films perpetuate racist and sexist stereotypes in both national cultures, profiting from these essentialist reductions of American, French and/or black identity. However *La haine* and *Les lascars* are not part of this mainstream. Both are more independent films. *La haine* is based on three main characters, Vinz, a Jewish character, Saïd, an Arab character and Hubert, an African character, all of whom were born in France in a banlieue. In a recent blog by Andy Buckle⁶ he states, “In the tradition of American hip hop cinema the film is cut around the soundtrack...”, effectively including Kassovitz’ film in the category of hip hop films.

Hip-hop’s commodification is furthered, as is the consumption of blackness and sexuality as commodities. Commodifying black femininity and black masculinity helps to reduce them as respective threats to the state. In the hip-hop films that I analyze, blackness gets reflected along different axes of oppression related to gender and class. An example of this is *Straight Outta Compton*, which highlighted police brutality while

⁵ Bluher, Dominique. “Hip Hop Cinema in France”. *Camera Obscura* 46. 2001.

⁶ Buckle, Andy. “La Haine: Comparing the Approach to Hollywood Genre Cinema of Lars von Trier and Matthieu Kassovitz”
<http://thefilmemporium.blogspot.com/2011/10/la-haine-comparing-approach-to.html>

overlooking problems of sexism in hip-hop culture. The film has a very problematic portrayal of women, which one could say is simply trying to stay true to its work as a biopic of the members of NWA, but which ultimately reifies sexist portrayals. This cementing of sexism as concerns the black female body is especially problematic in the way that it commodifies black female sexuality through representations in hip-hop.

A central element to both French and American hip-hop films is violence, which is unfortunately part of the backdrop to much hip-hop (music and films.) Many films and television shows like *Colors*, *Hustle and Flow*, and *Empire* glamorize and normalize violence and the depictions of the drug trade. Along with the normalization of violence comes what Tricia Rose refers to as the “extra attention [hip-hop gets] for its violent content” (36). Rose goes on to suggest that this violence is heightened through visual media like film. With this normalization of heightened violence, blackness also becomes visually linked to violence, contributing to ever more prevalent racial profiling and prejudice in society. The American film and television industries both glamorize and exoticize blackness, which in turn contributes to its commodification. In the United States, we see violence and blackness equated daily in the mass media.

Not only in feature films, but also in current television shows, the seeming inevitability of violence being associated with blackness is illustrated. This happens in both Seasons 1 and 2 of the television show *Empire*. This relatively new show includes prison scenes, kidnappings, attempted homicide and actual homicide in its roster of violence. The essentialization of blackness along with the violence happens throughout both the first and second seasons of the show. One example is during the youngest son

Hakeem's kidnapping when he is pulled out of the kidnappers' van shirtless with a hood over his head. The dehumanization along with the eroticization of the black male body could not be clearer in this scene, as well as many others. The show depends on this eroticization of black bodies in order to further its own sales. This happens in the second season of *Empire*, for example, in which the hip-hop mogul Lucious Lyon spends some time in prison, where he records a new rap track as well as ordering a murderous hit on a fellow inmate. The commodification of blackness is also ubiquitous in this show from swimsuit photo shoots with singers on the show to a music video evoking the Black Panthers in which the brothers Hakeem and Jamal fight each other. *Empire* shows us how far Lucious Lyon is willing to go to gain power and money through and for his empire. Nothing seems to be sacred in this quest. His empire is based on commodifying blackness, and the show itself commercializes blackness and beauty standards in problematic ways. The characters with the most power on the show are lighter-skinned African Americans whereas other, darker-skinned African Americans on the show are relegated to positions of servitude as administrative assistants or maids. One of the darker-skinned African American rappers on the show, Freda, is referred to by Cookie as "an animal" when she battles with Cookie's son Hakeem.

The merging of television and reality is complete on the episode in which Jamal becomes the new face of Pepsi within the show, and then during the commercial breaks there are Pepsi commercials aired on real television. Jamal is *Empire's* main gay character, yet his gay identity is complicated by him falling for a biracial woman named Sky in season two. She is railed against as being an opportunist when she claims her own

black identity, accused of not embracing her own blackness until it is convenient or profitable for her. Shows such as *Empire* need to be analyzed within hip-hop studies to help broaden and deepen knowledge about the juxtaposition of television and hip-hop culture.

Hip-hop studies has become an academic discipline in its own right with its accompanying conferences and scores of books on the subject published over the past decade. There is a legitimate space now for hip hop in academia, and we must fight to broaden this space. With foundations in the academy, hip-hop studies itself contributes to the commodification of hip-hop culture. It is unavoidable that cooptation happens once a part of American and globalized culture becomes a focus of academic inquiry and a discipline of its own. The study of hip-hop music, films, and television shows forms a symbiotic relationship in which each feeds the other's sales.

Most hip-hop films adhere to the generic expectations of mainstream Hollywood, which seems to demand a certain level of violence and drug/alcohol abuse as well as essentializing of blackness. *Colors* contains a message against violence and makes clear that the police are fighting a losing battle against gangs. The film, however, criminalizes hip-hop culture as well as blackness. There is a tension between the culture of the police force and hip-hop culture. As we see the police driving through Los Angeles, graffiti is always in the background. The film is told mainly from these white police officers' points of view. Yet it also reveals the corruption of these police officers, in similar ways that

this is revealed in *Do the Right Thing*(1989)⁷, *Straight Outta Compton*(2015), and *La haine*(1995.)

Colors depicts a community together trying to fight against the criminalization of graffiti and hip-hop culture in general. The film also shows gang-affiliated people doing graffiti. The soundtrack only features hip-hop when the gang members are central to the scenes. In this way, the film itself criminalizes hip-hop, linking the music visually with criminality in most of the scenes. Throughout the film blackness is seen as a sign for violence, with one African American man, Rocket, in particular shown committing two drive-by shootings. A white police officer describes this as “apparently at least two blacks drove by in a van, and boom!” In one scene we see two African American men from rival gangs firing at each other with semiautomatic weapons until both lie dead. Both are left there on the ground, as the camera pulls back from the awful scene in which both men are completely dehumanized, in death just as they were in life.

In another scene we see two white police officers chasing an African American man. The scene reifies racism in its depiction in which the man running away is presumed to be guilty. The police officers’ faces are shown as they pursue him, but his face is not shown, only his back as he runs away. In this way he is dehumanized and reduced to a sign for criminality. A similar process occurs in a later scene in which the LAPD raid a gang hangout; they surround the group with police cars and a helicopter, state surveillance taking over with its searchlight as bright as the sun. One of the young gang members kills one of the LAPD, and they in turn kill him. Of course, the young man

⁷ *Do the Right Thing*. Dir. Spike Lee. Universal, 1989. Film.

of color who's killed gets almost no screen time whereas the white police officer's face is lingered on for several minutes as he dies. The police officer is shown being mourned over, unlike the young man of color who also dies in this scene.

Black sexuality was criminalized within the film in one horrific scene in which the police officers raid an African American woman's house, kicking the door down while she is having sex with her lover, who's also African American. As the man reaches down to grab his pants, he is shot by a white police officer three times in the back, while still in bed with her. Black sexuality is shown as punishable by death, seen as dangerous and needing containment. This is seen all too often in Hollywood films which confuse black sexuality with criminality.

Spike Lee strikes a much better balance vis-à-vis black sexuality in his films. In *Do the Right Thing* (1989), which was nominated for two Academy Awards, he shows his character Mookie getting intimate with his baby's mother, with the help of ice cubes to cool down the 100+ degree temperatures. Spike Lee celebrates black sexuality and black life in this film, all the while fighting against police brutality and gentrification. From the first moment of *Do The Right Thing*, Public Enemy plays in the background. Specifically, the first song we hear is "Fight the Power."⁸ The character Radio Raheem walks around the neighborhood with his radio blasting Public Enemy. The film's antiracist message is clear, supported by the background music of hip-hop. Radio Raheem faces off with a group of Latino guys hanging out. They, too, have a radio and

⁸ "Fight the Power." Public Enemy. Motown Records, 1989. Single.

start a music war with him, turning up their volume ever louder to drown out Public Enemy. This scene is significant in that it shows how strong the racial tensions in the neighborhood continued to be, while also pulling away from stereotypical depictions of blackness. Spike Lee tries to accurately depict African American communities in New York City in the early Nineties.

Radio Raheem goes into Sal's pizzeria with his music on and, once again, it presages a conflict: this time about the music itself. Sal will not sell him anything until the music is turned off. This scene is a terrible foreshadowing of the film's tragic end, in which New York police officers kill Radio Raheem. As the film and its characters reach a fever pitch, the audience sees how people's prejudices affect their judgment and their interactions. Raheem's radio is a strong symbol of old school hip-hop, as well as a flashpoint for racial tensions in the neighborhood. The reality of racial tensions in Brooklyn is projected onto the musical genre of hip-hop. The film reveals a sociopolitical critique of the musical form's mainstream reception as deeply racialized. Gentrification is shown to be very problematic, increasing the characters' territorial qualities.

When Raheem again brings his radio into Sal's pizzeria, it is an assertion of hip-hop identity that Sal cannot abide. He refers to the music as "noise" and then tries to get Raheem to leave, saying, "Fuck your music!" When Sal then breaks the radio with a baseball bat, he declares war. Everyone in his restaurant is silent as the radio sits shattered on the ground. Raheem then assaults Sal, and their fight is broken up by the NYPD, one of whom immediately grabs Raheem and starts choking him with his nightstick until Raheem collapses on the pavement. The police then haul his dead body

into the patrol car and drive away as quickly as they can. The streets are filled with people protesting the murderous police and their criminalization of Raheem for his blackness. One man on the street yells, “He died because he had a radio!” Raheem dies for hip-hop. As the camera pans through the restaurant in flames, Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power” emerges extradiegetically, as we see an extreme close-up of the destroyed radio amongst the wreckage. In *Cahiers du Cinema* (1989), Nicolas Saada discusses the violence within the film:

The film takes on enormous responsibilities, both politically and cinematographically. During the entire first part, which presents the principal characters, the camera moves around with nonchalance along with a music that “moves.” For the white spectator, the identification with these characters is tempting, facilitated by the fascination with their language. But once the violence invades the film, the identification becomes impossible. (7; my translation)⁹

It is unclear why Saada believes that identification is impossible after the violence truly begins in the film, as it seems still more compelling to identify with the film’s characters once Raheem is assaulted and killed by police. Saada seems reticent to believe that violence resides within us all. The violence he experiences should make us identify still more with the character of Raheem. Unfortunately not that much has changed since the release of *Do the Right Thing* in 1989. In this film early on in his career, Lee associates violence with everyone, particularly the NYPD, and shows how blackness often becomes criminalized.

⁹ Saada, Nicolas. “Pourquoi juge-t-on le gens? Entretien avec Idrissa Ouedraogo.” *Cahiers du Cinema* 423 (1989): 7-9.

In a similar way, being Arab becomes criminalized along with blackness in the French film *La haine*. Just as the police were guilty of murdering an African American man in *Do the Right Thing*, in *La haine* the police are guilty of murdering an Arab Frenchman. Both of these murders incite riots, in each of the films. The fact of each of the men's citizenship does nothing to save them, rather their minority status in each country seals their fate as they are fatally preyed on by the police force. Spike Lee complained in an interview that he felt Kassovitz "completely ripped off" his film to make *La haine*.¹⁰ Kassovitz claimed never to have seen Lee's film.

I am treating this as a hip hop film because it includes major elements of hip hop culture such as breakdancing, hip hop music and graffiti art. Throughout the soundtrack, hip hop is woven in and becomes a part of the diegetic space. It can be both a banlieue film and also a hip hop film, simultaneously. In *La haine*, we see the architecture of the banlieues which seem like the old colonial towns in which shanty towns were created aside gated communities. This new recreation of old situations helps ensure that in modern French cities such as Paris, the inhabitants of the banlieues are kept separate from those in the city center. One way this is enforced is through the train schedules, which shut down during the night, ensuring that those in the central city and those living in banlieues are kept apart. This point is brought home when the three young men miss their train and are forced to wait all night before they can return home to the banlieues. When they first arrive in central Paris and are addressed by the police as 'vous' rather than 'tu', being treated with more respect than the police in the banlieues ever treat them

¹⁰ <http://blog.criterioncast.com/post/22701072994/spike-lees-thoughts-on-la-haine-while-talking>

with they are in shock. They don't know how to react when they are treated so respectfully by the police in central Paris (to begin with). The neocolonial structure of present-day France is revealed through these and other interactions with the police with Said, Hubert and Vinz. They fall into the description Aihwa Ong gives under neoliberalism of "Citizens who are deemed too complacent or lacking in neoliberal potential may be treated as less-worthy subjects."¹¹

When Hubert and Said are apprehended by the Paris police, it is clearly a case of racial profiling as they had done nothing wrong. However, they were seen as not belonging to this area of central Paris and were then taken to the police station. This reveals the neocolonial behavior and attitudes in supposedly postcolonial France, where racial profiling reigns. Like the colonial gated communities which the natives needed permission to enter, central Paris has its own codes and permissions for those who live in or visit it, both literal codes to gain access to apartment buildings and social codes which reveal those who do not 'belong' to the milieu. Hubert and Said are seen to be 'trespassing' as they have no 'permission' to be walking around central Paris in true neocolonial fashion. Vinz, on the other hand, who appears white, is allowed to stroll through central Paris after disavowing his connection with his friends.

La haine dramatizes stories of police brutality in France. Much like *Les lascars*, *La haine* includes a hip-hop soundtrack and scenes that feature the French HLM (housing projects.) During one key scene in the film, we see an overhead shot of the neighborhood as the camera pans across it, evoking police surveillance as Vinz's neighbor aurally

¹¹ Aihwa Ong. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Duke University Press: Durham and London. 2006.

mocks the police. While he does so, he samples hip-hop (Nique la police by Cut Killer) along with lyrics from Edith Piaf. This pan across the housing complex helps accentuate the confined quality of the area in which they live. They are literally boxed in by the housing project. The film treats hip-hop as an art form, whether it is DJ'ing, breakdancing or doing graffiti art, it respects hip-hop culture and celebrates it. Hip-hop is ubiquitous in this film, though never at the center, since the film is about police brutality and Parisian youth. Because hip-hop culture is present throughout *La haine* it makes sense to read it as a hip-hop film.

The majority of this black and white film focuses on Vinz, Saïd and Hubert wandering the city together the day after a riot sparked by an episode of police brutality in which their good friend, a young Arab man named Abdel, is severely beaten. We see the police abusing two of the friends while they are interrogating them, choking them as a lesson for a new officer in how to conduct interrogations, which evokes the government condoned torture of Algerians decades earlier by the French. While they've done nothing wrong to merit being taken to the police station, they have no recourse given their powerless situation in neocolonial France. Afterwards, they find out about their friend Abdel's death while watching television in the metro station, looking at a wall of television screens which cut away from scenes of war from afar to the local news breaking story about their friend dying after being beaten into a coma by the police. The film opened with a white newscaster on television describing the beating their friend had endured, and explaining that the police officer responsible had been suspended. Life and death are mediated by television sets in their difficult lives in the banlieue. Finding out

about their friend's death in this way inspires murderous fantasies in Vinz. He wants to kill a cop, and he has the means to do it. However, his friends do talk him out of it and he's persuaded to give them his gun. Of course, mere moments later he is shot by a cop.

Graffiti features prominently in many of the scenes, with the most striking example being the word "vengeance" (which is the same word in French as in English) painted on the wall of the police headquarters during a riot, as well as the opening of the film in which Saïd tags a CRS (riot police) van with his name and "Fuck the Police" beneath it. The film reveals the terrible conditions that the three friends must live under in the housing projects in the Paris suburb of Chanteloup-les-Vignes as well as how they are treated when they visit central Paris upon missing the last train home to the suburbs. While it employs many techniques of American hip-hop films, Kassovitz' film is different in that it goes inside of the police station, showing the brutality that occurs directly under the watch of the entire police department. Only one police officer looks away during the beatings of the young men while tied to their chairs. The police officer in charge gives a lesson in torture techniques. The police twist Hubert's and Saïd's necks, choking them, as they give a demonstration to a newer police recruit on how to torture suspects. It is clear that the new recruit disapproves of their horrible tactics, yet he says nothing and does nothing to stop them. His only reaction is to look away. This scene, with its in-depth look at torture techniques, evokes the Algerian war and France's torture of Algerians during that time, sanctioned by its government. This helps to link France's historic treatment of minorities with their current treatment of minorities

particularly in the banlieues. It gives a very bleak picture of life in France with its neocolonial disparities.

Throughout much of *La haine*, there is no background music. This musical lack emphasizes the bleakness of the main characters' lives and surroundings since the spectator is forced to take in the visual austerity of their surroundings with no music in the background to ease this process. When music does appear, it is a peripheral element. For example Hubert, one of the friends, quotes the famous Boogie Down Productions song "Who Protects Us From You?"¹² when he asks a local cop that question in the song's title. In Paris, Vinz rides around with a group listening to French rap in the car just before one of his friends shoots a nightclub bouncer. As they walk down the street, Saïd does a little graffiti, changing a billboard that read "The world is yours" (Le monde est à vous) to read "The world is ours" (Le monde est à nous) and Vinz beatboxes, freestyling his own rap. They don't seem to be bothering anyone, but they are depicted as "menacing," as Conor Soules explains:

La haine demonstrates how extensive the power of media can be. In the film, the news media is bias, portraying the youth as menacing while failing to realize their stigmatization only contributes to the negative feedback loop, in which the youth's lack of legitimate representation further hinders their access to opportunities. In one scene, news reporters attempt to question Hubert, Vinz and Saïd about the riots from the night before. (Indiewire.com)¹³

¹² Boogie Down Productions. "Who Protects Us From You?" *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop*. Compact Disc. 1989.

¹³ Soules, Connor. "Twenty Years of Hate: Why 'La Haine' is More Timely than Ever." *Indie Wire*, February 9, 2016. http://www.indiewire.com/article/twenty-years-of-hate-why-la-haine-is-more-timely-than-ever-20160209?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed.

In this scene, the reporters behave as though they are in a drive-through safari, peering down at the young men and filming as they ask them if they had burned any cars the night before. The three men refuse to answer the reporters' questions, telling them that they are not in a zoo, and the transparency of the news media is here highlighted.

Throughout *La haine*, the television figures as its own character, ubiquitous and central to their lives. We see Vinz trying to get reception by adjusting the antenna on one of the older televisions, and we see a shot of their friend Abdel before static interrupts and breaks up the image. These televisions are ever-present and always showing footage of the riot from the night before. Most important is the moment in which the three young men are in the subway station waiting for the train and they see their friend's death announced on the news.

An important thing to note about the year the film came out is that it was one of several times that Front National founder Jean-Marie Le Pen ran for president of France. He had garnered enough support to run in their elections, which is of note because he ran on a racist, fascist platform. He ran for president five times but was luckily never elected. This helps us to understand the political climate in 1995 when the film was released. Decades earlier, there had been a sort of collective amnesia after decolonization and this refusal to speak of the events of the French past helped to set the stage for future problems in France such as those revealed in this film so deftly.

The image of their friend Abdel starts out as one large image across many televisions, then breaks up so that each television bears a smaller image of their friend

Abdel. The effect on them is enormous, particularly as they had been kicked out of the hospital earlier when they tried to visit him as he lay in a coma. Life and death are both mediated by television in this film; everything seems to take place on television. Vinz, Hubert and Saïd see everything through that televisual lens. Hip-hop is also part of the fabric of their lives, just as in many American hip-hop films, allowing it to be present everywhere in their lives without having to be placed at the center.

Interestingly, *La haine* does not seem to commodify blackness to the same extent as American hip-hop films. Hubert, the main black character, is treated in the same way as the other main characters in the film, and is not portrayed in any especially different way than the others, nor is he exoticized. Hubert is a peaceful man, who abhors Vinz's desire to carry a gun. He helps serve to highlight the similarities in the prejudices the police hold against both African French and Arab French citizens. In the final scene, Hubert is in a faceoff with a white cop, each holding their gun on the other as Hubert's friend Saïd looks on in horror. The cop has just shot their friend Vinz accidentally after holding a gun to Vinz' head as a joke. While Vinz is the only person who gets shot throughout the course of the film, guns play a central role in the film. When Vinz finds a gun after the riot, he begins carrying it with him everywhere he goes, enjoying his newfound sense of power. He threatened to kill a cop if their friend Abdel dies, to avenge his death. Even when Vinz was sitting in a movie theater, all we could hear are gunshots, over and over. We can't escape from the guns or the violence. Neither can the characters in this film.

In another French hip-hop film, *Les lascars*, the guns are handled in a more comedic manner rather than treating such serious topics as police brutality. *Les lascars*, which is adapted from a French television series of the same name, features a rapper, Tony Merguez (merguez are a type of spicy sausage served throughout France with fries, originally from North Africa,) who falls in love with a wealthy woman for whom he tries to change his misogynistic ways. Hip-hop style is highlighted from the beginning of the film. Tony's life is immersed in French and American hip-hop culture.

As in many of the American films analyzed thus far, the main characters in this film deal drugs for their livelihood. Remarkably, there is far less gun violence in this film than other hip-hop films mentioned thus far. There had been little in the way of hip-hop animation until this feature film and television show were released. Most of the soundtrack for the film includes hip-hop, both in English and in French. The music is used over montage sequences that show Jose and Tony going about their lives while the soundtrack consists of rapping.

Like many American hip-hop films, *Les lascars* depicts its share of violence. However, the violence is more subdued than in other such American films as Sheridan's *Get Rich or Die Tryin'* (2005)¹⁴. The guns are treated more as comedic props, such as when they accidentally shoot a statue in a well-appointed home where Jose housesits. At the end of the film, the house self-destructs when the sauna catches fire and forces half the house to crumble into dust. In this scene, the film makes clear the instability of

¹⁴ Sheridan, Jim, dir. *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. Paramount, 2005. Film.

edifices of wealth, indicating that neoliberal hegemony will not always prevail. The message is more optimistic than many we find in American hip-hop films, which often paint a bleaker picture of the political future.

The film ends with an animated music video in which Jose and Tony sing about how they are reformed, will no longer jaywalk, nor do any other minor crimes, such as stealing an apple. They sing of their own reform, a joke rarely found in American hip-hop films. American hip-hop music videos are rarely concerned with reform, either, instead glorifying criminality as endemic to hip-hop culture. The ending does not give much hope to reforming another side of these characters, their misogyny. One of the more problematic aspects of *Les lascars* is its portrayal of women. The film has the animated equivalent of video vixens in that the women are often presented as “arm candy” for the hip-hop artists in the story, including the central character, Clémence, who is visible also as a ‘video vixen.’ Women are shown as the sum of their parts, and their appearance in the film seems limited to a collection of stereotypical representations. In this way, *Les lascars* would seem to have much in common with the recent film *Straight Outta Compton*.

One of the most problematic aspects of *Straight Outta Compton* is its exploitation of women. Very few women are shown with the same level of complexity as the male characters. The majority of the women are shown nude or nearly nude as objects for male fantasy and enjoyment. There are gratuitous shots of women swimming topless in pools with dollar bills floating on the surface. There are panning shots of women shaking their butts in tiny thongs. They are presented as background only, not as people. There are

scenes of women engaging in sex with each other for men to watch. There was even a scene in which a nearly naked woman was locked out of the hotel room to the hilarity of all those present. Unfortunately, the film did not choose to question the objectification of women. People must all go through a sort of “becoming-woman,” in order to continue the process of subjecticization. The film appears to condone and even celebrate the sexual exoticization of women, staying true to hardcore rap’s frequent messages to that effect. But in becoming-woman and becoming-minor we can help to erase the oppositional binary differences of gender and thus understand hip-hop culture in a different way. This can allow for a broader spectrum of gender presentation within hip-hop, including but not limited to queer and transgender hip-hop artists being welcomed as part of hip-hop culture.

One other interesting and problematic aspect of *Straight Outta Compton* is the colorism revealed within the film. It is shown in the fact that all three main characters are shown partnering with African American women who are lighter-skinned than themselves. It is one of the film’s unspoken illustrations of “success” that these are the women Dre, Cube and Eazy have chosen, and the similarity in the film’s representation of their choice of partners is striking. Black female sexuality gets exploited in numerous ways in the film, reducing women’s power and removing any threat that such power might pose to the state. In this way it shows an important aspect of hip-hop culture, which is often sexist. We do not see women in any roles other than as mothers, wives, and playthings. We do not see women as having careers, or as being anything outside of the

domestic sphere. These concerns are eclipsed by other types of problems, such as police bias and attacks.

One thing that all the films analyzed herein have in common is the portrayal of police brutality. This is shown repeatedly throughout the film *Straight Outta Compton*, in which the police's bias is illustrated from the beginning when we see them harassing African American youth who are just carrying their schoolbooks on their way home. In *Straight Outta Compton*, money is never far from the characters' lips. In scene after scene, there is discussion of contracts and money. From NWA's beginnings, there is conflict between the members about contracts. Eazy E is shown living more luxuriously than his fellow band members, eating out with his agent while the others eat fast food and Ice Cube asks what's happening with his contract. His agent stalls on the contracts for everyone but Eazy E and mismanages his money, which is not discovered until almost at the film's ending. The most revealing scene is after Eazy E has been beaten by Shugg Knight's thugs, he goes to his agent's house late at night. His agent, not knowing who he is initially, holds a pistol to his head as he sits by the pool. Then, afterwards as they are talking, his agent Jerry Heller tells him that they must hit back with lawyers, not with violence. Eazy tells him that it is not about the money and Heller tells him that it indeed is about the money and he should "care about the fucking money."

Money is a central preoccupation of the film and of gangsta rap as a whole. As the main characters climb in wealth and status, they move into larger homes where they are seen to be trapped and unable to continue, with Dre having creative block and Eazy E forced to downsize to a smaller home eventually. Only once towards the film's end is the

obsession with money addressed when Eazy E tries to reunite with Dr. Dre and Ice Cube, saying “the money kinda had everybody divided.” The film illustrates the industry’s central focus: the money. This is returned to repeatedly with shots of framed gold and platinum albums on the walls of the record company’s offices. In one unforgettable scene, Ice Cube goes to the record company’s offices to have a meeting. They deny him his proceeds from the record sales as promised, so he returns to the office with a baseball bat and smashes every single framed album, along with all the glass tables in the office. He instructs them to take the damages out of what is owed him. There is a small ray of hope at the film’s ending with Dr. Dre turning his back on Shugg Knight in spite of Knight’s threats “you gonna walk away from all this money?” Dr. Dre decides that peace of mind is worth more than all the money he could have made with Death Row Records. He fights against the tide of money worship and forges ahead into new territory on his own.

NWA’s links with corporatization are clearly shown after the group has split up and the separate members each go their own way, and are wooed by Interscope and Sony. The workings of the music business are revealed to control everything in the characters’ lives. We see the signs of rap’s commodification as Eazy E drives down Sunset Boulevard, gazing at billboards of Dr. Dre. In the tradition of McDonald’s, Dre’s billboards read “Over 5 Million Sold.”

The film references the media throughout just as *La haine* does, cutting away to newscasters talking about the group NWA and gangsta rap (in similar fashion to such cutaways to the news in *La haine*). The ubiquitous white male newscasters also make the

announcements after the Rodney King verdict, which is cut with medium shots of the uprisings in Los Angeles directly afterwards. The film tries to be as realistic as possible in its portrayal of the most famous gangsta rap group in the world and the current events in the Nineties. *Straight Outta Compton* tracks hip-hop as it takes further steps to renegotiate its own borders vis-à-vis gangsta rap. Gangsta rap changed the rules of hip-hop, morphing it into a new creation and drawing a lot of negative press (and positive) attention to itself.

If there is a moral of the film, it is that freedom of speech is our most important freedom in the United States. In the scene in Detroit with the police at their concert, we hear Ice Cube saying “They tried to tell us what we can say, what we can play.” The group goes on to sing their forbidden song “Fuck tha Police,” which was also in *La haine*, and they are subsequently arrested, violently, by the police officers outside of the concert venue. When interviewed they explain that the song was meant only as a warning, not as a call to arms. As they watch someone driving a bulldozer over their albums in the street below, Eazy E points out that those people had to buy all the destroyed albums, and he repeats the group’s mantra: “Any publicity is good publicity.” The group’s meteoric rise to fame brought with it its own set of problems, for each of the members.

The film also endeavors to produce sociohistorical meaning within hip-hop culture by telling the tale of NWA. There are moments in the film that try harder than others to achieve this, such as the scenes of the Los Angeles uprisings. Life imitated art after the film’s release, with it becoming the highest-grossing movie from an African American director ever. With \$200 million in worldwide sales, *Straight Outta Compton*

has surpassed all expectations for its success. The film is at once art and industry, showing the problems with the commodification of hip-hop as well as the beauty of the art forms (both of the film and of the hip-hop tracks). It is also contributing to the globalization of hip-hop with its enormous sales worldwide, even as it adds to the historical telling of hip-hop, specifically gangsta rap.

Many of these filmic texts are an important part of hip-hop's nascent steps in the United States. They helped draw attention to hip-hop culture, bringing it to the forefront in the 1980's and then keeping it there through the present. These films commodified hip-hop culture still further than its commercialization through music sales alone. The films took hip-hop culture to a different level, opening it up to product placement within the films as well as the possibilities of commercializing hip-hop in new ways, through clothing brand names and hip-hop stars advertising new products.

In part, this commodification helped ensure hip-hop's survival. This is valuable now as cultural evidence of hip-hop's influence. Hip-hop continues to evolve and, as it becomes further globalized and comes back around to the United States, is remixed. Without these films, American and French hip-hop culture would not be the same. Without them, hip-hop might have been limited to a smaller framework, to a smaller group of fans. These films have changed the culture of hip-hop and vastly added to it as well, in spite of some of the aforementioned problems endemic to Hollywood and French cinema.

Through the discipline of Hip-hop Studies, we can keep these films alive, continuing to study them and teach them in order to further the discipline. Also important

is to teach Hip-hop Studies as interdisciplinary in departments including but not limited to Francophone Studies, American Studies, and Film Studies. Hip-hop studies will continue to grow and keep changing provided that it is taken seriously in an academic context and given the chance to evolve and deepen.

It will be important to continue to draw connections between the essentialization of blackness and the glamorization of violence in much of hip-hop culture. We must try to unpack notions of violence as expected or predictive. Violence in hip-hop often becomes glorified, and we have to be careful not to fall into the trap of blindly accepting this. In studying these films and television shows, we can help to understand hip-hop culture and its legacies from decades past as well as in more recent years.

Chapter 3

Feminism and Sexism in French and American Hip-Hop

When compared, French female hip-hop artists appear to be more openly feminist than most of their American counterparts who sometimes deny feminism as one of their tenets. One notable exception is Queen Latifah, who wears her feminism on her sleeve with such songs as the award-winning song “U-N-I-T-Y” (1993), in which she sings, “you gotta let ‘em know . . . you ain’t a bitch or a ho” as well as “you put your hands on me again I’ll put your ass in handcuffs.”¹⁵ Like Queen Latifah, many of the French female hip-hop artists challenge sexist dominant discourses. American female hip-hop artists like Lil’ Kim and Nicki Minaj tend to limit themselves to being sexual icons, while their French counterparts rely less on their sexual presentation and more on artistic and musical expression. Their reliance on such expression resists the commodification of female bodies, including their own, in their work. It is possible that within the French cultural context in which artists are more supported than in American culture, these French female hip-hop artists are able to have more freedom with their artistic and musical expression. They are allowed to be more than the sum of their parts, unlike many of their American counterparts, who are limited by the hip-hop market and expectations of them therein. One shining exception to these limitations is the recent success Janelle Monae, who performs a wide variety of music from neo-soul to hip hop.

¹⁵ Latifah, Queen. “U-N-I-T-Y.” 1983. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8cHxydDb7o>.

Janelle Monae's music video for her song "Yoga"¹⁶ finds a way to be sexual without objectifying, and to embrace hip hop more than she does when just a featured artist in hip hop videos such as Jeezy's. For most of the video, she performs a dance routine with other women dancers. Towards the video's end, the crowd diversifies, including men and women. She is able to convey sexiness without playing off of power imbalances or inequalities. Everyone in the video appears to be having fun and dancing together. Monae is often described as a feminist, such as in the article by Kimberly Foster, "The Beat of Black Feminism: Janelle Monae and the Radical Politics of Wondaland"¹⁷. Foster says that she marries popular art with Black Feminism. While Monae does not publicly embrace the label of feminist, her work seems to back this up. In her video "Prime Time"¹⁸ this is noteworthy when the male love interest starts singing about them getting together that night, but interjects "Is that okay?" into the lines he is singing, showing them on more equal footing as the video intercuts each of them singing to the other. Janelle Monae seems often to work independently of the market, instead choosing to make a broad variety of music and not just limit herself to soul or hip hop.

A prominent French feminist rapper that embodies resistance to the market is Bams. In her 2007 music video for the song "Pas cool"¹⁹ ("Not cool"), she uses

¹⁶ Janelle Monae. "Yoga". *Wondaland presents: The Eephus*. 2015.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00kB6p_FZAw

¹⁷ Foster, Kimberly. "The Beat of Black Feminism: Janelle Monae and the Radical Politics of Wondaland". <http://www.forharriet.com/2015/09/the-beat-of-black-feminism-janelle.html#axzz4G1YdFvwQ>

¹⁸ Janelle Monae. "Prime Time". 2013.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xls2xX0Clg>

¹⁹ Bams. "Pas Cool." *De ce monde*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljEaNLQxjMs>. 2006.

animation to poke fun at sexist essentializing assumptions about femininity and women. In a quick pan from left to right, the video's opening shot includes a close-up of Bams' name. The camera then whirls about in a mad scientist's lab. As the camera moves throughout the lab, it passes over the scientist's machines and jars full of Barbie doll heads. A quick zoom onto an operating table foregrounds a Barbie torso attached to some wires. The video then showcases the mad scientist administering shock therapy, presumably to the Barbie torso. He looks first at a packaged Barbie doll and then back to the headless torso on the table and bodiless heads in jars, as if trying to figure out how to build his own life-sized Barbie. Another male main character emerges from one of the scientist's machines and one of the Barbie heads begins to boil, melting into a face with a frown. The mad scientist is literally constructing femininity and in so doing revealing the constructed nature of it.

The mad scientist throws the headless torso from the operating table to the ground. He and his male counterpart then try to reassemble a brown-skinned Barbie doll atop the same table. This new doll wears her hair in green cornrows— similar to those Bams wears in her other music videos. Inexplicably, the video then depicts the mad scientist wearing women's clothing and shoes. This depiction of the cross-dressing scientist deconstructs assumptions about femininity by showing how femininity can be expressed by both males and females, despite heteronormative assumptions to the contrary.

The lyrics to "Pas cool" critique heteronormativity in several ways. Bams's lyrics deconstruct dominant femininity to illuminate how heteronormative beauty standards are

rewarded by the dominant culture through a greater acceptance of those females who conform to such standards of femininity. The video's deconstruction of femininity simultaneously deconstructs heteronormativity through its disruptions of dominant expectations of both the female dolls and the mad scientist and the femininities they display. The lyrics explain that Bams doesn't care about being conventionally pretty, she doesn't care about being uncool, that it is a pain being a girl in the heteronormative matrix. In order to be cool, she would have had to ascribe to cultural norms and become pretty according to the dominant culture's standards: by straightening her hair and making her body fit the usual expectations for femininity. She sings the following lyrics: "Tell me why / , when I am pretty / things are always easier." In this lyric, she questions why society rewards conventional beauty in predictable ways, such as bequeathing more attention to those women who accept normative beauty standards from the dominant culture and rejecting the cultural overvaluation placed on it. She places herself outside conventional gender norms, insisting that she rejects the mad scientist's version of her and society's expectations for proper femininity. The mad scientist stands in for hegemonic maleness, showing how the beauty standards are physically and ideologically enforced by males. The video highlights femininity's artificiality and the objectification of women by showing the construction of femininity by the mad scientist with the female dolls. It also demonstrates how ideals of beauty are often confused with reality, troubling the space between representation and reality as it shows the extent of the changes which the dolls undergo in order to achieve femininity. The video also interrogates the gender binary through the image of the mad scientist's crossdressing. Rather than simply taking

him at face value, as the one in charge of building the dolls' femininity, we see that the mad scientist has always already been feminine himself, as he shows through the reveal of him crossdressing in the video. This helps show that femininity is all a construction, not something females are innately born with.

As this video makes clear, complicating the gender binary in French hip-hop videos like Bams's "Pas cool" is as important as themes of crossing national boundaries, affecting both American and French culture in deeply formative ways. This chapter examines other French hip-hop artists who complicate the gender binary to investigate how they critique the commodification of bodies, especially black female bodies, in hip-hop commodity fetishism. At stake in the focus on gender, sexuality and race is the very identity of hip-hop. "Pas cool" embodies this stake by disrupting conventional expectations regarding these three indices. American hip-hop artists trouble dominant hegemonic assumptions less strongly and less frequently than their French counterparts due to industrial pressures from the American music industry. These pressures can affect artists very strongly particularly early on in their careers.

One American artist, Syd tha Kid, broke past the dominant gender boundaries and binaries in the American hip-hop industry when she became Odd Future's only female group member. She was also the only member who was openly queer until Frank Ocean, one of the band's other members, with the support and encouragement of the group as well as Snoop Dogg, publicly came out as bisexual in 2012. He was extraordinarily popular in his solo work and it seemed that his coming out merely added to his fame, rather than disrupting it. Through coming out in the hip-hop community, he helped pave

the way for other hip-hop artists to do so in the United States. An artist identifying as queer or bisexual had been virtually unheard of in hip-hop and showed great courage on Ocean's part since he was at the vanguard of queerness and hip-hop, which will be explored further in the next chapter. His coming out also shows the evolving cultural acceptance of homosexuality within the world of hip-hop. Paving the way for queer artists also helps fight against sexism in hip-hop through broadening what material is acceptable in that world.

Many American female cultural producers, such as Boss, Queen Latifah, and Psalm One, also cross the boundary line that assumes that hip-hop is the domain of men. In my discussion of gender division and hip-hop in this chapter, I look to Tricia Rose's arguments in *Hip-Hop Wars* (2013) about decrying sexism while simultaneously remaining sex-positive. She explains that hip-hop is not responsible for sexism, that it is society that is sexist. Further, Rose states that "if (rappers) were to admit that their images and content are partly determined by the . . . corporations, they would give us important ammunition against corporate investment in sexism" (154). Constructions of femininity run the gamut in transnational hip-hop from the incredibly sexist to more forward thinking and innovative, such as in Bams's video for her song "Viens"²⁰ (2005) in which she plays with different notions of the gaze. She destabilizes the gaze by intercutting images of herself walking on the streets with images of old women looking into the camera. There is an inherent power in women claiming this masculine space of hip-hop and taking on the authority associated with rapping, which both empowers these

²⁰ Bams. "Viens." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1h9tZpDcbuc>. 2005.

women and destabilizes hip-hop, which was once limited to normative masculinity. At the beginning of Bams's video for her song "Viens," we see an extreme closeup of her own eye, which calls into question exactly whose gaze is being shown by the camera. Towards the end of her video, we again see an extreme closeup of her own eye, reminding us of the camera and its position.

Both Bams and Nicki Minaj incorporate cyborgs in their music videos, but that is where any similarity between the two artists ends. Nicki Minaj constructs various feminine characters that she plays in her music videos like the cyborgs and the hyperbolic characters whose identities Minaj assumes. Some, like the first cyborg in "Turn Me On"²¹ Minaj literally constructs, beginning with the white painted lips atop a machine which later morphs into a female form. Bams uses a more deconstructive approach to analyze dominant femininity, as she did in her video for the song "Pas cool." She does this to a lesser extent in her video for her song "Viens," in which the camera shows her walking around the town, as well as showing the people she is walking past and an old woman whose images hers is intercut with. In choosing her artist's name, for example, Bams evokes her ethnicity: Bamileke from Cameroon (Basu and Lamelle 155). She shortened Bamileke to Bams, holding onto her identity rather than accepting an assimilated French identity for herself. What role does Bams's ethnicity play in her work and its critical deconstruction of femininity? In drawing attention to her ethnic origins through her name, she foregrounds her identification as Cameroonian and evokes pre-1885 history.¹ In so doing, she reclaims her cultural position of possessing an intersectional identity as a

²¹ Nicki Minaj. "Turn Me On." Dir. David Guetta. *Nothing but the Beat*. Music Video. 2011.

young French woman of color as well as her own sovereignty, which implies a disidentification with the French narrative of inclusiveness. She lays claim to her African identity, in spite of her French citizenship. She references her identity as an African woman, shown walking around her native Cameroon.

Minaj troubles race in a different way than Bams. Minaj flirts with the posthuman and postfeminist through the trope of the cyborg in her 2012 video “Turn Me On” in which cyborgs are created by a mad scientist, similarly to the Bams video “Pas cool.” At the video’s beginning, we see a cut to an extreme close-up of two eyes looking out. This cuts back to a pair of lips singing the song’s lyrics: “Only you know how to save me / come on and turn me on.” The first cyborg shifts from a mechanical shell to white to brown as the video continues, and a small army of female cyborgs walk together as she sings, “Make me come alive / come on and turn me on.” Here feminism begins to masquerade as something closer to misogyny, while Minaj plays with the meaning of the song’s title. Minaj’s feminism pretends to be part of the misogyny of the mad scientist in the video, but ultimately she stands for independence, individuality and femininity. At the same time the cyborgs in her video are post-human; they suggest that women only exist in relation to men’s control of them sexually. Minaj plays with the meaning of femininity and femaleness by depicting the falseness of the trappings of femininity with wigs, makeup, cyborgs, and, of course, an abundance of Barbie doll-style clothing. Femininity is a means to an end for Minaj, who embodies hyperfemininity in most of her public appearances, on video or in person. Her exploration of femininity is different than that of Bams in that Minaj takes femininity to such extremes that it becomes ridiculous. Bams

remains more down to earth in her embodiment of femininity, even in her music video with the mad scientist.

From the beginning of Minaj's video, when the video confronts viewers with a face with special optical machines attached, viewers realize they are not in human reality any longer. Rather, through the video, they enter an augmented posthuman space in which Minaj's character is seen as a rescuer of the other "women" in the video. The posthuman space in the video helps to suggest that gender is constructed, as surely as the posthuman women in the video, which we see slowly coming to life. In the next frame, we see a machine face, with the "lips" painted white, singing the lyrics to the song. However, there is nothing behind the face but more machine parts. The figure with the optic device peers into these mechanical lips as Minaj sings, "Only you know how to save me." The figure with optical machines peers at an eyeball, while, in the foreground, the mechanical face begins to grow a smooth veneer that looks more like a human face. We hear Minaj's voice as we watch the cyborg face as it shifts form. The cyborg's body becomes smooth and hairless. It lacks nipples and sexual features. It looks human but also like a Barbie-like figure, which seems contradictory at first. It is a fusion of the two. As the cyborg rises from the table and begins walking, the man with the optical devices removes them so we can see his eye watching the cyborg. Minaj walks through the streets populated by cyborgs of varying ethnicities, singing about being saved. As she repeats the lyric "turn me on," the cyborgs storm the gates and then slowly enter through them. The cyborgs grab and fight over a human man on the street, a man who transforms into a mechanical humanoid figure. The cyborgs lovingly stroke him as he embraces his

posthuman existence. Similar to the cyborg females who have brought him to (posthuman) life, he does not have any discernable genitals. Like a Ken doll, he has a smooth bodily surface. At the end of the video, as Minaj begins to depart from the scene on horseback, the female cyborgs run after her, presumably to transform her into a cyborg like the man they've transformed. This scene is problematic in that they try to make Minaj's character one of them, perfectly posthuman and without a soul. It seems that they do not want anyone to escape from the cyborg space within the video. It also epitomizes the typical heteronormative values espoused by the majority of American hip-hop artists. The video normalizes femininity even as it reveals it to be all a construction. It also elides racial differences by showing a multicultural group of cyborgs, some white and some black, which simplifies blackness and its meaning for both the other cyborgs and Minaj.

In "For white girls only?: Postfeminism and the politics of inclusion"²² (2013), Jess Butler examines that Minaj denies being a feminist. Her works are, rather, complex depictions of femininity. She seems to be subject to strong industrial pressures from the American music industry which expect her to embrace the sexualization of her persona while rejecting conventional definitions of feminism. In her video for the song "Did it On 'Em"²³ (2010), for example, she wields a dildo on stage, pretending to urinate into the audience with it. She exemplifies sexist perversity (acting in a way that others feel is offensive or strange, Merriam-Webster's dictionary) throughout this video, calling herself

²² Butler, Jess. "For white girls only?: Postfeminism and the politics of inclusion." *Feminist Formations* 25.1 (2013): 35-58.

²³ Minaj, Nicki. "Did it On 'Em." *Pink Friday*. Compact Disc. Cash Money Records, 2010.

the “germinator.” She tries on masculinity in so doing, but just as easily removes vestiges of it, going back to the hyperfeminine she is so well known for. In removing the signs of masculinity and embracing the hyperfeminine anew, she plays into the sexist politics at work in much of American rap, in which hyperfemininity and male masculinity are valued above all else. With her various personae, it is, at times, difficult to ascertain what her goals are with her performed characters. Despite her disavowal of the label ‘feminist’, she does have some feminist aims. One goal she has made clear is that she wants to send the message to women that they must have equality, specifically equal pay for equal work. This message supports, on the surface, a feminist message about the need to critique and undermine sexist American labor practices.

However, the extremes of dominant femininity and hypersexuality in Minaj’s work appear to override this message. She is in the process of complex negotiations around her own intersectional identity as a black female artist, contending with strong industrial pressures which influence her perhaps to deny (white) feminist allegiance. Her use of shock value for commercial profit is clear, with the hyperfeminine images that she uses playing into the United States’ sexist climate. There is inherent commodification of the female body in the images she creates. She buys into rap’s usual treatment of women as video vixens, even though her vixens are sometimes cyborgs. Minaj tries to disrupt conventional expectations of femininity through her work, although she does not always succeed at this. Resisters to twin heteronormative and racist institutions must forge their own tools to truly create change and Minaj works with what Audre Lorde may call the

master's tools in *Sister Outsider*²⁴ (1984): the video vixens or smooth cyborgs in her own music videos. Lorde explained that one cannot dismantle the master's house using the master's own tools. Minaj's work is complicated by the way that she buys into the values of mainstream rap even while she tries to create something new or changed from that foundation. She is working at cross purposes in doing so.

Unlike Minaj, a French-Argentinean rapper who tries to create her own anti-sexist tools to make lasting change viable is Keny Arkana, who strongly advocates worldwide class-based revolution. One of France's most prolific rappers, she is more like American rapper Boss in her physical presentation, that is, more gender-neutral. Arkana keeps her hair covered in her music videos and acts more like "one of the guys" as opposed to exploiting her sexuality for public consumption. There must be more than these two options, exploiting one's feminine sexuality or embracing female masculinity. It is a fine line to walk, assessing whether one is exploiting one's femininity or merely one's talent. Is this an effective strategy, to challenge dominant sexist discourse by acting or dressing like "one of the guys"? Or, does this performance type merely reify the power system already in place and claim a more masculine voice within the traditionally male realm of hip-hop? It is difficult to ascertain what she is giving up and what she stands to gain from avoiding any signs of femininity and aligning herself with the masculine. Is this really the only way to succeed in the world of hip-hop, by positioning oneself alongside the male rappers? The latter seems to be the only viable option for many female rappers, and this

²⁴ Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Crossing, 1984.

seems to be Arkana's strategy. It is effective in that it helps the audience focus on her message rather than her visual presentation. She is part of the political cause of socialism. Arkana helps show that gender expectations and heteronormativity within French society can be successfully subverted, unlike Minaj, who plays into gender expectations with her hyperfeminine presentation.

Arkana showcases her masculine performance in her music videos, which are political and highly critical of the French status quo. In her video "V pour vérité"²⁵(2011), she depicts a team of revolutionaries interrupting the evening news by taking over the airwaves. These revolutionaries use this takeover to send their message straight to the French public—a public who often labels her group irresponsible terrorists. Part of the message that they send, visually, is that women are equal as part of the revolution worldwide. Some of her other songs—"Civil Disobedience"²⁶ (2015) and "Wake Up"²⁷ (2012), for example—draw attention to her activist interests and disturb constructions of the French nation-state, class, and gender. The line "multinationals and growth make their roads on our liberties" is from her song "Civil Disobedience." This line underscores her beliefs about class struggle and revolution. Through her song lyrics and music videos, she consistently works to reveal how the current system is constructed and structured.

²⁵ Arkana, Keny. "V pour Verite." 2011. *YouTube* Video. April 23, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm-u45jqCgc>.

²⁶ Arkana, Keny. *Civil Disobedience*. Compact Disc. L'esquisse 2, 2015.

²⁷ Arkana, Keny. *Wake Up*. Compact Disc. Tout tourney autour du Soleil, 2012.

Another female French hip-hop artist who disrupts conventional expectations with regard to gender as well as nation, Lady Laistee, made a video entitled “For the ladies”²⁸ (1999). This video features women dressed in coveralls and bandanas, suggesting female labor, which is in stark contrast to most of the hip-hop videos in the United States. In Laistee’s video, the women are not scantily clad commodified bodies. Rather, they weld in work clothes as Lady Laistee exhorts, “the ladies to demand respect.” Lady Laistee disrupts French gender norms by showing working women in blue-collar jobs. She shows them as successful and talented, as well as demanding of their proper respect. Female hip-hop artists are forced to carry the weight of feminist work since male hip-hop artists seem completely unconcerned if not sometimes opposed to such work. The gender inequality across the hip-hop industry is stark, and does not create a favorable climate for female hip-hop artists to do their important often political labor.

Lady Laistee also crosses national boundaries on her album *Black Mama* (1999) when she plays the gwoka drums from Guadeloupe, from which her parents emigrated to France (Basu 155). She bridges the boundaries between France and Guadeloupe by playing the drums. The crossing of boundaries suggests that her gender performance also highlights her intersectional identity as a French woman of color.

Much like Arkana and Lady Laistee, hip-hop artist Diam’s, in her video “Peter pan”²⁹ (2010), does not rely on commodifying female sexuality. In this video, she plays Peter Pan and entices three children waiting outside a principal’s office to go through a portal in the wall into Neverland. Throughout the video, she wears a backwards baseball

²⁸ Lady Laistee. “For the Ladies.” *Black Mama*. Music Video. 1999.

²⁹ Diam’s. “Peter Pan.” *S.O.S.* Music Video. 2009.

cap, a hoodie, or a top hat as she sings about not wanting to grow up. “Peter pan” forays into the world of childhood. Crossing lines of gender within the video by playing a male character draws attention to her investments in questioning the boundaries of gender.

American female hip-hop group Psalm One also presented some problematic ideas, such as in the song “Stupid Girls Never Win”³⁰ (2012) pleading to women to “be through with all these dudes.” Their intention seems to be to help other women, and to fight sexism, but putting forth this idea about “stupid girls” seems dangerous at best, and pretty far from feminist ideals because they reinforce sexism. Nicki Minaj has a video called “Stupid Hoe”³¹ (2012) in which she morphs from a tiger in a cage to a scantily clad woman in a cage. In this video, she reinforces woman as animal as she sings that she “pisses on bitches.” Minaj is oblivious to American female artists like Queen Latifah, who reminds women in the song “U-N-I-T-Y” (1983), “ya gotta let em know you ain’t a bitch or a hoe.” Latifah often raps about women standing up for themselves and being strong. The video “Fast Car”³² (2009) depicts her riding a motorcycle with a beautiful girl on the back. Many of her representations seem to point to a gay identity, but Latifah continues to deny this to the press. Perhaps Latifah is resisting assumptions that people make about feminists and lesbians in both the mainstream media and the world of hip-hop equating feminism with lesbianism. In trying to be unclassifiable, she helps create

³⁰ Psalm One. “Stupid Girls Never Win.” *Child Support*. Compact Disc. ASCAP, 2012.

³¹ Minaj, Nicki. “Stupid Hoe.” 2012. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6j4f8cHBIM>.

³² Latifah, Queen. “Fast Car.” 2009. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVNYbGIHzL8>.

and retain a space for women in hip-hop. Within this space, women can be critical of mainstream culture without being reduced to identity markers.

Unlike Queen Latifah, Boss is known and marketed as a female gangsta rapper. In her music video “Deeper”³³ (1993), images of Boss are intercut with images of a young woman in a straitjacket, with projections of Boss on the wall behind her. The restrained woman is shown in the same frame with a policeman, to contrast her lack of freedom with his power. This is accentuated by extreme close-ups of his key ring as well as slow motion shots of him walking with these keys swinging from his belt. The end of the video shows Boss fleeing the scene in slow motion.

In her 1993 music video “Recipe of a Hoe,”³⁴ she explains—as Queen Latifah also does in her song “U-N-I-T-Y”—that not all women are hoes. Unfortunately, this message is drowned out by the refrain sung by the male backup singers in the video: “ya gotta let a ho be a ho.” While she is singing, the refrain belies her main message. She capitalizes on images of black masculinity in gangsta rap, emulating them through her dress and the dress of the men in her music videos. However, she accentuates her femininity with makeup in close-ups throughout her videos, which helps her reception as a female and feminine rapper, as a badwoman. Perry describes Boss in *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip-Hop* (2004) as a “badwoman” similar to the badman of blues history. The word “badman” was also often used in ska culture, to describe an outlaw gangster type. Perry’s description is useful given the topics of sexism and life in

³³ Boss. “Deeper.” 1993. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdgJTOFkf88>.

³⁴ Boss. “Recipe of a Hoe.” 1993. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BM79wOCxG4>.

the streets that Boss explores in her music and her self-presentation. She presents herself as a fearless outlaw, perhaps coming from both the blues and ska traditions. She is the modern blues singer, rapping the blues instead of singing them. Yet she does not escape the commodification of black bodies inherent in many hip-hop music videos. Even as badwoman she falls prey to hip-hop's industrial expectations of such presentation of black bodies.

In Boss's 1993 video "Progress of Elimination,"³⁵ she eschews typical trappings of femininity when she sings, "I don't need no curling iron / I'll fix my wig later." She drives around with her girlfriends and is filmed partially in a morgue. Boss references slavery when she raps the following: "Some ways I am a slave, yes, massuh, no massuh, I'll work faster." She notes that she is not a slave. She also performs female masculinity through her attire and posturing when she shoots a gun out the window of her friend's car. As Perry explains, "black female escapism is not as widely recognized or accepted as a function of oppression as is that of men" (166). Yet, in the work of Boss, the lines are clearly drawn from the oppression women experience to the escapism through street life and the following commodification in the streets.

Commodification of black bodies dates back hundreds of years in the United States. The current commodification of black bodies feeds into long held myths and

³⁵ Boss. "Progress of Elimination." 1993. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvGj2QCRAgI>.

stereotypes about black people, as bell hooks reminds us in “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance”³⁶ (2000):

When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of the dominating race . . . affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the other. (343)

Hooks explains the relationships between consumption and racism in the above passage. Consumers purchase hip-hop products, trying to own a part of black culture and thereby gain mastery over it. However, the lines become blurred with artists, such as Eminem, whose albums, such as the *Slim Shady LP*³⁷ (1999) and *The Eminem Show*³⁸ (2002), become some of the biggest sellers in hip-hop worldwide. Eminem is one of the most successful rappers in history, and he is white, performing his identity as a disadvantaged kid from the trailer park in Detroit. What is problematic is that he presents himself as having a connection to black culture and as being a part of this culture. The lines become very blurred indeed as white middle-class teenagers purchase Eminem’s albums in trying to connect to and own some part of black culture.

Though many women in hip-hop years ago joined the music mainstream, this process of becoming more mainstream has become more difficult since the end of the 1990’s. While Lauryn Hill and Missy Elliott were able to do this and face the industrial pressures of hip-hop while triumphing as commercially successful artists, very few American women today can because the hip-hop industry remains so male-dominated.

³⁶ hooks, bell. “Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance.” *In the Consumer Society: Reader*. Eds. Juliet Schor and D.B. Holt. New York: New P, 2000. 343-59.

³⁷ Eminem. *Slim Shady LP*. Compact Disc. Interscope. 1999.

³⁸ Eminem. *The Eminem Show*. Compact Disc. Interscope. 2002.

For French women rappers, it is somewhat easier with a smaller French hip-hop industry and more possibilities of breaking in to it. The expectations are different for women in French hip-hop culture, and they are able to have greater creative latitude as a result. Nicki Minaj is the biggest female star in hip-hop today. Yet, her messages are problematic given the exploitation of her sexualized body. She is included in the mainstream, but at what cost to the women in her audience? She sells women out through her hypersexual, overly determined femininity. Rather than showing women in her audience an example of freedom, she holds herself still more strongly to the status quo, enacting predetermined sexual roles which have more to do with the pornography industry than her own creativity.

Rose explains how hip-hop artists must be successful in market terms. Without acceptance by the market and profitability, hip-hop artists cannot succeed. One must only look to so-called progressive or political hip-hop to see this in action, as the more political American groups such as Dead Prez have a more difficult time being successful in terms of the mainstream hip-hop market. Some people refer to them as part of “backpack rap,” which is rap that has a young, political following. They rail against the current system and how exploitative it is; with lyrics on the album *Let's Get Free*³⁹ (2000) such as “Would you rather have a Lexus or justice?” their work is very compelling. Many of the more political hip-hop artists choose to self-produce and form their own labels rather than modify their music to be more marketable. A good example of this market force is Immortal Technique, an American artist who self-released his first

³⁹ Dead Prez. *Let's Get Free*. Compact Disc. Loud Records, 2000.

album in 2001. Immortal Technique tries to raise awareness about topics like rape through his songs. Despite his interest in calling out violence against women, it is a stretch to define him as a feminist, given the misogyny in some of his songs. For example, he reifies rape in his song “Dance with the Devil”⁴⁰ (2001). The song tells the Oedipal dramatic story of a man who grows up and, because of the pressure he faces when joining a gang, ends up raping his mother in a bizarre twist of fate:

Cocked the gat to her head, and pulled back the shirt cover
But what he saw made him start to cringe and stutter
‘Cause he was staring into the eyes of his own mother.

The men around him insist on him participating in a gang rape, after which, he realizes the victim is his own mother. He then commits suicide, throwing himself from a roof. Immortal Technique, much like Eminem in “’97 Bonnie and Clyde”⁴¹ (1997), performs different characters in each of his songs. Immortal Technique’s music is rife with political inconsistencies, particularly regarding feminism.

Feminism is more clearly expressed through American feminist rappers like Missy Elliot. Her video for “Work It”⁴² (2003) plays with ideas of consumerism by literally showing her swallowing a car. While her clothing is somewhat modest in the video, the lyrics are not when she describes, in graphic detail, oral sex, for example. Elliot depicts herself to be not just a singer-rapper in this video, but also highlights a few

⁴⁰ Immortal Technique. “Dance with the Devil.” *Revolutionary Vol. 1*. Compact Disc. Viper Records, 2001.

⁴¹ Eminem. “’97 Bonnie and Clyde.” *The Slim Shady LP*. Compact Disc. Interscope, 1997.

⁴² Elliott, Missy. “Work It.” 2002. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zm28EEeyLek>.

breakdancing moves, showing herself to be a capable dancer, able to measure up to male breakdancers. As she walks through a beauty shop, the video draws attention to her androgynous look, a look that is visually contrasted to the more feminine women getting their hair done. She, by contrast, wears a backwards baseball cap and grabs at her crotch for lyrical emphasis. As Eliza Sellen explains in “Missy ‘Misdemeanor’ Elliot: Rapping on the Frontiers of Female Identity”⁴³ (2011):

Elliot’s ambiguous sexual subjectivity is further compounded by the extent to which she appropriates the sexual language of black male rappers. The validity of accessing these masculine tools is again questionable, arguably restricting female rap music to a larger heterosexual framework, and risking female authenticity. (321)

So, in accessing the masculine tools, is Elliot using the masculinist master’s tools? Is it possible for her to dismantle the heteronormative framework using the master’s tools, or not? Sellen’s argument rings true because it underscores how Elliot upholds the heterosexual framework in mainstream hip-hop. Elliot’s ambiguous gender presentation, however, also points to possible queer identifiers, as she embodies similar kinds of female masculinity to those which Judith Halberstam explores in *Female Masculinity*⁴⁴ (1998) and her own brand of feminism, creating a new role in hip-hop. Elliott’s feminism does not break down the heterosexual framework of mainstream hip-hop, still it does increase the possibilities for women within hip-hop. Her gender presentation expands the possibilities as well, queering hip-hop as she enacts female masculinity and desire.

⁴³ Sellen, Eliza. “Missy ‘Misdemeanor’ Elliot: Rapping on the Frontiers of Female Identity.” *The Gender and Media Reader*. Ed. Mary Celeste Kearney. New York: Routledge, 2011. 319-328.

⁴⁴ Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998.

MC Lyte, another American feminist rapper and a keynote speaker at Metropolitan State University at Denver's 2012 hip-hop conference, explained how she feels women's roles in hip-hop have changed in a negative way. She suggests that there exist "double standards within hip-hop," for example, calling a woman a queen and then in the same breath referring to her as a bitch. Perry gives MC Lyte as an example of hip-hop feminism: "Hip-hop has seen a feminist presence since the 1980s in such figures as Salt-n-Pepa, Queen Latifah, and MC Lyte, and hip-hop feminism continues to exist" (178). MC Lyte gained fame from her 1989 hit video "Cha Cha Cha,"⁴⁵ in which she dressed in pants and suits as she read everyone the riot act through her rhymes. She does not depict her femininity in her video. Instead, she promises how she will beat down anyone who crosses her. She embodies female masculinity in a particularly American way, as it is coded as black female masculinity yet still resolutely heterosexual. Her pugilistic attitude helps to mark her as American, coded masculine. She playfully warns people not to cross her path, which at the time in 1989 was a warning to be respected.

Unlike artists like MC Lyte, rappers such as Nicki Minaj and Lil' Kim find it hard to go beyond sexuality as a way for women to reclaim power. They are fiercely outspoken as far as articulating women needing to make their sexual desires known, but end up reinforcing the heteronormative framework. As Perry reminds us, "It is a delicate balance, but it is important to distinguish between sexual explicitness and internalized sexism" (182). It is a delicate balance between expressing her freedom of speech and

⁴⁵ MC Lyte. "Cha cha cha." 1989. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2_y5ECaQUc.

frank sexuality and buying into commodification of black female bodies. Lil' Kim is, perhaps, most well known for the explicit lyrics to her songs. For example, in "Not Tonight"⁴⁶ (1996), she makes her character's sexual wishes very clear in explicit terms (I didn't mind / when he used to fuck me from behind / it felt fine). As Perry suggests in *Prophets of the Hood* (2004):

Kim has developed as an entertainer, it has become clear that her image is complicit in the oppressive language of American cinematography in regard to women's sexuality. She has adopted a Pamela-Anderson-in-brown-skin aesthetic, calling on pornographic tropes but losing the subversiveness sometimes apparent in her early career. (181)

Perry goes on to explain the representational shift in Kim's videos—a shift that, Perry argues, highlights her changing relationship to commodification. This shift suggests that Kim's relationship to her own commodification changed as she grew more and more marketable. As the first woman in rap to have a number one hit on the rap chart, Kim created new ground for the rap industry. Perry also shows how the rap artist Eve, in contrast to hip-hop video models, accentuates her own self-exploitation. It seems clear that Eve also changed from her earlier career to later when she, like Kim, succumbed to exploiting other women in her videos. For instance, in videos like "Gotta Man"⁴⁷ (1999), Eve has short-cropped blond hair and is surrounded by children on a playground rather than by video vixens, whereas in "Tambourine"⁴⁸ (2007) she is surrounded by the video models, much like Lil' Kim often is. Both she and Lil' Kim moved away from featuring

⁴⁶ Lil' Kim. "Not Tonight." *Hard Core*. Compact Disc. Master Sound Studios, 1996.

⁴⁷ Eve. "Gotta Man." *Let There Be Eve*. Compact Disc. Ruff Riders and Interscope, 1999.

⁴⁸ Eve. "Tambourine." *Tambourine*. Compact Disc. Aftermath Records, 2007.

feminist themes in their work as their respective careers progressed. The more powerful and popular they became, the greater were their blind spots with regard to hip hop's effect on many people. In "Let Me Blow Ya Mind"⁴⁹ (2001), for example, Eve performs androgyny, both sartorially and with the motorcycle that she rides in the video. Yet, as Perry points out, "The creative power of the hip-hop artist is usurped by her image and sexualized commodification" (188). Thus, the original message, no matter how feminist the text may be, is then counteracted by the extent to which the artist is commodified. Eve appears scantily clad next to Gwen Stefani. The video mentioned above centers on the commodification of Eve and Stefani's femininity. To be sure, many male hip-hop artists are also very commodified. However, the difference between this kind of commodification and the type that shapes American women hip-hop artists is the lack of male "video vixens" in their work. There is no equivalent to the female video models, which are ubiquitous in the men's videos. In Eve's videos, the women are generally the only ones dancing, with the men observing them. When she does have male dancers in her videos, they are fully clothed and not sexually objectified. Lil' Kim also has women dancers in her videos wearing tiny outfits, but the men depicted are not "video vixens". No one usually wants to discuss the blind spots of hip hop, the ways in which it falls short. There has been much discussion about hip hop's supposed effects, such as promoting or increasing violence, but very little about the blind spots within hip hop. We

⁴⁹ Eve. "Let Me Blow Ya Mind." *Scorpion*. Compact Disc. Ruff Riders and Interscope, 2001.

must help participate in the emancipation of hip hop by negotiating its legitimacy. We must work to create bridges, such as that of interdisciplinarity.

The term “hip-hop feminism” was first mentioned by Joan Morgan in her book *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*⁵⁰ (2000), and the term continues to grow and evolve. We must integrate hip-hop feminism with hip-hop studies to make a lasting change in the study of hip-hop worldwide. While this term might seem to evoke cognitive dissonance, hip-hop feminism has always been a part of the world of hip-hop, even before the term was coined. Hip-hop feminism helps support the crossing of gender lines within hip-hop, a traditionally male space. French hip-hop sometimes seems more open to this crossing of gender lines, such as with the artist Diam’s or Lady Laistee. Hip-hop feminism supports the crossing of gender lines through opening up that performative space and allowing for more complex intersectional identities.

It is interesting to note the numerous female hip-hop performers who do not self-identify as feminist. As noted by Kieran Yates in a 2010 *Guardian* profile⁵¹, Erykah Badu, for example, calls herself “not a feminist, but a humanist” as a way of avoiding being assimilated into white mainstream feminism, which historically has excluded and alienated many women of color through their focus on white, middle-class American feminism. Other hip-hop feminists, such as MC Lyte, Latifah, and arguably, Minaj, do

⁵⁰ Morgan, Joan. *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.

⁵¹ Yates, Kieran. “Erykah Badu: I’m not a feminist, I’m a humanist.” *The Guardian* (London), March 24, 2010.

not balk so much at being feminist icons. They have nothing to lose by being claimed as feminist, having achieved such success each in her own right. Rachel Raimist, in her documentary film *Nobody Knows My Name*⁵²(1999), states that “most hip-hop women, including those in the film, do not name and claim themselves as feminist.” What is it that prevents or discourages most American women hip-hop artists from doing so? And are French women hip-hop artists any different, despite the difference in national context? Hip-hop feminism is an American concept that has no exact French counterpart. French hip-hop is such a smaller phenomenon that it doesn’t seem to have produced a French hip-hop feminism. Perhaps all American women hip-hop artists, like Badu, are concerned about being overtaken by white feminism if they self-identify as feminists. Do they think that self-identifying as feminist will somehow exclude them from the world of hip-hop, or at least mainstream hip-hop? This could be true to some extent. The world of hip-hop has sometimes been a hostile space for feminists, especially when mainstream male artists are often so misogynistic.

An excellent example of such mainstream hip-hop is 2 Live Crew, whose sexism is on display in both their songs and music videos. Gilroy discusses 2 Live Crew’s obscenity trial in his book *The Black Atlantic* (1995), in which he cites Henry Louis Gates Jr., who came to their defense when he reminded people that “one man’s misogyny turns out to be another man’s parodic play” (Gilroy 84). In 2 Live Crew’s video for the

⁵² Raimist, Rachel, dir. *Nobody Knows My Name*. Digital Video. 1999.
<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c516.shtml>.

song “Pop that Pussy”⁵³ (1991), they depict scores of women sleepwalking over to them to offer themselves up sexually to the group. The video presents women as mere objects for men’s fantasy and sexual service. 2 Live Crew member Luke Skywalker went on to produce the video “Luke’s Freak Show”⁵⁴ in 1999 which crossed the line into pornography, in its depiction of sex acts onstage. Women were lined up onstage with their backs to the audience to have an ass popularity contest. The preponderance of sexist images in American music videos like those by 2 Live Crew seems to have inspired many French music videos by male hip-hop groups, in particular. Groups like Doc Gyneco, whose songs bear titles such as “My bitch”⁵⁵ (1997). There still seems to be a greater number of American hip-hop groups that have music videos full of video vixens when compared to French hip-hop groups and videos made in France, such as work by MC Solaar. The issues we find in hip-hop are systemic and cannot be separated from the American narrative, as hip-hop in France is informed by that narrative. French feminist hip-hop artists poke holes in this dominant narrative by bringing the focus back to politics, such as Lady Laistee’s concentration on working women or Keny Arkana’s focus on the proletariat and its challenges.

Commodification of black bodies is certainly nothing new in the United States. Still, in recent years the American slippage between hip-hop and pornography has led to important questions about the commodification of the black female body within hip-hop.

⁵³ Two Live Crew. “Pop that Pussy.” 1991. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIX5bo8MOxQ>.

⁵⁴ Skywalker, Luke. *Luke’s Freak Show Vol. 1*. Film. 2001.

⁵⁵ Doc Gyneco. “Ma salope à moi”, Single. Compact Disc. 2008.

Snoop Dogg's work in the early 2000s, in particular, draws attention to this transformation with his video "Hustlaz: Diary of a Pimp"⁵⁶ (2002). His video embodies the confluence which occurs in that it was the top-selling American porn film of 2003. It is the mixture of porn and hip-hop, embracing the line between the two and dancing across it. Likewise, Mystikal won an adult video news award in 2003 for his performance in an adult video⁵⁷. In spite of the fact that he did not appear in any sex acts on tape, Mystikal's performance still received an award. There is considerable crossover between porn performers and rappers in recent years. I am hoping we are able to rescue hip hop from itself as well as learn to better understand the rhetoric of authenticity. How is authenticity created? In these adult videos masquerading as music videos, are they performing authenticity? It seems that authenticity is in the eye of the beholder, particularly where hip hop is concerned. So many fans pledge their allegiance to a certain subgenre of hip hop, such as conscious hip hop or even hard core hip hop such as is described below.

There is not much difference between Nelly's video "Tip Drill"⁵⁸ (2003), in which a man slides his credit card between a woman's buttocks, and an adult video. In "Tip Drill," what is interesting is how the women in the video begin to mimic male behavior as the video progresses. For example, toward the end of the video, a "lesbian"

⁵⁶ Snoop Dogg. "Hustlaz: Diary of a Pimp." 2002. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R8noY7ycrE>.

⁵⁷ Mystikal. "Liquid City." 2003. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCkNXx6IT8Q>.

⁵⁸ Nelly. "Tip Drill." 2003. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIYW6Yd4J94>.

scene incorporates mimed hetero-coitus and butt slapping. Every woman in this video is in a bikini, if not fully naked, and all the men are clothed in sportswear. Not a single man is in swimwear or naked. The ultimate act of dehumanization is, as I mention earlier, at video's end in which a woman's body is depicted as a credit card machine. We can read this depiction of the women as machine through the lens of Tricia Rose:

If they were to admit that their images and content are partly determined by the . . . corporations, they would give us important ammunition against corporate investment in sexism . . . [this would] reveal that many rappers are really doing the dirty work for these corporations and empowering themselves by insulting and denigrating black women. (154)

Rose makes an important point here by showing that male rappers often allow themselves to be exploited—and exploit others—by their relationships to the very corporations which help to bring them financial and career success. If only they could find a way to avoid this exploitation, they could be truer to their own vision.

In Ludacris's music video "Pussy Poppin" (2003), the setting is a strip club and the dressing room therein. In the song he raps, "I'll put a thousand in your hand and your heart will melt." The repetitive and uninspired nature of his "adult" rap music video is enough to give hip-hop a bad (or at least boring) name. Not only are the women terribly dehumanized in this video, but also they are completely waxed so as to appear prepubescent. Higher up, they all appear to have had breast augmentation surgery. The women are shown headless in most shots. Every woman depicted is either naked or wearing a bikini, and every man in the same video is fully dressed, as also noted in "Tip Drill." The most common type of shot is an extreme close-up from below of a woman's posterior shaking. The women's body parts are shown with dollar bills showering down

on them. Ludacris is a talented rapper, who in other music videos he's made, such as the one which features Nicki Minaj, does quite well enough without resorting to such extreme exploitation of black female bodies. He does not respond well to criticism of his raunchy lyrics, such as when he was interviewed by Oprah Winfrey in 2006 and claimed in an article by Allhiphop.com the same year that she edited his comments out of her show. The recurrent theme seems to be reinforcing the anonymity of the women depicted. In "Pussy Poppin," the refrain is "head down" just as in Nelly's video "Tip Drill" he continually returns to "it must be your ass because it ain't your face." The facelessness of the so-called "video hoes" is accented repeatedly, further dehumanizing them.

This theme is continued in the work of 50 Cent on "P.I.M.P.,"⁵⁹ in which he is flanked by not one but three naked women (who strip on camera.) The women not depicted naked instead wear sheer lingerie with dollar signs dangling in front of their crotches, which seems more dehumanizing than being merely nude. Two women are shown being led on leashes. This is all intercut throughout with the make-out scene of 50 Cent with the three women. Meanwhile he reminds everyone on the soundtrack that "money makes the world go 'round." Hip-hop has become a byproduct of capitalism. The depths of dehumanization are again present in this video, which technically, according to American ratings is not pornographic, but hits the borders of pornography very often. Not much could better describe the other videos mentioned than "visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic

⁵⁹ 50 Cent. "P.I.M.P." *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*. Music Video. 2003.

rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings,” the very definition of pornography according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OxfordDictionaries.com).

These extremes reached by rap/pornography help some people form or change their opinions on hip-hop. Hip-hop is being produced throughout the world now, and there are myriad makers, from Africa to North America to Europe, but these few high profile artists mentioned above promote the continued bad reputation of rap and rappers.

As Perry explains:

While the music videos are male-centered in that they assume a heterosexual male viewer who will appreciate the images of sexually available young women, it is clear that young women watch them as well. The messages such videos send to young women are instructions on how to be sexy. (176)

She goes on to criticize the impossible beauty ideals presented in the videos, including but not limited to the camera’s preference for light-skinned women’s faces, which comes from a long tradition of racism and representation in the United States.

The problematic nature of this blending of pornography and rap is clear. It disallows hip-hop’s involvement in more meaningful, broader expressions as it contributes to viewers’ myopia and stunted aesthetic appreciation, given the propensity of such music videos to appeal to erotic as opposed to aesthetic sensibilities. There is some crossover in French rap into pornography, but it is much less frequent than in the United States. One example is the video from Doc Gyneco, for the song “Viens voir le docteur”⁶⁰ (1996), in which he sings to a fifteen year old of taking her virginity as long as she doesn’t tell her parents. The background singers are three women dressed in the

⁶⁰ Doc Gyneco. “Viens voir le docteur”. Music Video. 1996.

tiniest nurses' uniforms possible, verging on the pornographic. But we don't have to leave hip-hop there. We can save it from sexism.

Sexism in hip-hop is not of course limited to male rappers. Syd tha Kid from Odd Future has a spin off group called The Internet, whose video "Cocaine"⁶¹ (2011) depicts Syd on a date with another woman at an amusement park. It highlights the objectification of women, but with the twist that it is a woman doing the objectifying. In a disturbingly odd ending, she leaves the woman by the side of the road after the woman has passed out in her truck. This is all the more surprising given the lyrics to the song "You look like you could use a little confidence." It's a sad view of gay life and drug use, which is all the more shocking after the romantic scenes shown within the video earlier on.

Unfortunately, it shows a lack of regard for her lover's humanity in this video, and highlights the importance of drugs over personal connections. Still, Syd crosses the gender boundary within hip-hop in producing this song and video on her own. Yet Syd is still participating in misogyny while also subverting some elements of it by being an openly queer female rapper. This reveals how homosexuality does not exempt anyone from being sexist. Female masculinity can still be both sexist and misogynist, and Syd tha Kid shows this very clearly.

The depictions in her video reinforce the gender binary and even stereotypes of masculinity as her character embodies reprehensible behavior in dumping her girl by the side of the road after she passes out. This is not the female masculinity that Halberstam described in his book by the same name. It has more in common with stereotypical

⁶¹ The Internet. "Cocaine". *Purple Naked Ladies*. Music Video. 2011.

masculinities deployed with misogyny, which are often present in hip-hop. In revealing Syd's lack of humanity, she aligns herself with those in the rap world who dehumanize women in their music videos such as the makers of the video "Tip Drill," in which women were dehumanized as objects to the point where they were depicted as human ATM machines. Syd's work is not much better, in showing her literally dumping the girl's unconscious body out of the door of her truck. She has bought into misogynistic notions of masculinity and how women are treated.

As mentioned earlier, hip-hop has found its way into higher education, especially in the United States and Europe. With organizations such as Rock the School Bells, an annual concert and conference to promote social change through hip-hop, the redemption of hip-hop is closer. Only through educating our youth about the potential power of hip-hop for change can we prove that hip-hop is not dead, but thriving and growing.

This can be seen in the work of Keny Arkana, with her newer songs, "Free Spirits"⁶² or "The World is our Reflection"⁶³ for her 2013 tour, or in the (especially earlier) work of Queen Latifah, who some call hip-hop's "First Lady." The power of hip-hop for change can be seen in the continued interest in the work of groups such as De La Soul or Tribe Called Quest. If the power for change were not alive and well in hip-hop, it would not be growing as an academic subject worldwide. While it remains difficult to cross gender lines into the world of hip-hop for female rappers, if by "world" we mean the world of mainstream hip-hop that is produced and distributed by multinational

⁶² Keny Arkana. "Free Spirits". Compact Disc. 2013.

⁶³ Keny Arkana. "The World is Our Reflection". Compact Disc. 2013.

corporations, there are many female artists who continue to strive and sometimes succeed at this. The hip-hop nation may be ruled by men, but there is ample room for women's authorial talents as well. Alongside the growth of hip-hop studies in the coming years, hopefully we will also see continued growth in the work of female hip-hop artists contributing to the hip-hop nation their unique viewpoints, talents and strengths from both countries.

Chapter 4

Queer Hip-Hop Speaks Out

My vision for the hip-hop nation's future is that queer hip-hop artists will have their own rightful places within the mainstream hip-hop industry. While it may have been necessary at a certain moment in time for queer hip-hop to exist as its own subgenre within mainstream hip-hop in order to protect its existence, this separation is no longer necessary given the changing culture especially in the United States and France vis-à-vis marriage equality. The cultural climate has been changing radically in the past few years to show increased acceptance of LGBT people and their accompanying concerns. In making queer hip-hop a stronger part of broader hip-hop culture, hip-hop's narrower hypermasculine image is at stake. It may not happen immediately, but with the growing acceptance of LGBT people in the United States and France, queer hip-hop, too, is becoming more accepted. With that acceptance comes the sublimation of queer hip-hop within the greater hip-hop culture. It is disappointing that progressive queer hip-hop artists feel compelled to further the cultural industrial segregation within hip-hop, rather than fighting to make a place for themselves amidst the world of mainstream hip-hop. Queer hip-hop seems to be part of a kind of "worlding"¹ (Spivak 269.) Worlding refers to a process whereby a subgroup is taken as representative of a larger whole, such as the Third World being understood as a subsidiary of First World nations. Then when the

¹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.

Third World is used as an example, we forget the “worlding” which has occurred to fold it in as a subgroup. In being inscribed by mainstream hip-hop as a lesser subgenre of itself, it makes mainstream hip-hop’s dominance appear to be natural. In fact it is artificially created by industrial pressures and the demands of the market, where it always already has included queer hip-hop. Queer hip-hop has the possibility to truly change the structure of the hip-hop industries, given the space to do so. Hip-hop culture could become broader and more nuanced given the inclusion of queer hip-hop artists within it.

Intersectional identity is explored and described by many queer rappers. In Hip-Hop Studies, we must take care to include rappers from all walks of life in order to present a more complete picture of the hip-hop nation(s). Queer hip-hop is less commodified than mainstream hip-hop in both the United States and France because it doesn’t sell as easily as mainstream hip-hop albums. There has been some commercial success, but nothing like that of mainstream hip-hop. The queer hip-hop in France is not as widespread as that in the United States. In the United States, queer hip-hop is a progressive force to be reckoned with by homophobic hip-hop heads and the hip-hop industry. Queer rappers in France, however, are much more difficult to locate. To date, there are only a few notable queer rappers in France, such as Monis and Casey.¹ This lack of queer visibility in French hip-hop reflects a more difficult reception in France than in the United States. Though France may have more enlightened views about sexuality, this attitude does not carry over into the world of hip-hop, a world that remains largely homophobic with few possibilities for queer performers. If queer hip-hop merely becomes a subgenre of mainstream hip-hop in each country, we risk losing sight of its

revolutionary possibilities to change the face of hip-hop culture, to open it up to wider possibilities of identification and performance. Because of queer hip-hop's precarious existence within hip-hop culture, performers need to frame and package their own identities as intersectional and multifaceted, and present them as part of the larger hip-hop culture. It's important for queer hip-hop to seek its place as a real part of hip-hop culture, here to stay. If it is only seen as a marginalized subgenre, it will be much harder to secure its acceptance worldwide. It needs to be accepted as an inherent part of the whole of hip-hop culture.

One exception to the homophobic climate in French hip-hop is France's first openly gay rapper, Monis. Apart from a few gay rappers, straight men of color—often children of immigrants from West or North Africa—dominate the French hip-hop scene. This chapter investigates queer hip-hop and explores how Frank Ocean's coming out in 2012 reflected changing cultural climates in the United States. He came out by posting a letter on social media, intervening at the mainstream level and presenting his feelings about his positionality in his own words. Originally the letter was to have been the liner notes for his next album, but he decided to post it sooner, causing a sea change within the world of hip-hop, revealing that his first love was a man.²

Ocean's intervention reveals why queer hip-hop needs to be a central core of hip-hop rather than merely a subgenre. Hip-hop needs to embrace all its artists. Ocean's identity as both an African American man and a queer one are very important in this case as he demonstrates the importance of intersectionality in queer identity politics and the world of hip-hop. Hip-hop needs to expand to include everyone, not just heterosexual

male rappers. Hip-hop artists must frame and package their own identities in particular ways in order to negotiate the intersectional politics in the hip-hop industry.

Traditionally, rap lyrics have often been homophobic. Until very recently, it did not seem acceptable to be out as a queer rapper in mainstream hip-hop in the United States. All of this changed with Frank Ocean's public coming out, since it was quickly supported by Snoop Dogg and 50 Cent. In 2012, Snoop even attributed homophobia to brainwashing in the past, saying, "no one would step up and support you because that's what we were brainwashed . . . to know" (fuse.com). The same year, he also said that in the near future hip-hop will be ready for gay rappers: "the West coast native is confident that the hip-hop community is ready to embrace an openly gay rapper" (MTV RapFix). While Ocean's now defunct hip-hop collective, Odd Future, still deployed the word "faggot" in their lyrics too often for this writer's comfort, the group had two out, proud members: Ocean and Syd, who seemed not bothered by the group's use of the term.

While Ocean is the first queer artist in mainstream hip-hop to come out publicly, there is a history of American hip-hop artists—like Queen Latifah and Nicki Minaj—who support gay rights. These artists' support of such rights did not have the same cultural ripple effects that Ocean has had on the industry, however. In 2012, *MTV News* provided, for example, extensive coverage of Ocean's coming out, with interviews with stars like Eve and 50 Cent. Before Frank Ocean, the phrase "gay rapper" used to be an oxymoron, at least in mainstream rap, but now this is swiftly changing in the American context.

Thus far, when validated by the media, most queer hip-hop artists are categorized as "conscious" or "political" rappers, in other words relegated outside the mainstream to

smaller venues of distribution and performance. Marketing oneself as a queer hip-hop artist can mean the difference between being signed with the rap industrial complex or remaining more of an outsider activist/performer. Many queer hip-hop artists do not want to only be known as gay hip-hop artists, but as hip-hop artists who happen to be gay. They are often shortchanged as artists and do not usually receive contracts with major labels. One Detroit artist Invincible, was offered several major contract deals—deals largely based on an illogical comparison between her and Eminem, another white rapper from Detroit. She turned down deals with labels such as independent label Web because signing contracts with them would have meant giving up creative control of her music that features themes of queerness. Like many other artists in queer hip-hop, she prefers to remain independent.

While many people in hip-hop complained about the “homosexualizing of hip-hop,” the hip-hop nation as a whole is slowly becoming more inclusive and doing away with their homophobia. Even “formerly” homophobic artists, such as Eminem, have started to change their tune, literally. Queer hip-hop artist Deadlee commented in an interview with CNN on his own reception of Eminem’s work and how inspired he was to fight such homophobic lyrics by writing his own raps as well as owning his identity as a queer rapper. In the interview, Deadlee, a Los Angeles artist, discusses listening to Eminem and how hurt he felt when, for example, in Eminem’s song “Criminal”² (2000), he rapped the following: “Do I hate fags? The answer is yes.” Deadlee tried to face up to the difficult challenges of complex queer intersectional identities in hip-hop culture.

² Eminem, “Criminal,” *The Marshall Mathers LP*, Compact Disc, Interscope, 2000.

Some queer rappers take on a wider spectrum of politics. For example, Fiona Simone of Atlanta's homo hop scene is proudly political in the music video for her song "Grind from the Bottom"³ (2009). In this video, she states that "we need a revolution" and deploys the term "crooked police" in the tradition of NWA. She uses images from African American history to highlight the current problems of police brutality in America's big cities today, even as she raps there's "no use dwelling on the past." She uses famous images of police making dogs attack protesting African Americans during the civil rights era. She raps about the difficulties men have after being released from prison, about fighting to get their spirits and minds back. Just as French rapper Casey does, Fiona Simone advocates armed revolution, similarly to what another French rapper Keny Arkana does in her socialist feminist rap.

Simone also foregrounds queer culture in her highly political song "Tomboy Fresh"⁴ (2009), in which she depicts the societal pressure on music producers to enforce gender conformity in their artists. In this song, she raps the following: "Yes, you can tell from the way I'm dressed / that I'm tomboy fresh / tomboy fresh" and "critics so blind / when will they see / a million tomboys just like me." These lyrics depict her investments in queer gender politics. Another example of her investments in such politics is when, in the same song, she raps the following: "I be goin' in and I be goin' hard like a strap-on." With her lyrics, she affirms dyke culture and shows her own pride in being genderqueer.

³ Fiona Simone. "Grind from the Bottom" *Detour*. Music Video. 2009.

⁴ Fiona Simone. "Tomboy Fresh". *Detour*. Compact Disc. 2009.

Throughout the music video⁵ for this song she performs her own masculinity with her movements and clothes, even in the way she drives. Simone carefully navigates her intersectional identity as an African American female queer hip-hop artist. She helps reveal the constructed nature of gender through her performativity of masculinity. Her work references all aspects of her identity and shows the ways in which she can be a feminist, queer and African American activist simultaneously. We need such intersectional critique that combines race, class, gender and sexuality. It is crucial for hip-hop artists to embrace all facets of their intersectional identities to broaden hip-hop's reach and inclusivity.

She may be compared to French rapper Casey, whose activism is the backbone of her work in rap. On both sides of the Atlantic, these activist queer rappers are at work trying to change the status quo. They don't reference each other, but they are working along parallel lines to change the voice of queer hip-hop. With the growth of hip-hop studies, hopefully more attention will be paid to queer hip-hop as well. There have been a few conferences (such as "The Queerness of Hip-Hop") on queer hip-hop thus far and these promise to proliferate. There are also numerous articles on the existence of queer hip-hop, especially in relation to mainstream hip-hop. This critical conversation is growing at a much slower rate in France, despite there being at least a few queer rappers doing work in France now, such as Casey and Samy Messaoud. This slower rate is due to the smaller scale of queer hip-hop in France and the lack of Cultural Studies approaches

⁵ Fiona Simone. "Tomboy Fresh". *Detour*. Music Video. 2009
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6HQf327tF0>

there. Casey is a prolific hip-hop artist who touches on a number of important subjects related to queer politics. In Casey's video "Chez moi"⁶ (2007), she speaks of life in Martinique and the effects of colonization on the place from which she hails, drawing the historical connections visually through images of slavery. The video begins with a documentary-style interview with her grandmother discussing raising her eight children. She raps about mothers and grandmothers being the heads of the family. Casey sits listening to her then kisses her cheek as she rises to leave. She also wears men's clothes, no makeup, and has her hair in cornrows, walking with a distinctly masculine gait as she descends the stairs. The camera looks up at her leaning against a building, emphasizing her power as a rapper. Towards the end of the video, she kisses her necklace, and dedicates her song to her family and the Caribbean islands. In this song, her character is depicted as a stark contrast to the content she raps about and visually imagines. Her gender presentation is completely different from anyone else's in the video, as she presents a more masculine gender position as she raps. She raps about Franz Fanon and Aime Césaire. She also includes a map of the slave trade in this video to help highlight the problems of colonialism as well as our present moment. In many of her videos she tells the story of slavery. She raps about harvesting sugar cane, and the pain that colonialism has caused, breaking her people's backs for a bag of sugar. Such overtly political material and references are sometimes difficult to find in the world of mainstream hip-hop, which relies so often on dehistoricized narratives of the superficial

⁶ Casey. "Chez Moi." 2007. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_L6VuuB1c2w.

and material. In this video we see her amidst her family and friends and she stands out in each frame as special, as different, as gender variant while providing a strong political critique of postcolonialism and its problems. She explains how the slave owners became the former slaves' employers, and how little changed through officially ending slavery.

Casey weaves a political thread through most of her work, such as in videos like the 2006 "Dans nos histoires"⁷ ("In Our Histories") from her album *Ennemi de l'ordre* in which she sings about sadness and a lack of hope:

They beat the Blacks and raped the Black women
You can believe me
There is no hope
There is only pain to see
In our history.

In her video for this song, we see a young girl learning about the history of racism. The images of the girl are intercut with photos from the past, photos like one of a Black man being lynched. She raps about violence against people of color, mentioning the historical epidemic of rape. Casey connects rap with history and politics in this postcolonial moment in order to raise awareness about colonialism and racism. She works hard at exploring her own intersectional identity and at mining it for important material to rap about. She incorporates postcolonial problems such as in her song "Sac de sucre"⁸ (2010), in which she uses the first person to discuss the circumstances of slavery, the terror of systemic rape and murder: "Our old torturers are our new employers" and "free, yeah, but always inferior." In this way she explores the postcolonial condition in the

⁷ Casey. "Dans nos histoires". *Ennemi de l'ordre*. Music Video 2007.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlgQnx-Qrp8>

⁸ Casey. "Sac de sucre". *Libérez la bête*. Compact Disc. 2010.

former colonies of France, and the ways in which the power imbalance is carried on to this day in the sugar cane fields. Casey speaks of violent revolution to overcome these systems. She tells of being taken from Africa, of being owned and then transformed into exploited workers after slavery officially ended. Casey speaks through her intersectional identity as an Afro-Caribbean French queer hip-hop artist, with her own particular gender presentation. She takes over the hypermasculinity of hip-hop and converts it in her own way, through her own masculinity, which she describes as her “androgynous air.” Casey raps about absent fathers, about the human condition, about racism in France and the former colonies. She sings of being black and “minoritaire” (minority), of being seen as a criminal merely because she is black.

In Casey’s 2006 song “Pas à vendre,”⁹ she addresses people’s questions about her gender identity, and whether she is a guy or girl, due to her androgynous presentation. She stages her own performativity as female masculinity. There is ambiguity in her performance. She sings that her way of life is not for sale, and that she doesn’t care what people think of her. She addresses gender more specifically than sexuality in many of her songs. In her video for the song we see a man doing graffiti and breakdancing, evoking an old school hip-hop feel. She sings that her rap is not for sale, that it’s part of her way of life. Casey sings of life in the banlieue, and of her pride in where she comes from. She sings of life in the HLM, the French projects in the banlieue. She reveals how many problems from the past still plague African French people currently as postcolonial

⁹ Casey. “Pas à vendre.” *Tragédie d’une Trajectoire*. 2006.

subjects in France. She embraces all aspects of her own identity, and in so doing develops a still stronger stance as a hip-hop artist. She does not seem to address her own sexuality in her songs or videos, instead focusing on her gender identity which often gets linked with people's expectations about sexuality and gender presentation, as they often conflate the two. People make assumptions based on performers' gender presentation, when in fact gender and sexuality are discrete aspects of identity. On the opposite end of the spectrum where talking about one's own sexuality is concerned is French gay rapper Monis, who often raps about gay topics.

Monis, who is originally from Dijon, calls himself the first French gay rapper. His first album, *Anima in pena*¹⁰ (2009), focuses largely on gay issues. On his second album, *Le monde va bien*¹¹ (2011), there is only one song that deals with queer identity. He refuses to be a pawn of the industry, which results in him having to keep working outside the music industry as well since he is an independent performer. He inhabits this ambiguous space in which he moves from one aspect of his intersectional identity to another. He performs authenticity through the texts of his raps. His rap name was derived from his grandparents' surname, Simon. He used verlan (seen in Chapter two in the film *La haine*), a type of French Pig Latin, seen to derive the name, in which the second syllable is put first, and the first, last. It would seem that he is avoiding French anti-Semitism in changing his name from Simon. France has a long history of anti-

¹⁰ Monis. *Anima in Pena*. Compact Disc. 2009.

¹¹ Monis. *Le Monde Va Bien*. Compact Disc. Pusakag 2011.

Semitism which came to light again in the 2015 massacre and taking of hostages in a kosher supermarket. People have been attacked in the streets for wearing a yarmulke or star of David. Thousands of Jews were shipped to Auschwitz under the direction of the French authorities. So it is understandable that Monis might be afraid of fallout from French anti-Semitism if he were to simply be “Simon,” which is a Jewish surname.

Monis claims he’s experienced more discrimination from gay people than from other rappers and, as he notes in the June 22, 2010 issue of *Têtu* that his fans are often lesbian. He does not discuss any discrimination he has experienced for being Jewish, rather he only embraces his gayness and not other parts of his identity. The editors at the gay magazine *Têtu* agree that Monis is the first openly gay rapper in France. Since his rise to fame, some other rappers have followed suit, but he was the courageous first. The fact that France has the second largest rap industry in the world provided the backdrop for queer hip-hop to exist in France. Still, Monis is swimming upstream in trying to make a name for himself as a white gay rapper in France. He is taken less seriously as shown in the exchange between him and trashtalking talk show host Cortex in France. Cortex accuses him of not even being a rapper and is very rude about Monis’ sexuality. Monis fought back against Cortex’s ignorance by threatening to sue him.

With songs like “Let me Live” or “History of Hate,” Monis embraces his own intersectional identity as a French gay rapper. He has one rap in which he sings about the media demonizing “us,” the youth in France. He brings up many different issues in his raps, exploring intersectional identity among French youth, as well as rapping about love.

Monis has a few things in common with gay male African American group the Deep Dickcollective from California. An important American group, the Deep Dickcollective foregrounded political statements about queerness and gender inequality as well. With their impressive video “For Colored Boys”¹² (2007), Deep Dickcollective made it into Yale University’s 2010 *Anthology of Rap*¹³. The video and its poetic song are a beautiful tribute to African American gay men and their expressive culture, with the myriad images of the men in the video showing the range of artistic talent in African American queer expressive culture. The Deep Dickcollective explores intersectional identity including but not limited to class, race, education, sexuality and gender on six different albums that they made. The Deep Dickcollective also appears prominently in Alex Hinton’s 2006 documentary *Pick Up the Mic*¹⁴, in which queer hip-hop artists are given voice to create a tapestry of performers. The group is sadly no longer together, but several members have gone solo since the group’s dissolution in 2010.

Deep Dickcollective boasted lyrics such as “grammatology for gangsters,” referencing Derrida’s 1967 work *Of Grammatology*¹⁵ and gangsta rap at the same time. They do not delve into this reference, rather they just let the name drop. A diverse group

¹² Deep Dickcollective. “For Colored Boys”. *On Some Other*. 2007.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdIWqsbxMM>

¹³ Bradley, Adam, and Andrew Dubois, eds. *The Anthology of Rap*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2010.

¹⁴ *Pick Up the Mic*. Dir. Alex Hinton. Rhino Films. 2006.

¹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *De la grammatologie*. Les éditions du minuit, 1967.

of performers from Oakland, California, they brought a great amount of energy to their cause. They often mentioned being college-educated. In one song they rap “become so global that I’m a local hero,” referencing globalization. They perform their own masculinity and question traditional masculinity such as football playing and watching in opposition to their own freestylin’ masculinity. They started their own label called Sugartruck Recordings, on which they feature many performers.

One of the most promising of these performers from the documentary *Pick Up the Mic* is Katastrophe, an American white trans male rapper from San Francisco. He is the first openly transgender rapper in the United States, perhaps in the world. Sugartruck Recordings, which is owned by the Deep Dickcollective, produced Katastrophe’s first album, *Let’s F***, Then Talk about My Problems*¹⁶(2004). In his music video for the album’s song “Wake Me if I’m Dreaming,”¹⁷ Katastrophe creates a melodramatic story about the breakup of an interracial relationship. He ends the poignant video with an image of himself burning a photograph of him and his girlfriend, which indicates his moving on from the relationship. His lyrics in “Wake Me if I’m Dreaming” draw attention to relationship dynamics:

You might be near okay
Steer the ship to bay
Docked ya locked in talked into toxic, obnoxious and charmin’
the paradox disarm and on guard and aired
how we were both scarred and scared.

¹⁶ Katastrophe. *Let’s f***, Then Talk about My Problems*. Sugartruck Recordings, 2004.

¹⁷ “Wake Me If I’m Dreaming.” 2004. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyFtS2CuvEs>.

He pushes the limits of rap with his very existence and efforts at rapping. In a 2005, the *San Francisco Chronicle* explains that Katastrophe's tattoos spell out "heavy handed" down his arms and "tender-hearted" across his chest. He faces a great challenge of being taken seriously as a man in our transphobic society, due to the frequent biases against transmen. He confronts stereotypes of who a rapper is or should be, recreating himself as a white trans male rapper who is so much more complex than many rappers, and acknowledging multiple aspects of his own intersectional identity.

In his 2010 video for "Tunnel Vision,"¹⁸ it shows a party filled with gender-variant guests in his motel room. One friend is wearing a T-shirt that reads "That's what ze said," a gender-neutral pronoun. Katastrophe's fame has been limited to queer settings where he performs. He is part of that subgenre of hip-hop, queer hip-hop, in spite of not being gay himself. The industry doesn't really acknowledge Katastrophe since he is not part of mainstream hip-hop yet. His videos can be found on Logo television channel, which is devoted to queer productions. He also often performs locally in the Bay Area.

His first album dealt with many issues of gender identity, and he did not stop performing as he went through his transition. He would like to increase trans awareness, particularly in normalizing trans identity for the greater public. He says that he identifies more as a sober man than as a trans man. He tours throughout the United States and the world, with his most recent tour being an American tour in 2015. He explores his masculinity through hip-hop, a traditionally masculine art form. Hip-hop's

¹⁸ Katastrophe. "Tunnel Vision." 2010. *YouTube* Video. March 3, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfWq7W3oeMw>.

hypermasculine image is at stake in embracing queer hip-hop as part of mainstream hip-hop.

Erick Sermon, originally part of hip-hop group EPMD, was interviewed in 2015 on TMZ¹⁹. He said that the hip-hop community is not ready for transgender rappers, that they are “taking the culture too far.” He acknowledged that there are women rappers, but said there’s not room for transgender rappers as hip-hop is a “no Bruce Jenner zone.” Similarly, in 2012, Sermon said that being gay in hip-hop was “like a curse.” He said he couldn’t imagine any gay rapper ever being successful in hip-hop. Times have changed just since 2012, and there are now many transgender rappers, none with broad commercial success but some like Katastrophe doing well enough to keep touring.

Hip-hop’s rhetoric of authenticity surrounds notions of authentic maleness or masculinity within hip-hop. The cultural reception of hip-hop is closely tied to these notions of authenticity. While transgender rappers are living out their lives as their most authentic selves, this is a different kind of authenticity than the type that some old school hip-hop artists such as Erick Sermon refer to. These days, hip-hop is a battleground of warring authenticities, with a proliferation of identities appearing to win out as hip-hop culture continually broadens its scope to include ever-widening audiences and ever more varied performers.

The rhetoric of authenticity makes for interesting intersections when applied to white gay or trans male rappers, African American gay or trans male rappers, or female

¹⁹ Sermon, Erick. “Being Gay and in Hip-Hop is ‘Like a Curse.’” *Huffington Post* (New York), Queer Voices Video, February 22, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/22/erick-sermon-epmd-rapper-gay-hip-hop_n_1294156.html.

genderqueer rappers. In France this rhetoric of authenticity is perhaps still more important as it's once removed from hip-hop's origins in the United States. What is interesting in France is that there seems to be less expectation for hip-hop artists to be of African origins than there often is in the United States. Hip-hop in France is extraordinarily multicultural. It's possible that there are many more queer hip-hop artists who simply don't present themselves in this way. In chapter three I wrote about many different feminist hip-hop artists in both the United States and France. Some of those might make sense to be included under the rubric of queer hip-hop artists. It depends on where a performer's own focus lies, and how they choose to frame their own identities.

This same rhetoric of authenticity and of being 'old school' makes it difficult for queer hip-hop artists to negotiate the spaces within hip-hop where they could carve out space for themselves. For the most part, the hip-hop industry simply ignores transgender rappers as not economically viable. Rappers such as Katastrophe are beginning to prove this wrong. Yet is it really possible for transgender hip hop artists to survive in mainstream hip hop? Or will they forever be relegated to a second citizen status by virtue of their intersectional identity and supposed lack of authenticity?

This idea of authenticity works against both female rappers and trans male rappers, since this concept of authentic masculinity resides within male-born-males, according to hip-hop's historical privileging of "authentic" male selves of hip-hop artists. Queer hip-hop artists must solidify their own concepts of authenticity in what they bring to hip-hop culture and must fight against prescriptive notions of what is authentic.

Through trusting themselves and relying on their own queer authenticity, queer hip-hop artists will find their place within the hip-hop industry and hip-hop culture.

Conclusion

Hip-hop's two largest markets are in America and France. In this dissertation, I have endeavored to show the similarities in these two largest hip-hop markets in the world, as well as delineating where they diverge. I have shown how these two markets affect each other, and what crosspollenation has occurred between them in recent years. Hip-hop has devolved into a neoliberal practice, moving far away from its activist roots in the South Bronx.

I explained the ways in which hip-hop has always already been transnational, from its very beginnings in the South Bronx where it first appeared. Now that hip-hop has proliferated throughout much of the world, it has become more difficult to trace the path back to hip-hop's beginnings. I focus on the hip-hop industry in France and that in the United States in order to show how these industries have influenced each other. It has largely been in one direction, the ways in which the French artists have drawn on the American ones, and followed the French tradition of resistance through political expression.

Many French hip-hop artists are working to overcome the French legacy of colonialism through their raps. Some of them, such as Keny Arkana, advocate violent revolution to change this legacy. These ideas were also explored in chapter two in which I analyzed the film *La haine*, which revealed the neocolonial condition in the banlieues of Paris. This was also touched upon in the work of Casey, a French queer rapper who was analyzed in chapter four.

The reception of the transnational product has become of utmost importance since everything now in hip-hop is transnational. The way French or American hip-hop gets received can mean the success or failure of the product. With the strengthening of multinational corporations, many hip-hop artists have become more corporatized, and some have become reduced to the lowest common denominator in order to augment sales.

I drew comparisons between the group NTM and NWA, both of whom experienced strong state censorship. The latter was explored in the recent film *Straight Outta Compton*, which revealed FBI intimidation of the group NWA. The former had to contend with being prohibited from performing for six months in France after playing their own song about police in France. The echoes between these two groups are striking, and show the ways in which groups from different countries help to make up the hip-hop nation together.

The hip-hop industries are worth billions. I discussed the ways in which queer hip-hop is becoming an intrinsic part of the hip-hop industries rather than just a subgenre. Only a few hip-hop artists take on multinational corporations in their lyrics, and female and queer hip-hop artists make up some of these. I touched upon the idea of authenticity within hip-hop and how “keepin’ it real” holds such weight within hip-hop culture. Reclaiming the potential for social change from what hip-hop has become in recent decades is of utmost importance.

Hip-hop studies is an important field of study and holds the potential to be an interdisciplinary field, bridging African American studies and Francophone studies, as well as drawing in Film Studies and Music. In chapter two I analyzed several French and

American films and television shows to illustrate how these could be helpful within hip-hop studies. I discussed the reduction in meaning for some of these cultural productions, given their ownership by multinational corporations. The commodification of blackness was a central focus with regard to these films and television shows. Another important focal point was the concept of “becoming minor” as relates to hip-hop as a minor literature.

Also important in the second chapter was the exploration of the ways in which hip-hop’s violence is heightened through the visual media. The continual linking of blackness with violence was pointed out in several different filmic and televisual examples, and the resulting dehumanization was analyzed as an intrinsic part of many hip-hop films and television shows. I discussed the blurring of lines between television advertising and content on shows such as *Empire*, as well as the commodification of hip-hop studies itself.

I drew attention to the problem of police brutality through the films that were analyzed in chapter two, specifically police killing young men of color in both the United States and France, which was highlighted in every film analyzed. I also delved into the problematic sexism which occurred in many of these films, including but not limited to the film *Straight Outta Compton*. This film reveals the rampant commodification of hip-hop through the arcs of the characters’ lives. It became the highest-grossing film from an African American director thus far.

In chapter three, I analyzed feminism and sexism in hip-hop culture specifically in France and the United States. I demonstrated the ways in which French artists seem to be

more comfortable with advocating feminist stances, whereas American female hip-hop artists often have a more difficult time with this.

I discussed American artists such as Queen Latifah and Syd tha Kid, showing how their work intersects with feminism. I analyzed different female hip-hop artists' approaches to race in their raps and music videos as well as their deconstruction of femininity. I showed their varied gender presentations and how that related to the message of their raps. I discussed the prevalence of female masculinity among female hip-hop artists, as well as the ways in which they disrupt conventional expectations of them as hip-hop artists. Questions of class and representation were central to many of the artists' work.

Challenges that women face as gangsta rappers were analyzed as well through the work of artists such as Boss, from Detroit. Questions about the use of masculinist tools to further their hip-hop messages were raised, along with the concept of authenticity as relates to the hypermasculine in hip-hop. The heterosexism of hip-hop was highlighted as relates to female hip-hop performers. The perils of internalized sexism were explored as relates to such artists as Nicki Minaj. Through looking at her work and Eve's and L'il Kim's, I analyzed their own self-exploitation for the hip-hop market.

Performative androgyny forms an important element in much feminist hip-hop, in music videos by Eve or Boss. They access the authentic masculinity of hip-hop culture through incorporating their own masculinity into their work as hip-hop artists. The intersection of hip-hop feminism and hip-hop studies proved to be a rich location for discoveries of several new rappers such as Keny Arkana and Lady Laistee, from France.

Many artists, such as Erykah Badu, do not identify as feminists, but rather as humanists due to feminism's notoriety as being limited to white middle-class women's problems historically. So American women hip-hop artists are self-identifying as feminists much less often than French women hip-hop artists.

The misogyny of much mainstream hip-hop was analyzed, including both 2 Live Crew and Snoop Dogg. Their own complicity in the commodification of blackness was illustrated through clips from their music videos. The slippage between hardcore rap and pornography was explored, in such videos as "Tip Drill," in which women are grossly dehumanized. Ludacris' contributions to the dehumanization of women were carefully outlined, as well as their effects on young female hip-hop fans. I analyzed also many of the female hip-hop artists contributing to the dehumanization of women through their own work.

Finally, in chapter four, the idea of authenticity is interrogated as relates to hypermasculinity and hip-hop culture vis-à-vis queer rappers. A number of queer subjectivities are analyzed, finishing with white transgender male rapper Katastrophe, whose work has been on the Logo channel and in international film festivals. I discussed the radical shifts of late in the cultural climate both in the United States and France which has effectively made more room for queer rappers within hip-hop culture. I argued for the inclusion of queer hip-hop artists not as a subgenre of hip-hop culture, but as equal participants to the other rappers in the culture. I showed the dangers of being subsumed under hip-hop culture as a mere subgenre instead of them assuming their rightful place as

equal performers within the industry. I illustrated the worlding of queer hip-hop despite the fact that it has always already been included as part of hip-hop culture.

The importance of intersectional identity figured prominently in chapter four, and was analyzed with regard to several different hip-hop artists located both in the United States and France. The huge change brought about by Frank Ocean's highly public coming out was explained. His own intersectional identity as a queer African American man (or at least one whose first love was a man) was illustrated.

The dangers of being ghettoized within "conscious" hip-hop were elucidated as were the difficulties of being taken seriously as a queer hip-hop artist within the hip-hop industry. Fiona Simone fights valiantly against these forces with her music videos that evidence both her commitment to African American rights and history and her commitment to genderqueer politics. Her French counterpart, Casey is described through her work on postcolonial subjects through her songs such as "A sack of sugar." She carefully delineates the ways in which France's former colonies are still exploiting postcolonial subjects to this day, through unfair labor practices.

Casey also raps about her own gender presentation. I explored the genderqueer aspects of several different queer hip-hop artists in chapter four. I contrasted the expectations for hip-hop artists in France, which has a more multicultural hip-hop industry, with those for hip-hop artists in the United States, in which the expectation is more prevalent that hip-hop artists are African American. She sings about not being for sale, similarly to Keny Arkana, who chants that she is not a product. It is interesting to note the numerous rappers who insist on this, that they will not be turned into a product

for sale. At the other end of the spectrum are those rappers who are more concerned with their own branding, and how they choose to sell themselves.

I have made interventions into the discourse framing hip-hop culture in the United States and France, showing the varying levels of activism which are at work in each place as well as what they are fighting for. I showed hip-hop's own self-knowledge as a minor literature as well as the ways in which hip-hop is constantly renegotiating its own borders. I discussed hip-hop as a nation with its own poet laureate. I also explained how the corporatization of hip-hop is a global phenomenon, and what this means for hip-hop's future. It would seem that such corporatization helps to divide hip-hop artists rather than uniting them along lines of shared experience as part of a political musical movement. Hopefully in the years to come, hip-hop can in some way return to its roots as a movement and help to turn globalization into glocalization, bringing greater meaning to the works of new hip-hop artists.

In the future, I hope to research Francophone hip-hop from diverse locations such as Martinique or Senegal. I would like to analyze colonialism's influence on these places as it is evidenced through the hip-hop from those areas. It would be interesting to write about intersectional identities such as Immortal Technique or Keny Arkana, showing their dual nationalities as well as the effects this has on their work. Many rappers such as MC Solaar were born in Francophone locales but then grew up in France. These too would be fascinating positionalities to learn from in hip-hop studies, and will help us to understand hip-hop's power worldwide as an ever-growing, ever-changing phenomenon.

I would like to contribute to the discourse of hip-hop studies and of Francophone studies, demonstrating the ways in which hip-hop is important in the study of recent history as well as globalization. There is so much to be learned from hip-hop as a phenomenon which is always renegotiating its borders and its own rights to power. Hip-hop has changed many lives and promises to continue to do so, as a now four decades old movement affecting millions of people worldwide.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor. *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, New York: Institute of Social Research, 1941, IX, 17-48.
- *Essays on Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2002.
- Ahearn, Charlie, dir. *Wild Style*. Submarine Entertainment, 1983. Film.
- Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review, 1971.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. New York: Verso, 1983.
- Arkana, Keny. *Civil Disobedience*. Compact Disc. L'esquisse 2, 2015.
- . "V pour Verite." 2011. *YouTube* Video. April 23, 2011.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm-u45jqCgc>.
- . *Wake Up*. Compact Disc. Tout tourney autour du Soleil, 2012.
- Asante, Molefi K. *It's Bigger than Hip-Hop: The Rise of the Post-Hip-Hop Generation*. New York: St. Martin's P, 2008.
- Bams. "De Ce Monde." *De Ce Monde*. Compact Disc. Junkadelic Zikmu, 2005.
- "Pas Cool." De ce monde. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjEaNLQxjMs>. 2006.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.
- *Image-Music-Text*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1977.
- Basu, Dipannita, and Sidney Lemelle, eds. *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Black Culture*. London: Pluto, 2006.
- Baybutt, Andy, and Ice-T, dirs. *Something from Nothing: The Art of Rap*. Kaleidoscope Films, 2012. Film.
- Beats, Rhymes & Life: The Travels of a Tribe Called Quest*. Dir. Michael Rapaport. Film. 2011.
- Berry, Torriano, and Venise T. Berry, eds. *The 50 Most Influential Black Films: A Celebration of African American Talent, Determination, and Creativity*. New York: Citadel, 2001.
- Blanchard, Pascal, Nicolas Bancel, and Sandrine Lemaire. *La fracture colonial: La société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial*. Paris: La Decouverte, 2013.

-
- Blondeau, Thomas, and Fred Hanak. *Combat rap II: 20 ans de rap français*. Paris: Le Castor Astral, 2008.
- Bluher, Dominique. "Hip Hop Cinema in France". *Camera Obscura* 46. 2001.
- Booba. "Gun in Hand." *Ouest Side*. Paris. Compact Disc. 2006.
- Boogie Down Productions. "Who Protects Us From You?" *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop*. Compact Disc. 1989.
- Boss. "Deeper." 1993. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdgJTOFkf88>.
- . "Progress of Elimination." 1993. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvGj2QCRAgI>.
- . "Recipe of a Hoe." 1993. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BM79wOCxG4>.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Langage et pouvoir symbolique*. Paris: Seuil, 2001.
- Boyd, Todd. *The New H.N.I.C.: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip-Hop*. New York: New York UP, 2003.
- Bradley, Adam, and Andrew Dubois, eds. *The Anthology of Rap*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2010.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.
- Brewer, Craig, dir. *Hustle and Flow*. Paramount Classics, 2005. Film.
- Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone, 2015.
- Butler, Jess. "For white girls only?: Postfeminism and the politics of inclusion." *Feminist Formations* 25.1 (2013): 35-58.
- Caramanica, Jon. "Two Titans Share The Seat of Power: Kanye West and Jay-Z, Kings of Hip-Hop, Merge Empires on 'Watch the Throne.'" *New York Times* (New York), August 14, 2011.
- Casey. "Chez Moi." 2007. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_L6VuuBIc2w.
- "Dans nos histoires". *Ennemi de l'ordre*. Music Video 2007.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlgQnx-Qrp8>

-
- . “Libérez la bête.” 2010. *YouTube* Video. March 3, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5av32E3mz0E&index=3&list=RDR-SD10rMILQ>.
- . “Pas à vendre.” 2007. *YouTube* Video. March 3, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMf1Z9MVSno>.
- “Pas à vendre.” *Tragédie d’une Trajectoire*. 2006.
- . “Reves illimités.” 2010. *YouTube* Video. March 3, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RNEfn44wLRY&index=2&list=RDR-SD10rMILQ> .
- “Sac de Sucre.” 2010. *YouTube* Video. March 3, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-SD10rMILQ&list=RDR-SD10rMILQ#t=286>
- Cazwell. “Ice Cream Truck.” 2010. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w02QxQZGQc>.
- . “Unzip Me.” 2011. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwn7KLaJJpM>.
- Chang, Jeff. *Can’t Stop Won’t Stop: A History Of Hip-Hop Culture*. New York: Macmillan, 2007.
- Charnas, Dan. *The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop*. New York: Penguin, 2010.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism and Feminism*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2006.
- Colors*. Dir. Dennis Hopper. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1988. Film.
- Curtis-Hall, Vondie, dir. *Gridlock’d*. Gramercy Pictures, 1997. Film.
- Da Brat. “Sittin’ on Top of the World.” *Anuthatantrum*. 1996. Compact Disc.
- Dangerous, Johnny. “Curious.” 2007. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvZE_frZk-A.
- . “Dangerous Liaisons.” 2003. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggFlfGJ-s4k>.
- De La Soul. *First Serve*. Compact Disc. Jesgrew Records, 2012.

Deadlee. "Good Soldier II." *Assault with a Deadlee Weapon*. Compact Disc. Bombastic, 2006.

Dead Prez. "Hip Hop." *Let's Get Free*. Compact Disc. Loud Records, 2000.

Deep Dickollective. "For Colored Boys". *On Some Other*. 2007.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdIWqsxbcMM>

Deleuze, Gilles. *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure*. Paris: Les Editions du Minuit, 1975.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of UP, 1987.

Denton, Paul. "Monis, le 'rappeur gay,' répond a Cortex: 'C'est juste un guignol.'" *Yagg* (Paris), August 8, 2011.

Derrida, Jacques. *De la grammatologie*. Les éditions du minuit, 1967.

Diam. "Peter Pan." 2010. *YouTube* Video. January 23, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEKS7tmVb7s>.

DJ Junkaz Lou. "Camrade." With Bams. *Por de Gennvilliers*. Compact Disc. Junkadelic Zikmu, 2008.

Doc Gyneco. "Né ici." *Première consultation*. Compact Disc. 1996.

---"Ma salope à moi", Single. Compact Disc. 2008.

--- "Viens voir le docteur". Music Video. 1996.

Durand, Alain-Philippe. *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002.

Dyson, Michael. "Between Apocalypse and Redemption: John Singleton's *Boyz N the Hood*." *Cultural Critique* 21 (1992): 121-41.

—. *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip-Hop*. Philadelphia: Basic Civitas, 1994.

Elliott, Missy. "Work It." 2002. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zm28EEeyLek>.

Eminem. "97' Bonnie and Clyde." *The Slim Shady LP*. Compact Disc. Interscope, 1997.

—. "Careful What You Wish For." 2009. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbpOaEigyJE>.

-
- . Eminem, “Criminal,” *The Marshall Mathers LP*, Compact Disc, Interscope, 2000.
- . “The Real Slim Shady.” *The Marshall Mathers LP*. Compact Disc. Interscope, 2000.
- *The Eminem Show*. Compact Disc. Interscope. 2002.
- *Slim Shady LP*. Compact Disc. Interscope. 1999.
- Empire*. Fox. 2015- Television.
- Eve. “Gotta Man.” *Let There Be Eve*. Compact Disc. Ruff Riders and Interscope, 1999.
- . “Let Me Blow Ya Mind.” *Scorpion*. Compact Disc. Ruff Riders and Interscope, 2001.
- . “Tambourine.” *Tambourine*. Compact Disc. Aftermath Records, 2007.
- Famuyiwa, Rick, dir. *Brown Sugar*. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2002. Film.
- 50 Cent. “P.I.M.P.” *Get Rich or Die Tryin’*. Music Video. 2003.
- “Fight the Power.” Public Enemy. Motown Records, 1989. Single.
- Fixx, Tori. “Not Perfect.” 2007. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bl1hpM-ieMo>.
- Folami, Akilah. “From Habermas to ‘Get Rich or Die Tryin’’: Hip Hop, the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and the Black Public Sphere.” *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* 12 (2007): 235.
- Foucault, Michel. *Surveiller et punir: la naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
- Fournier, Audrey. “Rumeurs sur le couple Sarkozy.” *Evous* (Paris). November 7, 2011.
- Freedia, Big. “Excuse.” 2011. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uN0mEDGM3I>.
- . “Feelin’ Myself.” 2013. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y0bjAXFZGw>.
- . “Y’all Get Back Now.” 2013. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMQGqOg4IDw>.
- Galuppo, Mia. “‘Straight Outta Compton’ Becomes Highest-Grossing Movie from African American Director.” *Billboard*, November 3, 2015.
<http://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6752823/straight-outta-compton-box-office-worldwide>.
- Gates, Henry Louis Jr., and Nellie Y. McKay, eds. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. New York: Norton, 1997.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

-
- Glissant, Edouard. *Poétique de la relation*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990.
- Guetta, David. *Turn Me On*. Compact Disc. Capitol Records, 2011.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998.
- Hall, Stuart. *Modernity and its Futures*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992.
- Hanson, Curtis, dir. *8 Mile*. Universal, 2002. Film.
- Hess, Mickey. "Hip-hop realness and the white performer." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22.5 (2005): 372-389.
- Hine, Darlene Clark. *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*. Champaign: U of Illinois P, 2009.
- Holland, Sharon Patricia. *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000.
- hooks, bell. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." *In the Consumer Society: Reader*. Eds. Juliet Schor and D.B. Holt. New York: New P, 2000. 343-59.
- Huq, Rupa. *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth, and Identity in a Postcolonial World*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hustle and Flow*. Dir. Craig Brewer. MTV Films, 2005. Film.
- Immortal Technique. "Dance with the Devil." *Revolutionary Vol. 1*. Compact Disc. Viper Records, 2001.
- "Obnoxious." *Revolutionary Vol. 2*. Compact Disc. Viper Records, 2003.
- "Peruvian Coke." *Revolutionary Vol. 2*. Compact Disc. Viper Records, 2003.
- Invincible. "Locusts." 2010. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97IpJ9OTMQQ>.
- Jackson, Curtis, dir. *Before I Self-Destruct*. Cheetah Vision, 2009. Film.
- Jaehne, Karen. "Charles Ahearn, "Wild Style." *Film Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (1984): 2-5.
- Jay-Z. *Decoded*. New York: Random House. 2010.
- "Open Letter." 2013. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rm18JhNnCNM>.
- JenRO. "Dykes in Da House." *Unreleased and Uncensored Vol. 1*. Compact Disc. Jen Records, 2005.
- Joseph, Alvin. *The Horizon: A History of Africa*. Detroit: U of Michigan P, 1971.

-
- Katastrophe. "Second Hand Emotion." 2008. *Vimeo* Video. March 3, 2016.
<https://vimeo.com/64103290>.
- . "Tunnel Vision." 2010. *YouTube* Video. March 3, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tfWq7W3oeMw>.
- . "Wake Me If I'm Dreaming." 2004. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyFtS2CuvEs>.
- *Let's f***, Then Talk about My Problems*. Sugartruck Recordings, 2004.
- Keeling, Kara. *The Witch's Flight: The Cinematic, the Black Femme, and the Image of Common Sense*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007.
- Kitwana, Bakari. *The Hip-Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African-American Culture*. Philadelphia: Basic Civitas, 2002.
- Kjeldgaard, Dannie and Søren Askegaard. "The glocalization of youth culture: The global youth segment as structures of common difference." *Journal of Consumer Research* 33.2 (2006): 231-247.
- Korona, Miz. "Playground." 2010. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4n6PkCkYUK0>.
- La Haine*. Dir. Matthieu Kassovitz. Canal Plus, 1995. Film.
- Last Offence. "They Don't Like Me." 2009. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEkmc_ja7ck.
- Lathan, Stan, dir. *Beat Street*. Orion, 1984. Film.
- Latifah, Queen. "U-N-I-T-Y." 1983. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8cHxydDb7o>.
- . "Fast Car." 2009. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVNYbGIHzL8>.
- Lavonne, Melange. "Gay Bash." 2007. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdjSRu8na3o>.
- Lee, Spike, dir. *Clockers*. Universal, 1995. Film.
- . *Do the Right Thing*. Universal, 1989. Film.
- Les Lascars*. Dir. Emmanuel Klotz. Canal Plus, 2009. Film.
- Levin, Marc, dir. *Slam*. Trimark, 1998. Film.
- Libre, Gros-K. "Coming Out." *Coming Out*. Compact Disc. K Records. 2010.
- Lil' Kim. "Not Tonight." *Hard Core*. Compact Disc. Master Sound Studios, 1996.

-
- Livres Groupe. *Album de hip-hop: Illmatic, the blueprint?: The gift*. Paris: Books Group, 2010.
- . *Genre de hip-hop: Rap, hip-hop west coast, rap old school, rap politique, dirty south, r'n'b contemporain, Chicago hip-hop, crunk*. Paris: Books Group, 2010.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Crossing, 1984.
- Ludacris. "Pussy Poppin'." 2003. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCujKQT-qT8&list=RDOCujKQT-qT8>.
- . "Pussy Poppin'." *Chicken-n-Beer*. Compact Disc. Def Jam, 2003.
- Massood, Paula J. "Which Way to the Promised Land? Spike Lee's *Clockers* and the Legacy of the African American City." *African American Review* 35, no. 2 (2001): 263-79.
- Maurin, Eric. *Le ghetto francais: Enquete sur le separatisme social*. Paris: Seuil, 2004.
- MC Lyte. "Cha cha cha." 1989. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2_y5ECaQUc.
- . "Keynote." Presentation at the Sankofa Conference at the Metropolitan State University, Denver, CO, October 3, 2012.
- MC Solaar. "Le Nouveau Western." 1993. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3r21GqLdRM>.
- Meghelli, Samir, James Spady, and H. Samy Alim, eds. *The Global Cipa: Hip-Hop Culture and Consciousness*. Philadelphia: Black History Museum Press, 2006.
- Messaoud, Samy. "Je Suis Gay." 2012. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/verify_controversy?next_url=/watch%3Fv%3DznPDXtg_1Nk&spfreload=10.
- . "Un Ange En Enfer." 2011. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGFI44BwsdY>.
- Minaj, Nicki. "Did it On 'Em." *Pink Friday*. Compact Disc. Cash Money Records, 2010.
- . "Stupid Hoe." 2012. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6j4f8cHBIM>.
- "Turn Me On." Dir. David Guetta. *Nothing but the Beat*. Music Video. 2011.
- Ministère AMER. "Sacrifice de poulets." Compact Disc. Paris. 1995.
- Mmembe, Achille. *De la postcolonie*. Paris: Karthala, 2000.
- Monis. *Le Monde Va Bien*. Compact Disc. Pusakag 2013.
- Anima in Pena*. Compact Disc. 2009.

-
- Morgan, Joan. *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip-Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.
- Mystikal. "Liquid City." 2003. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCkNXx6IT8Q>.
- Nelly. "Tip Drill." 2003. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIYW6Yd4J94>.
- Nilan, Pam. *Global Youth?: Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds*. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Nunley, Vorris. *Keepin' It Hushed: The Barbershop and African American Hush Harbor Rhetoric*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2011.
- NTM. "Police." *J'appuie sur la gachette*. Compact Disc. Paris. 1993.
- "Pose ton gun" *Suprême NTM*. Compact Disc. Paris. 1998.
- "Autopsy"
- N.W.A. "Fuck Tha Police." *Straight Outta Compton*. Compact Disc. 1988.
- Obama, Barack. "USA President Barack Obama Opinion on Hip-Hop & Rap 2008." 2008. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFsvg7jRp_g.
- Ong, Aihwa. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Duke University Press: Durham and London. 2006.
- Pecqueux, Anthony. *Le rap*. Paris: Revues 2009.
- Pereira-Lazaro, Albert, and Emmanuel Klotz, dirs. *Lascars*. Bac Films, 2009. Film.
- Perry, Imani. *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip-Hop*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.
- Pick Up the Mic*. Dir. Alex Hinton. Rhino Films. 2006.
- Pough, Gwendolyn, ed. *Home Girls Make Some Noise!: Hip-Hop Feminism Anthology*. Mira Loma, CA: Parker, 2007.
- Psalm One. "Stupid Girls Never Win." *Child Support*. Compact Disc. ASCAP, 2012.
- Raimist, Rachel, dir. *Nobody Knows My Name*. Digital Video. 1999.
<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c516.shtml>.
- Rainbow Noise. *Imma Homo*. Compact Disc. Rainbow Noise, 2011.

-
- Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1994.
- . *The Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip-Hop —and Why it Matters*. Philadelphia: Basic Civitas, 2013.
- Saada, Nicolas. “Pourquoi juge-t-on le gens? Entretien avec Idrissa Ouedraogo.” *Cahiers du Cinema* 423 (1989): 7-9.
- Samuel, Henry. “Nicolas Sarkozy’s Son Outed as Rap Producer.” *Telegraph* (London). January 8, 2008.
- Sanji, dir. “Turn Me On.” 2012. *YouTube* Video. January 20, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVw7eJ0vGfM>.
- Schultz, Michael, dir. *Krush Groove*. Warner Brothers, 1985. Film.
- Sellen, Eliza. “Missy ‘Misdemeanor’ Elliot: Rapping on the Frontiers of Female Identity.” *The Gender and Media Reader*. Ed. Mary Celeste Kearney. New York: Routledge, 2011. 319-328.
- Sermon, Erick. “Being Gay and in Hip-Hop is ‘Like a Curse.’” *Huffington Post* (New York), Queer Voices Video, February 22, 2012. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/22/erick-sermon-epmd-rapper-gay-hip-hop_n_1294156.html.
- Sheridan, Jim, dir. *Get Rich or Die Tryin’*. Paramount, 2005. Film.
- Shoals, Bethlehem. “Break it Down.” *XXL Magazine*, July/August 2011.
- Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. *Multiculturalism, Postcoloniality, and Transnational Media*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003.
- Simone, Fiona. Ladies Room 2.5. *Detour*. Compact Disc. 2009.
- “Grind from the Bottom” Music Video. 2009.
- “Tomboy Fresh”. *Detour*. Compact Disc. 2009.
- Singleton, John, dir. *Baby Boy*. Columbia, 2001. Film.
- . *Boyz N the Hood*. Columbia, 1991. Film.
- Siya. “Damn You Killin’ Em.” 2012. February 19, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jM_KzQOAIE.
- . “Heaven.” 2011. February 19, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4KKl-E_pH8.

-
- . “I’m Gucci.” 2012. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDxobTTJZwA>.
- Skywalker, Luke. *Luke’s Freak Show Vol. 1*. Film. 2001.
- Snoop Dogg. “Hustlaz: Diary of a Pimp.” 2002. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3R8noY7ycrE>.
- Soules, Connor. “Twenty Years of Hate: Why ‘La Haine’ is More Timely than Ever.”
Indie Wire, February 9, 2016. http://www.indiewire.com/article/twenty-years-of-hate-why-la-haine-is-more-timely-than-ever-20160209?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999.
- Staples, Jeanine M. “Hustle & Flow: A Critical Student and Teacher-Generated Framework for Re-Authoring a Representation of Black Masculinity.”
Educational Action Research 16.3 (2008): 377-90.
- Stone, Charles, dir. *Paid in Full*. Dimension, 2002. Film.
- Stoute, Steve. *The Tanning of America: How Hip-Hop Created a Culture that Rewrote the Rules of the New Economy*. New York: Avery, 2012.
- Straight Outta Compton*. Dir. F. Gary Gray. New Line Cinema. 2015. Film.
- Thee Satisfaction. “Queens.” 2012. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGWFBt_IPOg.
- Toop, David. *Rap Attack #3: African Rap to Global Hip-Hop*. London: Serpent’s Tail, 2000.
- Tshimanga, Charles. *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2009.
- Two Live Crew. “Pop that Pussy.” 1991. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIX5bo8MOxQ>.
- Tzvetan, Todorov. *Nous et les autres: La reflexion francaise sur la diversite humaine*. Paris: Seuil, 2013.
- Watts, Eric King. “Border Patrolling and ‘Passing’ in Eminem’s *8 Mile*.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22.3 (2005): 187-206.
- Weil, Patrick. *La Republique et sa diversite: Immigration, integration, discriminations*. Paris: Seuil, 2005.
- West, Kanye and Jay-Z. “Niggas in Paris.” *Watch the Throne*. Compact Disc. 2011.

-
- West, Kanye. "All Falls Down" *The College Dropout*. Compact Disc. 2004.
- West, Tim M. "Fly Brotha." 2011. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYmHMKwifQI>.
- Williams, Saul. *The Dead Emcee Scrolls: The Lost Teachings of Hip-Hop*. New York: Pocket, 2006.
- . *S/he*. New York: Pocket, 1999.
- Wright, Michelle. *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004.
- Yates, Kieran. "Erykah Badu: I'm not a feminist, I'm a humanist." *The Guardian* (London), March 24, 2010.
- Y Love. "Focus on the Flair." 2012. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSR_tDgTonA.
- . "This is Unity." 2011. *YouTube* Video. February 19, 2016.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvRy8bGSpDU>.
- Yo Majesty. "Kryptonite Pussy." *Kryptonite Pussy EP*. Compact Disc. Domino Records, 2008.
- . "Raw." *Raw*. Compact Disc. Domino Records, 2009.