MADE IN MARSEILLE: GLOBAL YOUTH AND COSMOPOLITAN IDENTITIES

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation argues for the significance of hip-hop musical culture in the reformulation of French identity by socio-economic, ethnic, and racial minorities. Indeed, these groups, particularly the youth within them, are vigorously reassessing, refiguring and challenging the ways French identity is affirmed through an ensemble of dominant, mainstream discourses. Through the analysis of song lyrics, visual imagery employed in CD inserts/booklets, music videos, and strategies for promotion and production, I argue that Marseille hip hoppers active from the early 1990s to 2010 have used audio-visual modes as discursive tools to articulate hybrid cosmopolitan identities that contest essentialist notions of identity solely or primarily defined on the basis of the nation-state. The cosmopolitan city of Marseille, with its long tradition of emphasizing its difference from the rest of France, is my focus as the urban site that gives its voice to the youth culture at the center of my thesis. I thus investigate how Marseille rappers espouse a regionalist discourse that casts the transnational space of the Mediterranean, including Southern Europe and North Africa, as the locus of their negotiation of identity while affirming difference from a purportedly homogenous national center.

I view the entire practice of hip-hop as a privileged site of identification and self-construction for the rappers, and suggest that they follow a strategy of autobiographical performance writing. The bulk of the dissertation is therefore devoted to autobiographical readings of hip-hop texts and images in order to underscore the ways in which identity is articulated through the disengagement from, and contesting of, existing racial, ethnic, and class constructs in contemporary French society. I propose that a preferable framework for the analysis of youth identities in Marseille is global cosmopolitanism. This aptly describes the choice of rootedness in Marseille simultaneously with the rejection of the binary conception of identity that is so unique to France. This project's goal is to validate the notion of a "French cultural reach," which hybridizes notions of place, space, nation, and ethnicity, without locking Marseille hip hoppers within the dichotomy of French/Other.

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À Marseille, on tchatche. Le rap n'est rien d'autre (Izzo, Total Khéops, 95).

This dissertation argues for the significance of hip-hop musical culture in the reformulation of French identity by socio-economic, ethnic, and racial minorities. Indeed, these groups, particularly the youth within them, are vigorously reassessing, refiguring and challenging the ways French identity is affirmed through an ensemble of dominant, mainstream, discourses. Through the analysis of song lyrics, visual imagery employed in CD inserts/booklets, music videos, and strategies for promotion and production, I argue that Marseille hip-hoppers active from the early 1990s to 2010 have used audio-visual modes as discursive tools to articulate hybrid cosmopolitan identities that contest essentialist notions of identity solely or primarily defined on the basis of the nation-state. The cosmopolitan city of Marseille, with its long tradition of emphasizing its difference from the rest of France, is my focus as the urban site that gives its voice to the youth culture at the center of my thesis. I thus investigate how Marseille rappers espouse a regionalist discourse that casts the transnational space of the Mediterranean, including Southern Europe and North Africa, as the locus of their negotiation of identity while affirming difference from a purportedly homogenous national center.

Through my close reading of hip-hop culture in Marseille, I offer responses to several theoretical problems raised by current analyses of youth culture in French studies. Comprehensive analyses of French rap lyrics have often, to my knowledge, taken a sociological or thematic approach to the texts, whereby the researcher as ethnographer

amasses the rap texts from his or her own point of departure and according to a unity of his or her own. The scholar chooses rap lyrics that best illuminate the themes studied (immigration or racism, for instance) and the rap lyrics are presented as evidence of a sociological fact. Such a sociological approach is useful in that rappers indeed engage socially relevant themes in their work, and patterns or thematics do emerge from the vast repertoire of rap texts. However, this approach also tends to elide the engagement of hip-hop as a cultural activity or an artistic mode of expression. The strength of hip-hop is the ability of the rappers to confront the listener with the emotions the rapper felt when he/she wrote a given text, which is emphasized through the aesthetics of the language and delivery. Rather than being isolated from their context, the lyrics must be read in tandem with the music, images, and production, for intertextual readings give a fuller picture of who the artist is, and what messages lie in the text. Thus, I view the entire practice of hip-hop—not just the texts—as a privileged site of identification and self-construction for the rappers, and suggest that they follow a strategy of autobiographical performance writing. The bulk of the dissertation therefore engages in readings of hip-hop texts and images that retrieve autobiographical traces in order to underscore the ways in which identity is articulated through the disengagement from and contesting of existing racial, ethnic, and class constructs in contemporary French society. I propose that a preferable framework for the analysis of youth identities in Marseille is "global cosmopolitanism," as defined by Robbins and Cheah in Cosmopolitics: "variously willed and forced detachments from local or restrictive identities do not issue in a gray universalism but rather a vivid spectrum of diverse dialectics of detachment, displacement and affiliation" (274). This aptly describes the choice of rootedness in Marseille simultaneously with the rejection of

the binary conception of identity that is so unique to France. This project's goal is to validate the notion of a "French cultural reach" which hybridizes notions of place, space, nation, and ethnicity, without locking Marseille hip-hoppers within the dichotomy of French/Other.

In Marseille, France's second-largest city, the local custom referred to as *la tchatche* signifies the mastery of language and local expressions, and the ability to speak at ease about anything and everything. French rappers are known in the Marseille media as *tchatcheurs*, since the art they practice is based on their talent with words. Beginning with the establishment of its first homegrown recording studio in Marseille, les *Grottes-Loubières* in 1973, and its first hip-hop radio station, Radio Star in 1983, Marseille indeed became famous for its dynamic rap scene when several rap and reggae groups wrote songs whose lyrics affirmed a specifically *Marseillais* identity. Rejecting Parisian cultural and musical dominance, they defended their city as a legitimate center of culture, while elucidating through song and music problems and tensions that existed in their neighborhoods and beyond. Expressing themselves in pensive, provocative, and sometimes humoristic texts, Marseille rappers saw themselves as *porte-parleurs* who spoke for a segment of the French population whose members were marginalized in society due to their ethnic origin or socio-economic backgrounds, and to their distance from the center of France, Paris. While other Hexagonal hip-hop[1] artists claim to "represent" certain neighborhoods, housing projects, or blocks, which Adam Krims calls characteristic of hip-hop (311), Marseille is unique in that the rap music the city produced

[1] In this dissertation, I use the terms "rap" and "hip-hop" somewhat interchangeably to refer to the actual music; however, "hip-hop" used as an adjective refers to the mode of cultural expression of which rap is merely one form (the musical one, of course.) Other modes include beat-boxing, graffiti, breakdance and dress.

can be thought of as a unifying factor for its diverse youth population, so much that *le rap made in Marseille* came to embody the ways Marseille youth relate to their social and political environment as Marseillais. I also argue that a distinct Marseille identity is articulated by youth of diverse ethnic backgrounds through the processes of hybridization and syncretization vehicularized by rap music. Marseille rappers can thus be seen as actors in producing and reproducing hybrid identities at variance with the dominant identity scripts of contemporary French society.

Theoretical Background

Postcolonial theory and theories of postmodern identities constructed in modern Europe are both essential to my attempt to define Marseille-ness as articulated in contemporary youth culture. Before attempting to demonstrate what it means to be *made in Marseille*, I first look to constructions of "Frenchness," which Charles Tshimanga has called an "ongoing site of contestation" (7). If the ideal of a French national identity as implicit in dominant discourse is contingent upon the constitution of a supposedly homogenous racial identity that is shaped and maintained through the vigorous regulation of distinct national culture, spaces where this identity is challenged are important to understanding Frenchness itself. Critical to understanding how Frenchness is constructed is the notion of universalism, which is seen as intimately tied with the Revolution of 1789, and thus with the defense of universal human rights, bound up with the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. Naomi Schor provides a concise summary of the Catholic roots of French universalism in The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought and also discusses France's linguistic universalism, which authors such as Léopold Sédar Senghor fully embraced. Schor then identifies what she calls the "crisis

of French universalism" in the twentieth century, particularly with respect to the integration of immigrants into the body politic. Immigrants, Schor argues, citing examples of incidents such as the "headscarf affair" of the 1980s, decried assimilationist policies that underwrote the republican principles from the outset by refusing to renounce their cultural and religious values (476). Indeed, as Herrick Chapman and Laura Frader argue in their key volume, Race in France, the founding myth of the French republic "emphasizes the inclusive, unitary nature of the republic as a polity based on universal rights, with little if any room for the recognition of group differences" (1). What room, thus, is there for the articulation of specificities in a system where differences are not only not officially recognized by the state, but also not recognizable at all? Recent scholarship on immigrant identities in France[2] has pointed to ways in which immigrants grapple with their place in a supposedly universal "French" culture, by demanding to be integrated while refusing to cast off whatever cultural differences supposedly impede their integration. An essentializing notion, integration implies "insertion" into a coherent whole and the clash of two apparently opposite elements based on national citizenship. Integration or insertion can be considered in socio-economic, cultural, and/or political terms.

Given that the primary locus of identity for these youth is the cosmopolitan space of contemporary Marseille—a French city, yet one with a long and complex tradition of "difference" from the rest of France—we must look at Marseille youths' identity construction through a different prism. Neither the rappers in my study, nor the majority

[2] See bibliography for Didier Gondola and Charles Tshimanga, and also the website http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org that contains essays centered around the 2005 *banlieue* riots by scholars of French culture and history.

of their listening publics, are recent immigrants to France who fashion identities based on a "lost" cultural heritage. Nadia Kiwan's triangular framework for understanding the experiences of French-born youth of immigrant origin is helpful to my analyses of hip-hop. Kiwan argues that young North Africans in France form identities along the poles of ethnicity, self-construction, and bricolage. Given that minority identity in France often overlaps with feelings of social exclusion, young people in France tend to view integration as socio-economic and situational, rather than strictly cultural (76). The increasing absence of employment and the prospects of social exclusion mean that cultural origins become a source of resistance.

To apply these concepts to the situation in Marseille, I look to definitions of transnationalism and its framework according to theories of postmodern identity flows. Alain Tarrius' scholarship on migration and identity in the Mediterranean is instructive for its definition of transnational space. In New Cosmopolitanisms, Tarrius argues that identity is circulatory; within the daily interactions of immigrants, transients and migratory persons, territorial compositions are constantly being renewed and reconfigured. He states that, "individus, isolés ou regroupés, étrangers aux nations qui les hébergent…bricolent, précisément à partir de leurs expériences circulatoires, des identités métisses entre univers proches et lointains" (6). This theory offers a new way to understand mobility that is, as Tarrius affirms, particular to the Mediterranean and which is especially suited to understanding Marseille. The port city is literally open to all and constantly changing, and is never fully present in any given static state. Various groups—tourists, cruise passengers, and waves of migrants from as far as the Comores or as close as Corsica—come and go, forming migratory networks based on colonial links, trade

(dockworkers, fishermen), religion, ethnicity and common language, in the case of refugees, for example. The contrast between "univers proches et lointains" refers to the ability of people to maintain strong links to their native lands, which is not a rigid conception of citizenship but a transnational identification. The idea of circulatory identities highlights new immigrants' capacities for self-organization and entrepreneurship in the new locality, emphasized in the notion of "bricolage," which encapsulates the agency with which immigrants can fashion identities and subjectivities.

In addition, I draw on some key elements borrowed from postcolonial theory that, following Edouard Glissant, posits identity as relational as discussed in particular in Poetics of Relation. This denotes a postmodern conception of subjectivity that can no longer be grounded in territorialized, monolithic identities that are tied to a specific place and time (25). Relation refuses *enracinement,* and thus, subjectivity must be understood through its relation to the multiplicity of identities in an ensemble of peripheries. The concept of Relation brings a particularly rich perspective to the study of culture in relation to technology and media; as Glissant states, "Aujourd'hui l'individu, sans avoir à se déplacer, peut être directement atteint par l'ailleurs, parfois même avant que sa communauté, famille ou groupe social ou nation, se soit enrichie de la même atteinte" (39). Glissant's idea offers a new way to think about cultures as having "reaches" and not rigid, impermeable margins, which seems particularly applicable to the cultural landscape of contemporary Marseille, where rappers and their listeners have unprecedented access to technologies that allow them to be confronted directly, as Glissant states, by an Outside. One can become cosmopolitan without leaving one's *cité* or *block*—an idea that the rappers express in their descriptions of their vision of contemporary French society.

Moreover, postmodern identities are elicited by the interaction between an individual and a variety of groups, be they religious, ethnic, social, or between any of a number of constructed categories of belonging. Individuals evaluate similitude and difference between themselves (and also within themselves) against others, in relation to context.

In a similar vein, Jacques Derrida, speaking of the early 1990s, maintains in The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe that cultural identity impinges on what is different within, and to, itself, and that what is proper to a culture is not to be identical to itself (2). He states, "In this case, self-difference, *différence à soi,* that which differs and diverges from itself, of itself, would also be the difference with itself *différence avec soi*" (10). Thus, no culture can posit a pure, singular identity as its origins, and then attempt to model itself on this identity in the future in order to exclude those who are deemed "different." Derrida points out a divergence that is already in place, and the transnational space of the Mediterranean offers a "laboratory" of how to think of relational identity in this manner. Conflicting theories of identity are thus formulated through the aesthetics, language, and delivery of Marseille rappers' music.

Rap music has become a powerful vehicle for cultural and political expression in France, circulating ("a text comes from the street and returns to it," as Fonky Family states) images, ideas, viewpoints, and sounds through the body politic. Together with other forms of street expression, such as clothing styles, dance, and graffiti, it participates in a total hip-hop spectacle, visible throughout the world in many contexts. Moreover, the psychosocial role of rap cannot be underestimated. As Marie-Angès Beau maintains, rap is primarily a tool of self-expression and self-construction; its structure and development require that rappers use words to impose themselves in the social community and prove

their superiority to other rappers. This is not only a way to integrate oneself in a group, but also a means to express individuality and to build self-confidence (2). Rap demands that one be able to write well, to understand slang and neologisms, and to play with rhymes and vocabulary, which in turn, as Beau argues, elicits a, "cultural consciousness." Lastly, given that rap also includes provocative attitudes toward other rappers, the government, and society, rappers rarely rap alone—they defend identities by forming solidarities with each other.

Marseille scholarship

In the past ten years, there has been a resurgence of scholarly interest in the city of Marseille, with multifaceted disciplinary approaches to studying France's second-largest city. No doubt its selection by the European Union as "European cultural capital" for 2013 has augmented interest on other fronts as well, with media outlets, economists and sociologists exploring the possibilities of Marseille as locus of international/intercultural and exchange and research. One important study is Mireille Rosello's article on métissage in Marseille, "De Massalia à la Planète Mars: Métissage ou 'fréquentage' (2001)" in which she traces the popular foundation myth of the city of Massilia (by Protis and Gyptis) as a trope throughout the city's history, arguing that Marseille's a priori hybrid origins do not necessarily make it a multicultural melting pot, at least without accounting for the expression of cultural differences. A more recent work, Joseph McGonagle's "The Multi-ethnic Metropolis: Representing Marseilles in Recent Photography (2008)" analyzes representations of different ethnicities in contemporary Marseille photography. McGonagle performs a close reading of photos by photographer Yves Jeanmougin, and argues that though Jeanmougin attempts to cast the

city as harmoniously multicultural, this is in fact an illusion. McGonagle explores how *communautarisme*[3] is operative in contemporary Marseille, rather than, as he states, a situation where its inhabitants live in multicultural conviviality. Another text, Sheila Crane's book, Mediterranean Crossroads: Marseille and Modern Architecture (2010) analyzes how mythic ideas about Marseille helped to shape its urban landscape. She demonstrates how Marseille acted as the fulcrum between the metropolitan center and its overseas empire. These works, in addition to analyses of Marseille native Jean-Claude Izzo's novels and the significant amount of scholarship on films that are set in Marseille,[4] depict Marseille as an important discursive space in French culture.

Contextualizing the concept of region in France.

To understand the role that Marseille rap played in articulating a specific regional identity, we must first define region and regionalism in France, and discuss what role regional identities have played in France's social and political history. As Herman Lebovics states in Bringing the Empire Back Home, in the past thirty years France transcended its historic sense of nationhood to reassess how its regions and former colonies had entered into the nation's cultural heritage (1). The French Republic is known for its strong centralized state, and is in theory "one and indivisible," leaving little room for the recognition of cultural and social differences that subdivide the national identity. Yet France is also known for its large number of characteristic regions, unified by language, geography, industry, gastronomy, and tourism for instance—which is hardly

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[3] *Communautarisme* refers to the situation where social groups form exclusionist enclaves and demand "special treatment" and recognition of their differences based on ethnicity. See, for example, Andrau (2000), Lévy (2005), and Rabagny (2007).

[4] See bibliography for specific works that analyze La trilogie Marseillaise, as well as films by Robert Guédiguian and Karim Dridi.

specific to France—but the political behavior of these regions, such as their long tradition of voting as one, is a distinct feature of French culture, which William Brustein notes in "The Social Origins of Political Regionalism in France, 1849-1981" (9). France is composed of twenty-six official administrative regions (twenty-two located in Metropolitan France, four of which are overseas, and though Corsica is administratively known as a *collectivité territoriale*, it is still considered a region). As Frans Schrijver states in Regionalism After Regionalisation: Spain, France and the United Kingdom, the concept of region originates from the Latin "regio," which denotes a border, line, or area (21) and has been used to describe distinguishable areas, called *pays* in French. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the term "region" was used by European travel writers in their texts to describe distinctive zones such as "the Middle East" or "the Orient," according to Schrijver (22). What these latter two definitions have in common is the notion of *terroir*, a bounded social space used by different social groups through an attempt to affect, influence, and assert control over a geographic area and its people (Schrijver 23). Due to political manifestations of regionalism, the concept of region is marked by distinct cultural and ethnic undertones. From the founding of the French nation in 1789, through the tumultuous wars, decolonization, and the global oil crisis of the 1970s, to decentralization in the early 1980s and the founding of European Union in the 1990s, many important challenges to the centralized Jacobin model occurred in the form of political and cultural regionalism. While detailed discussions of the prewar and interwar period are beyond the scope of this project, I will discuss the general background of regionalism in the postwar period.

It is important to understand that the political mobilizations of regionalism in the postwar period were stemmed by economic factors. Prior to the centralization of the French Republic, the Provence region, notes Brustien, had a longstanding tradition of autonomy—during the late Middle Ages, it was referred to as a "pays d'état" and was governed by sovereign duchies (23). Peter Wagstaff notes in Regionalism in the European Union how the transformation of France from a rural country to one with a strong urban base throughout the 19th century created unbalanced industrial and economic developments between the North and South which were not addressed until after World War Two (59). This was marked in 1947, continues Wagstaff, with the publication of a work called Paris et le désert français (by geographer Jean-François Gravier) which likened Paris to a monster, sucking the rest of the country dry. Gravier's watershed publication underlined the uneven and inadequate development of France's regions and the debilitating effect that Paris had, which was seen as bleeding the country to death and consuming all its resources. François Nectoux's summary of this in the Encyclopedia of Contemporary French Culture ("Regional Economic Development") notes that the regions of Provence, Brittany, and the Massif Central were losing their younger generation (a "brain drain," so to speak), to Paris, as well as their industries, and what was once the breadbasket of the country was close to becoming actual deserts (455). The French government reacted, initiating a series of programs during the Fourth and Fifth Republics called *aménagement du territoire* aimed at alleviating the unequal distribution of resources and to allocate funds and invest in housing, schools, and trades. During the period known as the Trente Glorieuses (roughly from 1946-1975), the dichotomy between Paris and its provinces needed to be addressed, given the rapid rise in population

of the South (due to immigration from Algeria, Spain, and Portugal as well as *Pieds-noirs* returning to mainland France after the 1962 independence of Algeria). The effects were felt in Paris, and the government was forced to confront demands for services, whereas previously, departments had served as the administrative relay between state and citizen (60). However, the oil crises of the 1970s further exacerbated inequalities and thus regionalist movements came to the fore in this period (Wagstaff 64).

The political manifestations of regionalism in response to these economic conditions were most notably felt in areas such as Brittany and the South (Mediterranean). Significant revivals of radical regionalism were supported by left wing groups in Brittany (Wagstaff 70) and served as the impetus of regional economic reform. Christian Jelen notes in La France éclatée that Breton nationalism was stirred up during the 1970s, and took on a character of an "ethnic revival" with a resurgence in popular interest for Breton cultural traditions and in particular its language, which was seen as being threatened by the domination of standard French (139). These revivals overlapped with their political organizations; for example, a Breton school was established in Rennes in 1975. Breton nationalism cast Paris as a colonizer and the provinces as "pays vaincus"; the idea of internal colonialism was shared by other regionalist activists, for example by Robert Lafont, noted theorist of the Occitan movement, who published La Révolution regionaliste (1967). The Algerian war and the movement to free Algeria from colonial occupation had already encouraged regionalist sentiments in France, as Heather Williams points out in Postcolonial Brittany: Literature Between Languages. For example, the mission statement of the UDB (Union Démocratique Bretonne) states: "L'UDB a été fondée en 1964…à la lumière de la guerre d'Algérie et des premières

manifestations populaires, du malaise breton, de la situation coloniale de la Bretagne" (Williams 129). This is echoed in a now-famous text by Morvan Lebesque, entitled Comment peut-on être breton? Essai sur la démocratie française (1970). Regionalism in this period was cemented in this notion of "internal colonialism" and opposition to political and economic domination of France's peripheries.

Regardless of the role of youth in the 1960s and 1970s, there are few studies on regional youth culture, however, in the contemporary period, and this dearth begs for critical reassessment of the role of regional identities within the framework of cultural studies. In preparing the first stages of this dissertation focused on Marseille and its region, I plunged into volumes concerning the history of regionalism in France from Roman times to the Sarkozy era, and I became interested in the manifestations of regional ideas as expressions of popular culture. As I read articles and chapters on "the role of regions in 'new Europe'" I wondered why there were so few scholarly works on regional youth culture in France?[5] Moreover, it seems that critical scholarship on "marginalized" youth culture, or youth from North African or African origin, tends to place youth both physically and metaphorically in the (Parisian) banlieue. While most of the youth discussed in my dissertation do in fact reside in housing projects, and there is no denying that social exclusion and marginalization do play a role in their identity construction, the banlieue-centre ville dichotomy is not operative for all youth experiences on the French territory. Is there a space in France where identity is articulated according to another framework? Indeed there is, and it is found in Marseille. Thus I hope to offer a fresh

[5] There are a few excellent articles on regional musical culture, specifically studies of the Toulousian group Zebda by Chris Warne (1997) and Danielle Marx-Scouras (2007). See bibliography.

approach to material that, to my knowledge, has been examined for the most part through a lens that casts youth culture outside of Paris as Other. My case study of regional musical culture in contemporary France sheds light on the restrictive binary inherent in this view.

My project thus adds to the substantial amount of scholarship and research on urban youth culture, though not necessarily regional, in contemporary France. Works pertaining to hip-hop and banlieue culture are abundant, and chief among those that are directly pertinent to this endeavor are Alain-Philippe Durand's study on hip-hop in the Francophone world (2000) and Pierre-Antoine Marti's book Rap 2 France: Les mots d'une rupture identitaire (2005). The former examines the discursive contexts within which young people in France negotiate identities. For instance, some of the contributors to Durand's volume analyze hip-hop dance, tags and murals in public spaces in urban France, and the urban sociolinguistic spaces of Libreville, Gabon. Pierre-Antoine Marti's work applies a textual analysis approach to over two hundred French rap albums, dating from 1987-2003, to locate a rupture and a "fracture sociale" in French society that are best understood through hip-hop. Additionally, Béatrice Sberna's Une Sociologie du rap à Marseille (2000) is an indispensable qualitative study that links questions of poverty, unemployment, and marginalization to youth's consumption of, and appreciation for, certain forms and styles of music. Sberna conducted on the spot interviews with youth of diverse ethnic origin as she encountered them in places such as the megastores of Fnac and Virgin Min Marseille's central shopping district. Her research concludes that many young Marseillais consumers consider themselves hybrid, and use elements of Mediterranean and North African cultures and American hip-hop culture to construct

identities. Gilles Suzanne's article, "L'économie urbaine des mondes de la musique: le district rap marseilllais" is an ethnographic study of the territorialization of Marseille rap that discusses how Marseille of the 1990s was the ideal setting for a hip-hop cultural revolution. Other important studies include an article by Jean-Marie Jacono, "Musical dimensions and ways of expressing identity in French rap, (2000)" which focuses on the specificity of Marseille rap, as well as articles by Steve Cannon (2003) and Brian George (2007). Jacono analyzes specific musical attributes of the rap group IAM and, to a lesser extent, of la Fonky Family. For example, he considers the use of humor, the Marseille dialect and accent, and reggae-influenced rhythms as characteristics of Marseille hip-hop. These attributes help to define a specific Marseille style that not only differentiates it from hard-core Parisian rap, but also is fundamentally hybrid. Cannon examines regionalist attitudes in groups with Occitan identity or flavor in their lyrics, while George examines the evolution of IAM's oeuvre in its ten years on the French music scene. Finally, Morgan Jouvenet's book, Rap, techno, électro: le musicien entre travail artistique et critique sociale (2006), examines not rap lyrics, but the ways in which Marseille rap became anchored into the political landscape through the efforts of youth groups and governmental organizations.

My study of a corpus of Marseille rap texts produced between 1991-2010 examines the complicated issues of race, class, religion, ethnicity, and marginalization in an increasingly globalized France. While I perform a textual and semiotic analysis of song lyrics, I also conduct a close reading of images, rap labels, and interviews, in short, of all the materials that constitute self-presentation, and which have not been adequately studied, in my view, as important vectors of identity. This methodology works to

underscore the political and social conflicts implicit in rappers' self-construction, as opposed to a mere reading of the socio-political conditions within which their art flourished. I approach the medium of contemporary popular music as an artistic and cultural site that is marked by varied signifiers of class, race, and, not to be overlooked, marketability. Indeed, Marseille hip-hop began to regenerate pride in a previously tarnished city while reifying notions of ethnic and racial alterity and difference through the voices of rappers. This is not to say that the groups from Paris such as NTM and Assassin did not also have an impact on their listening public by raising awareness of issues affecting youth who live in housing projects. Rather, I argue that the presence of a strong localized identity in the Mediterranean city of Marseille, considered here as an "ethnoscape" -to use Appadurai's term (Modernity at Large 184)- expresses a marked difference from the rap produced in the rest of France.

In contemporary France, the salience of identity issues that youth of immigrant origin face is increasingly evident, and moreover, how one talks about race, ethnicity and integration with respect to France's immigrant population has been recently called into question in French national discourse. French Interior Minister (now President) Nicholas Sarkozy's remarks on *banlieue* youth—calling them *racaille*—stigmatized an already alienated, marginalized group,[6] while on the other hand, bureaucratic terms used by the French government and media to describe immigrants' living conditions, perhaps designed to eliminate any racial or ethnic insinuation (i.e. terms like "quartiers sensibles," "zones prioritaires," "la banlieue," or "les cités dortoirs"), are not devoid of stigma in their own right. However, I do believe that all these terms describe a primarily Parisian

[6] During a visit to Argenteuil, in October of 2005, Sarkozy called the rioting youth "racaille" and vowed to clean up the city.

social climate—and that there are very different discourses surrounding the relationships between Marseille and the national center. For example, in the fall of 2005, when various suburbs of Paris and Lyon erupted in waves of riots, Marseille identity was put in the national spotlight. The Phocéen city was on the whole spared from car burnings and violent clashes between youth and the French National Police.[7] In turn, politicians and sociologists looked towards Marseille as a model of French-immigrant integration. It was suggested that inhabitants Marseille's *cités* consider themselves full-fledged members of society, and thus feel responsibility to their city, and therefore are less likely to riot. Some in the media proffered the explanation of geography—that is, the location of some of Marseille's immigrant neighborhoods (right in the city center) complicates the conventional and symbolic divide between the *cités* and *centre-ville* that plagues Paris and Lyon.

Part of what makes this question so pressing is that the assertion of a Marseille identity by marginalized youth in the South of France expresses both belonging to the city as well as alterity to other forms of cultural domination. "Je suis Marseillais" necessarily invokes certain cultural characteristics and ideals that are part and parcel of a broader Franco-Mediterranean population. Recent scholarship about the systematic marginalization of French youth of immigrant background has tended to center around the themes of inclusion and exclusion, alterity and difference, as evidenced in the number of academic conferences that deal with these themes.[8] The claim that marginalized youth

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[7] However, in October of 2006, several youths set fire to a city bus, severely burning a young woman of Senegalese origin, a student named Mama Galledou. Soprano references this act in his song "Passe-moi le mic."

[8] To name a few examples: "Diversity and Difference in France and in the Francophone World" (FSU, April 2004), "Inclusions, Exclusions" (ASFC, July 2005), "Other Spaces"

can pick a third, alternative identity—one that is neither wholly French nor completely foreign—necessarily reinforces the binaries that the youth are trying to overcome. Rather than focus on how Marseille identity functions within these binaries, I prefer to address the politics of place and what it means to be young, urban, and "immigrant" in contemporary France. I focus on the different categories of social, racial, or ethnic difference in France, and how contacts between insiders and outsiders to these categories are perceived as positive or negative. Indeed, those who are not immigrants but born in France can nonetheless be and often are affected by perceptions of ethnic difference.

Situating Marseille Rap

It is through the structuring and restructuring of the French language that Marseille rappers practice the art of *tchatche.* Rappers rely on techniques such as *le flow*, scratch, verbal puns and doublespeak to create a twofold discourse—one that simultaneously reaches their target audience and that remains opaque to the uninformed public. The linguistic situation of Marseille is unlike any other in Hexagonal France; successive waves of immigration influenced the multilingual character of the city—Arabic, Berber, Italian, Spanish, and Comorian all enjoy a significant linguistic presence. In the 1980s two *ragga* groups, Massilia Sound System and The Fabulous Trobadors reclaimed Occitan as part of their hybrid identities, juxtaposing colloquial Occitan expressions with contemporary street French in their lyrics.[9] Other groups, such as IAM

(Duke University, September 2006), "Alienation and Alienation and Alterity: Otherness in Modern and Contemporary Francophone Contexts" (Exeter, September 2007), and "Hybridity, Multiculturalism, Post-colonialism" (Orléans, France, May 2007).

[9] Ragga music is a sub-genre of Jamaican dancehall that appeared in the late 1980s in Jamaica and the United States, and finally to France in the early 1990s. Massilia Sound System, the eight-person ragga collective, first appeared in 1986 in Marseille, and since has produced over twelve albums. They promoted Mediterranean culture through their humoristic lyrics describing life in Southern France in the Occitan dialect of Provençal,

and Fonky Family distinctly expressed pride in one of the most salient features of speech in Marseille, the reputed accent, which, along with local expressions and slang, hold significant symbolic value for its inhabitants. Each rapper has his/her own style of articulation that is demonstrative of a specific linguistic *habitus* (Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power 17), which is the set of dispositions acquired from speaking in various social situations and to different groups of people. Rappers thus affirmed linguistic alterity and pride in *le parler marseillais* in their songs, as IAM does in "Mars Contre Attaque," where the rappers say, "A cause de l'accent on nous croyait incultes et naïfs..." and then attribute derision in some way to jealousy: "On envie le soleil, la chaleur, le mode de vie/ D'une cité que l'on renie et que l'on critique."[10] The Marseille variety of speech is adopted and embraced by certain social groups, particularly by the children of immigrants, as a way of representing their physical and social environment, and also as a way of resisting Parisian cultural hegemony. Their listeners identify with the artists who, through the features of their speech, "sounded" like they came from the neighborhoods (the *quartiers nord* of Marseille, or Belsunce) where certain speech practices are markers of authenticity and belonging.

What some Marseille rap artists achieved in the early 1990s was to re-popularize a city whose image and reputation had long been viewed unfavorably by its northern counterparts. The city suffered immensely from unemployment and poverty, particularly in its mostly immigrant northern districts, due to the French oil crises of the 1970s and

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espousing regional pride and resistance to the Parisian monopolization of culture. Their most popular albums were "Commando Fada" "Oaï et Libertat." The Fabulous Trobadors are a two-man group from Toulouse, formed in 1986, who are famous for their live concerts, and have only produced two albums.

[10] IAM, "Mars Contre Attaque" L'ombre est lumière Vol. 1. 1993.

the stock market crash in Paris in 1987. As Timothy Smith notes in France in Crisis: Welfare, Inequality, and Globalization Since 1980, in the late 1980s, the economic situation worsened for many, especially for youth, whose unemployment rates surged towards the end of the decade; it was estimated that one out of three North African immigrants were out of work (12). The nature of the workforce changed as young people experienced extreme downward mobility; in 1982, people under twenty-five made up 14.4% of the French workforce; by 1998 that number was cut in half. The structure of unemployment changed, as it became increasingly severe for certain sectors of the population; hardest-hit were youth, immigrants, and women (Ross et al., 280). Unemployment did not just signify economic destitution, but was due to categorical social exclusion, and the social and cultural dimensions of that exclusion disproportionately hit immigrant youth and some regions more than others (Kedward 520). Marseille became notorious for its international drug trade and violent crime, as well as for official corruption and organized crime networks. In 1994, Bernard Tapie, former mayor and president of Marseille's beloved soccer club, Olympique de Marseille, was engaged in a match-fixing scandal that forced OM's relegation to second division. Marseille soccer fans were humiliated and ridiculed throughout France. Another event greatly marked the conscience of the city and its immigrant community in particular when, on the evening of 21 February 1995, a militant from the National Front, hanging posters for the political party, murdered a 17-year-old Comorian, Ibrahim Ali, by shooting him in the back as he walked home with a group of friends in their *quartiers nord* neighborhood of La Savine.[11] Ali was a rapper himself and participated in

[11] This incident is dramatized in Robert Guégiduian's film *La Ville est tranquille* (2000).

songwriting and musical rap-clubs popular with youth of immigrant origin in the city. Rappers indicted the Front National for the murder in their songs, and the incident fueled their rage against racism and injustice. Yet, at the same time that they criticized the French state and bemoaned what they viewed as the institutional racism and ethnic and religious discrimination that it instituted, rappers created a cultural and musical ideal of their city in their texts (Jacono, "Musical Identities" 128). Marseille rappers performed a dual discourse of pride in their Marseille origins while expressing anger against imposed living conditions, racism, and marginalization, not as outsiders looking in, but as insiders.

Steve Cannon's assessment in his article, "Globalization, Americanization, and Hip-hop in France," that rap in Marseille grew out of a different relationship between center and periphery (194) than that common elsewhere in France, thus seems an accurate one. The *banlieue/ville* dichotomy that exists in Paris—that working-class, mostly immigrant youth are physically and economically marginalized from the center—does not exist in the same way in Marseille. Marseille's geography played a large role in fostering a sense of community among hip-hop artists who were just breaking out. Its one hundred eleven neighborhoods stem from historical divisions and are considered part of the city,[12] regardless of their location. Residents refer to localities within the city by these historic names, such as Belsunce, L'Estaque, or La Castellane, not by the French government's administrative system of numbered arrondissements; additionally, there are local names for certain agglomerations of neighborhoods centered around monuments or open areas, such as Le Prado, La Pref, and La Porte d'Aix. The main commercial sites, as well as access to the beaches, the Escale Borély (a large park with a boardwalk and

[12] For the history and development of urban neighborhoods in Marseille, see Tarrius (1998) and Césari et al (2001).

permanent carnival), the Stade Vélodrome, and the Cours Julien, all popular hangouts for families and youth alike, are a short bus ride away for most. This is not to say that Marseille does not have its share of decaying, poverty-stricken housing projects— the *quartiers nord* situated northeast of the Vieux Port house mostly immigrants and there, unemployment is staggering, around 16-19 percent, according to an article in La Provence by Florent Provansal (4). Yet in the three arondissements that compose the *centre-ville*, unemployment is even higher; as of January 2008, the figure was around 20 percent (Provansal 4). Rather than being marked by a division between center and periphery, Marseille is thought to be symbolically divided between North and South, as the beaches and recreational areas of the city are situated near the sea in the southern districts. However, the northern neighborhoods are nonetheless contained in the symbolic space of Marseille's history, and their inhabitants, as Jocelyne Césari states, feel completely *Marseillais* and consider themselves members of a larger community (Plus marseillais, 21). These geographical factors help formulate what the French media has called "l'exception marseillaise,"[13] that is, despite widespread unemployment, poverty, and a legacy of drugs and corruption, Marseille has largely resisted the rioting and youth violence that has occurred in Paris and Lyon. Thus, the Parisian *banlieue/ville* dichotomy does not figure in Marseille's cultural landscape, or in its hip-hop and rap. During the early 1990s when rap artists spoke out, instead of looking north—toward Paris—for cultural models and inspiration, rap artists looked South, towards Egypt, towards North

[13] See article entitled "Vivre ensemble à Marseille" in the Nouvel Observateur 19 June 2003.

Africa, and towards West Africa, reclaiming Marseille's status as the "grand port du sud."[14]

Given that the actors in my study are for the most part children or grandchildren of immigrants to France, a discussion of Marseille rap's unique features is inseparable from the history of immigration. Although in some songs Marseille rappers express a feeling of "foreignness," due to their surnames, skin color, and religion, it is important to note that in Marseille, definitions of foreignness have historically evolved and shifted. Marseille's position as Mediterranean port city shaped its immigration and transitory settlement patterns. Three distinct, successive waves of settlement can be noted: from the mid-19th Century to the beginning of World War One, the main immigrants to Marseille were Italians. During the second wave of settlement, from 1914-1930, Armenians, North Africans (mostly Algerians), and to a lesser extent, Spaniards and Portuguese were the primary immigrants to Marseille. By 1931, Marseille's total foreign-born population was roughly one-quarter of its entire population, and in the city-center 37% of residents were foreign-born (Tarrius, L'amenagement 110). Finally, from 1960 on, the majority of immigrants to Marseille were African and North African. Marseille now has a strong presence of Comorians, most of whom emigrated from Grand Comore beginning in the 1970s (due to the referendum for independence in 1975); currently the Comorian population is estimated at 70,000—one tenth of the entire population of the Comoros itself (Halifa 17), and greater than its own capital, Moroni. Several other particularities of Marseille's immigrant history are worth mentioning here. As Mary Lewis has suggested, the social stratification of Marseille's neighborhoods (whereby the southern districts are

[14] As we shall see in some of the rap lyrics, resistance to Parisian cultural hegemony is a prevalent theme in rap songs.

significantly wealthier than the northern districts) began with the second wave of Marseille's immigration, as a result of its economic imperatives. Day laborers and dock workers, mostly single males, had populated the city center and neighborhoods such as le Panier, which were soon deemed "unstable" due to the high concentration of unmarried men. The city center became associated with transience and criminality, while in contrast, the peripheral northern districts emerged as semi-rural and family oriented with a stable and rooted population (Lewis 84). Thus, socially, the "marginals" actually lived in the city center and not on its margins, as opposed to the situation in Paris. Another feature is one that André Donzel, in his book Marseille, l'expérience de la cité, has called "clientélisme marseillais," whereby an immigrant would arrive in Marseille, "[ayant] en poche le nom et l'adresse d'un compatriote auprès duquel il se rendait pour trouver travail et logement" (282). This clanism contributed to the notion of "quartier-villages" in Marseille and aided in the integration of immigrants to the city.

In addition, the city's local administrative policies have shown a greater tendency towards pluralism than that of other French cities. Marseille is the only French city to have an administrative body known as the *service de relations avec les communautés*, charged with maintaining dialogues with resident migrant communities. As Patrick Parodi notes in "Citoyenneté et intégration: Marseille, modèle d'intégration? (2002)" despite French laws that expressly prohibit the recognition of groups based solely on ethnicity, in Marseille, the local government has officially recognized and demonstrated openness toward multiculturalism (2). The most famous example of a local government body intervening in ethnic politics is *Marseille Espérance,* a group created by mayor Robert Vigoureux on 29 June 1990. Parodi notes the group's mission statement:

"L'instance écarte d'emblée toute discussion d'ordre théologique et se réunit pour trouver les moyens de combattre l'intolérance, l'ignorance, l'incompréhension et de favoriser la connaissance mutuelle et le respect de l'Autre" (3). *Marseille Espérance*, which consisted of representatives of different religious communities (Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and Armenian Orthodox, for instance), made group voyages to Jerusalem and also made efforts to be present at events sponsored by ethnic groups, such as folk festivals and holiday parties (Parodi 3). This group was also present at the demonstrations against the Front National during the aftermath of Ibrahim Ali's murder. Thus, because of the emphasis on plurality as opposed to assimilation, Marseille is thought to be a comparatively better model of immigrant integration in France.

Marseille Rap and French Regional Politics

A vehicle for political expression, rap music is almost always imbricated in the socio-political context of its production, and is thus linked to the ways French politics play out, in particular, in regional politics, which are very pronounced and have considerable consequences in France. The regional politics of the 1980s-1990s are particularly instructive here. Indeed, Marseille is again marked by specificity with regard to the politics of urban regionalism, while changes in national and regional politics have greatly influenced the cultural production of hip-hop.

In the early 1990s, rap artists in Marseille achieved mainstream status through the diffusion of their music on French radio. In France, radio became a site of cultural struggle in the early 1980s. When the Socialists swept the national elections of 1981, the party devised a series of decentralization policies that would encourage and support

minority and regionalist cultures in France (Silverstein, "Why Are We Waiting" 5). Also in 1981, President François Mitterrand deregulated the French airwaves, allowing voluntary organizations to start up their own radio stations. In the wake of this reform, various ethnic groups founded radio stations whose programming served the needs and constituents of their respective communities. Street-level reporting was also a feature of community radio stations. Most notable was the radio station Radio Beur, whose founder Nacer Kettane set up a station in Marseille in 1989 (Knapper 2). The first free, independent, Marseille-specific radio station was initiated by Jacques Soncin in 1981, and called Radio Galère; its name symbolizes the peoples' struggle to make their voices heard over the radio given France's monopoly over programming and funding. Radio Galère was dedicated to anti-racism and anti-fascism, giving voice to inhabitants from different communities in Marseille as a space of dialogue, discussion, and integration.[15] Three more radio stations were founded in the early 1980s: Radio JM, Radio Gazelle, and Radio Diva which played, among others, rai and rap music. Early on, hip-hop groups like IAM and Puissance Nord were played on local radio stations such as Radio Galère during specific radio shows dedicated to hip-hop, but they found it difficult to win spots on the playlists of major stations. It was not until laws were passed regulating French-language programming that they enjoyed wider mainstream diffusion. Indeed, on 26 August 1991, Jack Lang, Minister of Culture and Communication, met with the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (CSA) to enact legislation requiring that forty percent of all music played on French airwaves be in the French language (Cojean 1). Language, argued the

[15] In addition, Radio Galère's founding principles prohibit racism, sexism, advertising and self-promotion, and religious proselytism. A fuller presentation of the station's aims can be found on their website, http://radiogalere.org.

proponents of this law, was central to French identity and to buttressing French culture, especially against the influence of American and English-language television, film and music. Hip-hop soon became widely broadcast on several Marseille radio stations. The first station in Marseille to dedicate its programming to hip-hop was Radio Star, founded in 1986 (Sberna 147). Currently, in 2010, the station plays Top 40 songs in addition to French and American hip-hop and rap. It regularly interviews hip-hop artists from Marseille, such as Soprano. Lastly, Radio Star shares the hip-hop radio market with a Paris-based station, Skyrock, whose programming is dedicated to hip-hop and rap in France and around the world.

A consideration of French electoral cartography from roughly the mid-1970s to the 1990s demonstrates that there have been some marked changes in the French political landscape.[16] For example, in the presidential elections of 1974, two solid regional voting blocs were apparent. Right-wing candidate Valéry Giscard d'Estaing prevailed over challenger François Mitterrand, with the Western regions, including Bretagne, overwhelmingly voting right and the PACA region—including the entire South—voting left. In subsequent elections (the presidentials of 1981 and 1988, and the legislatives in 1988) there were less marked regional majorities; the RPR party, situated toward the center-right of the political spectrum (now called the Union pour un Mouvement populaire, or UMP), maintained pockets of support in the West, as did the Parti Socialiste. In 1995, during the presidential contest between center-right Jacques Chirac and Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin, only in the Picardie region and some areas in the Southwest did the majority vote Socialist. Thus, the political leanings of citizens of

[16]All information about voting maps from http://www.franceelectorale.com.

Provence, long supporters of the Left, changed in the 1990s. Most notably, the rise in support for far-right candidates increased exponentially in the PACA region. The Front National, for example, asserted itself in the region by first winning seats in regional elections; in the PACA regional elections of 1986, the party won twenty-one percent of the seats on the regional council, which was the highest percentage gained by the FN in any region of France (Rogers, "Front National" 84). This was an unprecedented opportunity to play a key role in local democracy, framing regional policy through local decision-making. There are, as Vaughan Rogers argues, many examples of policy measures have been initiated by the FN, which act directly against racial minorities, such as the cancellation in 1987 of the state subsidy given to a group called Femmes Immigrées (88). During the 1988 legislative elections, for instance, the working-class neighborhoods in the north of Marseille voted for the Communist Party candidate, while the southern, more affluent, districts opted for the center-right UDF candidate. This division continued during the first round of the presidential elections of 1995, in which Jean-Marie Le Pen won all four departments of the PACA region by a majority vote. In short, no longer is the Southeast a bastion of the Left, nor the Northwest of the Right. A look at the 2007 presidential election reflects the same trend; in the second tour, UMP candidate Nicolas Sarkozy won the majority of votes in the Southeast, Northeast, and North, while Parti Socialiste candidate Ségolène Royal achieved a majority in the Southwest and in Brittany. Support for Sarkozy was 58 percent to 42 percent in the Bouches-du-Rhône, and in Marseille, the vote was divided along the perceived North-South economic divide: Royal won a majority in the *quartiers nord* while the rest of the city voted for Sarkozy. The National Front and other far-right political parties have

notoriously achieved high approval from certain areas in Provence. In order to analyze this important trend, we must first examine changes in the political climate in the region at the time of these elections.

The fact that the mainstream right and far right (National Front) parties have gained strongholds in some towns and villages in the region, which historically had solidly voted Left, is due to strategic shifts in public discourse on regionalism, pluralism, and immigration. The first concerns the appropriation of the anti-racist, "right to difference" discourse espoused by the Socialists and others, by extreme-right, xenophobic groups. In the face of the drive to join the European Union, liberal groups supported "La France au pluriel," since they believed strong regional identities and ties would ensure democratic accountability and reject chauvinistic nationalisms. However, the New Right in France remained enthusiastic about the idea of a new Europe of regions, in which regional identities would prevail over the old nation-state model. This would lay the framework for anti-liberal policies and the elaboration of specific theories of ethnic exclusionism. This represents a shift from previous ideals of French nationalism on the part of the right wing towards a vigorous ethno-regionalism. As Alberto Spektorowski asserts, the New Right, "…sees political decadence epitomized in the transformation of Europe into a multicultural society; a bad 'copy' of the United States" (352). Fear of pluralism, then, has much to do with base economic, political, and cultural fears of the so-called immigrant Other, exemplifying the term "differential racism," which uses the "right to difference" to espouse essentialist, hierarchical categories of difference between individuals and groups. A second discursive transformation deals with immigration. In the early 1980s, an exclusionist and expulsionist immigration discourse emerged in

French politics that influenced working-class, among other, voters. During the periods between 1921-1932 and 1956-1972, France's policy regarding temporary immigration was based on economic imperatives. In contemporary immigration policy, however, the principal concern has become the prolonged or permanent presence as residents of immigrant workers and their families, and the access to citizenship of their children. Jean-Marie Le Pen was a major element in the transformation of discourse on immigration in the 1980s. The scapegoating of immigrants appealed to a marginalized segment of working-class voters, who suffered from inadequate housing, poor job skills, and unemployment. The success of the Far-Right's penetration into France attests to the contemporary trend of single-issue voting.

These conditions, particularly the emphasis on cultural manifestations of regionalist identity, were ideal for the birth of Marseille rap. While American funk and hip-hop music became popular in the late 1970s and the very early 1980s in France, as David Looseley notes in Popular Music (44), it was not until certain social and artistic conditions were present that hip-hop became a defining youthful *mode* in France, and most notably, in Marseille, in the early 1990s. The proliferation of rap and hip-hop groups in France followed the success of American hip-hop and rap groups, who dominated radio stations and media outlets such as MTV during this time. Rap's transnational "flow," to use H. Samy Alim's term (Global Linguistic Flows 4), from Jamaican sound systems to New York block parties, arrived in France, as Pierre-Antoine Marti notes, with the first French rap song, "Une Sale histoire" by a rapper named B-side which was recorded in New York in 1982 (23). The year 1984 is evoked in many hip-hop songs as the inaugural year of French rap, that is, when French groups began to form and

to produce their own music (26). Likewise, as Dayna Oscherwitz has argued in her article "Pop Goes the Banlieue," the emergence of rap in France coincided with the rise of racial identity politics of the National Front and SOS-Racisme (44). Criticism of and rage against racism and right-wing national politics have thus characterized French rap from its beginnings. During the late 1980s, early French groups such as Suprême NTM and Assassin adopted and reproduced the themes and style of American hip-hop groups of the period (Prévos, "The Evolution" 716). One such rap ideology is *gangsta* rap, a style of hip-hop known for its hard-core lyrics, oppositional attitude, and glorification of a thug lifestyle. Later on, French rap underwent a period of transformation, where, according to Prévos, "…It was also evident, even during the late 1980's, that some French rappers were trying to inject a Gallic ambiance into their recordings" (717). For example, the names and identities of the groups were no longer parroting an American-style "gangsta" attitude, but were grounded in ideologies specific to the social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds of group members. The name IAM, for instance, stands for *Imperial Asiatic Men*, or *Invasion Arrivant de Mars*, and exemplifies its grounding in a distant, colonial past, while evoking Egyptology. The groups' ideological trends are most evident with the choice of labels, which I will discuss in another chapter.

One of the factors influencing the way hip-hop and rap came to define the cultural landscape of Marseille is the fact that its production and distribution structures were largely homegrown and home-based. These structures can be likened to a construction site, asserts Gilles Suzanne in "L'économie urbaine des mondes de la musique." Marseille rap is, according to Suzanne, "un ensemble d'acteurs, de réseaux de coopération, de modalités de mobilisation sociale, de dispositifs institutionnels, qui

organisent des territoires productifs et placent en leur centre ses créateurs et leurs sonorités" (76). The networks of graphic artists, such as the agency Tous des K,[17] who designed CD covers and produced videos, together with technicians and sound people, and other entrepreneurs, produced the Marseille rapper as a subject and anchored in a "mode de vie" particular to Marseille. These local networks possessed unique sensibilities to the space of the city, its inner workings and its identity, to such an extent that in the early 1990s, Marseille rappers took a deliberate stand to make their cosmopolitan, *marseillais* identity a prominent part of their image and artistic message.

The chronology of the production of rap records in Marseille is as follows: it began as a phase of territorialization limited to certain neighborhoods and was closely linked to the development of the genre. Later on, rap production in Marseille became tied to national and international structures, as some groups signed with French divisions of international music labels, while other groups traveled to New York, and collaborated with well-established American hip-hop artists. The first Marseille recording studio dedicated to hip-hop, rap, and *ragga* music was founded in 1973 at the Grottes-Loubières by René Baldaccini (Sberna 147). Philippe Fragione of the group IAM bought the studio in 1999, having himself recorded music there in 1986. During the late 1980s and late 1990s, rap groups such as IAM, Soul Swing, Faf Larage, and Puissance Nord performed in café-concerts hospitable to rap music, such as MJC Corderie, located a few streets east of the Vieux-Port, as well as in public spaces, such as l'Espace Julien, for impromptu free concerts or freestyle sessions, as did IAM at the entryway to Marseille's busiest métro station (Vieux-Port Canebière). All these spaces are located in the city center, near public

[17] See website, http://www.tousdesk.com.

transportation and are accessible to all—thus, in effect, so-called marginal rappers brought rap to the center. They marketed their sound and images at open mic *soirées rap* hosted by local DJs and youth associations. These groups distributed home-produced CDs in their own neighborhoods, contributing to the sense of a rap community in the city. Lastly, hip-hop groups solidified their place in the French music scene as participants on soundtracks for several successful films set in Marseille, such as *Bye-Bye* (Kamel Saleh, 2002), *Comme un Aimant* (2001), and the enormously popular *Taxi* (Géred Pirez, 1998).

One reason why rap and hip-hop enjoy a large share of the French music market is their inherent "technicité," as Manuel Boucher calls it (258). Hip-hop and rap artists use cutting-edge technological tools and methods to produce and to market their music, and their listeners tend to be technologically savvy as well. One such tool is the *featuring*, which is more prevalent with the marketing of rap and hip-hop artists than with any other genre of music. In France, the American term "featuring" is used to describe an artist's participation on a track or disc, while he or she belongs to a posse, or a clan. The majority of *featurings* consist of a rapper collaborating on a song performed by a well-established artist, but at other times, *featurings* comprise several artists' talents, each contributing equally to a song. Additionally, it is a way for lesser-known or newer artists to break into the industry when he or she lacks significant investment capital. Secondly, Marseille rap artists resort to compilations, sometimes using the English term *mixtapes* or *street cds* to market their music. The term is a throwback to the early days of the recording industry, when consumers subverted record company contracts by selecting their own songs and mixing their own tapes according to a logic and desire of their own. These self-produced cassettes were often formulated around a concept or a theme. Some of the *mixtapes*

centered around Marseille artists include *Face cachée de Mars*, released in 1999, on which KX Andolini, Keny Arkana, Puissance Nord, and other Marseille groups appeared, as well as the *Chroniques de Mars* compilations (France, Ariola, 1998) bringing together Faf Larage, as well as members of Le Troisième Oeil, IAM, and La Fonky Family. Nonetheless, major recording labels appropriated the *mixtapes* and began producing albums featuring selections of French hip-hop artists' top hits. Lastly, again borrowing American terminology, Marseille artists produce *street-cd*s, cheaply produced discs that they distribute at concerts or literally on the street, as a method of person-to-person marketing.

While Marseille's leaders and cultural elite sought to redress the tarnished image of the city, in this period, several *fêtes populaires* headlined by hip-hop and ragga artists helped to repopularize Marseille on their terms. Marseille's cultural revival of the 1990s was bolstered by a series of concerts and festivals dedicated to "musiques du monde" that had symbolic value for the city's cultural landscape. The longest-running of these festivals is called La Fiesta des Suds, which was inaugurated in 1991 as a celebration of Mediterranean music and culture. The choice of name speaks to Marseille's position as the *porte du Sud* and as the entry way to France. Moreover, as "suds" is plural, the title exemplifies the fact that Marseille is geographically and culturally part of the south just as is North Africa. The festival is held yearly in autumn at the Docks du Sud, an outdoor venue near the port, and was conceived by Bernard Aubert, its artistic director, and Florence Chastanier, its general director. The festival attracts some 45,000 attendees each year, and during the weekend of the usually two- or three-day festival, artists from the neighborhoods open their workshops to the public for visits. Not only is the festival

accessible to the public, but it is also a reflection of the city's vibrant socio-economic and ethnic mix. Another is the annual summer Festival Marseille-Méditerranée, which began in 1996, and which takes place on floating docks on Frioul Islands and in the Vieux Port. This festival was not only dedicated to the diverse musical traditions of Mediterranean cultures, but to art, dance, theatre, and film. Massilia Sound System opened the festival in 1996, which also included Italian composers, Flamenco dancing, an outdoor production of the *Mille et une nuits*, Boléro music, as well as a concert by one of the youth orchestras of the region.[18] These festivals reified Marseille's image as the symbolic capital of Mediterranean culture.

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> Laisse les croire qu'à Marseille le Rap est mort
> On crée la brèche c'est tout Marseille qui s'infiltre
> On allume la mèche et c'est toute une ville qui explose
> Toute une ville qu'on exporte
> Toute une ville qu'on expose--Fonky Family, "On s'invite"

The success of the releases of Akhénaton's "Double Chill Burger" in 2005 and Fonky Family's 2006 "Marginale Musique" marked Marseille rap's perseverance in the hip-hop market in France, where hip-hop in general holds a wide share of music. Yet in the post-Chirac era, Marseille fostered several new acts, including Mino and l'Algérino, both of whom signed on to the label Street Skillz, as well as Keny Arkana, one of the most successful female rappers to date. Marseille rappers continue to produce albums, *mixtapes*, which are still produced as late as 2010, and music videos; one rapper in

[18] The festival's organizers chose the image of the Tomb of the Diver in Paestum, who is shown leaping into the sea, as its symbol: the festival was to be a voyage through the Mediterranean Sea, showcasing its diverse peoples and unifying them with ideas of pan-Mediterranean culture.

particular, Soprano, has become, as of 2011, the most popular solo rapper in all of France. To understand Marseille rap's wide appeal and "mode" in France, it is important to look critically and contextually at its beginnings and history in the city. In chapter two, "Politics of Place," I explore the concepts of hybridity, nomadism, and transnationalism by a reading of the city through rap. After providing a brief summary of the scholarship on Marseille rap, I argue that certain sociological and cultural conditions formed an impetus for the development of Marseille rap artists' unique style and voice. I then thoroughly explore the history of seven rap groups and several solo artists, with particular attention to the operation of "Marseille" identity reflected in the artists' crafting of their group identity and artistic message. This approach historicizes the processes of self-creation and situates the autobiographical textual analyses that ensuing chapters undertake.

Chapter 3, "Giving Voice Through Lyrics," analyses how the self is shaped and given voice through lyrics. Through a detailed textual analysis and cultural studies approach of this music, I underscore sometimes conflicting viewpoints articulated by Marseille rappers in their texts. I demonstrate the evolution of some rappers' texts, as they begin adding a global dimension to local concerns. The last section of this chapter argues for the importance of the writing process in expressing rappers' identities.

Chapter 4, "Beyond the Mic: The Mise en Scène of the Marseille Rapper" offers some responses to theoretical problems raised by analyses of hip-hop by exploring how rappers articulate hybrid identities through the use of images. Rather than gloss over CD inserts, I argue that they are part of a performative autobiographical strategy by the rappers over which they exert considerable control. I examine a corpus of *livrets* for

several elements, such as attachment to religion, expressions of ethnicity, and immigration, concluding that many CD inserts are designed to be read along with the song lyrics and form part of a rapper's musical identity.

In chapter 5, "The Mise-en-Circulation of the Marseille Rapper," I examine modes of identity construction that at first seem peripheral to the music and lyrics, namely music videos, label names, and production strategies. I attempt to provide a theoretical framework and reading process for these products that are at once marketing and commercial, yet not without expressions of artists' identities. My reading of label names demonstrates how rap labels are ways of organizing identity through codes and rituals, while my analysis of some popular Marseille hip-hop videos utilizes formalist film theory to analyze the motivations of producers and artists in depicting the visual identities of the music.

In chapter 6, I conclude by analyzing the specific type of cosmopolitanism expressed by Marseille rappers in their texts, music videos, and through their strategies for self-promotion.

Chapter 2

"Marseille, 1991-2010: The Politics of Place"

As George Lipsitz states in Dangerous Crossroads, "a poetics of place permeates popular music, shaping significantly its contexts of production, distribution, and reception" (4). The notion of a poetics of place can be applied to early 1990s Marseille, where during this time, the *rappeur marseillais* began to emerge as a self-crafted subject. A dozen or so hip-hop groups were able to flourish and develop their unique artistic voice through lyrical content, style, and aesthetics in a fertile ground provided by a combination of production networks, independent record labels, and music journalism dedicated to hip-hop. These artists crafted a vibrant subculture on the streets of Marseille, infusing their art with self-reflective lyrics in which they expressed a cosmopolitan *mode de vie* that is uniquely *marseillais*. Through various means they forged an artistic response to the complicated realities of the world around them. However, far from being a homogenous bunch, these rappers were differently invested in the cultural, political, and diasporic registers of citizenship in France.

My study of Marseille hip-hop is also a reflection on French contemporary culture as seen through the lens of a popular artistic form, rap music. In this chapter I examine and contextualize the rise and fall and the subsequent evolution of some of Marseille's most popular rap and hip-hop artists. As I examine the trends of twenty years of Marseille rap, beginning in 1991 and up to 2010, I discuss lyrical content, highlighting each group's most prominent themes while analyzing its aesthetic framework. I also evaluate the groups' artistic limitations and their extra-Marseille and/or international reach, and

whether their "exportation" was meaningful to them. A fundamental resource for this study has been Béatrice Sberna's groundbreaking and thorough volume, Une Sociologie du rap à Marseille: 1973-1998 (2001). Sberna chronicled the names, faces, and places involved in the promotion of Marseille hip-hop, from radio stations to workshops to recording studios. She catalogued sales and transactions, and performed interviews with local hip-hop consumers, and other members and performers of Marseille's hip-hop community. The "local/global" consciousness is an important one in hip-hop, since, as Christian Béthune has argued, rappers' power to represent a sector of society requires, "une situation d'appartenance communautaire, et implique une immersion culturelle" (126). Increasingly, however, rappers' ideals and positionalities are informed by the greater hip-hop community, whose international character resists adherence to any one regional boundary. As H. Samy Alim argues, "hip-hop communities worldwide interact with each other (through media and cultural flow, as well as embodied international travel) in ways that organize their participation in a mass-mediated cultural movement" (1). The study of the genre thus delves deeper into the workings of complex processes such as transnationalism, cultural flow, syncretism, indigenization, and hybridity (4). I aim to demonstrate why the medium of rap as a form of artistic expression is the primary method for youth to transmit their opinions on citizenship, state, class, sex, and race in Marseille.

Marseille rappers fashioned their artistic and social identities according to the trends and the tools of the time period (1991-2010) in a transnational social space that can be thought of as an *ethnoscape*, the conceptual framework Appadurai develops in Modernity at Large. Describing the production of a localized space, Appadurai states

that, "a neighborhood is a context, or a set of contexts, within which meaningful social action can be both generated and interpreted" (142). This theorizes the local-global relationship so important in global hip-hop. Neighborhoods provide a setting for meaningful social action, and though they are themselves contexts for social action, they require other contexts, meaning that locality is relational. Locality is thus produced in relation to the "other," which may be constantly changing and therefore becomes a continual process. Marseille rappers give valence to this idea, that a neighborhood is a social context, by describing their neighborhoods—Belsunce, Félix Pyat, or *les quartiers nord,* for example—in which various kinds of people at the local level (their families, their posses, and other rappers, for instance) are affected by larger forces. Thus, Marseille rappers transmit a vision of their city and neighborhoods in their texts by asserting their discursive power over the space.

Rap has served, and continues to serve, as a locus of identity construction for disenfranchised youth across France. As Sheila Whiteley and Andy Bennett demonstrate in Music, Place and Space: Popular Music and Cultural Identity, the significance of space and place in relation to issues such as the construction of national identity, the development of local cultural industries, and trans-local cultural exchanges between displaced peoples can be illustrated through musical culture (2). Clearly, music informs us of a sense of identity within the context of national boundaries, and discursively constituted, hip-hop music situates people by acting as mediator of the cultural relationship between individuals and a collective. A study of regional hip-hop in France, which entails studying local consumption and production practices, allows us to conceptualize the relationship between a particular urban space and the viewpoints,

desires, and feelings of its inhabitants. A close analysis of one of France's regions through the lens of hip-hop is contingent upon the importance of a *Marseillais* identity to beginnings of Marseille rap, the focus of this chapter.

Critical scholarship on identity in Marseille rap has examined the diverse artistic traditions and ideologies upon which the artists in my study have drawn in order to construct their personal identities. A 1997 study by Chris Warne (in which he deals only with rap texts written prior to 1995) analyzes Marseille rap lyics, group names, and artistic traditions for their identity-construction features, focusing primarily on IAM and ragga group Massilia Sound System. Warne examines the apparent contrast between IAM's rootedness in Marseille with the multiple, semi-mythical tropes (such as Egyptology) through which this group construct identities that differentiate it from implicit notions of Frenchness.[19] Musicologist Jean-Marie Jacono (2000) has explored how multi-ethnic groups such as IAM and Fonky Family construct musical identities using humor, among other tools. Steve Cannon (2003) analyzes some of the discourses that underlie IAM's oeuvre, including Egyptocentrism (2), and the universalistic ideology that this engages. Brian George (2007) has examined the politics of location and the type of cosmopolitanism in Marseille rap that developed within the context of Southern French regional identities, such as the Occitanie movement. Yet this scholarship tends to gloss over the gangsta or "hardcore" element in Marseille rap, which deserves fuller

[19] A glaring error in Warne's reading of IAM's identity construction appears early in his essay where he states that the group stresses their North African origins through their rap names. He states, "IAM incorporate their North African origins, featuring Egyptian hieroglyphics in their artwork. The group members' pseudonyms reflect this concern: Shurik'n, DJ Khépos, Akhenaton" (149). Only one group member is of North African origin: Freeman (of Algerian origin). Shurik'n is of Malagasy and Réunionnais origin, Khéops and Ihmotep of Spanish, Kephren of Senegalese, and Akhénaton of Italian origin.

exploration and is discussed in my thesis. Gangsta rap is, as André Prévos states, a vehicle to vent the frustrations and anger of society's disadvantaged and mistreated (719). Crime is treated as a form of rebellion and is often glorified and idealized in gangtsa rap lyrics. Its appeal is thus limited and it is not considered "mainstream." The groups from Paris, such as Suprême, NTM, Assassin, and Ministère AMER are considered hardcore, yet scholarship on Marseille rap has yet, to my knowledge, to consider this element.

Several factors make it possible to speak of a distinct, localized hip-hop community in Marseille, sometimes referred to as "la famille marseillaise." First off, in the early 1990s, since major labels in France were not immediately interested in rap artists, local production companies had to take the initiative to invest in their own recording studios. The first implantation of such a company in the Marseille territory is the recording studio Grottes-Loubières, later purchased by Philippe Fragione of IAM in 1999 (Sberna 147). Marseille artists thus became entrepreneurs and founded their own record labels (see chapter 5), such as Delabel, Côté Obscur, La Cosca, and the more recent labels like Street Skillz and TSE Music. Homegrown studios and labels gave artists more control over their sounds and texts, and allowed them to freely participate in each other's records as *featurings*, since artists signed with traditional, major record labels generally need permission from their label to lend their talents on others' records.

A second factor that affected the way rap was produced in Marseille was the availability of local venues called *café-concerts* where rap artists met, shared ideas, wrote texts and performed for local youth, usually for free. Two such café-concerts are the MJC Corderie and Marsatac (Suzanne 76). Additionally, once artists achieved local fame, they "kept it real" by participating in writing workshops with at-risk youth at some of

Marseille's youth centers.[20] Marseille is also home to La Friche Belle de Mai, a cultural center devoted to the writing, recording, and distribution of homegrown music. Created on the initiative of the city in 1990 and open to the public, Belle de Mai houses musical associations, recording studios, and numerous workshops for theatre, writing, and voice, among others, in addition to housing a restaurant and its own radio station. Some of Marseille's rappers led workshops there for youth, such as IAM, and others.[21] A few festivals (such as the Hip-hop Logic festival and Marsatac) grew out of the writing workshops held here and prominently featured rap artists on its billing.[22]

Thirdly, several independent radio stations were established in Marseille, such as Radio Star and Radio Sprint, whose rap-loving DJs promoted their music and gave their songs airtime, especially IAM and Fonky Family. Rap artists were among the first to benefit from the quota laws established in 1994 by the socialist government requiring radio stations to play at least forty percent of their content in the French language (Looseley 56). So, although rap music has its roots in the United States, radio stations could not deny French rappers playtime since their lyrics were in French.

Lastly, another factor is the distribution of mixtapes and self-concept cassettes, most of which were designed along a single theme. Now that music is distributed electronically, they are considered collectors' items. *Les mixtapes* could be quickly and easily produced for little capital, distributed hand-to-hand, and from a purely musical standpoint, the rap did not necessarily need to be quality, as opposed to a record, which necessitated at least ten full tracks. Thus, rap cassettes became a highly visible

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[20] Interview with Faf Larage, published in Le Temps 10 juillet 1999.
[21] See Belle de Mai's website, http://www.lafriche.org for more information.
[22] Marsatac features posters from its previous festivals under the "la retro" section on its website, http://www.marsatac.com.

commodity in Marseille in the early 1990s, one imbued with the appearance of freedom, given that cassette tapes were free-floating merchandise that could be exchanged, traded, and purchased on the street without the intermediary of a commercial structure such as a store.

IAM, Fonky Family, Le Troisième Oeil

An entire thesis could be written about IAM (Imperial Asiatic Men, Invasion Arrivant de Mars) and several scholars have indeed thoroughly analyzed the group's rich, complex constellation of positions. Thus, in order not to repeat the work done by other scholars, I will limit myself to a few themes. IAM's incredible artistic output, a literally groundbreaking achievement with respect to founding recording studios and labels, has influenced the Marseille rap world as has no other group. Its members were Philippe Fragione (of Italian origin), Geoffroy Mussard (Malagasy), Eric Mazel (of Spanish origin), Pascal Perez (Pied-Noir), Malek Brahimi (of Algerian origin) and François Mendy (of Senegalese origin). Four of the group's rap aliases reflect their fascination for Egyptology. Akhénaton, Khéops, Imhotep, and Kephrem refer to, respectively, a famous pharaoah; another pharaoah who built the Great Pyramid in Giza; a polymath and arcithect; and a 4th dynasty king. The two other group members' aliases, Sultan and Shurik'n, refer to the title of an Arab ruler, and the Japanese throwing star used by the ninja warriors. Marseille rap would not be what it is today without the efforts of Akhénaton (Philippe Fragione); he is considered one of France's most successful music producers, and he has created six agencies and music production companies. The group's first release, *De la planète mars* (Delabel, 1991) was a decidedly Marseille-centric album that quickly reached gold status. Subsequent albums included two volumes of *Ombre est*

lumière (Delabel, 1993), *L'école du micro d'argent* (Hostile, 1999) and *Revoir un printemps* (Delabel, 2003). A few of the themes in their poetics include the shaping of the discourse of colonizer/colonized in the context of cosmopolitan Marseille; the insertion of an immigrant Italian voice in the context of North African immigration to France ("Où sont les roses") and the Front National; hip-hop's relationship with other types of music (as in "Do the raï thing") and their Egyptocentrism ideology which posits an extra-European society as the foundation of Marseille ("Le pharaon revient"). IAM is one of the few groups that achieved international success; as Mela Sarkar states in her article on Quebec Hip-hop, *L'école du micro d'argent* was enthusiastically received in Québec, where rappers there began to imitate Akhénaton's style (142). Also, IAM's 2003 album, *Revoir un printemps* (which sold 300,000 copies in France, while another 60,000 were exported), features songs in collaboration with famous New York rappers Method Man and Redman, as well as R&B singer Beyoncé.

One track in particular on the album *Ombre est lumière* overshadowed the others: "Je danse le mia." Arguably the most popular French rap song ever, "Je danse le mia" is also held by some, such as *Le Monde* culture columnist Stéphane Davet, to be the spark that lit the flames of Marseille's cultural renaissance.[23] As an article by Léna Lutaud in *Le Figaro* states, the song, "avait séduit aussi bien les rappeurs que les mères de famille,"[24] implying its universal appeal as an anthem of the citizens of the city. The humorous, Marseille-accented lyrics describe the group's musical influences and their inspiration as it chronicles wild nights of partying in clubs:

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[23] Stéphane Davet, *Le Monde* (10 August 1998). The song, at the time of the newspaper article had already sold 600,000 copies.
[24] Léna Lutaud, *Le Figaro* (30 November 2005).

> Dès qu'ils passaient Cameo, Midnight Star/ SOS Band, Delegation ou Shalamar
> Tout le monde se levait, des cercles se formaient/ Des concours de danse un peu
> partout s'improvisaient/ Je te propose un voyage dans le temps via
> Planète Marseille je danse le Mia. (*L'école du micro d'argent.* Delabel, 1994)

"Je danse le mia," as Brian George states, digs back into the pre-history of rap, providing a cinematic, nostalgic account of nights in clubs and bars of Marseille in the 1980s (202). The song recounts the dress codes, verbal altercations, macho challenges, and verbal posturing of IAM's youth. Linguistically, the song manifests the variety of French spoken in Marseille, with Provençal expressions such "dégun" as well as the common use of "cousine" to refer to a female friend, and "minot" for a male friend. Although "Je danse le mia" appeared on the album *Ombre est lumière* as a rap song, it was not noticed by consumers and radio stations until it was sampled with "Give me the night" by George Benson, adding a rhythm and blues track to it; it then exploded on the radio. The song's music video included sample clips from Marcel Pagnol's film *Marius*, among other nostalgic and iconographic references to Marseille. The popularity of "Je danse le mia" supports the idea of "collective memory" as a unifying factor among Marseille's citizens, especially its youth.

Shurik'n (whose real name is Geoffrey Mussard) has had a successful solo career. Born in 1966 in Marseille, Shurik'n grew up in the *quartiers nord* and practiced judo, karate, and kung-fu as a youth and also dabbled in Taoist philosophy. He quit school and worked as a boilermaker apprentice before becoming a hip-hop dancer for the group The Flashbreakers.[25] No doubt his martial arts background influenced his dancing and his writing; in 1986, he met Akhénaton and began to write rap songs as part of IAM.

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[25] A biography of Shurik'n can be found on http://matchstick.new-forum.net/t89-shurik-n-biographie.

Mussard chose the name "Shurik'n Chang Ti" as an homage to his martial arts background. On his solo record, *Où je vis*, Shurik'n writes with a sharp sensibility as a young, French-born, Black subject growing up on Marseille's tough streets. His poetics contain myriad illusions to the writing process: in "Esprit anesthésié," the narrator compares the ink of his pen to blood, a trope that continues in "Fugitif," where the writing process is compared to the act of surveilling a city. Shurik'n's fascination with Asian martial arts is evident in songs such as "Samurai" and "Once Shu," and, in the latter, he compares the act of writing rap songs to a the art of a ninja warrior.[26] In 2000 Shurik'n released an album with his brother Faf Larage called *La Garde* (Delabel) where he further emphasizes his warrior style.

La Fonky Family, one of the most dynamic of the groups from Marseille, is composed of several rappers, MCs and DJs who began recording songs together when the Marseille rap scene was at its apex in 1993. Its members are Pon (Guilhem Gallart) and DJ Djel,[27] composer and MC respectively, and rappers Menzo (Mohamed Ali, who is of Comorian origin), the Rat Luciano (Christophe Carmona, of Spanish-Martinican descent), Don Choa (François Dilhan, born in Toulouse), and Sat (Karim Haddouche, Corsican-Algerian descent). They spent their youth Marseille, in the Panier and Belsunce neighborhoods, both located near the city's center. FF, as the group is commonly known, was officially formed after opening up for the Swiss group Sens Unik at a concert in the *quartiers nord* in December 1994. Their first major recording was a *featuring* on Akhénaton's album *Métèque et mat* with the hit song "Bad Boys de Marseille." The song

[26] It was around this time that the Sega console debuted in France, with ninja characters like Shinobi, which could explain Shurik'n's fascination with this lifestyle.
[27] DJ Djel was born in Belsunce, Marseille and his ethnic origin is not known.

was released by Delabel as a single in 1996. Fonky Family's first solo album, *Si Dieu veut* (Small Records, 1997) was recorded in Toulouse, and became an instant success, selling over 200,000 copies. The title's transfer of the pious Arabic formula, "Inch'Allah," into French evokes some of the group members' religious Muslim identification. Their effervescence and youth energized the Marseille rap movement and their songs and image were enthusiastically received in the youth community. They engage a wide range of social issues in their songs, describing with immediacy growing up poor and marginalized, surrounded by "béton pour horizon," or life in concrete HLM buildings. FF inveighs against the French state, the police, and the racism in French society, in particular that of the Front National. The group solidified a hybrid, multicultural Marseille identity in their lyrics through the use of clan imagery, which emphasizes the group's common rootedness in Marseille. Their youthful sounding and Marseille-accented voices express rage in songs such as "Sans Rémission" and "Maintenant ou jamais." The tempo is upbeat and the rappers' diction is hurried and forceful. The rappers speak in angry tones, and their breathing is heavy and rapid, indicative of rage and passion. In "Sans Rémission," the rappers claim to be part of a Marseille-backed crusade against the French state, and that together with other Marseille rap groups, they will invade France in a military-like battalion called "Opération Coup de Poing" from the "Nique Tout/Fuck Everything" sector. The group recorded several smaller "Hors série" cd's before their second effort, again with Small Records, an album entitled *Art 2 rue* (Small Records, 2001), whose title, "art of the street," evokes global hip-hop culture as encompassing not only DJs and MCs but graffiti artists and dancers. The album sold over 400,000 copies. They then followed up with a tour called "Section

Nique Tour." Their most successful concert, "Live au Dôme de Marseille" generated an enormously popular live album of the same name (Small Records, 2001), which was recorded in front of an audience of 8,000 eager listeners.

Almost ten years after the début of *Si Dieu veut*, Fonky Family released *Marginale Musique* in 2006. The title takes up a popular sociological term used in the French media to describe a set of the French population, who, by virtue of class, ethnicity, or immigration status is excluded from the center and thus lives on the margins of society, denied access to jobs as well as to social mobility. The album enjoyed commercial success throughout France and marked the group's ten years as band mates and colleagues. Despite their widespread success and a monetary gain that can hardly be considered "marginal," rapping for Marseille has remained their life's work. As Rat Luciano states, rap is "[mon] moyen d'écrire mon histoire et celle de ma ville."[28] Thus, the rapper provides listeners with an insider's view of their territory, reappropriating its physical marginality to the center. In *Marginale Musique,* instead of rapping over jazzy saxophone and drumbeats, as was characteristic of their earlier work, Fonky Family incorporated more complex rhythms and multilayered samplings to give the album a "fuller" sound. On this album FF, deployed some of their usual criticisms of the French state, the political scene, and the globalized economy, as well as mentioning a few new targets, including the Toulouse officials who covered up serial killer Patrice Alegre's crimes, and the C.E.O. of an oil refinery in Toulouse. Their delivery consisted of a crisper, more polished, yet at the same time, more conventional sound. The techniques used in earlier albums, such as the sound of Provençal cicadas chirping in the

[28] "Marginale Musique," *Marginale Musique.* Sony Music France, 2006.

background, voice-overs, and *featurings*, are missing from the album. As the group has matured, the pop culture references scattered in their lyrics have changed to reflect a more technologically-familiar listening public, that has greater access to globalized entertainment, such as American television series, videos, and the Internet. In their lyrics, they mention for instance HBO's *The Sopranos*, popular films such as *Kill Bill,* and American celebrities such as Scarlett Johansson. A few songs on this record reflect upon their place in the overall scheme of Marseille hip-hop; for example, on the track, "1984 fallait que je dise," FF traces its journey from Belsunce where they were inspired by American rapper Grandmaster Flash, to its individual solo albums, and finally, to the current album. FF remains one of the most important of all of the hip-hop groups to emerge from Marseille. The fact that they "represent" (literally, and in the rap sense, of speaking for, being true to, and embodying) the city-center gives valence to the notion that not all marginalities exist literally outside the city, in contrast to the Paris-*banlieue* dichotomy.

One FF member who has had solo success is Rat Luciano (Christophe Carmona) whose album *Mode de vie-Béton style* alludes to the motif of "street art" that includes music, graffiti, clothing styles, among others. The pessimistic track "Mode de vie complexe" conveys messages about Le Rat Luciano's music and lifestyle: he lives off an "excès de fric et de sexe" while needing to "fumer trop de gramme." Le Rat Luciano followed his first album with a maxi-CD called *Sacré*, where, on the title track, he ruminates about family and the ties that bind. Expressing himself in pensive, melancholy lyrics, he uses a carpe diem motif, stating, "On peut tous mourir n'importe quand/

Chaque seconde compte donc prends plaisir." *Mode de vie* and *Sacré* were only mildly successful albums, but nevertheless important contributions to Marseille rap.

Other Groups

Although the reclamation of Marseille identity was less central to their image, the duo called Le Troisième Oeil enjoyed considerable success and recognition for their introspective, positive lyrics at the end of the 1990s. They rap with cleanly articulated, slightly melancholic diction and place textual emphasis on voyage and immigration, two themes that are important to many of their listeners. The group Le Troisième Oeil is comprised of two members, Jo Popo, born on Reunion Island, and Boss One, from the Comores, and their two DJs, DJ Ralph and DJ Bomb. Both Jo and Boss One present themselves as pious non-smokers and non-drinkers, family men who in their lyrics speak of aspirations and hope for the future, in particular for that of Marseille youths in their neighborhoods.[29] In this sense, they take pains to reclaim a Muslim religious identity in their lyrics and in the images they present. They both grew up in a neighborhood called Félix Pyat near the *quartiers nord* of Marseille, and began rapping, writing and participating in local fairs and street festivals well before their first solo album; Boss One was part of the group Black Tiger Force, and Jo Popo worked with a group called GSK. As they state in "La Boomba," they are "sortis des coins populaires cachés de Mars/ hip-hop déjà dans mon sang depuis l'époque de Planète Mars," no doubt referencing their colleague IAM's album *De la planète Mars*, referring to Marseille's nickname, Mars. They first appeared in *featurings* on Shurik'n's album *Où je vis*, and in 1998 they were invited by IAM to join a few other Marseille artists in a collaboration on the soundtrack

[29] This information is on their website, http://www.le-3eme-oeil.com.

for the wildly successful comedy, *Taxi.* Their first album, *Hier, Aujourd'hui et Demain* (Sony Music, 1999) on which appears one of the best-known and most popular Marseille hip-hop songs, "Hymne à la racaille de France" (from *Hier, Aujourd'hui et Demain*), sold one hundred thousand copies, and they followed in 2002 with *Avec le Coeur ou Rien* (Columbia).

Troisième Oeil's lucid texts are rich with reflections on the writing process, as well as the evocation of Arab and Oriental imagery. For instance, the image for the CD insert for the album *Hier, Aujourd'hui et Demain* imitates a postcard sent from Mecca to Marseille. In the center of the image is Marseille's famous Monument aux Rapatriés d'Afrique du Nord, a statue that sits on the Corniche near the Mediterranean Sea. This image fits in perfectly with the group's emphasis on immigration, their origins in the Indian Ocean, and their hometown of Marseille. For example, the song "El Dorado" dramatizes the situation of a *sans-papier* named Mohamed, who immigrates to France in hopes of earning money for his starving children and wife. Yet after ten months of struggle and horror, he resigns himself to leave, uttering, "Tchao Eldorado, et à jamais." In conclusion, Le Troisième Oeil is an interesting group, and while their sound is rather mellow, their lyrics are sharp and thought-provoking. Moreover, their aesthetics and packaging provide insight into the Reunionese community of Marseille. To my knowledge, Le Troisième Oeil did not export as well as FF or IAM, and their total artistic output is dwarfed by some of the other groups.

Faf Larage was relatively unknown compared to Marseille rap's pioneers in the mid-1990s, but in recent years, his reach has extended throughout France thanks to his perseverance in the business and to a hit single. Faf was born Raphaël Mussard (his rap

name is a diminutive of Raphaël) in Marseille, in March 1971, and is the younger brother of Geoffrey (alias Shurik'n), of IAM. He is of Reunionese and Malagasy origins, and spent the early part of his career between 1988-1996 as one of the founding members of the ephemeral and now cult group Soul Swing, which he formed with popular French DJ Eric Dorgal.[30] Faf Larage has appeared on well over thirty Marseille-produced records, including the *Sad Hill* compilation, *Chroniques de Mars*, and the *Taxi* soundtrack, and he also worked on his brother's album *Où je vis* on the song "Esprit anésthésie," an autobiographical reflection on racial discrimination and police prejudice. In 1999, he released his first solo record, *C'est ma cause*, a collaborative effort with members of IAM, Fonky Family, and Def Bond lending their talents as scratchers, mixers, and DJs. The album's energetic, forceful soundplay consists of synthesized orchestra, especially violins playing somber notes against medium tempo percussion, giving some of the songs a fuller sound. Songs such as "Le dilemme" contain rhythm and blues style backbeats, which began to characterize his style. Lyrically, Faf Larage asserts his "cause" by drawing upon his experience as a young rapper navigating the cultural space of Marseille hip-hop. The majority of the songs on this album deal unsurprisingly with rapping and self-aggrandizement on account of his lyrical skills, the vigorous condemnation of lesser, lamer rappers, and, as the name "Larage" implies, anger toward state-sponsored injustice. Rap's function, as Faf states on the title track, is to: "[b]ouleverse[r] leur équilibre d'une putain de France libre/ où chaque personne est à sa place sans pouvoir en bouger,"[31]

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[30] Faf Larage used the alias "Dope Rhyme Sayer" when he performed with Soul Swing. I consider Soul Swing a "cult" group because many of their albums have disappeared from circulation and are now collector's items, unlike IAM's albums, which remain widely available.

[31] Title track, *C'est ma cause* (1999).

whereby the rapper assumes the role of loudspeaker for those who cannot speak for themselves. The themes of rage against racism and socio-economic inequalities are repeated throughout this album.

Faf's album *Rap Stories* (M6, 2007) lacks the forcefulness and "Marseille-centricity" of his previous album, perhaps due to his most recent success. In 2006, he broke into the mainstream with his hit single "Pas le temps" that was featured as the theme music of the French version of the American television series "Prison Break."[32]An enormously successful single, "Pas le temps" describes the plot of the series in a first-person narrative mode: "J'ai décidé de ne pas être prisonnier/ je n'ai que ma vie à offrir si jamais j'ai joué." The song earned platinum status on the French music charts, remaining there for nine weeks, and is featured on numerous top hits compilations.[33] His latest album, *Rap Stories,* was produced, not surprisingly, not by a Marseille-based music label, but by M6, the same French television network that has produced "Prison Break." His rap persona has evolved somewhat between the two major albums: in the title hit on *Rap Stories*, (M6, 2007) he introduces himself in the following manner:

> Ouais c'est moi le mec de "Pas le temps"
> Plus de 15 ans de musique, premier tube à 34 ans
> Toujours la rage dans le mic comme en 95
> Toujours accro au Hip-hop comme en 85

Faf identifies himself here as a hard-working rapper and places himself among the rap greats. In conclusion, by his 2007 album, Faf Larage has lost some of his defiant voice but nonetheless remains one of Marseille's most important rap performers.

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[32] "Prison Break" (Fox Broadcasting, 2009) stars Wentworth Miller and features the tale of two brothers, one who is unjustly incarcerated, and the other who enters the prison, having committed a crime purposefully, in order to help him escape.
[33] Info from Faf Larage's website, http://www.faflarage.fr, which is now hosted on http://www.m6music.com/.

The duo called Chiens de Paille collaborated with many of the rap groups that were productive during Marseille hip-hop's "golden age" in the 1990s. Formed in 1992, the group was composed of Sako whose real name is Rodolphe Gagetta, and Hal, Sébastien Alfonsi both natives of Cannes, who had previously appeared together and separately on a variety of Marseille-produced albums, including, among others, Freeman's *Le Palais de Justice* (Delabel, 1999), the soundtrack for the film *Comme un Aimant* (Delabel, 2000), and Akhénaton's *Sol Invictus* (Virgin Music France, 2001).[34] The duo carved themselves a niche in Marseille's hip-hop milieu, as their introspective lyrics meshed elegantly with jazz-influenced beats brought a fresh sound in contrast to more upbeat rhythms of groups such as FF and IAM. Lyricist Sako and producer-composer Hal were industry veterans, having rapped for years in the underground scene. Their appearance on the aforementioned *Comme un Aimant* soundtrack helped characterize their unique sound: on the title track, Sako's hollow, melancholic diction more closely resembles spoken word than hip-hop. Chiens de Paille signed with La Cosca, Akhénaton's rap label that produced their first solo album in 2002, *Mille et un fantômes*.[35] They followed with another album in 2005 titled, *Sincèrement*, which occupied the French pop charts for only one week at position 113.[36] Their most recent projects include a concept album released in October of 2008 featuring Sako and DJ Cut Killer, his real name Anouar Hajoui, a well-known French DJ and hip-hop promoter who has produced and collaborated on such albums as the soundtrack for Mathieu Kassovitz's film *La Haine,* and albums with DJ Khéops and Akhénaton. Despite the group's

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[34] Info from Faf's Myspace page, http://www.myspace.com/faflarageofficiel.
[35] Information gathered from the Marseille rap database, http://www.rap 2 mars.net.
[36]Information from Alpha Charts, http://www.acharts.us. Alpha Charts is a privately-owned website that aggregates sales, streaming, and radio play.

espousing of pride for the Alpes-Maritimes region (in video clips such as "Un Cran au-dessus," graphics bearing the 06 department number blaze across the screen, and images of the Côte d'Azur, not Marseille, figure in their videos), I include Chiens de Paille with the Marseille groups because many themes in their lyrics express a vision of youth life in southern France that is similar to that of their contemporaries in Marseille.

It is perhaps Chiens de Paille's signature style that not only characterized and popularized the group, but also pigeonholed them as a "serious" group. As they state on their Myspace Music webpage, "On nous a catalogués comme un groupe sombre. C'est ce que les gens connaissent de nous, mais on a d'autres facettes."[37] Nonetheless, their lyrical eloquence stems in part from the seriousness of their themes. Chiens de Paille invoked the power of the pen as a remedy against social exclusion and as a tool of personal fulfillment, vivifying in their verses a painful and sometimes lonely writing process. In their lyrics they engage the themes of youth, childhood dreams, and sibling relationships, painting a realistic, firsthand picture of some of the issues to which youth in cités of Southern France are confronted. Another unusual feature influencing the groups' lyrical production derives from their ethnic composition—Sako and Hal are both French-born men of Italian descent. In several songs the group evokes their Italian immigrant origins as a rhetorical tool to explore the contemporary turn of the millennium struggle over citizenship and identity in France. For instance, in "Bien paraître" (featuring another rapper of Italian origin, Akhénaton), Sako recounts the racism his family encountered upon immigrating to France from Como, Italy and their struggle to keep their language and customs. Likewise, in "Le dos courbé" (both from *Mille et un fantômes*), Chiens de

[37] Chiens de paille's official Myspace page, http://www.myspace.com/chiensdepaille.

Paille retell an imaginary account of Italian immigrant workers who have fled Fascist Italy in the 1930s. Upon arrival in their host country, presumably France, their religion ("Leur Christ fait peur,") and their different surnames ("leur nom rime avec cannelloni,") disturb and thus inspire hatred in their new neighbors/hosts. These tales of discord problematize the harmonious image of Marseille/ Southern France as melting pot. The song also calls attention to the in-between status of Italians in Marseille, as not quite French, but not Arab, and who suffered discrimination at one point, yet do blend into the general whiteness of society today. Nonetheless, only a few of Chiens de Paille's songs delve into race, as the search for authenticity in their lyrics and remaining true to their roots has been most important to the group's identity. Chiens de Paille balanced the power of their message with an equal competence in their production, emphasizing material musical craft with Hal's talent and self-proclaimed interest in rock, jazz, and other forms.

Another popular group is known as Psy 4 de la Rime whose popularity has soared since 2006. The four members of Psy 4 de la Rime are all Marseille-born Muslim sons of immigrants from former French colonies, and their hip-hop group has achieved mainstream status within the Hexagon and beyond; their latest project was a major tour in spring of 2009 in Paris and other cities.[38] Their Latin-sounding artistic names mimic those of Mafia crime bosses: Comorian Kassim D'Jae uses the moniker Segnor Alonzo, while Saïd M'Roubaba and Iliassa Issilame, of Comorian descent as well, use Soprano and Don Vincenzo, respectively. Rachid Ait-Baar, the group's DJ, is of Moroccan origin and uses Sya Styles as his name. They were all born in the early 1980s and spent their

[38]Information from their website, TSE music http://www.tsemusic.com.

youth rapping and producing homemade mixtapes in the Plan d'Aou (known also as the 15th arrondissement) section of the *quartiers nord* of Marseille, a working-class, mixed-ethnicity neighborhood that has given rise to other acts such as Lygne 26. Psy 4 de la Rime lionize their neighborhood, which they refer to as "Plan d'Aou City," in their songs, and claim to owe their creative energy and drive to the fusion of cultures and religions present there. As they state in an interview on the subject of their neighborhood: "Il y a de la joie et on peut réussir. Le mélange des cultures, l'esprit du partage sont nos avantages."[39] In their first album *Block Party* (361 Records, 2002), they presented the image of a high-rise *quartiers nord* housing project, and crafted a narrative of the group's own upbringing, describing a generation of young rappers struggling to achieve fame and status like the groups before them (Puissance Nord, for instance). Religious identity is a subtext in the album, since the group makes references to the Muslim holiday period of Eid and the name of God, Allah. Their next album was called *Enfants de la lune* (361 Records, 2005) and lastly, they released *Les Cités d'or* in 2008 (Barclay), two albums in which the *cité* remains a prominent signifier. Musically, their beats are hard, with upbeat tempo, and the group speaks with thick and audibly Marseille accents. Psy 4 de la Rime is extremely popular in the region, and they perform frequently in concerts in the region.

The "gangsta" element is manifest in their lyrics and presentation, in contrast to groups like IAM and Chiens de Paille. Their songs contain references to violence, drug use, and the capitalist, pro-money, macho posturing that is integral to the gangsta rap style. Psy 4 de la Rime's popularity may be attributed to several factors; the first is the group's obvious youth—the group members were not quite 23 at the time of their first

[39]http://www.rap2france.com/biographie-psy-4-de-la-rime.php.

major album. Second are the themes of their lyrics: many of their songs resonate with young fans due to themes of parental struggle, school boredom, and family violence. For instance, the song, "l'Enfant" (*Enfants de la lune*) evokes the psychology of juvenile delinquency among immigrant youth in France, whereby youth who are stereotyped lash out, not by "declining the stereotype," to use Mireille Rosello's expression (1998), but by becoming it. They state: "Immigré que je suis/ casse tout et le FN fait sa fête." The rappers solidify the theme of being Othered in society because of assumed "immigrant" status, one that is over-determined by the relationship between France and its former colonies, while in fact the rappers are all Marseille-born Frenchman. Other such themes in their work are perhaps eclipsed by the group's posturing, especially in light of some of their more juvenile lyrics. Psy 4 de la Rime's rap has increasingly adopted an atrophied and clichéd stance: many of their verses do not rhyme (unlike those of Fonky Family) and are rather facile in fabrication, consisting of uninspired platitudes and similes. A common technique they employ is to compare an idea with a pop culture reference that is intended to signify its epitome. For example: "Pas besoin d'Clooney pour/ Savoir qu'il y a urgence" ("Son des bandits," *Block Party*), referring to the hit American television series, E.R., and "Hey gars ça fond pas comme du M & M's" ("Sale bête," *Block Party*). Some of the group's wordplay is not completely without merit; for instance, their song "Jeunesse France" (*Les Cités d'or*) echos Fonky Family's "Hymne à la racaille" and "Bad boys de Marseille" years earlier, claiming rap as the cultural production that unifies all Marseille's, if not France's, youth.

2000 and Beyond

Undoubtedly, Marseille's most popular hip-hop artist in the 2000s is a rapper named Soprano, who, from 2001 on, was the MC, or mixer/scratcher, of Psy4 de la Rime. Saïd M'roubaba is a Muslim of Comorian origin, born in Marseille in 1979, where he grew up in the rough northern districts. He chose the street name "Soprano" after HBO's Tony Soprano, fictional boss of a New Jersey crime family, and conversations between the rapper and his psychiatrist appear as interludes on his debut album.[40] In 2002 Soprano went solo with his first *featuring* on one of Faf LaRage's albums, and in 2005 he recorded tracks on TSE Music's *mixtape* entitled *L'Apéro* with former group members from Psy 4 de la Rime. Finally, in 2007 he released a solo album titled *Puisqu'il faut vivre* (Hostile Records). Yet, Soprano's success and popularity are largely due to his Internet presence. He has reached his audience in ways that prior Marseille rappers had not—primarily through the Internet and new marketing techniques. For example, the public can now measure the success or at least the popularity of a group by the number of hits on their Internet pages as well as video and music sharing websites. As a case in point, Soprano's song "Halla Halla" has had over four million views on Youtube, as well as over 1,570 user comments. Likewise, on the French website Dailymotion, another user-generated video and music service, there are, as of 2010, well over 200 videos tagged with "Soprano," most of which are music videos, interviews, and clips from his concerts. Additionally, Soprano's use of Myspace and Facebook to market himself has proved successful in reaching his audience. For instance, internet users can subscribe to

[40] Soprano's choice of his rap name is meaningful on many levels. There is the idea of rap as "therapy," given its first-person mode of address and potential for the artist to reflect, shape, and reveal him/her self through writing. The cover for his maxi CD "Puisqu'il faut vivre" features the rapper sitting on the typical therapist's leather couch, and he appears conflicted about whether to spill his inner sentiments.

live feeds that send out automated notices of news and upcoming concerts. Myspace and Facebook allows users to post bulletins announcing events of interest to ones' contacts; Soprano thus sends bulletins advertising upcoming concerts and the releases of his singles and *featurings*. Another factor in Soprano's success is the growing popularity of the licensing of mobile phone ringtones. Personalizing one's ringtone has become a way to express one's musical tastes and identity. Moreover, ringtones provide the music industry with clear indications of the popularity of artists; in 2004, rap and hip-hop represented over thirty percent of ringtone downloads for French subscribers. Currently, Soprano has no less than nine songs available on an array of French ringtone download websites, two of which are consistently on the top ten for hip-hop and rap.[41] All of the aforementioned Marseille artists market themselves with Myspace pages and personal websites. However, given Soprano's youth and background, his enhanced web presence has helped establish an identity that is pluralized.

Soprano has transmitted an image of Marseille in his lyrics that was built by the previous generation of Marseille rappers.[42] In his lyrics Soprano describes his foray into rap as the performing of an identity that, like that of IAM and Fonky Family, remains true to his Marseille roots. It was not his destiny to become a rapper, but writing was an outlet, as he says in "Le Divan": "Voilà c'que je suis, un enfant de Madame France/ Qui n'a que le mic pour dire qu'il existe." In his music videos, Soprano has made use of the iconic imagery of Marseille which imbricates the local into the French-language technoscape, his webpages, advertisements, and viral videos that establish its web

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[41] I consulted persomobiles.fr sonnerie.net and aol.fr, among others.
[42] I use "generation" literally—IAM and Massilia Sound System started in the early 1980s.

presence on the World Wide Web. For example, a symbolic bridge is built between the older generation and the younger in his video "À la bien."[43] The opening sequence shows a group of middle-aged Marseille men, boisterously conversing over pastis, the drink of the Midi, in a local bar. When a video clip of Soprano's song showing the Stade Vélodrome flashes upon the bar's television, the men vociferously bemoan today's youth and the inappropriateness of the link between soccer and rap music. Suddenly, a man standing at the bar, who happens to be Éric Cantona, one of Marseille's most famous soccer players, chastises the detractors, saying, "Laissez les enfants tranquilles! Ils vont finir à la bien!" in his thick Marseille accent.[44]Rap artists have been some of Olympique de Marseille's loudest supporters in years—in 2004, BMI music released an album called *OM All Stars* on which a few soccer players rapped alongside DJ Khéops, Le Troisième Oeil, and others. Soprano's appropriation of the OM legacy (filming a rap video at the stadium, presenting Éric Cantona as a defender of his music) speaks volumes about the cohesiveness of the city's diverse inhabitants. For, while some cities such as Paris struggle with racism in their teams' fan clubs, such as the Boulogne Boys, l'OM remains a unifying factor in the integration of youth in Marseille. Soprano's popularity can thus be attributed to his youthful lyrics, his Internet presence, and his solidarity with other forms of expressing Marseille identities.

The notion of mobsters in therapy attracted another Marseille rapper, Soprano's younger brother who co-founded a rap label, Street Skillz, as well as a group called La

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[43] As of March 2009 the video had over 1,500,000 hits on Youtube.
[44] "A la bien" and "A la bien, cousin" is a popular colloquialism used in Marseille that means, roughly, "all good!"

Swija, in 1999.[45] The group consists of three rappers who fashioned their artistic identities using Italian, Mafioso-sounding names with a Spanish twist: Zino El Sarazino, Don Diego Moltissanti (and Mistral, which is a cliché that has come to be associated with all things *Sud*). "Sarazino" is inspired by "Sarrasin" which, of course, refers to the term given to Muslims during the Middle Ages, but Zino repurposes the slur, demonstrating his awareness of the historical and political reciprocity of gazes and looks between the Arab world and that of Europe. Curiously, the term "Moor" (Sarrasin) fallen out of usage; one could argue that the legacies of colonialism remain operative in contemporary French society, and thus, an African might call himself a Sarrasin simply to be ironic. Or Zino could simply be trying to be humorous.[46] Molitssanti is the name of Michael Imperioli's character on the *Sopranos*, who is the hot-headed protégé of the family boss. They formed La Swija in 1999, under the tutelage of Soprano and Psy 4 de la Rime, appearing on various hip-hop compilations and *mixtapes* before branching out on their own to record a series of mildly successful solo albums: *Des Racines et Des Ailes* (2004), and *Au sourire levant* (2009); the latter enjoys significant playtime on French hip-hop station Skyrock. Swija asserts on their blog that, "Ils s'influençent de nombreuses tendances musicales (Reggae, Chansons françaises, Rock et Musiques électroniques), et La Swija ne s'enferme dans aucun stéréotype et propose un Rap original." Indeed, La Swija

[45] There is yet another brother in this musical family, nicknamed K-rlos (Karlos de la Vega) who founded the group Liaison Meurtrière.

[46] A modern usage of the term "Sarrasin" occurs in the comedy *Les visiteurs* (Jean-Marie Poiré, 1993) the story of a medieval nobleman and his squire who are transported from the twelfth century into modern-day France. When the squire crosses the highway on foot, he clashes with a Black postal worker driving his car. Horrified, the squire scampers away, shouting warnings to his master, "Missieur!! Un Sarrasin!!"

presents thoughtful lyrics against a background of a variety of musical inspirations, such as techno and rock. They remain an important contribution to Marseille hip-hop.

One of the criticisms against some Marseille rappers is their lack of political engagement; while many rappers speak from positions of highly unequal access to power, few have actually forayed into the political arena beyond grasping the microphone to speak for others. One exception is Keny Arkana, an extremely popular female rapper who styles herself as an "alter-rappeuse," referring to her promulgation of the "alter-mondialiste" movement in Marseille. Keny, whose moniker is the *verlan* of *niquer*, expresses herself in rage-filled, biting, and oppositional lyrics indicting the French state. Born in the Parisian suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt in 1982 to parents of Argentinean origin, she lived in group homes and foster care before moving to Marseille in the mid-1980s where she spent her youth in the 1990s rapping with other artists at the studio Friche de la Belle de Mai. Keny released several self-concept cassettes and mixtapes before being signed by Because Music (the label that produced Manu Chao and Les Rita Mitsouko, among others) and her first album, *Entre Ciment et belle étoile* (2006) stayed 53 weeks on France's Top 150 music chart. The style of her music is reflected in the content of the lyrics and her clear diction and rage-filled tone. In *Entre Ciment et belle étoile,* Keny Arkana criticizes the geopolitics of the last ten years, especially the postcolonial North/South economic divide that has fostered vast inequalities and acute poverty, and in particular, the social exclusion of the youth of her generation. Keny foments a rejection of bourgeois values, indicting other rappers for their lack of political engagement. In "Le rap a perdu ses esprits" from the album *L'esquisse* (La Callita, 2005). she states:

> Eh le rap, t'a perdu de vue ta lutte, embourgeoisé?
> Ton petit confort avant tout, hein, c'est sûr que là t'es plus pourchassé?
> Mais fais gaffe car ils aimeraient te déraciner
> Te dénaturent en te déviant de tes principes faisant de toi un produit l'assigné?

Keny alludes to the irony that while the ruling classes consider rap to be a dangerous tool of popular discontent, in reality, her contemporaries merely adopt a militant stance, and do not take action against the targets in their verses. Therefore, as she insists, rappers must not lose sight of their mission in favor of money, glory and style.

If Marseille rappers of the 1990s critique contemporary politics, in particular the rise of the Front National in the Provence region,[47] Keny Arkana continues in this vein against a new target, Nicolas Sarkozy, while situating her ideology in the context of Marseille. Keny Arkana is one of the first artists to manifest public opposition to Sarkozy, and her artistic response to the 2005 *banlieue* riots was uniquely Marseillais. Her song "Nettoyage au karcher," using Sarkozy's term, was a direct response to then-Interior Minister Sarkozy's June 2004 remark that the cités of France needed to be cleaned with a hose, and his infamous use of "la racaille" to describe the diverse residents of France's housing projects. She states in, "Nettoyage au karcher": "Sortez les dossiers du placard, C'est à l'Elysée que se cachent les plus grands des racailles!" Arkana condems Sarkozy as being pro-Bush, totalitarian, in the same vein as Hitler, an Islamophobe bent on privatizing what belongs to the French people—all people. This was not the first time Sarkozy had provoked popular reaction from a musician. The Parisian rapper Doc Gynéco (real name Bruno Beausir) of the group Ministère A.M.E.R. publicly

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[47] Fonky Family, for instance, refers to the FN many times in *Si Dieu veut* as "Le front de la haine," and Le Troisième Oeil makes reference to FN's notorious assassination of Ibrahim Ali in their song, "La Guerre."

threw his support behind the then-candidate at a UMP political rally on 2 September 2006 in Marseille.[48] Fans' reacted so negatively that pro-Sarkozy Gynéco was forced to leave the stage at his concert in Geneva on 2 August 2007 amidst jeers, heckling and chants of "Sarko facho, Gynéco collabo!"[49] Arkana also denounces what she views as a bifurcation of the notion of justice and the "fracture sociale" inherent in French society. Having established herself as an anti-globalization *rappeuse politique*, Arkana released a mini-album in April 2008 called *Desobéissance* that mixed the genres of audio and print medias. The album is available on-line and one is encouraged to print out and distribute the pamphlets that accompany it; subjects include solidarity with the Oaxacan teachers' strike, anti-capitalism, and a campaign against television (which she considers a form of social control). Arkana states, "L'obéissance est la clé de voûte d'un système qui détruit notre monde"[50] and calls on youth to rise up against what chains them, implying that Sarkozy supporters and followers should revolt. She proposes, instead, an ideology of communitarism and affirms that social problems should be addressed at the community level. True to her aims, Keny Arkana founded a social movement in 2004 called "La Rage du Peuple," located in the Noailles neighborhood of Marseille, and a group called "Appel aux sans voix," a series of social forums arranged around themes such as homelessness and women's rights.

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[48] For one view of the events that unfolded during the concert, see article entitled: "Hué pour son engagement pro-Sarkozy, Doc Gynéco interrompt un concert à Genève" *Le monde* 7 août 2007.

[49] Doc Gynéco's latest album, *Peace Maker* (2008) was produced by none other than Pierre Sarkozy, one of the president's sons.

[50]From the website, http://www.keny-arkana.com/desobeissance.

A brief mention of the history of Marseille album compilations is in order here. Self-concept cassettes,[51] arranged around a specific theme, gave artists greater exposure, as well as control over their own images. These albums, as Gilles Suzanne states, "mettent en scène le côté sud... et ses langages (78)," framing the diverse notion of "Marseille rap" into a social context. Common threads are visible and audible in compilations such as *Face cachée de Mars*, *Chroniques de Mars*, *Sad Hill*, and *Ghetto Sud*, which appeared from 1999-2002. The compilation *Face cachée de Mars* contains tracks by underground and forgotten artists, with the exception of 45 Niggaz and Puissance Nord.[52] The tracks include "Tranche De Vie" and "Les Rues Marseillaises." *100% Hip-hop Marseillais* (Groove Magazine France, 1999) was produced by the French hip-hop lifestyle magazine *Groove* and featured the popular artists Prodige Namor, Troisième Oeil, and Puissance Nord with tracks like "Espoir" and "Club Merde." *Chroniques de Mars* was undoubtedly the most successful of such compilations; its cover features the image of a giant asteroid flying swiftly toward earth, symbolizing the way Marseille rap impacted the world music scene. Faf Larage, Freeman, Shurik'n, and Fonky Family all participated in the album. In songs like "Le retour du shit squad" the groups valorize marijuana use among young people, and in other songs they employ the imagery of war and battle to suggest the unification of Marseille due to rap. In 2004, a disc entitled *OM All Stars* was released by BMG Media. It featured numerous rappers such as Keny Arkana, IAM, Soprano, and Faf Larage, among others, all rapping about the city in

[51] A self-concept cassette is an album produced by a single record label that contains songs by various artists, and is usually cheaply produced.
[52] Other artists who appear on this album include B Vice, Fresh K and Original Boyz. 45 Niggaz composed another Marseille-centric concept album, titled "Les Guerriers de Mars" that featured songs titled, "Représente Marseille" and "Mon Micro et Mon Glaive."

tracks like “l’Amour d’une ville,” and “Mars dans la peau.” While some songs, with uptempo rhythms, singable choruses and stadium-style cheering are seem as though the album is destined to be played at the Vélodrome during matches, a few tracks, particularly the one by Keny Arkana, reveal the tensions that exist between pride for one’s place of origin and critique of it. In “Les Murs de ma ville,” Keny Arkana asserts : “les murs de ma ville, parfois glorifiés, parfois maudits.” A few soccer players such as Olympique de Marseille’s Abdoulaye Mëité rapped alongside them, mimicking American basketball players’ unfortunate forays into music. The seriousness of such an effort is debatable, but the album did enjoy success.

Other vectors have popularized Marseille hip-hop in France and abroad, not only giving Marseille rappers more exposure, but also offering representations of the cultural context within which rappers’ identities are created. Thus, intertextuality is an important component of the Marseille rap aesthetic. Artists such as Akhénaton and Def Bond participated on soundtracks for films set in Marseille, as with Gérard Pires’ *Taxi* trilogy (about a pizza delivery boy who becomes a taxi driver for a mob boss, and thus chaos ensues). In a sense, the use of local musicians confers “authenticity” to the film’s diegesis. Akhénaton and Kamel Salah’s film *Comme un Aimant* elicited tremendous critical response; no other feature film set in Marseille has captured the essence of its hip-hop the way this film has. Bruno Coulais’ score is inextricable from the plot, which recounts one day in the life of Panier-dwelling friends. Akhénaton and other rappers appear in it themselves, along with a cast of native Marseille people. A few tracks stand out: Bouga’s “Belsunce Breakdown,” whose opening piano riff against a silent background is strikingly modern, and Chiens de Paille’s melancholy “Comme un

aimant."[53] Likewise, although the score to Karim Dridi's Marseille film *Bye-Bye* (1995) contains little rap music, one character's choice of wardrobe calls attention to the trends of the period. The character of Rhida (played by Sofiane Madjid Mammeri, who later went on to star in *Comme un Aimant* as Christian) sports a t-shirt emblazoned with "Je danse le mia" in giant blue letters, an artifact of the era that reflects youth sensibility to rap music. Lastly, Jean-Claude Izzo's novels pay homage to Marseille hip-hop. The first novel in his trilogie Marseillaise, *Total Khéops* (Gallimard, 1995), is named after a member of IAM. The narrator, cop Fabio Montale, praises the group, stating that, while rap is not his favorite music, their texts "cartonnaient juste" and their *groove* is good (96). Films and novels set in Marseille from the mid-1990s to 2002 that refer to and interact with hip-hop and rap music produced there provide insight into the city's rhythm--its groove. A fuller exploration of the film and novels connected to Marseille hip-hop is outside the scope of this chapter, but it is important to note its impact on other cultural forms.

Conclusion

How has the worldview of Marseille artists changed in the years since IAM declared, "Je viens de Marseille, la ville photique, ce qui implique, logique, l'unique chaleur de mes lyrics"?[54] It is worth noting that since the release of IAM's first album, changes in the city's infrastructure as well as the inauguration of the Euroméditerranée Project have created new social cleavages in the city center, threatening to exacerbate a

[53] For a full discussion of the film score which points out the hybrid musical influences, including African-American, Sicilian and Muslim, see Francesca Sautman's article, pp. 141-143. Carrie Tarr briefly reviews the film with respect to social exclusion, pp. 104-106.

[54] "Je viens de Marseille" (*De la planète mars*).

North/South divide such as the one that exists in other French cities. A second important element in Marseille rap is the notion of the global/local divide to which I alluded in the introduction. In general, an awareness and sensibility to global issues and world politics has appeared in each of the artists' subsequent albums, with a few exceptions (Faf Larage, for instance). As Seth Widden argues in his essay on IAM, issues of globalization and belonging have become more prominent in their works. Going global encompasses a widening of rappers' social critique, and hence an emphasis on the rapper as thinking, feeling subject. In my view, when an artist "goes global" s/he not only establishes that sort of footing in the "global hip-hop community" mentioned previously, but expresses the possibility that hip-hop can be a source of cultural identity and a potential point of affiliation that can be shared across racial and ethnic lines.

As can be evinced from record sales and concert billings, Marseille groups have enjoyed monetary success and international fame, which raises the question of whether the groups can continue to express a vision of Marseille youth life in their lyrics when they no longer live the lifestyle. Arguments about cultural authority and racial authenticity are attached to conventions of rap/hip-hop; on one hand, for some young people, rap is a means to escape urban poverty and violence, yet rappers respond to the imperatives of the space they construct in their songs (Marseille's rough neighborhoods, France) as localized subjects, actors, and players. In looking at the successes and failures of Marseille rap groups, several conclusions can be drawn about the history of rap in Marseille. Talent and musical ability aside, it seems that IAM is revered by some as emblematic and representative of the city, while Soprano is considered a popular rapper *from the quartiers nord*, when both groups practice the same art, in the same discursive

space. It appears that Akhénaton's whiteness, despite his Italian immigrant origin, make him more *Marseillais*—or more French—than Soprano. The geopolitical situation in the last ten years, meaning current debates over immigration and citizenship, made race more prominent, and thus more of a discriminating factor.

In large music warehouse stores such as FNAC and Virgin, the two most popular in France along with Amazon.fr, music is categorized according to the political economy of identity. "Gangsta", "rap parisien" and "rap marseillais" are three such labels, in which groups of different national and ethnic origin and different levels of attachment to these categories of identity are inscribed. To explain the rise of Marseille rap in the late 1980s, its explosion in the 1990s, slight wane towards the turn of the millennium, and then its return full in force in the last five years, is not a simple question of geography and *terrain*, but constitutes its own quest around the notions of category and identity. Identification with the city of Marseille is a crucial component of rappers' identities and this is evident in their self-presentation toward the beginning of the 1990s, but as time wears on, this becomes less important. Just as IAM's hit song "Je danse le mia" led listeners on a journey through the temporal and spatial realm of their "coming up," many of the latest releases from Marseille rap groups, such as Keny Arkana and Soprano, reference their journeys as influenced by the groups IAM, Fonky Family, and Troisième Oeil. These journeys are written through lyrics which I discuss in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

"Giving Voice Through Lyrics"

"Quand tu écris un texte, tu sais qu'il part de la rue pour y retourner."—Fonky Family[55]

From 1991-2010, Marseille rap artists use symbolic language and a vernacular unique to the expressive culture of rap to cast their perceptions of the social, political, and cultural realm in France. With the help of hip-hop media coverage and a grassroots production structure, as well as the Internet, Marseille rap songs brought to life through poetry the living conditions of the disenfranchised and diverse social and ethnic subjects who claimed Marseille as their home. Rappers expressed opinions on a variety of both regional and global issues, speaking out about the many tensions in their environments, between socio-economic classes, races and ethnicities, and between people of nonwhite immigrant origin (especially youth) and those considered "Français de souche," among others. These rap lyrics relied on the refiguring of their native Marseille's variety of the French language together with English slang, local expressions, and various terms from North African dialects of Arabic, as well as English and Comorian, to transmit powerful messages to the listening public. Rapped and/or sung while accompanied by beats and music, the songs are also available for reading on compact disc inserts; and on artists' official websites and blogs as well as posted on unofficial fan pages and lyrics databases. The lyrics have become part of Marseille's "social fabric" and part of the consciousness of a generation of youth who grew up listening to and memorizing them, and thus "return to the street," as the group Fonky Family declared. Indeed, Marseille rap lyrics lend

[55] Quote from an interview with Catherine Peillon, *Fonky Family, Rap de rue* Les Musicales, p. 200.

themselves well to a study of how musical identities are fashioned and negotiated into models of belonging for youth in Marseille of the 1991-2010 period.

The rap songs of my corpus tend to fall into one of three categories: ballads, with or without a refrain that present a unified first- or third- person story or fictional account of urban life; five or six stanza poems in which each stanza invokes a new idea or theme; and first-person monologues, in which one rapper speaks his/her ideas without a refrain or any singing. In many instances the text represents a collaborative effort among several artists, and each rapper not only contributes a set of verses but his/her own style and artistic reputation to the text. Some of the questions I will attempt to answer within my interpretative content analyses are: who is the narrator? What is the mode of address? To whom is the song destined? What is the ideological "stance"—both in terms of ideology proper and social position, of the rapper? Modes of address allow us to study how rap texts construct different listeners and participants in the lived experience of hip-hop culture, and thus reveal the implicit social meanings of the text. My approach views cultural productions such as rap texts as being both consciously and unconsciously linked to other ideas at work in French society. Their consumption creates subject positions for their listeners through selecting a Marseille rap album off the shelf (or downloading one), memorizing the lyrics, and singing along, as all such activities mediate a symbolic relationship between the rappers and their devoted fans.

My hypothesis is that Marseille rappers' regional agenda is structured by a vision of France that differs from other regional rappers as well as along overlapping registers of citizenship and participation. In this chapter, my interpretation of Marseille hip-hop lyrics demonstrates how Marseille rap developed as an example of a particular type of regional

French musical identity within the global phenomenon of hip-hop music. Indeed, the processes of identity development in Marseille rap can best be understood through certain textual elements in rap songs that stand out for their creativity. In these songs, poetics manufactures meaning, bringing together aesthetics, themes, mode of address, and style. The songs chosen span the years 1991 to 2010, with an autobiographical portrait of the rappers through their lyrics. The poetic gestures performed during these nineteen years of Marseille rap constitute a musical genre as such, and the fashioning of the genre is significant in understanding rappers' self-construction. Marseille rappers have, over the years, conferred a global dimension to their concerns while fostering an energetic regional cosmopolitanism.

Schoarly works on French hip-hop have most often used thematic approaches to the lyrics, amalgamating the texts of rappers from different regions and cities, sometimes to the detriment of the rappers' autobiographical representation. For example, Pierre-Antoine Marti's thorough volume, Rap 2 France: les mots d'une rupture identitaire supposes the notion of a rupture between marginalized youth and normative forces and institutions in French society, supported with copious examples from French rap texts to support this. The prioritization of a rap text's political message over its aesthetics diminishes the work's opacity, according to which meaning is not immediately obvious, and not everyone is destined to "understand" certain texts. Yet, the ethnographer assumes the rapper is speaking *for* a certain sector of the public, and that s/he is speaking to *them.* Thus, one need only read a few rap texts to understand how a certain sector of the population feels about a certain issue, such as racism. One reads a few rap texts to "see"

how young North Africans (or any number of purportedly cohesive groups) "feel" about a certain issue, as though rappers (although they claim to be porte-parleurs at times) spoke for everyone.

In Le rap français: esthétique et poétique des textes (1990-1995),[56] Isabelle Martínez uses a literary approach to discuss poetic elements in rap texts as part of an overall strategy to present rap-making as an aesthetic pratice. My approach, however, differs from Martínez's in that I will consider *why* meaning is made in the text as well as the *how.* As H. Samy Alim states in the anthology Global Noise, "hip-hop is the primary site of identification and self-understanding for youth around the world" (5). I would like, for my purposes, to emphasize the latter, the "self"-understanding: thus, throughout this chapter, I emphasize rappers' self-construction. Writing poetry is not only a way for youth to escape poverty and marginalization by means of the commercial success of their records, but it fulfills the poet's need to understand him/herself by creating and negotiating an artistic identity that is deliberately in conflict with some of the available models of being in French society.

The following songs, grouped according to message while maintaining a chronological order within each topic to exemplify the evolution of major ideas, all point to the importance of formulating and producing a specific Marseille identity. This analysis of lyrics follows these steps: first, I situate the song's importance within the unity of the artists' work and the circulation of performers and their ideologies and

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[56] Martínez's volume is an important contribution to scholarship in French rap, in particular for its analyses of the inventive linguistic elements that French rappers have used. Yet Martínez melds two apparently contradictory positions—that rappers emancipated themselves from the French language's rigid rules and grammatical constraints while at the same time inventing and fusing slang, regional dialect, and neologisms, staying faithful to a great tradition of French-language poetics (74-75).

influences. I then determine both the material and poetic context of the text, identifying the song's themes and how they are aesthetically and musically conveyed through poetic devices. Since it is impossible to ignore the musical elements and structures that convey meaning through sound and tone, I allude to other ways through which meaning is communicated along with the text. For example, elements I consider important, such as sampling, melody and tone, as well as voiceovers, dialogue from films, and ambient street noise are all part of a rap song's sound collage; such intertextuality between rap songs and different musical genres is of crucial import.

The practice of sampling invalidates notions of original and copy. I include references to and information about, wherever possible, the particular song and artist from which that Marseille rap group sampled. The "DNA" of a song, sampling is of particular importance to the genre of rap, since it relies heavily on the transformation of previously recorded tracks into new sounds and beats. Moreover, the songs chosen by the artists to sample can sometimes reveal not only artistic and musical choices but political ones, and demonstrate the wide variety of influences and traditions from which Marseille rappers created their genre.

"Contrat de conscience" (IAM, *Ombre est lumière*, 1993)

In "Contrat de conscience" from IAM's 1993 release *Ombre est lumière*, the rappers mix personal anecdotes about their experiences with racism alongside views about what they deem to be an increasingly reactionary and hostile world as France enters the last decade of the millennium. The four rappers of IAM rap about French hypocrisy toward ethnic minorities over a forceful bass guitar melody, drum beats, and record

scratches. “Contrat de conscience” stands out on IAM’s sophomore release that contains other hits such as “Mars contre attaque,” the song that inflamed a regional dialectic between Marseille and Paris, and IAM’s global smash, “Je danse le mia.” The text consists of four stanzas in rhyming couplets, each spoken by a different rapper, with the shouted refrain, “Je suis tenu par les liens d’un contrat de conscience.” Said contract is perhaps their position as outspoken critics of France’s social and political tendencies of the period, with their perspective emanating from the Provence region, where, pointed out in the introduction, the National Front gained a record number of votes at that time. Although the National Front is never mentioned by name, IAM reflects upon and denounces the role of propaganda, the sensationalism in the media, and the hypocrisy that is found within the National Front discourse and it advocates a categorical rejection of these tendencies.

The song begins with the rapper Chill as he ponders his status as chronicler of his generation’s concerns. He defends the medium that he has chosen in order to do so: rap. Standing at the precipice of the twenty-first century, Chill sees two options for the future of hip-hop music:

> En cette fin de 20ème siècle, quel est le meilleur parangon?/
> Une masse hypocrite aux masques cubiques?/
> Ou une poignée au discours immobile comme une cariatide?

Alluding to two types of sculptures (according to the Petit Robert, “parangon” means an “example” and is a Greek term for Black marble [1841]), Chill wonders whether the French public, whom he calls “la masse,” has either the face of cubic masks and the voiceless apathy of the Greek sculptures, signifying how the French public reacts to his art. Chill comments on the negative association that the public casts on rap music, and

especially, the writing of rap lyrics. He describes it as, "rap-racisme-banlieue en équation," stringing the terms together with hyphens in the text in order to solidify the way in which the notion of racism against banlieue-dwellers are elided by his critics. As evidence of his critics' rejection of his subject matter, Chill says, "Ils pensent qu'il n'est pas très judicieux de traiter/ Des cités," implying the conflation of working-class, peripheral districts with crime and misery. Instead, his critics, who have become seduced by the sensationalist media, "espèrent des sujets bateaux, des paroles plus flasques," preferring lyrics and rhymes devoid of controversial topics; but Chill refuses lyrical complacency. He considers himself a political, engaged rapper, differentiating his art from what he calls "musique de putes."

In the second stanza, the rapper Shurik'n describes his "contrat de conscience" recounting a time when he was the victim of a prejudiced gesture on account of his being black. Embittered by this episode, Shurik'n's tone grows increasingly hostile and rage-filled, the incident becomes a point of departure to denounce the vexing racism widespread in French society. Initially Shurik'n voices a nihilistic view of the French public: "les temps changent, mais pas les gens ni leur esprit/ aucun changement n'est constaté entre hier et aujourd'hui." The repetition of "change" as both verb and noun solidifies his opinion. Although at first he questions the utility of meetings and demonstrations for social change ("je me demande à quoi tout cela sert/ les meetings and manifs qui finissent en mini guerre"),[57] Shurik'n then declares the demonstrations of the early 1980s useful when he thinks of his own encounters with racism. He describes a night out, when, as he walked solo on the street with his hands in his pockets, a woman

[57] Shurik'n alludes to the Marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme, or the efforts of groups such as SOS Racisme.

fearfully tucked her purse out of his reach as she walked past. In the verse, "Je sens sa peur quand elle change son sac de côté" the operative verb "sentir" is used, rather than "voir"; although their interaction was brief, a mere passing by, so marked was he by the woman's action that he felt it deeply. Shurik'n analyzes the episode by using two rhyming nouns that complement each other, "ce genre de réaction a droit à mon aversion," whereas the passerby's initial aversion to his skin color had instigated the incident. Stirred up by the memory of the anecdote, Shurik'n offers some observations on French citizens' hypocritical attitudes regarding race, which suggests that somatic features collapsed into ethnic identity inspire racist and prejudicial actions. For instance, consider the verses:

> [C]es idiots critiquent leurs voisins maghrébins/
> Qui réservent leur place pour Agadir au mois de juin/
> Qui resteront sur les plages jusqu'au soir/
> A faire le tournedos et cela dans l'espoir/
> De prendre quelques couleurs sombres, y'a plus de charme/
> …De retour en France, on vante son bronzage/
> Et on vote la flamme pendant les électorales.

Here, Shurik'n ridicules French people, who, hostile to their North African neighbors, aspire to acquire "couleurs sombres," while flocking to Moroccan beaches as summer tourists, only to return and vote for the National Front, whose symbol, of course, is a flame. On one hand, skin color does essentialize identity, as seen in Shurik'n's encounter with the purse-clutching passerby; yet on the other hand, ethnic origins (that is, one can visit Morocco and become tanned, resembling some Moroccans skin tone, while *being* Moroccan is a different story) are inextricable from one's identity within the French realm. Shurik'n reacts violently to this hypocrisy: using words such "crétins," "s'indigne," "frappe au poing," and finally, "le flot de mes colères." Shurik'n's anecdote,

told forcefully in this part of the song, illustrates how somatic features that convey race and ethnic identity, and, at least in the views of the National Front, by extension, immigration status, have become one of the defining lines for situating oneself in French society.

"Un brin de haine" (*Métèque et mat*, 1995)

Another way some Marseille rappers have expressed musical identities is by evoking their Italian origins[58] through text and music as a rhetorical tool to emphasize solidarity with other groups of immigrants. The "Italian question" is an interesting one with respect to French hip-hop. In a world where the majority of rappers espouse North African, African, or Caribbean origins, and where Blackness or Brownness is normative, individuals who represent European immigration offer new perspectives on the construction of artistic identities in Marseille hip-hop. Through a close reading of and Akhénaton's "Un brin de haine," Chiens de Paille's "Le dos courbé," and the collaboration, "Bien paraître," I note how each song contextualizes and articulates a specific Marseille identity through lyrics.

The title of Akhénaton's song, "Un brin de haine," problematizes the image of Marseille as harmonious melting pot by referring to the destructive "grain of hate" the song's characters possess. In this song, Akhénaton inveighs against the racism toward and fear of North African immigrants, and though the racist depicted in the song is himself an immigrant, he is of Italian origin. "Un brin de haine" is a medium-tempo song featuring Akhénaton rapping forcefully over a track of beats with no refrain. Though the

[58]Akhénaton (Philippe Fragione) of the group IAM and of the Chiens de Paille (Rodolphe Gagetta and Sébastien Alfonsi) are respectively of Neapolitan and Lombard Italian origins. Gagetta states on his blog that he named himself after Sacco of Sacco and Vanzetti.

song explicitly contains third-person dialogue and the characters' inner thoughts, the narrator speaks all dialogue in the same tone as the rest of the song, rather than allowing the characters to speak for themselves. In this sense, the narrator's point of view asserts itself as primary. The song tells of two young men, Stéphane and Isham, whose downward spiral into criminality results in their both being the victims of gun violence. "Un brin de haine" begins by describing sixty-year-old Calabrian immigrant Vincent, father to a young man born in Marseille called Stéphane (whom he named thus, "afin qu'il puisse mieux intégrer dans la société"); as the song's narrative reveals, Vincent's racism (and by implication, the elder generation's) is built on hypocrisy. Stéphane's proclivity for vice led him down the path to becoming a juvenile delinquent, as described in the verses, "Mais Stéphane qui a grandi ici dans le vice/Est une autre statistique de délinquance juvenile." Akhénaton perhaps unintentionally inserts his own voice when he describes Stéphane's partner Isham, "Son meilleur ami Isham, ce jeune qui vient de Nice/Autant que je sache est ma foi un gosse bien tranquille." Isham is an easygoing young man and not a troublemaker, but because of his North African origin, he suffers the blame for their concomitant acts as indicated by Vincent's assumption that Isham, not his son, is responsible for their delinquency:

> Son père qui va le chercher au poste la nuit
> Fait retomber la faute sur celui qu'il appelle l'Arabe
> Les gens vivent si proches, et les cultures s'ignorent
> Comme deux jumeaux qui sont assis dos à dos

The third and fourth verses of this stanza are the narrator's analysis of the situation; Stéphane and Isham are both Southern French citizens, belonging to twin cultures, yet one is Othered on account of his North African, not Calabrian, origins. The idea of Italian and North African immigrants sharing "twin cultures" evokes a non-ethnocentric

cosmopolitanism rooted in both groups' sharing the discursive space of multicultural Marseille; moreover, both have the same legal standing in France as French citizens.

Akhénaton paints a rather ridiculous portrait of Vincent, a loathsome, obsessive man who is so consumed with hatred and fear of "Arabes" that he sleeps beside the Bible and a .22 caliber rifle. Akhénaton contrasts this image of Vincent in Marseille with a description of Vincent's peaceful, crime-free Calabrian existence of his youth, "Lui qui dormait la porte ouverte dans la maison de famille/ Dans la campagne qui entourait Locri." The cultural mixity of Marseille's neighborhoods is evoked as Vincent reproaches Stéphane's choice of friend by insisting, "Je t'interdis de voir tous ces minables! Ne fréquente plus ce sale Arabe!" assuming that Isham is the delinquent, the instigator of his grandson's crimes.

Akhénaton also draws attention to the North-South divide within the city of Marseille, contradicting visions of the city's harmonious integrity: he states, "ces stéréotypes de la terreur qui vient du nord de la ville" alluding to the *quartiers nord*, impoverished northern districts housing many immigrants, which, although considered part of the city, remain separate from wealthier southern districts. As the song ends, we learn that, one night Isham rides along while Stéphane commits a robbery, and it is no surprise Isham gets shot in the shoulder, solidifying the discrimination placed on him. Stéphane flees home in a stolen car, returns to his apartment, and as he places the key in the door, his father, crazed by the idea that he is being robbed by les *les Arabes*, shoots him. The scene is described thus:

> Son père se tient debout dans le noir, il est chaud
> Vise la tête et lui dit "tiens meurs sale bicot"
> Il croyait que des voyous l'attaquaient
> Et s'est donné lui-même le plaisir de riposter

The phrases, “il est chaud,” and “le plaisir de riposter” demonstrate, using cruel irony, the result of Vincent’s irrational hatred of *les Arabes*. Once again Akhénaton inserts his own commentary on the episode: “Voilà ce qui arrive quand on méprise les hommes/Et qu'on se fout éperdument de l'éducation de son môme.” Thus, Akhéanton faults Stephane’s grandfather’s failure to provide an education for his children as the reason for his slide into crime. Likewise, the narrator explains Vincent’s racism by evoking the living conditions of 1990s Marseille:

> Et voici le résultat de l’entassement des gens
> Pas vraiment méchants, mais qui ignorent tout du voisin
> Août 95, aucun effort n’est fait dans ce camp
> Et cet été nous vivons un climat vraiment malsain

Once again the first-person voice resumes to insert an analysis of the situation and the current state of racial/ethnic affairs in mid-1990s Marseille: (“nous vivons”). Close quarters in addition to disregard for one’s neighbors are responsible for the fear and hatred emblematized in Vincent’s actions. In representing the racism on the part of a Calabrian immigrant toward another immigrant group, and by emphasizing the decade’s “unhealthy climate,” Akhénaton inserts a local conflict in a larger global conflict—that in order to achieve social harmony, one must have equal access to resources and socio-economic mobility. Not only is access important, but collective action must be taken to combat inequalities, yet, as he states, “aucun effort n’est fait,” indicting contemporary society’s refusal to act. Akhénaton emphasizes a broader consciousness of belonging to a wider community, one that not only includes Marseille inhabitants in August 1995, as he states, but also those “twin cultures” sharing the same space, a consciousness that could be described as cosmopolitan.

"Le dos courbé" (Chiens de Paille, *Mille et un fantômes*, 2001)

In "Le dos courbé," a track from their 2001 album *Mille et une fantômes*, the Chiens de Paille align the experience of their ancestors with the contemporary reception of and treatment of newer immigrants, suggesting that if the hope of harmonious coexistence is to be achieved, one must re-read one's history according to racial parameters. They tell an imaginary account of Italian immigrant agricultural workers who flee Fascist Italy during the 1930s and settle in France, where they are mistreated by their new neighbors. With a first-person narrative in which pronouns "nous" and phrases such as "notre histoire" are used, the Chiens seem to reach out to other young people (their listeners) in an almost didactic tone. The song's refrain reframes the migrants' plight of yesteryear into the current state of affairs, suggesting that lessons could be learned with respect to the various waves of immigrants to France. The Chiens set the scene and tone for this history lesson:

> L'Italie fasciste affiche ses litanies racistes
> Qui n'est pas pour est contre.
> Soit on s'aligne, soit ils alignent
> Des familles assistent à l'exil massif puis prises de panique s'avisent.
> Chacun quitte sa ville, jette les reliques de sa vie dans une trop petite valise.

Against a backdrop of rapid beats and choral music, the repetition of the French "i" sound in these five verses is a relentless, effective assonance: "Italie," "fasciste," "affiche," "litaine," and finally "valise," evoke Italy and the images of the words that surround it emphasize the desperation to leave it. "Affiche" in the first verse calls to mind the visual in the National Front's notorious postering of their agenda in Marseille's urban landscape—recall also, the notorious murder of Ibrahim Ali in 1995 by poster-hangers.

The immigrants' dangerous journey is vivified in the following verses: "A pied, on se risque sur les pistes de montagne," and "on passe à l'Ouest, entre pics et falaises" signifying that this is a migration from the South of Italy through the Alps.

For the Italian emigrants, France represented a quest for a new life and comfort for their starving families; however, upon arrival in their host country, their presence is cast as disturbing to their new neighbors/hosts, an ironic turn ("entre ironie"), since the persecution they had experienced at the hands of the Fascists is renewed by the French. The French, in the Chiens' words, mock the Italian exiles: "On les nomme Christos parce que trop prient," and, "Leur nom rime avec Cannelloni;" then the derision quickly turns to fear and then hatred, as illustrated in the verses: "leur présence terrorise," "leurs moeurs n'inspirent que froideur," and then, "Les propriétaires les haïssent." Their national origin and customs generate fear, anger and hatred from the French, and, notably, their level of religiosity is judged too strong. The latter is expressed by the verse, "Leur Christ fait peur," a notion that, when paralleled with contemporary debates over the seeming unwillingness of Islamic immigrants to assimilate into secular French society, serves as a reminder that Italian immigrants were treated similarly, as the feared "Other" by the French.

The song's last stanza evokes the cyclical nature of exodus, integration, and settlement in order to recapture the sentiments of turn-of-the-century immigrants and align their concerns with those immigrants of today. "Le dos courbé" takes an autobiographical turn as MC Sako recalls the immigrants' plight and frames it in the present:

> Dans nos coeurs, les pleurs des Christos s'éteignent
> Soixante dix ans s'achèvent

> Je fais la prière que ma grand-mère ignore ce que les siens deviennent
> De là-haut, qu'elle ignore qu'on accueille nos pairs comme on l'a accueillie hier
> Et s'il n'en retient qu'un, qu'il retienne ce texte, mon petit frère.

Sako maintains, through the insertion of the narrator's voice ("in our hearts" and "I pray") and the personalization of the immigrant experience to include his own family, that although Italians have assimilated into French society, they must never forget their origins and the struggle they once faced. The phrase, "we host our kin like they hosted us yesterday" emphasizes a relationship between immigrant groups that can be described as cosmopolitan. For, in problematizing Frenchness and their group's (Italians') purported membership as "French," they underscore the necessity to cast "Frenchness" as more inclusive, unlike the universalist, republican model that does not recognize differences. Finally, not only does the MC Sako call attention to the historical patterns and cyclical notion of migration and settlement, he also inscribes his text as a means to reach young people regarding their own histories.

"Bien paraître" (Akhéanton featuring Sako, *Soldats de Fortune*, 2006)

To conclude this consideration of Italian identity as fundamental to understanding Marseille rappers' self-construction, the song "Bien paraître," a collaboration between Akhénaton of IAM and of Sako of Chiens de Paille, from the album *Soldats de Fortune* (2006), contains an interesting perspective on the themes discussed above. The song explores the historical dimensions of Italian emigration to France and sheds light on how the terrain of cultural difference in France is constituted and contested. In their respective solos that make up this two-part song, Sako and Akhénaton show, by using personal anecdotes, how the obscured history of Italian emigration and the painful memories of integration into French society are suppressed. Moreover, in Akhénaton's words, in such

a society, "le paraître" or the look, or appearance, dominates, a notion that symbolizes and calls into question the "visibility" of difference.[59] Each solo ends with a refrain, sung/spoken by Shurik'n of IAM and Saïd of Prodige Namor, which fuses the solos together thematically.

In "Bien paraître," rapper Sako recounts to Akhénaton a trip he took with his father to Lake Como, Italy; this monologue serves as a narrative device linking the memory of Sako's family to the Italian diaspora and settlement in France. Sako begins by saying, "Tu sais, Chill…" addressing Akhénaton using his familiar rap alias, as though the two were having a conversation, and not recording a rap song. This adds an authentic flavor to the track and implies solidarity between rappers based on musical and ethnic identities. Sako describes his voyage:

> Y'a sept ans mon père m'emmène a Schignano
> Le village que ma famille a fui 70 ans plus tôt
> Peu distant de ton studio mais tellement loin
> C'est tout petit, quelques âmes près de Lago di Como

Sako speaks with a Southern French accent, but pronounces "Lac de Côme" in Italian, with a bit of Italian flair, attempting to authenticate linguistically his newfound appreciation for his family's background. Sako is humbled by the modest houses in the village that his family had fled 70 years earlier: "Les maisons n'ont qu'une pièce, tout tourne autour du fourneau." Indeed, the Italians in the village have maintained steadfast ties to the emigrants in France; a quick scan of some of the nameplates on front doors

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[59] Whiteness is as constructed as Blackness; although neither has any scientific foundation whatsoever, the stigmatization of somatic differences is a way to structure social relations between people. For whiteness in the context of Italian immgration, see, for example, Matthew Frye Jacobson.

reveals for Sat, that "la moitié des locaux porte mon nom/ Pour bon nombres, connaissent mes tantes et le 06."[60]

The village of Schignano is also where, for the first, time, Sako begins to understand his heritage as one of pronounced pain. Here, Sako's father "comes out" as an Italian, so to speak, for he reveals to his son his formerly obscured Italian-ness. Sako is surprised to hear his father speak his native language for the first time:

> Et sur la place de l'église face à ses gens je vais le découvrir
> Il est connu, parle italien couramment
> Surprise pour mon frère comme pour moi et pour sa m'man
> …En 23 ans il m'a jamais dit un mot de cette langue avant
> Maintenant je comprends pour mes tantes c'est la même
> L'instant me rappelle des phrases qui m'ramènent à elles

Sako is thus confronted with the memories of his family's immigration to France, as the church square functions as a *lieu de mémoire*. As he observes and listens to his father's conversations with those whom he calls "ses gens" bits and pieces of the Italian language that he once heard as a youngster are stirred up.

The visit to the village church awakens painful memories of France's initial xenophobic reaction to the Italian newcomers. The musical track in the background begins to pick up right at the point where Sako starts making connections between his personal recollection of this father-son trip with what he describes as the Italian immigrant experience in France: the song's track of drum beats becomes louder and the chorus of male voices singing "ah, ah" enters, as if to support Sako's narrative; this also mirrors his father's coming out. Sako describes French society as hostile to the Italians; just as depicted in *Le dos courbé*, the Italians hid their language, changed their names,

[60]The 06 stands for the Alpes-Maritimes region where Chiens de Paille originated.

and suffered institutional discrimination on the part of the French.[61] Sako emphasizes how the memory of Italian immigrants is deliberately eclipsed in order for the immigrants to assimilate into French society, leaving no trace of their past heritage. Italians, states Sako, learned to blend in, to acquiesce to appearances. The pain of their history and the mistreatment that they initially suffered are described as ghosts:

> Le brouillard est partout depuis l'époque de mes grandes tantes
> On [ne] veut léguer que des victoires à ses mômes en tant qu'hommes
> Mais les souvenirs qu'on efface restent chez eux des fantômes

Depicting the memory of Italian immigration to France as ghosts, as above, and also as *le brouillard* (fog), Sako resolves to get to know his origins better, articulating a desire to rediscover his roots. That the memories persist through fog and silence evokes the porous boundaries between the country of origin and the lives of the immigrants in France.

In the second part of the song, Akhénaton approaches Sako's recent self-discovery in a new light: here, he contrasts the suffering that Italians have experienced to that of other immigrants—in particular, those with dark skin, suggesting that "race" in the American sense (skin color, not class, or immigrant status per se) is the defining factor of contemporary (2006) discrimination. Beginning his part of the song *in medias res*, Akhénaton delves into a third-person anecdote about a thug of presumably Italian origin[62]

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[61]Banis par les institutions, fallait se fondre dans la masse/
Occultant leurs origines jusqu'à leur prénoms/
haïes par les instituteurs elles n'étaient qu'ombre dans la classe/
Montrés [sic] du doigt car ils étaient onze dans le cabanon.

Though in this previous verse Sako refers to his aunts, he uses the masculine pronoun ("ils étaient") to refer to everyone living in the same house, which I presume to mean the entire family.

[62] It is unclear whether the thug in question is of Italian or not, but he is most likely middle class.

who, together with a friend, steals a dining table and a set of chairs from someone's home; he loads the stolen goods in his van, and brings them home to his house for him and his wife to enjoy. The use of the third person at first seems to jar with the flow of Sako's personal narrative. Akhénaton denounces the hypocrisy that racializes criminality. Speaking of the aforementioned thief:

> Ouvre son journal page de faits-divers
> Hier soir ils ont volé deux phares chez le voisin à coté
> Il se redresse proférant des beuglements racistes
> Raccourci facile, le passible des assises
> A ses yeux c'est correct
> Comme si le vol bougnoule est crapuleux
> Et le vol rital honnête

The man's knee-jerk reaction to the news, which he immediately codes as racial, recalls Vincent's racism in *Un brin de haine* against North African immigrants. As these verses demonstrate, although our thug is himself a criminal, he attenuates his own acts by coding and attributing thievery and criminality to, one assumes, blackness and Arabness as its dominant constitutive element (as seen in his use of the slurs "bougnoule" and "rital," which, although they both refer to Arabs and Italians, are seemingly unequal.) Like their "Français de souche" counterparts, Italians, implies Akhénaton, took a shortcut in their application of racist stereotypes to their fellow citizens of immigrant origin: "raccourci facile" on account of, as he says, "les jeunes qui n'ont pas la peau nette." "Peau nette" refers of course to "clean skin" but also, "light skin," which they do not have. Akhénaton warns that they need to, "look at 50 years ago" to see how "France treated them/ how their fathers hid their mother tongue" before the same lessons of hypocrisy are handed down to their children. He then inserts his own voice into the

narrative, addressing himself to rapper Sako, "Sako tu sais d'où on vient c'était le Tiers-Monde," thereby emphasizing community and solidarity as a means to combating discrimination. Just as the song contains first the history from Sako's family, Akhénaton uses "on" ("we") to reach out to a broader Southern French community, crossing ethnic and national (French/Italian) lines, and signifying a multifaceted, inclusionary exchange between groups. Thus, different forms of address, personal anecdotes, and the interplay between first-person and third-person, work to explore the mutually constitutive racial and national identities in Marseille.[63]

"El Dorado" (Le Troisième Oeil, 1999)

Le Troisième Oeil's 1999 song "El Dorado" is a straightforward narrative in which the two rappers reflect upon the experience of the emigrant from a developing country to France. A slow, mournful number, the sonorous melody of Arabic sounding instruments in the background adds a foreign-sounding flavor to the song by amplifying its subject matter—clandestine immigration. "El Dorado" begins with a seemingly ad-libbed conversation between two men, both with heavy "foreign" accents, one wishing the other "Bon voyage" for his impending journey to France, and pleading with him to not forget his people. A first person-narrative, the song depicts the imaginary voyage of a *père de famille* named Mohammed, who, desperate to provide for his starving family, makes the decision to journey to France as a *sans-papier*, bringing with him a borrowed

[63] While I could not find data on how successful this particular song was, looking at video clips on youtube for "Bien paraître," I found many appreciative comments from people who expressed appreciation for Akhénaton's efforts. A few remarks were, "les paroles c'est ouf, ma famille viens [sic] d'italie, quasi la meme histoire..." (posted in 2009 by user *maniro572*) and "ce texte a valeur de document historique" (posted in Feburary 2011 by user *vakzaDoina*).

passport as well as plenty of ideals about what France represents. Mohamed outlines his dire situation and reasons for emigrating; he wishes to, “Donner un sens à ma vie si amère, j’en ai assez de vous voir pleurer,” referring to his family’s cries of hunger. The emigrant’s desperation is manifested by the words, “faim,” “mon cerveau torturé,” “la folie,” “cette misère,” “m’apitoyer.” In this unnamed home country, Mohamed observes his people, “un par un crever sans pouvoir me manifester.” The dangerous journey to France involved struggling to pay for his plane ticket by selling off his possessions (“tout bradé histoire d’avoir de quoi payer mon billet”) and the fear of being arrested on arrival, as evoked by the phrase, “dans l’avion crispé, terrorisé par l’appréhension d’arriver me retrouver confronté aux autorités.” The assonance of this phrase highlights his nervousness, but the following verse, in which he invokes God’s hands, mitigates his fears: “fermé les yeux, repensé à père, mère pour qui ma réussite représente la lumière pour être sincère,” which all rhyme.

The chance of success hinges upon the narrator’s image of El Dorado, which include, “la vie facile,” where “tout était rose,” and which represented “la lumière.” However, the song concludes with a bitter realization, that the narrator was in fact “charmé par le faux,” for after ten months in the country, he encounters nothing but hopeless misery. In France, he finds “des enfants qui meurent, des mères qui pleurent/ Des pères dans la terreur, des soeurs qui vendent leur corps pour s’en sortir,” which is in essence what he left back home. In addition to drugs and prostitution, there are no opportunities for employment, and living as a non-French speaking clandestine, essentially in the shadows, as he states, “je joue à cache cache avec la flicaille” is impossible. The narrator concludes the song with a embittered farewell to France:

"Tchao El Dorado, et à jamais." The narrator's conclusion that El Dorado offers nothing but horror and that his risky journey for his family's salvation was "la pire des conneries" is an interesting take on contemporary immigration. Although he does not give specific reasons for his lack of success, he hints that success is false, it was "sold" to him as an ideal and not a reality. The song poses a challenge to the dominant media discourse of immigrant "integration" into the French whole by showing one man's rejection of France's supposed ideals, while also emblematizing the plight of the *sans-papiers* in France.

"Mars contre attaque" by IAM (1993) "D'où viens-tu?" by Prodige Namor (1999) and "Les Murs de ma ville" by Keny Arkana (2005).

In the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, Marseille rap groups have articulated a separatist vision about themselves by drawing on their city's cultural and historical specificity—namely, that of a port city which by its nature is open to all and constantly changing. Through their lyrics, they express the potential for their regional identity to supersede all differences, including those of race, ethnicity, and immigration status. Therefore, these differences, or rather, differences *tout court,* must themselves be recognized/recognizable in France, where the idea of a universalist republicanism leaves little room for the recognition of race as a category of analysis (Chapman and Frader 1). The articulation of Marseille-as-Other within the discursive Hexagon by Marseille rap groups has taken several forms. In some songs, groups construct an idealized version of their city, one in which tensions between ethnic groups are elided in favor of a universalist expression "on est Marseillais"—itself Othered with respect to France, but universal nonetheless. In other songs, the grim realities of poverty and marginalization

are evoked. These descriptions are key to understanding how youth identities are formed as rappers paint portraits of Marseille and/or French social history using their spoken art.

In their 1993 song "Mars Contre Attaque," the group IAM rejects identification with the city's stereotyped representations by insisting that these clichés obfuscate the crisis of contemporary youth in Marseille. The song's title, a play on the film *Mars Attacks*, uses the common nickname in hip-hop for Marseille, the planet Mars, which evokes the alterity felt by some inhabitants towards the rest of France. IAM calls attention to the complexities of exclusion/inclusion in French body politic in a supposed multicultural city that has too long been ignored by the center, Paris, by asserting a regionalist discourse that is transnational and multicultural. IAM delivers these critiques in a forceful tone, using four stanzas of rhyming couplets offset by the shouted refrain, "Mars contre attaque." The group proclaims: "le temps du provençal rigolo est révolu," rejecting the south of France's stereotypes, such as the characters, "Raimu," "Marius, Panis, and Escartefigue" from Pagnol's films. Paris and the government's centralization have eclipsed the city culturally and financially, and the promotion of the coast, sun, and clichés masks Marseille's high unemployment, hunger problems, drugs, and poverty, as and other issues affecting youth, such as a lack of sufficient opportunities for recreation and sense of purpose, to such an extent that they turn to drugs and petty crime. In IAM's words: "sous le soleil la misère n'est pas plus facile à supporter." The oppositional tone of the lyrics is evident in several verses where IAM advocates not only the rejection of Parisian dominance, as alluded to previously, but counter-attacks: "Phocée se réveille/ Nous prendrons les moyens que vous refusez de nous donner/ vous prendrez notre apogée en plein visage comme une claque" (whereby Phocée, the name of the first settlers to

Marseille, and the nous/vous opposition represents the rest of France, and Marseille). IAM asserts that it is through the act of writing and producing hip-hop songs that the rapper can provide listeners with an insider's view of their territory, reappropriating its aforementioned marginality to the center. "Mon objectif, toucher par mon verbe, ma voix et mes notes." Thus, at the end of "Mars Contre Attaque" when IAM states: "On est Marseillais Bien avant d'être Français" the register of citizenship—or their belonging to a region—represents, I think, one of the earliest in Marseille rap, a "new regionalism" as distinct from the earlier one. Typically, according to Robert Maestri, regionalist movements are associated with the right, a return to old values, and the dominated space is normally the countryside (42), whereas here, the "region" is an urban, transnational "ville fondée par les emigrés." We see clearly in this text how identity is generated from specific places and clearly identifiable geographic space.

Prodige Namor's "D'où viens-tu," released in 1999, expresses the conflicted "nineties discourse" of nostalgia and ambiguity for Marseille. In this song the duo presents its city as a multicultural, transnational urban expanse where complex identities are fashioned according to a uniquely Mediterranean framework. Prodige Namor transmits an image of Marseille that synthesizes the regional with the universal. They draw upon the city's position as crossroads of the Mediterranean to emphasize rappers' concerns about the future by using clichés surrounding the city. "D'où viens-tu" consists of three stanzas and a refrain addressed to the listener, asking him/her to tell his/her own story of his/her origins. Namor speaks of his birthplace with fondness: "Né quelque part, flow pour mes origines sur la Méditerranée/ Le sang qui coule vous fascine, seen! C'est dans le sud que j'ai grandi, j'y a forgé mon esprit" evoking the rapper's "flow" an

essential element to style, and likening the flow of his words, to that of his blood, emphasizing that he is grew up in the south. This cements the image with the reference to the flow of the sea. A series of stereotypes surrounding the city of Marseille are invoked as part of the song's regionalist agenda. For example, Prodige Namor mentions, "52 semaines au soleil" "la canicule" and "la flambée de chaleur" and "les arômes des épices odorants sur les marchés" and "le rougail malgache" (a traditional Indian Ocean condiment) and of course, "le mistral," all terms that appeal to the senses. The geographic and climactic features thus praised form an idealized vision of Marseille that essentializes the city's identity into its traditional French depiction.

Not only does Namor praise its year-round sunshine, but also the city's multiculturalism and the mélange of different ethnicities and races which distinguish it from the rest of France. Marseille is a terrain of immigration; its geographic location as port city fostered the cultural exchanges of which Namor speaks: "J'évolue à la frontière de l'Orient" with "L'Afrique à l'horizon." And he describes the inhabitants as members of, "communautés diverses et variées/ la volonté commune est de partager" and "C'est ma fierté, héritier d'une civilisation d'origine mixtes." Namor casts the city as a "civilization" with mixed origins, transcending the idea of a multicultural city, since he posits diverse origins for Marseille's citizens, as opposed to everyone possessing a common flowing-haired Gallic ancestor. Residents come in all colors: "Les peaux ebènes sur les pistes" and also "La peau est sombre et mate sur les enfants souriants." Cheerful, harmonious people seem to live in Marseille, and no mention of discord is made. Within the city's figurative walls, residents learn about each other through the close contact they have with people from "Foumbouni, Moroni, Centuri, Tunis, ou bien Alger" who, once

settled in the city, become ambassadors for their respective places of origin, as it were. The city's ethnic diversity is not only unique per se in comparison to other agglomerations like Paris or Lille, but it is also the harmony with which they live that sets Marseille apart. For example, Namor evokes the poverty of the city's neighborhoods, describing them as, "démunis mais toujours sereins malgré la misère," calling attention to the lack of unrest and violence one would expect in a city with so many different ethnicities living in close quarters. Moreover, Namor rejects the idea of "integration" in Marseille: "Ne parlez pas d'intégration/ il n'y a pas d'arrangement." The notion of integration implies that there is one, unified, integral "whole" into which immigrants can assimilate. In a city like Marseille, the question could be asked, "integrate into what?" "French" culture? Or Mediterranean culture, which is, by virtue of its ethnic and linguistic alterity, "Other" to dominant French culture? Although the utopic vision in "D'où viens-tu" ignores the racism and discrimination in the city, it nonetheless exemplifies a nostalgic view of Marseille's cosmopolitanism.

For another view of Marseille's otherness, we look to Keny Arkana's 2005 song, "Les Murs de ma ville" in which she expresses pride on account of Marseille's unique cultural mixity. "Les Murs de ma ville" was written for the *OM All Stars* album, a Marseille-centric album dedicated to Marseille's *Ligue 1* soccer team, and deals specifically with the city. While the songs lionize the soccer team and, by extension, the city, they are not, in my view, all that interesting or special, yet Arkana's song stands out because she imagines the metaphorical concrete barriers as representative of the city's dynamic and cosmopolitan inhabitants resulting in a view of the city that can be called an all-or-nothing appreciation. I analyze the different ways in which the city's walls

emblematize the city's cosmopolitan inhabitants. An instance of the "love-it-or-leave-it" attitude expressed by Arkana can be found in the song's first verses:

> Les murs de ma ville ils sont rarement blancs, rarement propres
> Mais ils sont pleins de vie, pleins de signatures ou de coups de gueule des potes/
> Ils transpirent la spontanéité de ses habitants, de ses habitudes, des taux de /
> brigades et de ces tas de brigands

The physical depiction of the walls in these verses acts as a metaphor for Marseille citizens' lifestyles. Though literal walls are impenetrable and stagnant, Arkana's metaphorical walls are personified as porous and capable of transmitting messages ("transparent") about the city's inhabitants. The image of pristine white walls is contrasted to the ugliness that can be found in Arkana's native city: described as covered in urine, blood and alcohol ("Des petits grandissent en s'appuyant dessus, du sang, de la pisse et de l'alcool et des fous qui/ Prennent ces mêmes murs pour leur psy"), the walls silently testify to its inhabitants' personal struggles. A paradox is suggested in the following verses that attest to the walls' being reliable: "L'unique témoin des choses interdites/ Les murs de ma ville, pierres silencieuses." The walls are at once witnesses to perhaps criminal, or at least illicit, acts, but they are silent; they keep and hold secrets, faithful to their citizens.

In the next stanza, Arkana evokes the experience of Marseille youth at various stages of life: during childhood, the walls act as reliable standbys, watching over the children as the latter eat candy after school; later on in life they witness the youths' adolescent struggles for identity, and also delinquency. In these verses Arkana uses the pronoun "nous," addressing her fellow Marseille youth, and confers agency to the walls; they see, they watch, they observe, they know. Arkana imparts the power of wisdom onto

the personified walls in the verse, "Educateurs muets, durs mais droit, écrit par sur les toits tes histoires/ Les murs ont des oreilles et te tapent sur les doigts." Lastly in this stanza, Arkana affirms the use of graffiti by evoking the vivid colors of paint that, rather than besmirch the walls, vivify the experiences of the youth.

In the last stanza of "Les murs de ma ville," Arkana celebrates the energetic cosmopolitanism very much as Prodige Namor did ten years before by calling attention to and celebrating Marseille's eclectic mix of inhabitants:

> Les murs de ma ville ils sont trop cultivés/
> Ouais, tant de cultures inondent son béton/
> Ils sont même polyglottes/
> Ici c'est comme un mini-monde/
> Où tous avancent main dans la main

Obviously, Arkana insists that the mix of cultures, languages, and backgrounds is a source of strength for the walls, as evidenced in the last verse, suggesting that social advancement is only possible through the collective engagement of Marseille's citizens ("main dans la main"), despite their differences. Following this description of the city's walls, the song takes another turn, whereby Arkana calls out and lists some of Marseille's neighborhoods that are contained within the city's walls: La Plaine, Castellane (childhood home of Zinedine Zidane), La Cayolle, to name a few. This reaffirms Marseille's difference, from Paris, for example, as most *Marseillais* refer to the city's districts not by the arbitrary and bureaucratic system of numbered *arrondissements* but by the historic names of their neighborhoods.

Soprano, Comorian Voice from Marseille: "Passe-moi le mic" and "Ferme les yeux et imagine-toi" (*Puisqu'il faut vivre*, 2007)

Soprano, from the group Psy 4 de la Rime, has had perhaps the most successful solo career, second only to Akhénaton, among Marseille rappers; he has styled himself as the rapping "voice of the Comorian community" in Marseille. This stance necessitates some contextualization: indeed, Marseille's Comorian community is the largest in the world outside of the archipelago itself and is extremely well-organized politically and socially, in part due to its homogeneity (as opposed to, say Algerians who are a more heterogeneous group). The first Comorians who arrived in Marseille were mostly male dockworkers who set up housing in the city's northern districts before bringing their families over to settle permanently in neighborhoods known as Plan-d'Aou, la Savine, and la Solidarité; Soprano himself hails from Plan-d'Aou.[64] Several notable events, including the separatist crisis in 1975, and later, the notorious murder of young Ibrahim Ali in 1995, which Comorian writer Salim Hatubou describes as a "trauma," put the Comorian community on the map. Azad Halifa argues, in his book *De Marseille aux Comores* (2007), for a "double intégration" in the lives of young Comorians in Marseille, and this brings us to Soprano's lyrics. Second- and third- generation youth are "absent" in the Comores, since they were born in France, or, because those born in Mayotte are by nationality French, and cannot "return" to a place they never left, yet the Comores are overpresent in their daily lives as young *Marseillais*, owing to strong religious identity and a deep attachment to local political organizations that make the welfare of their community a chief concern (11). Halifa further stresses the importance of the neighborhood to pan-Comorian identity (18), naming Félix Pyat, and those aforementioned, as spaces where restaurants, clothing stores, and travel agencies help

[64] Writer Salim Hatubou hails from La Solidarité, and has written articles about the Comorian community. See Bibliography.

solidify ties to the islands through their activities. It is within this context that I discuss some features of Soprano's texts with respect to his artistic identity.

In "Passe moi le mic" from his album *Puisqu'il faut vivre*, Soprano engages a variety of global issues that point to the many social contexts in which his artistic identity has been constructed. The song consists of a series of imperatives: Soprano implores his listener to "hand him the microphone" so that he may achieve a goal, transmit a message, and effect change. In doing so, Soprano names himself the representative of people, an act reminiscent of early American rap artists speaking for a segment of the population rarely seen or heard—namely, young, marginalized people of color. The *narratee* that he creates exists only in the world of his songs. The *narratee* to whom Soprano addresses his song gives us an idea of who the rapper himself is.

"Passe moi le mic" is a slow-tempo song, but Soprano's rapid-fire diction and his passion are evident as he literally screams some of the lyrics, so deep runs his conviction about his role as *porte-parole*. His vision of France is fractured; the refrain of the song states, "on prend le mic pour ceux qui n'ont pas la parole" and those without voice, according to Soprano, are a variety of peoples, ideas, and communities:

> Passe moi le mic que je représente tous ces quartiers de France
> Tous ceux qui subissent l'intolérance, l'inégalité des chances/
> Toute cette misère que les médias maquillent en délinquance !

Soprano calls out the French media for their whitewashing of the government's responsibility to its citizens by framing the coverage of misery as delinquency. Soprano continues with a list of publics he purports to represent. They are social marginals: "ces mères isolées, ces grands frères alcolisés," and working-class French, "ces femmes de ménage, ces pères au chantier," as well as undocumented immigrants, "les sans-papiers,

les exilés, les expulsés, ces familles colonisées qui voyaient la France comme une terre de liberté!" Soprano shouts out to people living in his homeland, using the familiar term "bled": "ces cousins du bled qui font la plonge pour envoyer de la thune," referring to dishwashing, or other menial jobs, one assumes. In addition to working-class families, Soprano also claims to represent those affected by the tightening of the global economy: "ceux qui touchent le smic, tous ces bac plus 8 qui squattent l'Assedic!" including over-educated professionals who cannot find employment among those who share in the general misery of the population.

Broadening his horizons beyond the entire Comorian archipel, beyond Marseille, beyond all of France, Soprano speaks for an entire continent, melding issues of global import into his rhymes: "cette Afrique endettée, ces Français pas encore intégrés, cette solidarité entre peuples affamés." Lastly, Soprano casts his hometown of Marseille as a harmonious melting pot, by claiming to represent "cette Islam de paix, cette mixité entre communautés, la richesse du métissage." While he appeals to different nationalities, ethnicities, and social classes, it seems that the only thing these groups have in common is that Soprano claims to represent them with his microphone. Clearly, the Bac + 8 crew, to say nothing of world leaders, might not consider a twenty-something Comorian/Muslim man from Marseille as their spokesperson. Nonetheless, the act of representing seems to be the focus of Soprano's artistic energies. At the end of the song, Soprano shouts, "donne moi du rap qui représente! donne moi la force frangin!" thus appealing to his fellow rappers ("frangin") to return rap to is original purpose: to speak on behalf of others in an artistic way—with style, with form, supported by passion and

meaning. In doing so, Soprano's song "passe-moi le mic" demonstrates a global sensibility.

In "Ferme les yeux et imagine toi" a track from his 2007 album *Puisqu'il faut vivre*, Soprano implores his listeners to reconsider their complaints about daily life by imagining situations where they could be worse off. As in "Passe-moi le mic," Soprano spouts a succession of far-reaching and variegated opposites, encouraging listeners to close their eyes and visualize the living conditions and experiences in which the majority of humanity suffers daily. In the accompanying video clip, Soprano is filmed standing alone in the desert sands, eyes closed, singing passionately about what his life could be like. The song begins with reggae artist Blacko singing a refrain that sets up the song's theme: "On sait très bien ce qui se passe ailleurs mais on ose se plaindre/ relativise ferme les yeux imagine-toi." In the song's refrain, the lack of conjunctions (relativise ferme les yeux imagine-toi) conveys a sense of urgency in the three imperatives. Soprano continues after Blacko's refrain by describing the conditions in a nameless country: "Dans ces pays où…" and then lists descriptions of the global "South:"

> Où les hommes politiques sont en treillis
> Où la liberté d'expression est une conspiration
> Où le dollar civilise avec des canons
> Où on peut mourir d'une simple fièvre
> Où les épidémies se promènent sans laisse
> Crois-tu vraiment tenir sous la canicule
> De ces pays où pendant deux mois tu bronzes
> Eux toute l'année ils brûlent"

Similar to "Passe-moi le mic," in this song, Soprano's style of listing descriptive conditions, objects, and situations after a single theme, conjures up a "call-and-response" style that aids in structuring his vision of life in Marseille versus the nameless countries

to which he alludes. Political regimes that rule by the gun, a lack of freedom of speech, and enslavement to American military and economic policy, are all critiqued by Soprano; the fourth and fifth verses use a play on images: the image conjured up by diseases that walk "sans laisse" are linked to "canicule," evoking the dog days of summer, and thus dog-walking, a nice rhetorical device. Soprano alludes to middle-class French people on vacation in hot climates like Tunisia or Morocco, some of whose citizens are punished throughout the year by the scorching sun. Another contrast is evoked in the following verse: "Imagine ta vie sans eau potable/ une douche les jours de pluie," evoking the cruel irony that in places with limited access to clean drinking water the climate is often unpredictable. After these not-so-subtle references to life in the global South, Soprano turns his attentions toward Europe and to Marseille: "Imagine toi enfermé comme Natasha Kampusch/ ou brulé comme Mama Galledou dans le bus," referring to two completely different crimes: the former, the Austrian girl who was held captive and abused for eight years (ending in 2006) and Mme Galledou, a Franco-Senegalese woman from Marseille who was severely burned when a pack of rioting youths burned the bus she was riding. The two cases are unrelated and may seem hyperbolic to see them juxtaposed, but Soprano uses the notoriety of each crime to insist that one ought to appreciate one's own life. Whom if any does Soprano blame for the conditions he describes? He expresses considerably less rage than, say, Fonky Family's denouncement of the French government whom they deem responsible for the terrible living conditions of Marseille's working class citizens, but for Soprano, the "enemy" is less tangible and generally faceless. He seems to blame globalization, the world economy, and the

east/west north/south divide; Soprano offers no "solution" to the misery, but implores his listeners to relativise their own situations, and to stop complaining.

"Ayié mama," Psy de la Rime (*Enfants de la lune* 2008)

Psy 4 de la Rime's song "Ayié mama," from their 2008 album *Enfants de la lune* constructs the Comorian family as a site of generational and gendered conflict for the young narrator, Soprano. In "Ayié mama," the rapper seeks to locate himself in relation to two cultures, that of his mother, a Comorian immigrant, and that of contemporary France in which he finds himself living, in a rough neighborhood in Marseille. The song displays a sensibility to the changing experiences of immigration in France.[65] In theme, text, and style, "Ayié mama" is a "mother appreciation song;" a common theme in rap songs popular in American hip-hop; commercially successful rappers such as Snoop Dog, Jay-Z, and Tupac Shakur,[66] for example, produced songs in which the rapper demonstrates admiration for his mother by alluding to her personal struggles, such as having raised a (delinquent) son under financial duress, dealing with drugs, an absentee partner, among other themes. Soprano praises his mother's fortitude while expressing regret for his own criminal and rude behavior, painting a picture of their family dynamics. "Ayié mama" thus belongs to this tradition of mother-appreciation songs, but it also adds the family's immigrant status into the discourse and context. The song is a first-person ballad with a melody of lullaby-like tinkering bells that seems mawkish at

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[65] I refer to the cycles of migration to France, in particular that of Comorians. In 1975 when Mayotte voted to stay with France, the Comorian Diaspora began. Soprano and his contemporaries—now in their early 30s—are considered part of the "third generation" and were all French-born.

[66] Tupac Shakur's "Dear Mama" (1995) was written in dedication to Afeni Shakur, the rapper's mother and former Black Panther activist. Tupac recounts his mother's struggles to keep young Tupac out of trouble and to provide for his basic needs despite her being single and on welfare. Many similarities exist between this song and "Ayié Mama."

times due to the narrator's earnestness and emotion. The narrator, a young adult male, upon separating from his girlfriend, pleads his mother for forgiveness and understanding on account of his bad behavior, and his situation causes him to reflect upon his mother's choice to emigrate to Marseille. The mother-son relationship depicted here is one of discord; the song begins: "Je voulais que tu saches que je n'ai jamais voulu hausser la voix contre toi/ te faire de la peine." Mother and son both share the same stubborn, volatile, personality, yet family strife is exacerbated by the experience of inequality and poverty in France. The narrator states to his mother: "T'as choisi la France pour nous sauver, t'as fui la souffrance pour nous élever" and "je sais qu'au bled coco on n'a rien à manger." "Ayié mama" expresses the existential crisis of the immigrant: how can a young *Marseillais* of Comorian origin be expected to inhabit two spaces at once?

The narrator feels alterity toward his mother, and she to him, based on their different life trajectories:

> Je suis né de ce peuple comorien/ l'aboutissement de deux êtres…
> Tu m'as fait naître ici mais ton coeur était là-bas/
> Moi j'ai grandi ici mais tu voudrais me voir vivre là-bas

The "deux êtres" so evoked symbolize both France and the islands where the narrator's mother lived, and also, as he states, where she wished he had grown up. Moreover, his mother's ideals of France are contrasted with her ideals of what life would be like for her and her son if they lived in the Comoros. A certain ideal of Comores as emblematized in the narrator's family strife does not live up to his previously held notions, and likewise, the mother's image of Comores does not live up to the one in France. The son's ideas of his origins are changed by what he sees in France: "l'opinion que j'avais du mariage comorien ça a même empiré/ mes plaies se sont encore plus allés depuis que mon père

s'est remarié." The rhyming of "remarié" with "empiré" suggests that his disillusionment with his origins rests in family strife, following the remarriage of his father. Thus, in this song a double presence is evoked, symbolized by the son's respect of his mother.

Returning to the texts: La Swija's "Bout de papier" and "Au cimetière des poètes" (*Au sourire levant*, 2009)

La Swija's song "Bout de papier" from their album *Au sourire levant*[67] demonstrates how the rappers' artistic identities are revealed and claimed through a self-making process. The first track on the album, "Bout de papier" offers a narrative of the group's struggles as hopeful rhymers who debuted on the Marseille hip-hop scene. At the same time, it posits a self-commentary about their journey that acts as a metaphoric third person in this autobiographical song. The track begins with the sound of wind blowing, followed by a melancholic piano riff; this is one of the slower-paced songs on the album, and the rappers' diction matches the andante rhythm. Rapper Zino begins the song with references to the musicians' role as writers:

> On a choisi d'écrire nos vies sur un bout de papier
> Y'a que de l'instinct quand le cœur promène le stylo
> Parce que la vie nous parle
> On fait chanter la langue du quartier

Zino emphasizes writing as the primary focus of the rappers' energies, as opposed to music-making; the words, "nos vies" and "Coeur," are founding elements that inspire the pursuit of rap. As previously, Zino alludes to his position as porte-parole of the

[67] Only two tracks were released as singles on this album that debuted on 12 January 2009: "Bienvenue" and "Monde des merveilles."

neighborhood, solidifying an authentic tie to his community with the term "la langue du quartier," perhaps referring to Marseille-inflected speech and accent. The second verse of this stanza is a nicely-turned verbal phrase, "le coeur promène le stylo" which conjures an image of the heart leading the pen which in turn records the rapper's inner sentiments. Zino and Mistral then move on to narrate their journey as rappers, hearts full of ideas, as they struggled to record their first album. Expressing gratitude toward the senior rappers who assisted them ("Merci à Sopra[no], Matéo, et Césaré) along the way, La Swija casts their participation as indispensable to their current success.

La Swija documents the street marketing techniques that afford young rappers a means to distribute their works in their own neighborhoods and thus subvert corporate control, while also remaining "authentic" products of their communities. Mistral thus describes the process:

> Enfermés dans une cave à Saint-Hys
> On répétait, on maquettait, bien sur toujours sur mini-disque
> Les 5 titres gravés…on faisait le tour des quartiers, tous ça pour les donner…
> …Quand le CD est sorti, entre fierté et stresse
> On en vendait de la main à main

The crafting of a rapping subject began with heart and then pen; next, he recorded music in basements and friends' homes until he had enough tracks for a street-CD, which he handed out free of charge to friends and neighbors. Eventually, he recorded a studio album, which, according to the song's final stanza, lead to concerts in the region and beyond, culminating in an "official" album for sale at Fnac. The final act, Mistral notes, is signing a contract with a record label: "Ensuite on signe à StreetSkillz/ Je t'explique ! Ce n'est pas qu'un label/c'est un contrat entre amis," the bond between friends is cast as more important than the fiscal contract. "Un bout de papier" ends by evoking the title and

the first image, as the rapper states, over sound of wind blowing, “Aujourd’hui feuille blanche, encre vide/ le coeur qui parle à la vie.” “Un bout de papier” lays out not only the process by which rappers become famous rappers, but also the recording contracts themselves, emphasizing community and solidarity among like-minded rappers.

In a similar vein, “Au cimetière des poètes,” by the same group, uses melancholic imagery against a somber rhythm to emphasize French rappers’ belonging to the great tradition of French poetry and also underscores the sometimes painful process of writing oneself in poetic verse. Ruminating on a dead poets’ society, so to speak, La Swija uses the traditional image of a poet struggling to write to express their life’s dedication to writing in this song which is one of their most lyrically inventive and interesting. One might cast the theme as cliché, but considering the tendencies of rap music in general to focus on the *outcomes* of rap (wealth, fame, power) a discussion of what underlies rappers’ motivations seems a welcome contribution. “Au cimitière des poètes” begins with the song’s refrain, rapped by Diego, who conjures up two tropes familiar to poetry and the writing process: the blank ink/white paper dichotomy and that of the pen/sword:

> Je vois les colombes se déplumer
> Ou les plus grands ont jeté l’encre
> Leurs souvenirs sur des bouées
> Il y a plus de saisons c’est tous les jours l’automne et nos pages blanches se
> Ramassent à la pelle comme ses feuilles mortes

The whiteness of the “colombes” contrasts with the blackness of “l’encre” in the following verse while evoking the writer’s block familiar to many a poet: dead leaves are compared to the unused, blank sheets of paper discarded by the rappers whose ideas fail to flow and translate themselves into verses worthy of being written down. An autumn day is a fitting backdrop to express the poet’s chilled inspiration that contrasts with his

desire to travel, explore, and escape beyond the confines of his current situation. The second trope is taken up in the following stanza by Zino, who laments the lack of poetic texts in contemporary rap, "Pourquoi laisser mourir un art/ à l'heure où le savoir est une arme?" thereby aligning himself with those who would transcribe their knowledge using poetic language as opposed to atrophied clichés and gangsta tendencies.

Inner anguish is the impetus of this poet's work, expressed in the song through references to voyage, darkness, and freedom. Rather than posit the difficult *vie dans les blocks* as the source of his anguish, a common theme in French hip-hop, in his verses, Zino constructs a wholly poetic struggle. First, the poet weaves the black ink/white page dichotomy within the context of changing seasons, which in turn mirror the trajectory of the rapper's artistic identity. "Larmes d'encres…de l'encre posé [sic] sur de belles feuilles blanches/ blanches comme cet hiver/ dans un igloo mes premières lignes dansent." Ink as tears and the cold isolation of an igloo in Marseille—a city whose winters pale in comparison with those of Paris, for instance—represent the isolation of the writing process. Dancing verses are a synecdoche for the poet himself :

> Je danse sous une pluie de rime interminable
> J'ai jeté l'imperméable pour un plaisir inoubliable
> J'aime faire danser ma plume/ escalader les dunes de rime
> Voyager pour jeter l'encre dans la plus belle des îles

The transformation of dancing verses from the poet having cast off his raincoat, dancing under the rain shower of his own rhymes, to making his pen dance, illustrates Zino's conception of rap as poetry of the self. The perfect rhyme of "interminable" with "inoubliable" stresses the idea of poetry as writing that is limitless in terms of possibilities and creativity. The –er verb infinitives "danser" "escalader" and "voyager"

align together to form a portrait of the active artists, dancing and traveling about the world thanks to their craft.

The song, however, changes to a darker tone in the next few verses that describe the poet's inner self:

> Un poète passionné écrit des kilomètres
> J'écris pour panser les blessures intérieures
> J'ai trop la joie pour laisser s'exprimer mes peines extérieures
> Alors j'écris pour me révolter
> J'écris pour m'évader
> J'écris des lignes de vers alors…sur toutes les feuilles mortes avec un cœur énorme
> Regarde il y a toujours un soleil caché derrière un coin sombre.

The two phrases, "blessures intérieures" and "peines extérieures" appear mismatched; seemingly, the poet's exterior joy might be easily apparent (his situation, his family problems, poverty, economic and social marginalization) while his inner wounds not so, yet the writer is eager to express himself, which he casts as revolt and escape. Ending with the contrast between light and dark, Zino uses the metaphor of a hidden sun behind a dark corner to signify his joys of writing.

After Zino, Mistral enters the track and continues to describe the poet's writing process by evoking his own fear of the unwritten text and the blank page, while also criticizing technology's grasp on society, which results, hey says, in a lack of poetry in rap texts. So difficult is the writing process that the rapper evokes the stacks of white paper that fall, again, like the leaves of autumn, all pages that failed to become rap texts.

> Tous les jours où presque, j'enterre des textes dans un autre cortège funèbre
> Quand vient le soir l'inspiration en deuil vêtue de noir
> …la liberté est une arme, elle pleure inconsolable
> Elle meurt de solitude de peur qu'on l'oublie
> Qu'on ne sache plus l'écrire…la poésie est un fantôme, un esprit qui se cache
> Au bar des rimes disparue, un dernier verre, une dernière plume/
> Ivre de peines…

The terms “enterre,” “cortège funèbre,” “en deuil,” “vêtue de noir,” and “solitude” evoke darkness, death, and sadness, while at the same time they reprise, through imagery, the autumnal scene proposed at the song’s outset. Freedom, including the freedom to write, is the weapon with which the poet backs up his texts. Knowledge was power in the previous stanza, while here it is the freedom to write. Yet the last lines signify and end of inspiration, when both the ink and the poet’s will to write dries up.

This song is not without its own contradictions, however. In evoking the writing process, and a defense of the role of rap as freedom, and primarily a textual practice, the two rappers criticize the lack of ideas in contemporary society: “le peuple ne veut plus rien savoir/ ils pensent peu/ le cerveau lobotomisé/ aujourd’hui on apprend à vivre, à respirer avec la télé,” which poses television—and perhaps, by extension—popular culture, as the locus of young peoples’ apprenticeship on how to act in society, but exaggerates the point by saying that people learn to breathe from television. Further, Mistral notes the global phenomenon of instantaneous celebrity devoid of “realness” and meaning: “La planète clique sur Internet pour être célèbre,” together with automated, unthinking citizens who rely on technology to tell them how to think, act, and feel. This is a problematic position, given that rap’s success in France can be attributed largely to its “technicité,” alluded to in chapter one. The feelings and opinions that La Swija shares are disseminated through music and to a lesser extent, technology (music videos, blogs and websites) and are destined, as the previous verses have shown, to be consumed by the very unthinking public they criticize. Primarily, Mistral seems to criticize the lack of emphasis on writing in some rappers’ oeuvre, rather than criticize the means by which a

text is disseminated. “Au cimetière des poètes” thus “kills” its rappers and places them among the ranks of departed poets whose artistic struggles were documented on paper. In this way, La Swija illuminates a facet of contemporary French rappers’ identities using tried-and-true tropes.

The rapper as martial artist: “Fugitif,” and “Oncle Shu” Shurik’n (*Où je vis,* 1999)

As noted previously, Shurik’n’s personal interest in martial arts influenced his lyrics and musical style. Globally, the fusion of martial arts and hip-hop was not new; both emphasize battles. Battle rap, for example, a style that originated in the late 1970s in the United States, featured two or more MCs brawling it out freestyle in front of a live audience. Using braggadocio lyrics, insults, and creative storytelling, s/he who performed the slickest, most inventive rhymes and punch lines was deemed by the audience the winner of a battle; rappers also battle it out in the recording studios, trading insults and put-downs with other rappers in their albums. Rappers have also infused martial arts themes in their self-presentation. For example, Wu-Tang Clan, whose members were born in Staten Island and Brooklyn, took their group’s name from a 1981 Gordon Liu film called “Shaolin and Wu Tang,” about the traditional rivalry between the two styles of karate, Shaolin and Wudang. Similarly, rapper Shurik’n uses martial arts and warrior imagery in his texts and his rap name. This reflects the importance of his personal background (having practiced kung-fu and judo for years prior to becoming a rapper) to his artistic identity, one that is not focused on his racial origins but rather expresses a code of conduct to which he adheres. In a 1998 interview with Sophie Grassin of L’Express, Shurik’n comments on his interest in martial arts and states that he practices

kung-fu (with weaponry and all) three hours a day with a sparring partner. He then moves on to lament the fetishization of the rituals and stoicism that martial arts conjure up: "Bien que l'Occident l'habille de mythologies, l'art martial est d'abord fait pour détruire" (Grassin 1). In his lyrics Shurik'n is guilty of some of this fetishism, and as I demonstrate in chapter four, in his videos as well, but the links between warrior and poet are interesting to examine.

Shurik'n compares practicing martial arts to writing rap lyrics in his song "Fugitif" from his 1999 solo album *Où je vis*. He employs warrior imagery to express his personal responsibility to write texts that unveil truths about Marseille's dark side. The album's overall aesthetic also reveals Shurik'n's fascination with and respect for the Far East. Inspired by traditions such as martial arts, the figure of the Ninja and the Samurai, and various elements of Buddhist religion,[68] Shurik'n "tries on" an Asian-in-Marseille identity whereby he sees himself as a warrior, bound by ancient codes of respect, honor, and tradition, whose mission is to represent Marseille's marginalized youth by fighting against the system through his texts. A warrior with a figurative sword and a literal pen, Shurik'n often raps about the writing process itself, dedicating his craft to his neighborhood, as he states in a reverse synechode, "La ville est notre quartier" ("Mon Clan," *Où je vis*). While the presentation of a Samurai-like *fugitif* is an interesting twist on the long-established role of rapper as representative voice of his or her community, the emphasis given to the writing process itself is especially important for it provides a picture into the rapper's self-construction and creative process. Also, it remains to be

[68] A curious example of this can be seen in the music video for the track "Samourai" in which Shurik'n stands alone in the center of a Japanese-style dojo wearing silk pajamas, performing various karate moves as he raps.

seen if the rapper is a journalist, merely recording life as he sees it in the *cité*, painting "les choses telles qu'elles sont" or whether his position as loudspeaker entails a political or social engagement beyond writing. "Fugitif" begins with a film soundtrack—it sounds like a gangster film—in medias res, in which the titular character has outsmarted his captors, "il est trop malin." Shurik'n begins describing the writing process by creating an imagist opposition between the white page and the blackness of his words: "Je baptise un nouveau stylo/ Sous ma feuille immaculée…/ Mordu d'arts martiaux, trop de stylos/ Devant de la scène, pile au premier rang." He differentiates himself from the hordes of other rappers, in this case, referring to them by means of a synecdoche as pens, and not, for instance, microphones, thus insisting on the primacy of writing as the means to reaching his audience. He shows that prior to his beginning a new poem, there is a ritual, and he uses the language of religious ceremonies/religion with terms such as "baptise" or "immaculé." Further, Shurik'n thus describes his writing process :

> Je capte et retranscrit les faits/
> Tel est mon lot/
> Montreur de mots, diseur d'images/
> Ouvreur de cages, compteur des mots/
> Écrire ma rage sur page/
> Vomir ma noirceur

The poet's "lot" is to transcribe what he sees and feels; the black ink on the immaculate white page creates a striking image. The four "-eur" nouns, including the chiasmus within the fourth verse "montreur de mots, diseur d'images" and "ouvreur/ compteur" that describe the rapper's work are not grammatically linked, but rhyme solidly with "noirc*eur*" at the end of the stanza, suggesting the pain involved in the writing process. Further on we see that indeed pain is inextricably linked with it, and Shurik'n

demonstrates possible reticence to completing his mission: “J’écris souvent mes vers sur les nerfs/ Acerbe, je balance mes tripes sur claire fontaine/ Feeling.” The verb “balance” suggests a denouncement, almost a betrayal of sorts, and the word “tripes,” not only picks up from “vomir ma rage” previously mentioned, but evokes an interiority that is, given that one’s guts are very much personal and self-contained, private and is revealed only under duress. Like the fugitive who is “malin” but uncatchable, from the song’s spoken dialogue at its beginning, Shurik’n flees: “Là, je disparais subtile jusqu’à l’invisible Efface les traces sauf celles faites/ Au feutre à bille indélébile, sur vinyl.” Thus his work is only “visible” when audible, when rapped. Images of violence pervade the remainder of “Fugitif:” Les mots sont la voix du coeur,/ Le coeur, une voix pour les mots/ Parfois les bras portent de la rancoeur,/ Les mains deviennent des marteaux.” The personification of the rappers as “stylos” vomiting their rage onto paper, and then their bodies themselves as tools of writing violence (“les mains deviennent marteaux”) works to cast the act of writing as painful. The song ends with the refrain, “Ils ont voulu me piéger/ Mais j’ai filé, esquivé les filets, assiégé,” solidifying the image of the fugitive that was proposed at the beginning of the song. Perhaps it could be said that in writing rap lyrics for the general public’s consumption, Shurik’n attempts through his music to escape himself.

Shrurik’n’s song “Oncle Shu” (which is Shurki’n’s self-styled nickname, “Shu” being the word for “master” in Japanese) likens the act of rapping to battle, cementing the relationship between rap music and martial arts that has so affected Mussard’s youth and foray into Marseille hip-hop. Speaking of “Oncle Shu de Mars” and his preparation rituals, respect for Taoist traditions, and his lyrical superiority, “Oncle Shu” can be read

intertexutally with the previous song, “Fugitif.” The song begins with the ambient noises of a city street: cars whizz around the streets and the sound of a police siren is heard. Then, a solo transverse flute, typical of traditional Japanese music, plays a long, high-pitched note, which is somewhat dissonant against the “modern” sounds of cars and sirens, followed by a lute (which forms, together with drums, the song’s backbeat). A stereotypical, Bruce-Lee-esque kung-fu cry of, “wah!” enters the track, then Shurik’n begins rapping about his pre-battle rituals:

> J’ai brulé l’encens sacré, dans le secret developpé mon Chi
> Fait offrande à Shinam, salué trois fois mes armoiries
> Les sens aiguisés, grise, excitation maitrisée
> Trois verres de Sake me changent en Kamikaze excité

Shurik’n peppers the lyrics with vocabulary that comes from the Japanese language and would be lost on those who are not familiar with martial arts. The use of terms such as “Natemi,” “Tatemi,” “Katemi,” “Walin,” “Yin,” “Kouens,” “Shinobi,” “Bokken,” “Kashaku,” and “Kama” appear in every other verse, without definition or explanation. For instance, “Je ne veux pas qu’un Kashaku [sic] tranche mon cou pour haute trahison.” Some of these words might be comprehensible to non-martial art enthusiasts, (Kaishaku refers to the role of the Kaishakunin, who performed the duty of beheading warriors during their ritual suicides). Another example is, “Je débarque comme un Natemi/ En Kimono, l’ennemi tappe de mon Tanto sur le Tatami,” Tanto referring to a Japanese folding knife, and Tatami referring to Japanese floor mats made of rice straw. Shurik’n exemplifies a rich linguistic dexterity in his handling of these terms, suggesting not only his familiarity with Japanese martial arts weaponry and culture, but demonstrating his rapping skills through his smooth usage of these terms. He does not define the terms or

imply that his listeners should know them, but presumes a certain knowledge about Japan that aids in the comprehension of the narrative. The song “Oncle Shu” thus illustrates Shurik’n’s prowess as a warrior-rapper and moreover, the ability of rappers to play with identity in their narratives.

The examples show how rappers’ texts illuminate the process of self-construction. Marseille rappers express evolving discourses on contemporary social issues which they confront and with which they grapple in their lyrics. Lyrics are a space to negotiate their opinions and reactions to contemporary issues. My analysis of lyrics in this chapter thus raises questions about the tools of self-definition which I address in chapter four, where I focus on the role of visual culture in Marseille rappers’ assertions of authenticity. The lyrics describe one aspect of rappers’ identities, and a study of the packaging of rap CDs brings an invaluable dimension to the construction of Marseille rappers’ identities.

Chapter 4

"Beyond the Mic: The *Mise en Scène* of the Marseille Rapper"

Introduction

In autobiographical analyses of French rappers' identity construction and performance, there seems to be a hierarchy of verifiable vectors of identity, as music and lyrics are deemed authentic representations of an artist's identity while the packaging of rap albums is often glossed over. By focusing solely on the analysis of either rap lyrics or their politics, scholars have overlooked other ways in which rap artists have made meaning for themselves. While the "message" of rap has been discussed by scholars of French literature, rap music itself by musicologists, and the history and political/social implications of rap by sociologists and others, CD inserts, and to a much lesser extent, music videos,[69] have not, in my view, been analyzed to their full potential. The absence of serious analyses of the visual materials that accompanied the rap songs can be said to obscure the full portrait of the artists' identities, for one can read the visual imagery employed in the CD booklets and videos along with the music as part of a performative authobiographical strategy that uses complex aesthetics to express artists' feelings about race, ethnicity, and contemporary politics and society, among other categories. It is impossible, then, to ignore the visual modes of representation present in the promotional materials, and also how the meanings expressed in the music and lyrics work alongside the visual material.

[69] There is a rich trove of scholarship on music videos of American hip-hop and rap, which delves into such themes as the representation of the Black female body in hip-hop videos, "gangtsa" rap, and urban culture, to name a few. I did not have the opportunity to analyze hip-hop fanzines, a genre all their own.

Lack of scholarly treatment, or at least favoring lyrics over studies of CD inserts and music videos may be due to the fluid categories of analysis in which one might place the latter media and materials themselves. While CD inserts undoubtedly possess an artistic dimension over which rappers are presumed to exercise control, they also function as part the overall "packaging" of the disc itself. As a self-contained unit, and a product destined to sell for the record label, the disc's *livret* (the French term for insert and booklet) functions as promotional material. French youth's first aural encounter with hip-hop in the 1980s and early 1990s was likely with radio. As André Prévos notes, the first private FM radio stations were created in 1981, due to Mitterrand's reforms, and DJs created their own rap-only shows to play on such stations as Carbone 14 in Paris, with Dee Nasty as the most famous DJs.[70] Later on, hip-hop dance shows on television, CDs that people purchased, and music videos (on television and on the Internet) broadcast a rapper's creativity and style to their audiences. Listeners of hip-hop became *consumers* of the goods that accompanied the music, as the act of flipping on the radio or turning on the television does not implicate the audience in a direct exchange, whereas when a young Marseillais goes to Virgin Megastore and purchases a Troisième Oeil CD, opens the case and peruses the contents of accompanying insert, this elicits another level of the rapper's involvement with their implied audience, which is more direct. Thus, CD inserts can be thought of as a hybrid form of autobiography destined to reach a specific audience, and their aesthetic complexities serve to locate rap within its socio-political context.

The medium of CD inserts seems to place overwhelming obstacles in the path of rappers toward autobiographical self-construction: for one, they require several layers of

[70] André Prévos in Alain-Philippe Durand, 1. Here, Prévos discusses how Mitterrand's policies regarding Free Radio helped rap artists take control of their own radio shows.

distance between the idea, design, and finished product. When a listener purchases a CD and views the images and text in the *livret*, it is not clear, upon first glance, who exactly is the "author" of such an artifact. For example, Akhénaton's CD inserts purport to be "by" Akhénaton—partially because the music on the CD contains his words, and must meet his approval, but it is not entirely a self- and one-authored text. The insert is "signed" by Akhénaton on the cover, but the lyrics, dedications, and photos are "by" Philippe Fragione. When we listen to an interview by Philippe Fragione, we might wonder who is the "I" that is represented through images and text on the CD insert, and who is the person giving the interview? This apparent tension calls to mind Philippe Lejeune's theorization of the relationship between the author and reader. Lejeune states in The Autobiographical Pact that a contractual obligation—the "pact"—is put into play when a reader opens a book that purports to be an autobiography, by virtue of the main character's possessing the same name as the one on the byline. Lejeune maintains, "the affirmation in the text of the author's identity" refers "back in the final analysis to the name of the author on the cover" (14). This signature, so to speak, is the textual evidence that the work contains some kind of retrospective truth. Though rappers use aliases instead of their "real" names, which might dismiss an application of Lejeune's theory to this context, it nonetheless aids in understanding the *livret* as filled with autobiographical traces. The pact defines what is an autobiography and not necessarily what is autobiographical. We must look at the images on CD booklets and the text written as representational, then, and as a way to assert identity and a space within which to craft complex subjects. Thus, a CD "by" Akhénaton is *both* Fragione and Akhénaton.

Ultimately, my analysis of the CD booklets, the wordplay involved in the titles and the non-lyric text, as well as music videos, seeks to theorize a framework and reading process for cultural artifacts that are at once vectors of identity and commercial products. Without attaining a "fuller picture" of *where* and *how* these artists produce their rap, many listeners have a tendency to see rap artists as nothing more than creative "iconoclasts" from marginal ethnic backgrounds and poor neighborhoods, a stereotype of a young urban immigrant youth, singing literally the same old song about tough upbringings, hard knocks, and the rage they have towards the French state and its policies. It is important to consider the autobiographical identity performance in other positions they articulate: as we have seen in the previous chapter, the rappers express themselves alternatively through the persona of an Asian warrior, an Italian immigrant, and hard-nosed thugs as well as doting sons and brothers. The relationships between word and image and text and image thus produce rich meanings for cultural markers of identity.

In this chapter, I will discuss Marseille rappers' strategies for self-construction by analyzing nine compact disc inserts from five groups. I will show how Marseille rappers use such transnational cultural forms including and sometimes especially African-American traditions in order to emphasize local concerns and content. A few key assumptions must be made before continuing: one, that listening to a rap disc requires a certain level of socio-cultural knowledge of the content and context embedded in the text. For instance, Marseille rappers evoke their personal histories and make references to places, streets and neighborhoods that generate feeling. Second, that some work of deciphering must be done by the listener: not only decoding certain poetic metaphors, but

understanding how enunciatory (address) and linguistic (forms of language) dedications, spoken addresses, and sampling, work to create meaning. If an artist's message precipitates upon an implied audience's "getting" the message, this is even more so in rap, for it is *a priori* a message that not everyone is destined to "get." The difficulty of comprehending a rap text is inherent to the aesthetics of hip-hop. As Isabella Marc Martinez states, the rapper's diction, the extension or accentuation of words on the rhythmic line, and the often rushed delivery create a noticeable gap between the written words and their performance (44). Martinez casts the audience's efforts to understand the message of, and to sing along with, a rapper's texts as a "ritual of initiation" (45) whereby the public that makes the effort to bridge the gap between the written and performative text is rewarded with a specific type of information, and a feeling of commonality. Attentive, emphatic listening is thus required—and this recalls the notion alluded to in my introduction about rappers' sharing transnational modes of belonging with others.

While questions of authenticity affect other artistic genres and media as well, they are central to hip-hop, as "realness" and street credibility are crucial components of a rapper's success, believability, and marketability. A young Marseillais attempting to establish him or herself as a rap artist on the scene draws on the cultural idiom of hip-hop, one that might comprise rituals of clothing and dress, racial/ethnic markers, and, most importantly, I believe, the manifestation of the rapper's own identity, which he or she locates in his or her own experience, or sometimes in the story of how he or she became a rapper in the first place. A Marseille rapper as subject must display "realness"

but also must communicate that the rap song is a product of his/her own experience. As Joan Scott states of experience in Women, Autobiography, Theory:

> When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject...becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is structured—about language, or discourse and history—are left aside (59).

The vision mentioned in this quote is dependent on a certain form of evidence—the rapper's personhood as shaped through his/her experiences growing up and surviving in the same conditions and lifestyle as his/her listening public. Often, selfhood and authenticity are tied together. To interpret these identities it is important to remember that the critics' vision is shaped by language, discourse, and history. The ways in which representation figures into self-construction can best be understood by seeking the "I" in Marseille rap through an analysis of non- or extra- textual features.

Thus, rappers at once produce a commercial product, are themselves produced by the culture from which their artistic voices emerge, and in representing this culture, reproduce it. Commercialism coexists and overlaps with authenticity, and thus one must question how rappers identify themselves to their audiences. Marseille rappers reveal certain identities (racial, religious, ethnic, socio-economic) to their audiences, explicitly or through insinuation, and the explicitness of some parts, racial, for instance, might succeed or fail in courting some types of audiences in the French or global public. Are Marseille rappers mere figures of rebellion, products of their time periods, or do they

engage with social issues in a way that elevates their status as *porte-parleurs* of society's ills and to leadership roles? For example, Brian George applies Bhaktin's notion of the carnivalesque and the temporary celebrations with the *monde à l'invers* to hip-hop culture. As George states, "rap uses the techniques of late capitalism to attack its cultural superstructure, altering people's hearts and minds irrevocably and making possible a series of profound social changes" (201). Thus, hip-hop as commercial product is limited as a means of critiquing social structures, to say nothing of effecting tangible change in the lives of its listeners. It must be possible to both view rap, then, as an obviously commercial product that is marketed and promoted according to contemporary capitalist techniques, and, by measuring the tension between artistic endeavors and producers, to make visible a fuller picture of its ability to affect social change. These images of self-construction are tenable and demonstrate tension between the personal experience of a subject—in this case, the "Marseille rapper" and by extension, youth growing up in Marseille.

CD Inserts as Vectors of Identity

CD inserts are (usually) multi-page booklets ("livrets") that offer recording artists the chance to directly communicate to their consumers a wide range of information, such as production and distribution data, song lyrics, presentations of the group members, and dedications to group members' families.[71] In addition, the booklets communicate other connotative information to the listening public through paratext and intertextuality. CD inserts serve to exert control over the way the group's message and song lyrics are to be

[71] I use the term "CD insert" to refer to any and all printed material encased in a CD; some are merely one-page documents, nothing more than a cover image with copyright information on the reverse side. The term "booklet," and its French equivalent, *livret,* refer to the longer, multi-page document that resembles indeed a tiny book.

read and interpreted. They can be categorized by their degree of complexity and whether or not they contain the lyrics to the album's songs, the text of which is often essential given rap songs' tendency to be verbose and difficult to understand—although some inserts do not include lyrics because of copyright issues. Some CD inserts are distinctly illustrative of the music's content, while some merely gesture toward ideas or ideals that lie within the group's oeuvre, regardless of the songs contained on the album. Another aspect of CD inserts is their implied audience. Once the insert is published, it is up to the consumer to read it, discard it, keep it, or not. Marseille hip-hop artists are not alone in their use of CD inserts to generate meaning. Yet, an in-depth reading of them offers insight into the many aspects of the genre which is, in my view, still lacking, given that CD booklets are an opportunity for artists to express a form of agency with respect to their contribution to contemporary French culture. Mine is not the first study to look at CD inserts of Marseille hip-hop; Médéric Gasquet-Cyrus examines some inserts, yet he approaches them as *all* the non-lyrical or musical features of a particular CD: spoken voices, ambient sound, as well as spoken dedications; I will focus solely on the images in the actual physical CD booklets.

Certainly, one could argue that, given CD inserts' commercial purposes, that is, that their intent is to sell the product, rap artists may have little or no control over the visual images on the cover of albums nor over the contents of the *livret*, thus rendering them less accurate reflections of artistic identities. Yet the incentive of rappers to represent their works as having "come from the street," which suggests a strong link with the rapper's own community and neighborhood, is tantamount; inscribing their works in a local context through the use of images and symbols seems crucial in order for the rapper

to retain a sense of ownership and community of his/her music. These traces of authenticity allow rappers, in turn, to maintain some control over how their music might be received and consumed: rappers assume familiarity with their implied and real audiences and thus can speak directly to them using symbols and coded messages. Moreover, employing local graphic artsists and designers, from their own neighborhoods, or who might even be friends and associates of the rappers, is a way to elude the commodifying practices of large, distant multinational companies. Similiarly, there is a growing field of study into the vehicularization of French hip-hop in the cities, and into the types of public policy that surround its implantation (such as analyses of how public funding supports hip-hop concerts and writing workshops for local youth) that explore hip-hop marketing, and are not necessarily limited to lyrics.[72] These studies highlight ways in which graffiti art, dance, and hip-hop promotional materials figure as methods of implantation into urban centers in France. They encourage us to envision the packaging of rap in the physical form of the CD insert as having played an indispensable part in the articulation of Marseille hip-hoppers' identities. Indeed, not only did the CD inserts used to express artists' ideologies and intentions, but they provide narratives about the CD's production, revealing dimensions that may be otherwise obscured, and the presence of other types of discourse, such as a lexicon of rap slang terms used in the lyrics, or dedications that encapsulate an idealized listening public, besides those present in the artists' statements.

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[72] See the studies by Morgan Jouvenet (2006) as well as by Sylvia Faure (2005). The territorialization of hip-hop is an important theme as well in French texts. See Loïc Lafargue de Grangeneuve's study (2008) on the politics of hip-hop. Grangeneuve addresses specific questions regarding Marseille and Bordeaux as well.

Visual modes of representation provide insight into constructions of self and other in contemporary French society, and the powerful links between ideas and image as a way to organize identity. My attention to the images and text contained in CD inserts of Marseille hip-hop groups[73] primarily focuses on how self and other are defined primarily through a depiction of the rappers' discursive environments, images of which play a fundamental role in relating to local youth communities, the nation-state (France), and broader, transnational communities. The most common depictions of the multi-faceted environment in which Marseille rappers live and the ways in which group members present themselves are exercises in cultural education, because the groups make gestures toward multiple discursive spaces: the Mediterranean, the Arab world, Islam, and the Muslim world, ancient societies such as Babylone, and historically marginalized peoples, among others. In this way they present themselves as products of a cosmopolitan society, and express parallel solidarities based on race, ethnicity, and marginality. The cultural reach of hip-hop is as broad or as limiting as the rappers define it. Thus, the representation of ethnicity, gender, consumerism, and the appropriation of American-style thug posturing is integrated visually and imbricated within the social context that they live. In this chapter, I examine what representational work each insert does, and how each asserts, challenges, or stereotypes a visual representation of a *Marseillais* identity. I also analyze the correlations made between technologies of the image (on the Internet and in music videos both on television and the word wide web, for example) and hip-hop artists' perceptions of the local and the global, given the visual engagement between the artists and the public.

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[73] See appendix of CD insert images.

Not only is it important to deconstruct how the artists present themselves, but equally to question how they are "seen" and by what public. I analyze how the images should be read, and in which contexts. Some CD inserts tell the story of the album's production, and thus it serves to document the conditions of production and the work involved. Some inserts be read as a whole, can work with, or sometimes, against, the lyrics on the album, acting thus as an extension of its contents. Roland Barthes' theorization of photographic images in Music, Image, Text is instructive for this analysis: Barthes argues that all analogical reproductions of reality (photographs, cinema, and drawings) concomitantly comprise a denoted and connoted message. The latter is, "the manner in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it" (17). Images are thus not only informational, but symbolic, and contain a theoretical individuality that necessitates an interrogative reading. Art and aesthetics are utilized in Marseille's hip-hop to inspire feelings and to structure attitudes towards the French state, citizenship and relationships between people who live in Marseille (the local) and beyond (the global). My approach highlights the interconnectedness between music and the visual representations employed for its marketability and consumption.

Given that I write this dissertation in the new millennium, when downloading music has fast become the preferable method of acquiring new music,[74] CD inserts have become less important as marketing tools, and even less available as consumers opt to download music on the Internet, using iTunes, for instance. Since CD inserts were, in the first years of the 1980s, merely reproductions of vinyl record album covers, the impact of

[74] France has passed stringent laws to shore up control of Internet piracy and peer-to-peer content sharing. The administrative governmental body created in 2006 to oversee these laws is called the Autorité de Régulation des Mesures Techniques.

the cover image in particular, as compared to that of a large vinyl record, had already been diminished. Moreover, given the rise of the Internet as a marketing and communication tool, nearly every Marseille rap artist has his or her own webpage or fanpage, and databases containing lyrics,[75] images, and videos abound, which has rendered CD inserts, as CDs, a thing of the past. However, considering that IAM's *De la planète Mars* was released in 1991, just a few years after the first album ever sold on CD (*The Visitors* by ABBA, released in 1982) compact discs were at that time still fairly novel and the packaging—plastic jewel cases in which a small stapled booklet fit snugly—still offered an opportunity for the artists to "say more" to their listeners, as a coda, appendix, or even an erratum to the recorded music. Another consideration is the availability of "underground" albums and mixtapes, which, as discussed in the introduction, are part of a groups' "street marketing." Thus, my analysis of CD inserts covers the years 1991-2006, before mp3s were ushered in as the new medium of music consumption.

Definitions of self

The rappers' environment is not simply a question of where they live, nor where they produce the rap that appears on this album, but the rapper's surroundings contextualize an identity that is in negotiation with larger forces. Depictions in the CD inserts of the youths' physical and social environments illuminate our understanding of the discursive cultural zone in the city of Marseille. Rappers sometimes refer to their

[75] Many lyrics databases—for instance, paroles.fr or lyrics contained on rap2france.com—are unreliable and untrustworthy with respect to accuracy. Many songs are posted by specific users—who could be anyone—and errors or uncertainty as to a lyric or word is common.

surroundings as “le ghetto,” likening the bleak, monotone housing projects in the northern neighborhoods of the city, where mostly low-income and working class French are housed to the rough neighborhoods of Harlem or the Bronx. It is important to note that the latter neighborhoods or ghettos are more ethnically and racially homogenous as compared to a French *cité*, and thus, the term “ghetto” implies the stereotype of a socio-economic, imposed marginalization, rather than a racial one.

Through the use of images, as well as personal dedications, the rappers offer narratives of struggle as markers of authenticity. What follows are examinations of the CD inserts of Fonky Family, Psy 4 de la Rime, and IAM, in order to see how these rappers present themselves as social actors in the city of Marseille.

The appreciation of art that originates from the street is the title of Fonky Family’s second album, “Art 2 Rue” (2001): this booklet unfolds, accordion style, to reveal extreme close-up photos of the group members with small lettering identifying each one. No lyrics are offered and very little text is directly communicated, save for a few personal dedications. The CD insert seems to solidify the notion that rappers reveal a side of their environment that is hidden in some media portrayals of Marseille, yet confirmed in others. Many of the songs on this album bemoan the dirty and dangerous living conditions of Marseille’s *cités,* and the CD insert evokes this very view of Marseille. The cover image is that of an underground sewer and a large sewer ventilation cap, emblazoned with Fonky Family’s signature double “F” logo. Graffiti adorns both the front and back of the image; significant is the sludge and steam that oozes out of the sewer cap, suggesting that filth and unpleasantness are contained within the environment in which Fonky Family practice their art. As they say in the title track, the album is

dedicated to, “ceux qui taguent sur les trains, les murs crades et là où se craint/ ceux qui parlent sur la musique, ce qui décrivent joie, angoisse, haine et amour” (“Art de rue). The walls described here are already “crade,” and the area is already dangerous and shady, so the tagging is thought of as positive.

The leaflet shows the artists’ faces superimposed over familiar images of the *cité*: bleak, tag-adorned concrete structures; stairwells; and a city street, two buildings joined together by a strip of laundry hanging across them. The rappers are depicted in stereotypical “tough-guy” poses: the rapper Sat gives the middle finger sign, another shakes his fist at the camera, Menzo makes hand gestures as though he were gripping the bars of a prison cell. Their faces resemble mugshots—serious, tough, and gangster-like. These photos fit in with the surroundings depicted in the *livret*—the rappers show themselves as part of their urban environment. In representing their hometown, Marseille, and more specifically, their neighborhood, Belsunce, as a dangerous, filthy, and neglected area, Fonky Family indicts the spatialization of social difference in France. Spaces meant to house immigrants and working families are thought of spaces of incarceration, given the images Fonky Family uses.

Fonky Family’s *Marginale Musique* (2006) is practically the illustration of a group’s decline; although the group was once engaged in social and political critique, creating links and solidarities between marginalized communities, it soon lost its biting social relevance. This is evinced in the CD insert accompanying this album, and most significantly in the use of their double “F” logo, for, instead of capping a sewer in street scene, the group’s emblem becomes the opening to a giant bank vault, suggesting that Fonky Family has indeed gained financial success akin to robbing a bank. Likewise, the

rest of the images tell the story of the group's participation in an armed robbery: the frayed edges of notebook paper are depicted at the top of the leaflet along with faux-blueprint diagrams of a bank vault, suggesting the planning of the robbery beforehand. Group members are photographed wearing ski masks, posing in the back of a conversion van, and the array of tools at their disposal—dynamite, large drill bits, various sights and cameras, computers, as well as walkie-talkies—implicate them as part of a serious, high-stakes robbery. The last image in the succession are the spoils of the robbery itself, which are none other than a posed selection of Fonky Family's platinum records, graphics of which are clearly visible, including the aforementioned "Art de rue," "Si Dieu veut," and "Marginale Musique" itself. In addition, a middle image shows group members lifting Fonky Family artifacts from a safe deposit box that contains several platinum discs, and some cassettes, a gold chain with a huge FF pendant, and fliers/stickers with Fonky Family's name.

As noted in fine print on the last page, the artwork for the CD insert was created by a Paris-based graphic artist and art director named Dimitri Simon, who also created the *livrets* for artists such as Diam's, Abd al Malik, and Sniper.[76] A glance at Simon's promotional website reveals the artist's style and credentials. Simon's other designs for CD covers use studio-shot photographs, often close-up shots of an artist with a blank backdrop; his compositions are often one-dimensional. He uses techniques such as high-contrast lighting and stark white print on black, all of which suggests that the art

[76] A selection of Simon's work can be found on http://www.dimitrisimon.com and also his personal Myspace page, http://www.myspace.com/dimitrisimon. Simon also designs promotional posters for feature films, such as Luc Besson's *District B-13* and Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*. Given his work with internationally-recognized directors and recording artists, I would estimate that an artist like Simon is very well compensated for his services.

director's role in creating this CD insert was greater than the input of Fonky Family, though the rappers' input was not zero. This particular CD *livret* is not as thematically interesting or engaging as the others, but it is indicative of the self-viewing of Fonky Family as a group. As mentioned before, this was not a success as were their other albums, and the group's message, which, in the early 1990s was engaging and captivating, indeed is now trapped in stereotypical representations of capitalism. Not only do they believe their music is special, but worth stealing.

The CD cover for Psy 4 de la Rime's 2001 *Block Party* is polysemous in nature and connotes a transnational idea —literally, a "block party," social cookouts/barbecues held in North American working-class inner cities—and the transfer of the term "block" from its French meaning—high-rise apartments (blocs of HLMs) in the *cité*. Not only does this leaflet redefine the word "block" in this context but it evokes the group's living spaces and how people and territories are thought of as spaces of rejection, social malaise, and stand for the people that live in them. Given the attention that the international media pays to the "blocks," especially considering the race riots in Paris of 2005, and the stigmatizing discourses of violence, criminality, and poverty, the idea of the *cité* as a "party" is ironic. This title both assumes and rejects these notions.

Consisting of six pages, the insert for *Block Party* consists of a narrative of dedications graphically inserted into the letters that spell out the group's name; resembling a journal entry rather than intended to be legible, the run-on sentence fragments amalgamate various figures and parties that assisted in the making of Psy 4 de

la Rime's rap music.[77] Marseille regional slang is used, such as "gadgille" [girl], as well as English terms as well. The cover image for *Block Party* graphically depicts the words "Psy 4 de la Rime" in block letters, as apartment buildings. These "blocks" are inhabited, for the sides of the words contain windows and curtains, some have lights on inside, and some do not. The yellow blocks are portrayed from an aerial view of the housing projects, while just beyond lies the Mediterranean Sea, thus positioning these blocks as the *quartiers nord* in Marseille, where the group was formed in its Plan d'Aou neighborhood. While the term "banlieue" has come to be associated with Paris' suburb-city center dichotomy, the term "blocks" conjures up ways in which people are spatially differentiated. However, those growing up in these blocks pictured on *Block Party* have access to the pleasures of the Sea, situated just beyond the *cité*.

Block Party directly addresses Psy 4 de la Rime's listening public in three ways. The first is an address to those who neither listen to nor appreciate hip-hop: at the bottom right hand corner of the *livret*, the CD's title is displayed in the same font, graphics, and color as the label "Parental advisory: explicit content," a ubiquitous warning found on (American or English-language) compact discs that contain curse words.[78] An exact graphic match to that parental warning label, *Block Party* is thus an album worthy of warning, and not destined for a certain listening public, namely youth, because of its purported explicit content. However, Psy 4 de la Rime's lyrics rarely—if ever—contain curse words or vulgarities. The second address is to their listeners: the leaflet's interior

[77] The dedications are personal ("à ma mère, ma fille, et ma femme") for instance, and also to Allah, to other rap groups and production companies.
[78] These labels were added at the behest of the Record Industry Association of America (RIAA) beginning in 1985; specific reasons for requiring this label on music CDs can be found on their website: http://www.riaa.org.

pages contain dedications to various listening publics: those who are incarcerated, dead, people from Belgium, Quebec and Germany, and to the broader, "prochaine génération des blocks du Sud au Nord, de l'Est, à l'Ouest" as though living in "blocks," and therefore being marginalized, impoverished, defines their listening public. The note on the CD cover itself that reinscribes the role of rap as beneficial to society; the following quotation appears in block letters, "Enlève-nous le son, t'auras un braqueur de plus dans ta boutique." Clearly the "you" in this quote is meant to address bourgeois, middle-class French people, who may criticize and reject rap as violent, or to be feared, yet Psy 4 de la Rime assumes its positive role: keeping young men out of trouble. This is solidified by a photograph on the second page of the *livret* that shows the group members and some friends hanging out, surrounded by books and writing materials, suggesting the poetic craft of rappers is one they take seriously. "Block party" thus uses graphics, color, and direct address to create a sense of "us" and "them," and territorializes Marseille hip-hop expressing solidarity with other people living in housing blocks, even though this is not the first image many may have of rap produced in Marseille. The producer of the CD insert, the company Tous des K, is acknowledged with the following credit, "Design graphique et photographie made in Marseille by tous des K [sic]." The obvious wordplay—the English expression "made in" as well as "by," and the existence of such a specific place, suggests that this particular CD insert was created under the auspices of the group itself, in the very environment from which the rap music contained within was created.

Language is an important locus of a rapper's identity, and word choice, rhythm, and enunciation denote specific localities and origins (Silverstein 55). Marseille rap

groups have distinguished themselves through the usage of slang terms, insults, and phrases unique to the French spoken in Marseille. A look at IAM's second album *Ombre est lumière* illustrates these ideas, as their inventiveness with language is one of the group's most well-known attributes; their listeners are called upon to decode their wordplay. Some of the slang terms contained in the texts may be lost on the listener, however, and thus, a CD insert can be used to communicate their meaning to their audience. A short booklet consisting of four pages, the CD cover exemplifies the group's adherence to Egyptology.[79] Again designed by the Marseille-based graphics company *Tous des K*, the black color scheme accentuates the composition depicting stone columns, the faces of the group members with their eyes darkened in and highlighted with red, and the stone petroglyphs with Egyptian characters written on them. Inside the leaflet, IAM provides listeners with a lexicon of the expressions that they use in their texts. Beneath the image of a stone carving depicting an Egyptian eagle is the text, "La mouette de l'Etang de Berre," and a humorous description of a "Marseillais" sea-gull who wears Ray Bans and gold rings. And beneath a fragment with a hieroglyph depicting a couple, are the words, "gadgi, gadjo," with their translation, "fille, garçon." When opened, the left hand page reveals an entire lexicon with some more expressions of uncertain French or Marseillais origin: IAM seems to have invented, or at least popularized, some: *débonze, chtebeuh*; others are standard French words used in a Marseille way, such as *arracher* (mentir); and still others derive from Provençal, such as *stoquefish*. This lexicon is not only playful and humorous, but it serves as an indicator of social belonging along linguistic modes and registers.

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[79] Based on images associated with Egypt, as André Prévos has called it, "Pharoism." See Prévos in Global Noise 48.

Young people, IAM included, especially young Marseillais, find that language constructs identities and creates in-group and out-group members. As Jean-Louis Calvet states in his article "La sociolinguistique et la ville: Hasard ou nécessité?"

> "L'opposition entre *we* et *they* peut passer par des langues différentes (par exemple *nous* parlons arabe, *ils* parlent français) ou par des formes différentes d'une même langue (par exemple *nous* parlons verlan, avec l'accent des cités, *ils «* gaulois » avec l'accent parigot, etc.) Je considérerai le *français régional marseillais* comme une marque identitaire permettant à ses utilisateurs de se distinguer à la fois des locuteurs du Nord, ceux qui parlent pointu, et des Marseillais qui les imitent et « renient » ainsi leurs origines (61).

Thus, the group plays with forms of addressing the audience and their listeners by exploiting the interplay between "us" and "them." Evident in the inclusion of a lexicon of IAM-invented expressions is the importance to which the group accords their manner of speaking and richness of their vocabulary,[80] a style that not every French speaker understands. Jean-Marie Jacono, in his analysis of the group, argues that, "The kind of French spoken in Marseilles is very seldom referred to in IAM's texts" (27), which might be true of the lyrics, and an assessment gleaned from listening solely to the music, but the existence of extra-textual material—namely, the lexicon provided on this CD insert, implicates the necessity of considering all the means by which groups package themselves. Perhaps, then, since the lyrics themselves do not contain excessive usage of Marseille terms in their texts, the CD insert functions as a way to get the message of the group's linguistic singularity across to their listeners.

CD inserts are spaces where rap artists write dedications, acknowledgements, and credits, which are important components of a Marseille rapper's autobiographical

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[80] See Jean-Louis Calvet's discussion of lexicon in IAM's *De la planète mars*, 65-67. IAM's worldwide hit "Je danse le Mia" uses not only the Marseille accent but a few words like "fada" in order to impart a distinct flavor to the lyrics.

positioning. These "shout-outs" provide insight into how the hip-hoppers anchor local solidarities into a global "imagined community," to use Anderson's term, of transnational hip-hoppers. Fonky Family's debut album *Si Dieu veut* illustrates these concepts. The most brief of all their CD inserts, it consists of no more than four pages, the front cover and another page; its composition is simple, and depicts a young woman sitting defiantly on a vibrant red leather couch, smoking a cigarette. To the left of the couch, one sees the narrow streets of a Marseille neighborhood with laundry hanging between buildings, presumably the group's home territory of Belsunce. The album title *Si Dieu veut* transfers the commonly used Arabic term, is imposed on the front image in cursive script and then translated over the French, "Inch'Allah." On the second page of the booklet, beneath a photo array of the six rappers and one DJ, the rappers each make personal dedications to their loved ones: beginning with Djel, Don Choa, LaouB, Le Rat Luciano, Menzo, DJ Pone, and Sat express gratitude to various people. They thank God, "Allah, Dieu," as well as specific neighborhoods in Marseille, such as "Belsunce" and "Le Panier," the birthplace of several famous hip-hop acts including 3ème Oeil and IAM. They show appreciation to specific people in their families who have helped them along the way, for instance, "Abdel, Rachida," and they evoke their immigrant origins by saluting family members who live abroad, such as, "mes cousins d'ici et du pays." They recognize the women in their lives with the dedications, "à ma mère, à mes deux soeurs pour m'avoir soutenu," and also the general hip-hop community, "à tous les breakers," "à tous les DJs." In this way, Fonky Family invokes a global community of listeners, and creates a broad profile of their territory.

The next paragraph of dedications in *Si Dieu veut*'s insert is difficult to digest, as it contains a verbose list of the group's collective dedications—beneath a cursive script stating, "La FF Remercie…" These dedications follow one another, without indentations or paragraphs, and require significant deciphering on the part of the reader. Fonky Family thanks both private persons and institutions, some broken down by neighborhood—we see some of the organizations to which I alluded previously, "L'Organisation du centre bourse," which sponsored rap concerts and writing workshops in Marseille in the early 1990s. Among the slew of acknowledgements, is their record company, Small Records, a division of Sony/BMG, Kif-kif productions, which assisted them in their sound mixing and marketing, their graphic design team, who designed their CD booklets, and of course, the numerous other hip-hop groups with whom they have collaborated: 3ème Oeil, IAM, Sista Mickie, Prodige Namor. Finally, Fonky Family thanks the cities in which group members have friends and family members: Toulouse, New York, Maintes-La-Jolie, and lastly, Marseille.

What do we make of these long dedications on rap albums? Are they merely posturing, or par for the course? Since this is the last such CD in which Fonky Family used booklet space to do such dedications, we can conclude that they are crucial to understanding how Fonky Family came into their own as rappers in 1990s Marseille. These lengthy dedications demonstrate the value that rappers place on social relations in the *cité*, by cherishing their friends and family and emphasizing the importance of their support. These dedications also reject the media portrayals of the artists' neighborhoods as desolate, depressing spaces. Also, they show that becoming a rapper is a craft, because one can vew the dedications as "paying dues" to those that helped the rappers

along the way. As we can note, hugely popular groups such as IAM are mentioned as having assisted Fonky Family, as well as the technical supports that are crucial to a rapper's success. DJs, graphic artists, record labels, producers, and perhaps their tailors, their caterers, make-up artists, someone along the way who mixed a good beat, someone who helped with a lyric or a hook on a track appear to be included. I give these suggestions because it would be impossible to ascertain each and every person that Fonky Family thanked. These dedications read much like the closing credits on a film reel, where various craftspeople who seemingly form the "background" of a project are given textual acknowledgment as having helped create a work of art. Dedications to their city and neighborhood are a form of meaningful direct address that, as Paul Silverstein argues, functions to invoke kinship ties to the hip-hop community. Silverstein states, "[The] re-spatialization of the hood as the center of the rap groups' cognitive maps and imagined geographies entails particular political ramifications" (56). This notion is illustrated in a closer look at the rappers' dedications which emphasize rap as a craft and gesture toward broader networks of community-building.

Definition of Other

While the previous groups used images of Marseille to define themselves, others groups' album art uses images of other lands and societies, which can be thought of as self-Orientalizing. Whether using stereotypical images of the Other or of immigration, or the use of various Asian or Arabic writing, groups very deliberately make ethnic origins a prominent component of their identities, just as the groups previously discussed used their Marseille surroundings to position themselves. As Edward W. Said formulated in Orientalism, constructions of opposites and others are subject to constant, shifting

interpretation about their differences from those who are posited as self (273). Marseille rappers addresses racism through visual imagery that draws attention to historically constructed subjects that emphasize transnational belonging. For this analysis, I look at the CD inserts from the groups IAM, Troisième Oeil, Akhénaton, and Shurik'n.

IAM's first record was released in 1990 and was aptly titled *IAM Concept*. This title is, like *Block party*, polysemous in nature: a concept is an abstract or general idea inferred or derived from a specific instance, place or time. Notions of "concept" are evoked in the CD cover itself through its aesthetics: the front cover displays a black and grey background image adorned with hieroglyphics. The typeface of IAM's group name resembles a tapestry; red, black and green respectively, the letters themselves appear as thought knit from African cloth. The idea of tapestry evokes the term "*tissage social,"* which is what one finds in Marseille, according to the group's ideology. Also evident in this cover image are concepts of Egyptology, an ideology of IAM's that has been very well documented as mentioned previously. In the center of the album cover, standing apart from the grey background, is a large drawing of the African continent, in red and green, with a crescent moon and star in the middle. A circular ring of mock-hieroglyphics spells out the word IAM repeatedly, save for some yin-yang symbols and the Egyptian *ankh.* A counterpoint to both the Afrocentrism in mainstream American hip-hop and the Eurocentrism inherent in universalist France, this composition evokes a Pharaonic ideology that posits origins in Africa- but not Black Africa, rather Egypt—that also does not play into the hands of racist French leaders like Jean-Marie Le Pen who advocate a "return to Africa" for immigrants. Indeed, the symbols on the cover are quite diverse in their origins and meanings—colors, which evoke Garvey's pan-African flag; also, there

are hieroglyphics, mini microphones, peace signs, and yin-yang...everything but the fleur de lys or *bleu blanc rouge*. This CD cover is strikingly modern in its composition, for although the symbols are a hodgepodge of designs, they work with each other in a harmonious, not jarring, way, perhaps like Marseille itself, the "creuset" of France. The images used in the CD cover for *IAM Concept* symbolizes the group's hybrid, far-reaching inspirations for their music.

Le Troisième Oeil's striking CD insert for *Hier, aujourd'hui et demain* (1999) represents reality in a different light, as they adopt a piece of French patrimony and use it to underscore the "Oriental" themes in their art. The CD cover is a reconfiguration of Marseille's famous Monument aux morts de l'Armée d'Orient et des terres lointaines, known colloquially as "La porte de l'Orient." This monument honors the soldiers who died fighting for France during World War 1, and was constructed by Marseillais architect Gaston Castel and inaugurated by President Gaston Doumergue in 1927. Scripted above the monument's square arch are the words: "Aux Héros de l'Orient et de Terres Lointaines" and below the arch lies a statue of a woman lifting her arms toward the sky; when directly facing the statue, the statue appears to be sitting on the sea. Various neo-Classical relief statues adorn the arch: they represent both soldiers and citizens. Troisième Oeil's reconfiguration of the monument is an attempt to expand the definition of patrimony and reinscribe it in its existing Marseillais context, which a consideration of the CD insert reveals.

The monument depicted on the CD cover itself is striking because a few of the features of the actual monument have been altered: the neo-Classical soldiers and civilians that adorn the arch are rendered more life-like. Indeed, one of the soldiers is

depicted as Black, for his skin is entirely shaded in, as opposed to the stark grey of the actual stone sculpture, and the soldier on the right-hand side sports a full beard, and one can assume that he is supposed to be Muslim. The script at the top of the arch has been altered to read, "Aux soldats du hip-hop dévoués à jamais." One might regard these alterations as a tongue-in-cheek joke, or that the rappers' version of the monument merely likens soldiers of war to those in hip-hop. But the overall aesthetic of the CD insert suggests a deeper, indexical meaning. The graphics on the CD *livret* are that of a mock-postcard: the cover features a yellow-brown color scheme, and the monument is prominently positioned in the center; a false postmark bears the words "République Marseillaise" on the upper right hand corner. These all work to decenter Paris as the capital and recenter Marseille as the most important city in France.

The graphics and typography used for the CD's track list on the back page of the insert is made to resemble Arabic writing, although the actual words are in French. The group's name and all the track listings are written out with long strokes, slanted letters, curly tails, and randomly scattered diacritic marks which may evoke Arabic script. Additionally, a strip of what appears to be Persian tapestry embellishes the top of the image, and, with the Arabic-looking lettering, the prominent half-moon sculpted into the monument, and the darker-skinned soldiers, constructs an Orientalist image. Given that Islam figures importantly into the rappers' self-construction, as seen in chapter three, it is fitting that Troisième Oeil use a reconstruction of the "door to the Orient," a famous monument located right in their hometown, to say something about their reality. The figuration of Black, Muslim rappers as World War I soldiers implies that Troisième Oeil see rapping as a way to do battle, as a siege against the hegemonic structures of French

authority. Moreover, the CD insert evokes the idea of a counter-discourse in history—Africans, indeed excluded in the representation of French soldiers on the actual arch, are herein re-instated.

Akhénaton's album *Métèque et mat* engages immigration, race, and ethnicity; its CD insert supports and gives visual weight to the lyrical themes in several ways. Thus, the images must be read along with the lyrics. The album is deeply steeped in the rapper's personal history, as Akhénaton, the son of Neapolitan immigrants to France, dedicates it to his wife (for whom he converted to Islam) Aïsha and his son, Yanis, who, as he notes in the insert, was born doing the course of the album's recording. The *livret* is rather lengthy, comparatively; at 12-pages, it contains all of the lyrics to the songs, in a sepia tone resembling the pages of an old book, which has the effect of seeming like a historical artifact, or at least something old and trustworthy. A transnational effort, the liner points out that some songs were recorded in Marseille (Plan-du-Cuques Studios) New York (Greene Street Recording Studios), and in Italy, in Naples and Capri, at two studios bearing English names: Flying Recording Studios and Capri Recording Studios. Once recorded the songs were then mixed in New York, and in Paris. The overall style graphically demonstrates the political messages within: for example, in the title track "Métèque et mat" Akhénaton allegorizes racial relations in France to that of a checkerboard, whereby skin color denotes the axiomatic superiority of ethnic groups: "darker" immigrants from the whole Mediterranean space, including Italian and Spanish, are considered one "race," (Akhénaton notably states that "le métèque est un pur produit génétique") and were forced to submit to the "law of pale faces." The allegory is expressed through the cover image, which depicts a grinning middle-aged (Corsican?)

man, wearing a blazer, sitting at a chess board, grasping a chess piece that symbolizes Akhénaton (for it is of an Egyptian statue). The CD's lyrics, which valorize the notion of a pan-Mediterranean identity, emblematized in "un pion," can be read with the aforementioned images and work together to express this ideal.

Akhénaton emphasizes his hybrid roots through a chronicle of images of presumably Italian immigrant families who are depicted in a series of old photographs splayed throughout the album's pages. These photos provoke the audience to engage with the materials and interpret for themselves meanings that are conveyed. One might ask, how did Italian immigrants live once they arrived in France? Where did they live, how did they work, and with whom did they socialize? The viewer can construct the experiences of the immigrants that is captured within the photographs as he or she considers the relationships and the histories of the persons depicted. For instance, on the second page of the booklet, there is a faux-photograph[81] of a toddler playing on a carnival-type hobby horse. She is bundled up and formally dressed, the way young Marseillais might have dressed during the 1940s winter, as opposed to today. On page 3 of the booklet, a group photo of some men posing in front of the Vieux Port shows the immigrant working-class; one can see ships and masts in the background, which hints to the men's status as dockworkers. On page 4, ten photos depict different families who belong to different social classes—there is a young male soldier, leaning against a sign in his winter coat; some very sharply-dressed businessmen and women in fine suits; and then some happy families. One family depicts several generations of women, all dressed

[81] The image is clearly a photograph, as opposed to a hand- or computer- generated image, but since it is surrounded by a white border and placed at a seemingly random angle, the way an old photo in a photo album would end up, it is a photo made to look like a photo.

in simple clothing, and another photo shows a young blonde woman from the 1990s and several photos of children. These constructed portraits suggest family unity and cohesion. Urban and rural families are both depicted—a shot of a family among some olive trees, as well as a besuited man standing in front of his beautiful car. A wedding photo shows a happy young couple in front of their very French wedding cake, a *pièce montée*, thus emphasizing both tradition and assimilation. The composition of these photographs collectively generates what Elizabeth Edwards has called a "social biography" in Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums, (14) or the notion that images can have a performative meaning that is created by the viewer. Upon regarding the diverse images of Italian immigrants, one sees different social classes, levels of education, and wealth, and implicitly, how integral Italians were to the social fabric of their host communities. Clearly, the biography of these particular people would be familiar to those who know them, but given that there are no captions, except a note at the end, thanking various families in Italy and in France, we may assume some are Akhénaton's own relatives.

It is uncommon for rap albums to depict photos of white people in their liner notes, let alone photos of entire white families, weddings, and babies. Obviously, Akhénaton is considered "white," and thus, these are, presumably, "his people," but this CD insert has other meanings. White peoples' photos are ubiquitous and very public in visual culture, or at least, images of people constructed as white tell the History (capital H) of France and French society. Akhénaton asserts a counter-history, that is, the history of Italian immigrants in France that ought to be read differently—not as invisible, since the signifiers of wealth and social mobility are implicit in the fancy suits and

automobiles—but as an immigrant history—one that Akhénaton feels has been obscured, erased, or assumed to have blended in with dominant French history.

The front image of the CD booklet for *Où je vis* (1999) may be even more significant as a representation of artistic identity because is Shurik'n's first and only album (he is a member of the group IAM), and thus one could assume he had more artistic license to present himself as he desired. Known for his use of Asian imagery in his rap lyrics and videos, he draws from several different East Asian martial arts and graphic arts to express his identity. Blurring specificities between national and ethnic traditions, he named himself after the Japanese throwing star, claims to be a devotee of Taoism, and practices judo (from Japan) and kung-fu (China), all the while using Samouraï (Japan) styling and images. His use of Asian symbols raises questions about the appropriation of signs and symbols by other groups and cross-cultural consumption. As Arjun Appadurai stated in The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, "The diversion of commodities from their customary paths always carries a risky and morally ambiguous aura" (27). Does Shurik'n fetishize Asian symbols, or does this merely reflect global transnational flows of consumption? Moreover, as a young Frenchman of Malagasy origin, one who, according to his lyrics, feels himself Othered in French society, why does he not distinguish between the Asian countries from which he adopts signs and symbols?

Some of the features of *Où je vis* are meant to be read in conjunction with the lyrics themselves. The graphics and typesetting on the back page of the CD insert does not respect traditional right-side-up orientation. The numbers that list the tracks are placed sideways and the CD's title is depicted both right-side-up and upside-down,

suggesting a Japanese orientation of typography. Like the Troisième Oeil's use of Arabesque writing, the song titles listed on the CD cover are mock-Chinese calligraphy. They are "written" in black ink, such that one recalls Shurik'n's lyric: "vomir ma noirceur" as he discusses his role as rapper, likening the act of writing to expelling his insides, which visually contrasts the explusion with the carefully artfulness of Chinese brush painting and calligraphy. The use of technology in the graphic design to create images that evoke Asian traditional artwork are renewed in the context of this Marseille rapper's self-definition. The cover depicts the rapper from behind, standing up outside the city gazing down at Marseille. The image itself is not full, it is cut off, as though it had been painted. In an attempt to craft a unique identity, Shurik'n relies on the traditional Asian calligraphy techniques rendering his style both unique and fetishized.

Conclusion

The images contained in CD inserts were part of a whole complex of marketing tools that performers relied on to mark their identity and are composed of all kinds of symbols with their underlying connotations. As shown, both definitions of Marseille rappers' environments as well as gestures toward the Other are important graphically for ventures in self-construction. These, however, are static images: what remains to be discussed are music videos that put ideas and people in motion, as will be seen in chapter 5.

Chapter 5

"The Mise-en-circulation of the Marseille rapper"

Part I: Commercialism

Rap is the most contemporary way for youth to express at once rebellion, regional culture, and identity due to the ability of rappers to speak convincingly in the first person. As examined in the previous chapter, Marseille rappers wrote the stories of their lives through text and images, casting the cosmopolitan space of the Phocean city as the backdrop for the construction of their artistic personas. They expressed various kinds of authenticity that signaled belonging to social categories such as class, religion, and race. Yet, as Anthony Kwame Harrison argues in Hip-hop Underground: The Integrity and Ethics of Racial Identification, no other musical genre is as mired in deliberations over the notion of authenticity as is rap: as a genre, rap wavers on the edge of anti-establishment radicalism and corporate co-opted commercialism (83). Likewise, rappers straddled the line between embodying street credibility (emphasizing one's humble, poor upbringing and struggles to survive on the streets) and celebrity (exposing, or sometimes flaunting, the trappings of wealth, status, and power that result from the sales of their music). Artists forswore the corrupt values of commercial enterprise and instead promoted a "pure" ethos of art for art's sake. "Keeping it real" is diametrically opposed to "selling out," which signifies losing touch with one's original ideas, while, conversely, the former, staying "underground" resists commercialization. These two opposing positions, underground versus commercial, purport to emanate from opposite socio-political spaces—in the U.S., authentic rap comes from the street versus the suburbs, and in France, likewise: the *cité* versus the record company's hi-rise. Naturally, the term

"street cred," short for "street credibility," (in the French media, the English "street cred" is preferred, as opposed to a French translation) is a notion applied to certain rappers that implies possessing social capital gained through lived experience and staying true to one's roots.[82] These apparently contradictory positions impel the consideration of a number of theoretical issues, including the effects of globalization, consumerist society, and changing technology. The Marseille rapper as self-crafted subject is commoditized through a variety of packaging modes that anchor the self, the music, and the style, locally and globally.

From 1990 to 2010, great changes to the culture industries have been wrought by new media technologies, just as hip-hop culture has become extremely important as the site of identification for large sectors of the French youth population. George Lipsitz notes this in Dangerous Crossroads (1994), stating, "as transnational corporations create integrated global markets, as the nation-state recedes as a source of identity and identification, pop culture becomes an ever more important public sphere" (4). Rap is, quite literally, big business in France, the world's second-largest market for the genre (after the United States), and in Marseille, it has come to define the cultural métissage and cosmopolitanism most often associated with the city.[83] Hip-hop drives not only sales

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[82] Rupa Huq, in her chapter on the uses of hip-hop culture, notes an interesting malapropism spoken by an interviewee, a member of a Manchester rap group. The rapper stated, "I couldn't just go straight into commercial without proving myself…with hardcore you can get your street credit [sic] first…" This remark leads Huq to question the meaning of street cred not as social capital, but economic capital, blurring the lines between artist and product (113).

[83] As Gilles Suzanne remarks, the vibrancy and popularity of Marseille rap was one reason for Marseille's selection as European Cultural Capital for 2013. Several rappers lent their support to the Marseille- Provence 2013 selection campaign, serving as official ambassadors of the committee. Hal (Sébastian Alfonsi) of Chiens de Paille produced a short film supporting the city's candidacy that was shown as part of the official campaign

of albums and concert tickets but of magazines, clothing, and lifestyle products such as cell phone ringtones and wallpapers.[84] Its marketing products, such as websites, blogs, and social media, generate work for graphic designers and IT professionals, among others. Music videos belong to a category all their own, given their labor-intensiveness and the fact that an entire new industry came into being for their creation, production, and distribution.[85] Further, the state-controlled media (radio, television and to some extent, newspapers)[86] had played a colossal role in disseminating rap even before the inception of music videos. Thus, as Gilles Suzanne remarks, Marseille rap is as much an economic product as an aesthetic one (75), and a specific set of production and distribution practices commodifies it as a product.

I have argued that rap lyrics, music, scratches, beats, and images can be read as sites of rappers' self-construction and identity. Some rappers emphasize the writing process and the process by which they become self-made men and women. But once the text is recorded, remixed, and packaged into or as part of a CD, artists may be forced to relinquish control over the finished product to music industry marketers. Given that hundreds of people (artists, workers, dancers and more) can be involved in the shooting

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in 2008. The Marseille 2013 website displays a slideshow of photos featuring members of IAM, Psy 4 de la Rime, Chiens de Paille, and solo artists such as Algérino that were taken at the inauguration in 2008. See website http://www.marseille-provence2013.fr/ for details.

[84] Wallpapers are images that mobile phone subscribers may download and apply as the background image on their phone screen. The record company that owns a particular artists' music licenses these images for popular use.

[85] See Mako Fitts' thorough qualitative analysis of the American rap music video production industry (2008) for a discussion of the human capital required to produce a music video.

[86] I consulted interviews with some rappers in widely available periodicals such as Le Nouvel Observateur and Le Monde as important contributions to the dissemination and advertsing of rap.

of a music video, and thousands are involved in some capacity as members of a record label/production company, the question of individuality in rap becomes a concern, and the incentive to succeed commercially becomes crucial not only for artists, but for the thousands of people involved in the process, prompting us to query the amount of individualism permitted in rap. Moreover, there is a finite number of major record labels and production companies; no matter how individual an artist is, some aspects of his/her music marketing will undoubtedly be handled by people who also work for other artists—thus the artist who seeks to capture his/her individuality and remain true to his/her roots, might have to market the works him/herself. How has commercialism affected Marseille rappers' self-construction, and how do they resist being co-opted by hegemonic production and distribution structures?[87] The French media have traditionally been hostile to youth of immigrant origin in France, yet the television show "Rapline" on France's channel M6 from Bordeaux seems to legitimize—and commodify—French rap. Rappers must seek out methods of promotion and production that resist attempts at commoditization.

Below, I explore the notions of authority, resistance, and commercialism in the making and distribution of Marseille rap. The packaging of Marseille rap functions as an important site of resistance to the dominant culture's forces of commoditization, and that this resistance manifests itself in autobiographical ways. As discussed earlier, to focus

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[87] Theorists such as Rupa Huq (2006) have offered well-argued critiques of Theodor Adorno's (and that of the Frankfurt School) popular music theory that extend beyond the scope of this chapter. For example, she responds to Adorno's claim that all popular music is victimized and homogenized by the culture industry by providing counterexamples to centralization, and positing the paradox of the rise of "world music," which spread rapidly and became more available to more people when multinational corporations themselves flourished. See Huq (2006): 47.

solely on rap's political message elides the important cultural work performed by these artists. The manner in which Marseille rappers produced their albums, managed their groups, and marketed the music can be considered an artistic and creative "end" in itself. Broadly, the material conditions that govern youths' participation in popular culture can limit the ways in which they "get to" be included, yet, greater access to the technologies of cultural production has enabled them to disseminate their own works with greater ease. Marseille rappers created their own record labels in the early 1990s, imbued their music videos with Marseille-centric images during the mid-1990s, and later, from roughly 2002-on, hired homegrown artists to design their websites and blogs, such that their *culture*-making can be read as *self*-making. My study of the specific context within which rappers produced their works offers insight into the processes of musical construction, which is both socially and politically constructed.

After considering rap texts and CD inserts and their images in Chapter 4 I examine the issue of capitalism and co-opting by situating Marseille rap in the technologies of production at work in the French and global music industries. Following an overview of some of the issues surrounding commercialism and rap music, I suggest that the generic conventions of rap-making pose direct challenges to the traditional workings of record companies by virtue of its a priori independent, identity-constructing, nature. The emphasis on self-making in the lyrics is indeed codified in the structures of production and dissemination. Marseille rap artists negotiate the tensions between artistic creativity and the realities of production, dissemination, and consumption. Authenticity in hip-hop is transmitted in part through marketing techniques; I provide examples of how taking ownership of one's product and handling one's own image augments the sense of

self and signifies an attachment to the discursive space of the city. Artistic tension between rap and authenticity are seen through an analysis of two types of production and marketing tools used by the artists in my study: rap labels and music videos.

Generic Conventions of Rap and Hip-Hop

The polemics regarding the relationship between ownership, exploitation, and appropriation seem more decisively applicable to the making of rap music than to other genres of music. In the early 1990s, while rappers inveighed against the social order and economic systems that oppress minority youth in France, they were nonetheless able to profit enormously from official state policies governing the control of radios and television. French hip-hoppers benefitted indeed from several laws and state policies. One law, passed on 30 September 1986 (n. 86-1067) broke up the state monopoly on radio waves and subsequently on television stations (TF 1, for example, was privatized) and freed up spaces for new acts, provided they diffused knowledge about "Francophonie."[88] The law states: "La programmation doit spécialement viser à améliorer les moyens de connaissance et de défense de la langue française tout en *illustrant l'expression de la francophonie dans le monde*" (italics mine). These decrees made it possible for TV shows such as *Rapline* to emerge into public, French nation-sanctioned, viewing. Similarly, the law passed on 1 February 1994, commonly known as the Carignon law (n. 94-88) liberalized the French airwaves and encouraged competition with satellite channels. This allowed television stations that featured rap (such as MTV) more airtime. Lastly the Toubon Law, also passed in 1994 (n. 94-665) decreed French to be the official language of advertisements and written material, which again, the French

[88] Full text of these laws can be viewed at the website named LegiFrance, which is sponsored and maintained by the French government. See http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr.

rappers and producers used to their benefit. Rappers also benefitted from the organization of France's capitalist, hierarchical, and centralized music sales and promotion industry.[89] Historical factors can help explain why and how rap exploded on the French musical scene in the early 1990s.

In the early 1990s, cultural critics such as George Lipsitz, H. Samy Alim, and others recognized that entrepreneurship in international hip-hop culture was part and parcel of rappers' attempts to defy commodification by the very systems that they resisted, yet profited from. In 1994, Lipsitz remarked:

> Certain kinds of multiculturalism and internationalism are also essential elements in the project of transnational capital to erase local differences and distinctions in the hope of making all cultural and political units equally susceptible to investment…Cultural creations testify to the ways in which artists from aggrieved communities can use the very instruments of their displacement and dispossession to forge a new public sphere with emancipatory potential (14).

Using the tools of capitalism—marketing, advertising, branding, licensing—artists can "free themselves" from what Lipsitz views as the inevitable—the homogenization of artists' works as personal control over content and form slips away. Rather than accept co-opting and playing by the record company's rules, so to speak, the ultimate emancipatory goal on the part of the rapper is emblematized in the figure of the rapper-producer, who assumes control of his or her own production company and even helps other rappers break out into the industry.[90]

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[89] Briefly, the music recording industry in France falls under the auspices of the SNEP (Syndicat National de l'Édition Phonographique), a professional organization founded in 1922 that is charged with keeping sales records (#1 singles, top-selling albums, etc.), classifying and certifying music, registering royalties, and increasingly, exerting vigilance over digital music (downloads and pirating).

[90] France's record industry is organized as such: Vivendi Entertainment is the big conglomerate that owns SFR (France's largest telecommunications group), Canal+, and Universal Music, among others. The major recording companies are: Sony Music France

The arrival of American musical forms in the Francophone cultural sphere has followed a process of initial resistance, copying, and then adoption, notes André Prévos (2001: 713), and rap was no exception. While in the late 1980s rap music emerged as a popular American cultural form in France, its artistic and ideological components were nurtured and transformed according to socio-economic forces present in urban French society as well. Interestingly, however, the first "official" successful venture of French-language rap came in the form of a b-side on American rap group Fab Freddy's album by the French pop duo, Chagrin d'Amour in 1982.[91] This first commercially-produced French rap song was celebrated, but interestingly, also viewed with circumspection. That is, young rappers (who were already rapping, who listened to and appreciated rap, but who had not yet been officially recognized) in the French *banlieues* might have been pleased to see rap gain acceptance, but it is more likely the case, as Prévos maintains, that they were dismayed at Chagrin d'Amour's "official" recognition. This meant, of course, that this particular group's songs would set the precedent for what rap "was" in France, and in turn, other rappers would be forced to modify their lyrics and style to suit French expectations (2001: 714). Coupled with the fact that rap was initially eschewed by multinational corporations (Prévos 2001: 95), rappers needed to exert agency in the creation and distribution of their music and to innovate, seeking out other sources of revenue to produce their works.

(probably the second-largest, merged in 2004 with BMG, and possesses subsidiaries); EMI, of which Delabel is a subsidiary; Warner; and Polygram. When researching the record labels for each CD in my discography, I found that "all roads lead to Universal" or one of the other 4-5 multinationals; even if a record is produced by a small label, the latter is often owned by one of the big five. The companies that hold the largest share of Marseille hip-hop are EMI, Sony, and Columbia.

[91] See their website, http://www.chagrindamour.fr.

Once rap began to take hold in France in the mid-1980s-early 1990s, Paul A. Silverstein argues, rap artists sought to "short circuit" the system and capitalize on its fruits more directly by taking care of the production, management, and marketing ends themselves (53). This is evident in the evolution of the anti-commercial to the "hustler" type, which better accommodates commercially successful rappers. Rap artists felt pressure to craft an identity suitable (and saleable) in the mainstream recording industry while "keepin' it real," remaining congruent with the anti-conformist ethos of staying true to one's roots. The rapper-hustler is thus a compromise between both types.

George Lipsitz warned of the tenuous position of the rap artist, calling popular music a "dangerous crossroads" (12). Where there is money to be made, there are attempts to appropriate and commodify youth culture by mainstream market forces. Two veins began to emerge in French rap: one, "mainstream" rap (artists such as MC Solaar, discussed below, who was the first rapper in France to sell over one million albums), as well as IAM, who is considered by most scholars to be mainstream, and a second, the "hardcore" or "gangsta" rappers such as Assassin and NTM. Hardcore rappers use harsh, unflinching language to interrogate and denounce the French state and call attention to taboo subjects such as colonialism, drugs, and police brutality. However, once their music becomes commodified as a commercial product, it loses its political dimension as it adapts to the demands of radio stations and record labels (Tshimanga 253). That rap is always in danger of being elided, washed out, co-opted, and erased by exterior forces emphasizes the importance of the act of self-promotion as a form of cultural resistance.

The process by which rap became "officialized" in French cultural discourse is paradoxical, particularly because such assimilation represents not only the Francization

of a distinctly African-American cultural form, but also because, in France, it is usually a product of the *banlieue*,[92] and thus, of ethnic and racial minorities who are rendered invisible in French society.[93] For French officialdom to declare rap as fitting in with French culture norms is to accept its content as somehow belonging to a great tradition of outspokenness and protesting, and of course, to accept the availability and openness of a public sphere within which to commit such rabble-rousing. As David Looseley argues, the *chanson française* is *the* "official" French musical style—yet, "rap was probably the easiest [form] upon which to stamp a label of French authenticity" (Popular Music 56). Rap melded easily into cultural traditions, much more in fact than did pop or rock music, Looseley continues: "Its semi-spoken nature allows the stresses and cadences of French to be accommodated somewhat more comfortably since they are not constrained by a melodic line" (56). While the musical form of rap might have been seen as adaptable to the French language, and thus considered legitimately "French," the rappers' manner of protest and resistance was soon legitimized as well, which can be viewed as co-opting rap. For example, Jack Lang, Minister of Culture and then Minister of Culture and Communication (1981-1986, 1992-1993) initiated a series of public subsidies for rap concerts, festivals, and funding toward writing workshops. One such festival was the

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[92] One notable exception is the hugely successful French rapper Kamini, whose debut single "Marly Gomont" (Psychostar World, 2006) became one of the most-downloaded songs and most-viewed videos on the Internet. In "Marly Gomont," Kamini raps about growing up in rural Picardie, part of the only Black family in a town of less than 500 people, thus defying the stereotypes of rap and the *banlieue*.

[93] That is, invisible not only due to their being denied access to employment and political power but also due to the absence of race as official categories of recognition by the government. As Chapman and Frader note in Race in France, legislators in the Fourth Republic reaffirmed restrictions against the state gathering statistics on racial, ethnic or religious affiliation (3). Researchers are forced to use data on place of birth as a hint at ethnic identity.

still-running national Fête de la Musique. As Charles Tshimanga argues, Lang was keen to represent world music as a "symbol of multiculturalism and inter-ethnic solidarity, contemporary expressions of French republicanism. Thus, rap could be represented as being as much a continuation of French oral tradition as chanson and perfectly compatible with a European literary cultural heritage" (144). Thus, "allowing" minorities' participation in official culture through state-sanctioned music festivals and writing workshops seems a gesture wrought with tension.

The case study of Parisian rapper MC Solaar is instructive in understanding how commercial success can discredit a rapper's claims to authenticity. Born Claude M'Barali on March 5, 1969 in Senegal to parents of Chadian origin, MC Solaar's career as a solo rap artist exploded in the mid-1990s after he recorded several demo tapes and was instantly signed to a major record label, Vivendi.[94] He has enjoyed a long career in the French public spotlight, selling out concert tours in Poland, Africa, and Russia in 1992, serving as a juror at the Cannes Film Festival, working with Amnesty International, and winning several French music awards. He suffuses his lyrics with references to his heritage[95] and the African continent while describing his teenage years and how he finally came to discover rap. On account of his smooth-toned voice, described as "velvet," unlike the harsher tones of other rappers, his music was credited with a veneer of *French touch* and cool-ness that exported very well overseas, especially among middle- and upper-middle- class white college students in the US.[96] Many consider MC

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[94] See Radio France website for a detailed biography: http://www.rfm.fr.
[95] For instance, using Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal in his songs.
[96] The song "La Belle et le Bad Boy" *Cinquième As* (France: Elektra, 2002) was featured prominently in the penultimate episode of *Sex and the City*, and his album *Prose Combat* (France: Cohiba, 1994) is the 25th bestselling international rap album on amazon.com—

Solaar the "poet laureate" of the French suburbs; this image has brought controversy, however. Solaar was criticized for "selling" the image of the integrated Black (Cannon 164) both in France and overseas. His poetic language and the use of "standard" French as opposed to *verlan* or the reputed "banlieue" accent allowed him to export his music as a *French* rapper—a legitimately French rapper. Solaar explained this in an interview article in 1994:

> "I didn't want to speak like the people in the suburbs, but use good French, even if I'm a black man…I needed to do something, so they don't look at the color but the artistic way of (what) I am doing. This way I can say there are things that are not good in the country. If it is well done, you don't know what you look at first, the color or the way that it is written. Is it the artist? Or the color? That's how I do it."[97]

Here, Solaar emphasizes the necessity to use standard French to overcome stereotypes and prejudgments that might arise had he spoken like the youth in the *banlieue*—in order for his message and his critique of the French state and colonialism, for instance, to be treated seriously. I would argue that Solaar's rap falls perfectly well within a French poetic tradition, he was pressured to shed some components of his identity in order to be successful—and in this we see the process of co-opting.

Part II: Rap Labels

In Marseille, hip-hop has derived its cultural force, particular in the mid-1990s, through its independence from commercial, official modes of production thanks to the entrepreneurial efforts of artists such as Akhénaton and later, Soprano, both promoters of their own record labels, who define themselves more as artisans than artists. As Hughes

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the former is 39th. These are just two measures of the success of his exportation in the United States. A measure of his acceptability is that is also used in French language pedagogy in the United States.

[97] Dana Thomas, "Rapping Up the World: The Freshest French Export Is MC Solaar." *LA Times,* 8 June 1994.

Bazin notes in La Culture hip-hop, these artists developed interstitial spaces of cultural creation outside institutional forms and constructed experiential routes for their work (102). The tension between large companies and smaller labels goes back decades, but this tension is more complex than simply a matter of size, whereby smaller labels promote niches in the market and larger companies control more of the market.[98] Somewhat paradoxically, smaller production labels offer more centralized control and greater product diversification at the same time. Profitable independent labels are almost always absorbed by larger companies, or enter distribution and licensing deals that transfer significant profits to the majors (Krims 136).

Creating a rap label offers the appearance of control and oversight, but the two modes of production (a major record label versus a small, independent label) display both ideological and economical ambiguities. As Barbara Lebrun notes in "Majors et labels indépendants: France, Grande-Bretagne, 1960-2000," multinational recording industries are known as "les majors" in France, and are called as such not solely on account of their size, but because the record side of their business represents just one branch of their activities (37). Lebrun's research on the advent of independent labels in the UK and in France shows that independent labels arose in the 1970s around the punk rock music scene. One of the first independent labels in France was Rock Radical Records (later named Bondage) founded in 1982 by Jean-Yves Prieur, member of a Parisian punk band, The Brigades (1982-1989). As Lebrun notes, Prieur formed the label as an alternative to the domination of the majors, which punk bands considered imperialist in nature. Their manifesto was the following: "de faire exister les groupes de manière autonome, de

[98] As the Union des Producteurs Phonographiques Français (UPFI) website states, as of 2005, independent record labels account for 35% of the entire French market.

proposer un système sans concession, suffisamment solide et efficace pour éviter le circuit normal" (40). Here we see the emphasis on an alternative ethics of production and a willingness to avoid using official and commercial routes to record and promote one's music. This alternative ethics also gives the artist street "cred."

A familiar explanation for why so many successful rap recordings have come from independent labels is because they are "closer to the street" (99). However, as Keith Negus suggests, this is too neat an explanation, and invites criticism on many fronts: for example, one might suggest that smaller labels give the appearance of freedom, and allow artists to work directly with the target audiences to whom they sell and market their works (speaking to them in "their" language), but in essence act as procurers, securing clients for the multinational. A second criticism lies in the genre itself, according to Negus:

> The genre culture of rap posits a different notion of musical practice… in terms of the idea of a 'career' and sense of belonging to a musical entity. Rap posits a fluid series of fluid affiliations and associations, alliances and rivalries. These affiliations are lived across various groups and individual identities (94).

An examination of IAM's efforts to circumvent multinational record labels and innovate in the neighborhoods of Marseille supports Negus' notion. IAM was the first Marseille-based group to take financial control over the licensing of its own music. As Prévos remarks, Le Nouvel Economiste titled the group "Men of the Year" in 1996 because, since the release of their third album, the members of IAM had become owners of their songs. In 1995, *Côté Obscur Edition* negotiated a contract with the large conglomerate EMI to obtain the rights to use all of their songs (908), which is especially important in

rap, given the issue of sampling.[99] They also negotiated the rights to produce the music and video for all the groups under their label. At the end of 1996, IAM employed 60 people in its record company, based in Marseille, 12 of whom worked full time, something previously unheard of for a rap group.

Philippe Fragione's other projects also emphasized independence, business acumen, and a desire to capture control of Marseille's hip-hop scene before the multinationals stepped in with their obviously greater capital and purchasing power. His label Côté Obscur launched Fonky Family's career; and in 1998, Fragione created the label 361 Records,[100] which did the same for the careers of Psy 4 de la Rime and Chiens de Paille (Fonky Family and Chiens de Paille would later go on to sign with bigger labels, such as Sony Music France). Notably, Côté Obscur and 361 records were not structured the same way as one of "les majors," but rather like a family: at least in the beginning, each label had one or two salaried workers who took care of managing artists, recording, and also marketing. Philippe's brother Fabien worked at the label as the contract person in Paris, and Aïcha (Fragione's wife) took care of the contracts. In 2002 La Cosca earned 46,331 Euros and sold 395,000 Euros in dividends, according to an article in Le Figaro (Lutaud, 2005). Fragione also involved himself in other projects around the creation of rap—in 1999 he invested funds toward a chemical study of carbon fibers and record disks. Fragione's incredible artistic output and entrepreneurial ventures have quite markedly been a major factor of social change among Marseille's working-class youth.

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[99] Sampling is routine and integral to hip-hop, and owning the rights to one's music allows artists to not only profit from other groups' use of their music, but to do so freely.
[100] Since the writing of this chapter, their website seems to have disappeared and gone offline.

Rap Labels were a necessity for Marseille rappers. While, as André Prévos has stated, since its inception French rap was never perceived to be a threat to "Frenchness" on account of its being "rapped" in the French language (723), nonetheless, the multinational record companies upheld a form of (white male) French hegemony; homegrown labels thus gave artists control over cultural production and provided opportunities for urban youth to have their voices heard. Independent labels emphasized features of the local environment (Marseille and the South) and decentralized production from Paris, and dialogued with other artistic productions, such as graphic design, creating an urban music economy (Suzanne 75). It is interesting to consider the sheer number of independent labels that have cropped up over the years: there are at least 10 labels that I encountered in my research emanating from two Marseille artists: IAM and Soprano, and some are no longer in existence. The ephemeral nature and short-life of some rap labels is in part due to, as Keith Negus asserts, business pragmatism. One example is that since rap tracks cannot be "covered" unlike rock or pop songs, and cannot be reperformed and resung, they are thought to have shorter shelf lives. Also, rap is thought to lack long-term historical and geographical potential to endure beyond the immediate historical context in which it is produced (96). This results in a lack of investment and the adoption of certain practices to keep investment low—hence, allowing homegrown rap labels to emerge and take control.

The notion of label became important to French rappers during the early 1990s when multinationals were wary of signing rappers to their labels, and is central to their identity construction. Home-grown labels such as Côté Obscur, 361 Records, La Cosca, and Street Skillz, Delabel, Beat Vandalizm, and Sad Hill Records aided young, amateur

artists to find outlets for their music. These labels count among their staff sound and recording technicians, as well as graphic artists, and management types who take care of finances and contracts. In this respect, a label is a company or enterprise like any other. However, the label is a brand or trademark associated with a certain type of music, which attests to avenues of identity-making and self-fashioning. The rap label expresses the intellectual framework for a group's identity. Labels are semiotic signs; discrete units of meaning, they "say" and connote more than they appear to say, by virtue of their economy and succinctness. Moreover, the idea of a "label" usually denotes belonging to a category or classification, and when self-applied, connotes self-fashioning and self-marketing.

Kiffe Kiffe Production (Sberna 25) was one such ephemeral label, founded in Marseille 1996 by Philippe Fragione and Pascal Pérez of IAM. It offers a straightforward picture of how a typical Marseille hip-hop label came to fruition in response to factors that I have just outlined. Kiffe Kiffe production's manifesto reads:

> La force du label marseillais est de contrôler totalement ses productions, de la conception même des disques jusqu'à leur distribution dans les magasins spécialisés en passant par leur fabrication. Il peut compter sur sa propre distribution indépendante à l'échelle européenne (France, Belgique, Suisse, Luxembourg, Pays-Bas) et Nord Américaine (New York, Montréal.) L'argent qui vient du hip-hop doit profiter aux jeunes du hip-hop et être géré par des gens du hip-hop. Le rap marseillais doit promouvoir le rap marseillais (Sberna 27).

Kiffe Kiffe productions thus affirms the particularity of the Marseillais sound and rejects co-option from multinational control.

Another small label, La Cosca, was one of Marseille's first independent rap labels. After the enormous success of *Ombre et Lumière Vol. 1* (Delabel, 1993), which sold over 450,000 albums, the group members of IAM chose to invest their earnings in

some autonomous production structures to further develop the Marseille hip-hop scene. Thus, they formed the independent label La Cosca in 1995. La Cosca co-edited Akhénaton's solo album *Métèque et Mat* (together with Delabel, a divison of EMI music) and then rapper Freeman's album *L'Palais de Justice*. If we apply principles of the semiotic theory of signs as defined by Saussure and Barthes, for instance, to a name such as La Cosca, we can see how it articulates the artist's vision of foreign-ness and Italian-ness. The fact that La Cosca "sounds foreign" through the signifier, that is, through the short, economic "title" of the group, demonstrates a relationship to the signified, the label's ideology. The pertinent ideology is that the rise of racism against newer-arrived North African immigrants in Marseille has obfuscated deep-seated resentment on the part of earlier immigrants, such as immigrants from Spain and Italy, who, by virtue of their "Latin-ness" or shared religion and cultural values were seen as easier-assimilating, yet who nonetheless also suffered from racism. Moreover, that Italian immigrants and their descendents take part in anti-Maghrébin racism is particularly deplorable. Thus, the label evokes alterity and difference. Secondly, the word "Cosca" figures as a double articulation. According to Roland Barthes in The Semiotic Challenge, primary units of language have meaning, and these can be further decomposed into distinctive phonemes, each of which no longer has meaning (211). The double hard *c* sounds defamiliarize French pronunciation and language, as the first phoneme, "cosc—" is not found in standard French.

It is also by this name that the label's founder, Philip Fragione, calls attention to his Neapolitan roots. "Cosca" means "clan" in standard Italian, yet it also has another meaning in the Sicilian dialect—it means "artichoke" (the standard Italian term for the

Mediterranean vegetable is *carciofo*). "Artichoke" (cosca) is a metaphorical nickname used in the Italian media to refer to the Mafia. As Letizia Paoli explains in "The Pentiti's Contribution to the Conceptualization of the Mafia Phenomenon":

> "The network surrounding each Mafioso was constituted by a series of dyadic relationships which, though variously based on work, clientelism, or kinship, remained independent of one another. Such a relationship was allegorically represented in the word 'cosca' (artichoke), where the Mafioso represented the core and the men grouped around him the leaves of an artichoke" (266).

Of course, the heart is the best part of the artichoke, but it needs protection that the layers on the outside offer. Rappers using Mafia themes for power and macho posturing is not new; rappers Noriega-n-Capone and Junior Mafia in the USA, and Soprano in Marseille, all use gangster names for their rap aliases. The reasons why Akhénaton chose to align himself with the Mafia are complex, given that in his music, particularly on the album *Métèque et mat,* he inveighs against the racist stereotypes applied to people of Italian descent in France. Consider the title song from the album, where he addresses the Mafia stereotype directly:

> Tu venais voir chez moi, on te disait, "Entra, entra, Pana
> Bienvenu chez Tony Montana"
> On nous a fait croire que l'on était des merdes et à force on l'a cru
> Le stéréotype a pris le dessus
> Aucun héros à notre image, que des truands.

Akhénaton laments the lack of positive role models for young people of Italian extraction in France in this song, yet, in others, he expresses pride for the Sicilian mob. In an interview with Fabrice Pliskin of the *Nouvel observateur*, Fragione described his label as a family, and cited the narrative of the song "La cosca" from *Métèque et mat* as example of the resistance his label represents.[101] The song is a first-person narrative of an 84 year old Sicilian man looking back on his various voyages and struggles to resist economic domination, fascism, and internecine conflicts in Sicily. He describes the man's exile, emigration to the USA and attempts to return home. This label which defines the artists as much as it defines their ideology thus expresses multiple layers of meaning.

Another dynamic Marseille-based rap label is the label "Street Skillz." The group was formed in 2001 following the association of four artists who wished to develop an independent production house. Soprano, Cesare, two rappers, Mej, a local DJ, and Mateo, a music manager, run the group, and they released their first mix tape entitled "Block life vol. 1," containing previously unreleased material by Soprano and Césarë. Their second release, aptly titled "Block life vol. 2" was released in 2002, and was composed of material by the above groups along with Lygne 26 and Algérino. The sign, the English name "Street Skillz," connotes various qualities that define the label's mission and function, and could have several signifieds. Skills are the set of competencies that enable one to be well versed and proficient at accomplishing a goal or completing a task. Street skills are those that permit a rapper to survive the rough, dangerous streets of his or her neighborhood. Moreover, street skills can also refer to the

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[101] In the interview, Fragione explains the metaphor of the artichoke: "*La cosca* désigne l'artichaut en sicilien. Il y a le coeur qui représente le chef, et toutes les feuilles se rattachent au coeur. La cosca c'est la famille." Fabrice Pliskin, "Il était une fois Akhénaton" Le Nouvel Observateur 16 November 1995.

art of living the life of a rapper—which is reminiscent of Fonky Family's second album, Art 2 rue (Small Records, 2001). The first line of the title song "DJ, Breaker, Bboy, Graffeur, Beatbox/ Jusqu'au bout art de rue" (Art 2 rue) calls out to the various people and forms of artistic expression related to the milieu of rap. Graphically, the use of the "z" at the end of "skillz defamiliarizes language norms, given the rules governing plurality. Of course, in both French and English the letter "s" is used to signify "more" and excess, as well as possession. Using a "z" instead of an s calls to mind Barthes' analysis of Honoré de Balzac's Sarrazine. As Barthes asserts, "Z is the letter of mutilation: phonetically, Z stings like a chastising lash, an avenging insect…like an oblique and illicit blade, it cuts, slashes…" (106). The word "skillz" written as such calls attention to rappers' search for opacity in their language. Their craft is to destructure language, and put words together that seem not to belong, such that they remain opaque to an uninformed listening public. Likewise, the sharp, slashing "z" that Barthes evoked can be thought of in terms of honing or sharpening ones' street skills.

Some of the messages disseminated in the group Psy 4 de la Rime's music and lyrics are encapsulated in the record label some of its members began in 2004. Segnor Alonzo (b. Kassim Djae, Marseille in 1982) founded the label TSE Music (which stands for *Territoire Sous Embargo*)[102] as part of an effort to collaborate with like-minded artists and represent their artists' hip-hop lifestyle through the home-based production and distribution of their music. Unlike Because Music or Delabel, TSE exclusively produces hip-hop records. Although it seems cliché to state that a record label is "more than" a record label (a statement which reeks of corporations' attempts to create consumer

[102] Their website is http://www.tsemusic.fr.

loyalty by selling images, as opposed to products),[103] TSE Music casts its activities as the promotion of the Marseille hip-hop lifestyle. This is evident in their manifestos which are gleaned from a study of their website.

TSE's website expresses the label's goals and attitudes toward hip-hop music and its role in popular culture. TSE's website uses Flash® graphics and sound files to create an ambience; the graphic design of the site is sophisticated, and appears more like a video game than a website. It is a mix of commercial and identity-bearing messages; one must click the front access page to enter the main site, which shows the TSE logo emblazoned against a backdrop of camouflage; the front page is blatantly commercial, and is used to promote the latest of their CDs for sale. The main page features a gray and army-green "war zone" in the neighborhoods of Marseille: helicopters fly over an empty HLM, a broken television and army foot locker sit next to an army tent, and rapper Segnor Alonzo faces the audience, headphones atop his head, next to a torn-down chain link fence. Every minute or so planes fly around the screen emitting characteristic army-sounds, such as helicopter propellers and the sound of an electric shock. Each object—the gray tent, a flashing sign, a pile of boxes, opens a different page of text, and are displayed as the paper on an old-fashioned typewriter.

Both TSE's mission statement and the presentation of the record label's members foreground Marseille as the birthplace of their artists and of the label, which seems distinctly un-hierarchical in its organization. The following text describes its aims: "Un label de rap français créé en 2004 par le rappeur Segnor Alonzo (Psy 4 de la Rime): son

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[103] Naomi Klein's influential book No Logo (New York: Picador, 2000) investigates how American corporations stopped manufacturing actual products and instead market their brand images while outsourcing the manufacturing to low-cost factories. Consumerism, argues Klein, has entirely displaced citizenship.

but, promouvoir la culture hip-hop au travers de: Compilation, Mix-Tape, Album, Street-Album et Vidéo." The promotion of "street albums" is a way for TSE's artists to market their music directly to audiences without investing significant capital in the recording of a studio album. In general, street albums function as previews that are released prior to an artists' studio album—they consist primarily of performance tracks and can be produced quickly and cheaply for promotional purposes. TSE's three hip-hop groups who own the label are featured on the main page of the website: Segnor Alonzo, Sale Equipe and Lygne 26. Their biographies highlight names, birthdates, and the *quartier* of each artists' birth—Félix Piat, Jean Jaurès, Campagne L'Evêque (all neighborhoods in Marseille, of course). The acts that TSE Music promotes on its site (with links to Myspace as well as advertisements that encourage visitors to purchase their CDs at Fnac, etc) are local, underground groups from Marseille's suburbs and the surrounding area: Script Nocif, an underground group from the Vaucluse, Pertuis (population 20,000) and Marignane (where Marseille's airport is located, population 33,000). These groups probably would not be famous without promotion from Marseille "big brothers" helping out smaller acts. The website is also linked to shopping; the many Marseille-based companies are given credit, so that one can shop easily and quickly for a variety of brands. The site sells t-shirts, stickers, and other products featuring exclusively male rappers striking tough-guy poses amidst billowing clouds of marijuana smoke.[104]

The name TSE music stands for "territoire sous embargo" and refers to Marseille, a stance emphasized by the airplane flying over the scene on the website. A look at one of

[104] The text on TSE's website states: Script Nocif est un groupe de rap Français, originaire de Pertuis (Vaucluse) créé en 2003 et composé de 2 Rappeurs Néo (Mohamed) et Don Mémo (Djamel), les deux jeunes artistes sont accompagnés sur scène d'un Dj dit Dj Blako.

Psy 4 de la Rime's songs reveals that the label's name was likely generated from the idea of Marseille as neglected, poor, and likens it to a war zone. In "Justicier" (from the album *Enfants de la lune*) rapper Soprano tells of harassment on the part of the local police assigned to "control" the housing projects of Marseille, actions that have turned his neighborhood into a no-fly zone, so to speak:

> Exploité par l'oligarchie, le peuple a peur
> Enchainé dans sa propre liberté, le peuple pleure
> Répression, oppression, tolérance zéro, chaos
> La police fait mal, la garde à vue persécute, la garde à vue tue…
> J'suis pas là pour faire d'la démago
> Beaucoup d'flics font bien leur taf
> Mais d'autres mettent nos blocs sous embargo

Soprano expresses the sentiment that Marseille's youth are prisoners in their own neighborhoods due to continual harassment and identity controls. He then reports a conversation he had with a policeman who had stopped him in the street:

> Vous êtes du Plan d'Aou ?
> - Oué
> Qu'est-ce que vous faites dans la vie, les jeunes ?
> -Artistes
> Artistes, artistes c'est-à-dire ? Tu fais quoi, tu écris sur les murs ? Artistes peintres ? C'est quoi ?
> -Ah musique, rap
> -Du rap, ah, Plan d'Aou
> -Plan d'Aou c'est les Psy4 de la rime, ça.

Not only does he consider his music art, but he portrays the police officer as recognizant of Plan d'Aou as *the* neighborhood of Marseille rap. Thus, TSE Music's ideology is born out of one of their songs.

Part III: Music Videos

The emergence of music videos in the 1980s as the principal marketing tool for the record industry signified the new medium's power in influencing musical tastes by creating visual identities for the artists. This represents a shift in the methods of self-promotion artists had at their disposal. Representations of these visual identities are constructed using film production techniques such as lighting, mise-en-scène, and camera work which illuminate the ways in which artists make meaning. In this section, a close reading of a selection of some Marseille hip-hop music videos argues three main points. First, that music videos promote the songs they feature in specific ways; they create visual imagery that follows the song that is being sold, reflecting its structure and underscoring musical features such as melody, rhythm, and timbre. Specific rap videos are faithful representations of the songs they feature. Secondly, the politics of place figure decisively in Marseille rap videos, particularly early ones, where the setting is foregrounded through elements of set design and art direction. Lastly, many Marseille rap videos go beyond the representation of street culture, and rather are themselves agents of creation and reproduction. They work to cultivate a *Marseillais* ideal that links the city and the rappers' way of life in specific historical moments. These analyses contribute to discussions of music videos in Marseille as an artistic practice and as an ideological apparatus.

Some general remarks about the music video industry will help contextualize my analysis of the deeper issues that run through production and promotion of videos in France. Relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to French hip-hop music videos, in contrast to scholarship on American hip-hop videos, where close readings of the videos

and analyses of their role in the music video industry are plentiful.[105] Scholars of French culture tend to neglect music videos perhaps because they believe that the inherent aspect of commercialism muddles the questions of agency and representation that are germane to analyses of youth culture.[106] However, when scholars focus exclusively on lyrics and occasionally make remarks on representations in video or in CD inserts, this obscures the performative aspects of racial, ethnic, and class representation that I address, as in views of CD inserts and cover art.

It is important to state unambiguously that music videos are commercial products and serve a different promotional purpose than do CDs and live concert performances. While radio was the first method of promotion for Marseille rap artists in the mid-1980s to early 1990s, and airplay of French rap was augmented in the mid-1990s thanks to the Carignon law of 1996, music television programming became the primary method of promotion in the late 1990s. Music video airplay is the heart of artist visibility and music industry profits, generating sales of advertising, royalties, and complementary items like T-shirts and accessories. The commercial purpose of music videos is to attract new listeners and fans to the group and their record label by providing a platform from which to visually brand the artists. The circulation of music videos by the recording industry stemmed from an attempt to appeal to a wider audience than those who purchase an

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[105] Scholarship on American hip-hop music videos is thorough and varied. In addition to influential works by Tricia Rose (Black Noise, 1994), Keith Negus (Music Genres and Corporate Cultures, 1999), and articles that address the music video production industry, a substantial number of texts address the depiction of black women, race, gender, and ethnicity in videos. No such scholarship specifically addressing hip-hop in France exists, to my knowledge.

[106] The availability of rap videos on Youtube and Dailymotion (despite copyright laws which normally prevent their viewing) facilitates analyses of rap videos, given that, unless they are deemed "classic" (like "Je danse le mia,") they do not regularly appear on television except as part of retro music programming.

artist's records or attend his or her performances. Live performances are but a simulacrum of the album being played; people who have purchased or listened to the album enjoy and consume the performance, paying homage to the CD and the songs they know and love. Music videos, however, are a more efficient and cost-effective method of promoting music both in a national context and internationally; once a video is recorded, it can be transmitted widely hundreds of times, and promoters can ensure airplay by paying music video programmers (similar to a radio programmer) to play the video at peak times.

Music videos are commercialized, customized products (tailored to certain audiences, yet that must possess an aspect of mass appeal to fit into a national television channel's programming), they nonetheless contain discourses of performance that are essential to making meaning in popular music. However, a concert and the video of the same group performing the same songs are not created equal. In Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture Andrew Goodwin maintains, in discussing the US recording industry, that the record company's control over the funding of music videos results in a lack of cultural autonomy enjoyed by popular music performances. He states, "When a record company helps underwrite the cost of a national tour, it enjoys none of the influence over the performance that it does when it hires a director to shoot a video clip" (28). Thus, the promotional demands of music video explain many of their textual features. Pop music performances have long enjoyed airplay on France's television stations.[107] Many of France's national television stations as well as

[107] See Barbara Lebrun's book Protest Music in France: Production, Identity and Audiences (London: Ashgate, 2009) for a discussion of music videos and variety shows that appear on French television (124) in the context of "protest music."

cable or satellite channels offer variety shows and live or prerecorded musical acts. The breaking up of state radio monopolies in the 1980s in order to increase competition and diversify programming applied to television as well, although to a lesser degree. For example, in 1984-1985 TéléFrance 1 (one of the state-owned TV stations) was the first station to feature a show entirely focused on hip-hop, aptly titled, "Hip-hop," hosted by a famous Parisian DJ, Sidney (Prévos 905). During the early 1990s, *banlieue*- and "street"-themed programs appeared on stations such as the French-German cultural programming channel, Arte, that featured interviews by rap artists, though they were not focused solely on rap, such as "Caméra Graffitti" (Prévos 915). Music video programming was soon after widely circulated on several French television channels, including M6, the most profitable private national French TV channel, and MCM (a music channel owned by M6).[108] MCM broadcasts a subsidiary called MCM Music Black featuring solely hip-hop and rhythm and blues, and several other stations featured hip-hop videos in regular rotation, such as NRJ Music, MTV France (on which "Yo!" the French version of the groundbreaking American television show, "Yo! MTV Raps" appeared), and the station France 4.

The availability of music in digital mp3 and mp4 format in France[109] did not render music videos obsolete, as music television is thought to have done for radio, but rather increased investment in technologies of the image. At first, music video production

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[108] The website http://www.mcm.net is useful because it has a section for "classements" where users can find out which songs were recently played, the rotation, and purchase CDs.

[109] The algorithims specifying the digital audio encoding format known as mp3 were released publicly in 1993. The first commerical mp3 player, a Korean-made product called the MPMan F10, was invented in 1998. It is around this time that mp3s became available to the wider public. The first large peer-to-peer sharing network, Napster, was founded in 1999.

waned as record labels feared pirating and easy downloads, but the Internet is increasingly used to promote music videos on a greater scale than on television. Videos and video clips broadcast on the Internet are known as "viral" videos because they are shared instantaneously through various means (email, texting, and on websites), thus, spreading out to and reaching millions of end users. Moreover, new technologies such as Broadband and 3G (and 4G) networks allow websites to host high-bandwidth videos and moreover, to support-high-definition advertising. Automated advertisements that appear as the first 30 seconds of a video that users are more or less forced to download, pop-up ads, and advertisements tailored to specific users depending on browsing habits represent an extremely lucrative part of a video production company's business. What was needed was a technological leap forward, which came in the form of a broadband explosion and 3G. With those advances, sites like Vevo, MySpace, and YouTube were able to support high-definition video and advertising—a development that offers something MTV never could: Vevo, for example, gives a cut of advertising revenue to the artists. The site Dailymotion.com is the most popular host for music videos in France, in addition to Youtube, both of which are available in the French language; both are customizable and permit users to create and share playlists. Users can visit the music-only section of the site, where upcoming concerts are advertised, and most-viewed or most-purchased charts are available for perusal. These sites can be seen primarily as promotional in nature, and they sell advertising space to various clients and list upcoming concerts. Finally, a specific genre of website, the hip-hop fansite, represents a large share of music video

circulation in France: Rap2france, Skyrock, 2K music, to name a few, all offer videos, interviews with artists, promotional items, and blogs.[110]

Genres

On the whole, music video genres employ different settings, style, and modes of address that reflect the music's constituencies and consumers. Rock bands, for example, depict group performances in fanciful, grand settings suitable for children's stories, and can show the lead singer weeping or expressing emotional turmoil (Vernallis 74). Female pop singers' videos tend to emphasize the singers' bodies and clothing, thus artistic directors and set decorators work together to highlight them. Rap videos, by contrast, do not typically employ fanciful, surreal settings or emphasize nature. They tend to depict the artists in realistic scenarios where setting is important (the street, the housing project, and the city) and move toward quasi-cinematic, sensationalized illustrations of the persona of the artist. It is all a question of style, an index of meaning established collectively over time by different artists and their audiences. Styles provide a foundation, a vocabulary of forms that constitute and express the social and cultural markers of belonging and identity that are related to other associated cultural features such as language, attitudes toward race and sex, and leisure activities. These contribute to forming and maintaining group identity while creating "outsiders" who do not belong.

[110] Internet piracy laws in France are stricter than those of the United States. The organization known as HADOPI (Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des Œuvres et la Protection des Droits sur Internet) was proposed by the Sarkozy government in 2008 and the object of an amendment to the Constitution in 2009 to enforce copyright laws in order to prevent file-sharing. The "three-strikes" law was put into effect; offenders who share files and flout copyright restrictions are sent a warning email, then an official notice, and lastly their internet access is revoked for a period of time. Nonetheless, mp3s are easily found on peer sharing sites and personal blogs.

Marseille rap videos usually fall under one of several stylistic categories. The first, and possibly the least elaborate and least expensive to produce, is the "performance video." In these videos, the group lip syncs to the musical track using hand gestures and body movements to emphasize lyrics, following the beat of the music. In essence, they perform the song, each lyric of which is integral to the production and shown on camera. Often the rap group performance is supported by bystanders or members of the group's posse, who "chime in" and sing the refrain, grooving to the beat of the music, suggesting that the video itself is a conduit for advertising upcoming acts. Viewers might recognize some of the underground/amateur rappers in the background. The bulk of Fonky Family and Faf Larage's videos are of this style. Normally the setting for performance videos is the street where the artists grew up and began rapping: given rap's spoken mode of address, many of these videos possess a documentary-like quality, similar to that of a voice-over. These videos use realist filmmaking techniques, such as the use of a hand-held camera, to highlight the spoken words and the music. The camera might cut away to a shot of the setting or to an element in the video's mini-narrative. The second type of rap video is the "conceptual" video, which relies on symbolism and metaphor to illustrate the song's lyrics. Both visual and verbal elements articulate the song's themes, and often the rapper performs some or most of the lyrics; Shurik'n's video "Samourai" is of this type. The most elaborate type of rap video is the "narrative" type, which depicts an integral story and sequence of events, in which the performers themselves play roles, or do not appear at all in the video, and instead professional (or non-professional) actors assume the roles of characters in a story. These videos are the most costly and elaborate to

produce and thus tend to use techniques similar to those of a *court-métrage*. IAM's "Petit frère" is of this genre.

Processes

Mako Fitts' qualitative study of the music video production industry (in the United States) emphasizes that music video production itself is a site of critical inquiry into the proprietorship of hip-hop culture (212). That is, modes of production in the music industry shape the tangible representations of hip-hop culture. This suggests that the role of independent record labels (whether owned up the ladder, so to speak, by a larger company) is extremely important in allowing artists to exert agency over some or all aspects of the creative process. According to Fitts, it is the record label, and not the artists themselves, that oversees the hiring of the creative team that produces the video. The director, talent (actors, make-up artists and sound engineers, to name a few), and support staff, such as catering crews, are all contracted to work for the production label (218). It appears thus that the group members are once- and twice- removed from the actual hands-on direction, set design, costuming, sound mixing, and a host of other activities that are part of the filming process. The production company answers to the record label, after all, and not necessarily to the artists. While this may the case for a large, distant, production company with expertise in several musical styles, smaller independent production firms are nonetheless able to directly engage more intimately with the artists. One example is the Marseille-based media group Tous des K, which has produced videos for IAM and for Soprano[111] was founded by two locals in 1992 (Didier Deroin, from

[111] Tous des K produced "Ferme les yeux et imagine-toi" for Soprano's solo album, and "Ca vient de la rue" for IAM.

Aubagne and Stéphan Muntaner, a native-born *Marseillais*) who began designing CD inserts and promotional posters and flyers before beginning to produce hip-hop videos.

Specific Videos

IAM's video for "Red Black and Green," released in 1991, uses on-location setting, mobile framing, and costumes to illustrate the song's subject matter, which focuses on the themes of anti-colonialism and intra- and inter-racial solidarity among Marseille citizens, some of whom are members of the African diaspora in France. IAM expresses a discourse that posits a pre-European civilization rooted in Africa, to which the group claims allegiance as self-styled "poètes afro-asiatiques." They take note of the growing political and social tensions in the South of France at the time, given the rise of the Front National in France generally and especially in Marseille, the tightening of immigration controls in France and the right-wing cries of "immigration zéro (which would lead to the eventual passage in 1993 of the racist Pasqua laws). The song itself is a meditation on the colors that not only make up the Pan-African flag, but also that symbolize rap's ideological roots: from red, the color of violence and rage, to green, the color of freedom, and black, a reference to Africa and to African unification. The song's melody, specifically its guitar riffs and drum beats, was sampled from Roy Ayers' 1973 song of the same title (*Red, Black and Green*, Polydor),[112] and the riffs impart a funkiness and retro sound to the video as well as an intertextuality between the songs. Given that

[112] Ayers (b. 1940 in Los Angeles) is a funk and jazz musician, composer, and singer as well as a keyboard and vibrophone player who has produced scores of albums and soundtracks, including for Blaxploitation films of the '70s.

this is one of the first Marseille rap music videos to ever be released,[113] its importance in establishing IAM's visual identity cannot be underestimated, and the video style aids in transmitting a vision of Marseille to the cultural center of France and establishing a "Marseille style" for its rappers. Indeed, as I noted in the introduction, in the early 1990s, Marseille rappers expressed resistance to the supposed national cultural center by claiming a separatist Marseille identity. Establishing shots of the city and the setting for the rappers' movements must be read, therefore, according to this defensive posturing characteristic of IAM in the 1990s.

In the video "Red black and green," IAM seeks to define its community beyond racial categories and try to appeal to wider ties of alliance, allegiance, and experience. The video begins with a black screen and silence, which create suspense for the viewer; suddenly, the guitar riffs of the song's melody enter, synced with the visual. A high-angle shot of an HLM is followed by a series of tracking shots that pan right, revealing the outer courtyard of a housing project, followed by a shot of Shurik'n's head, and then finally, the rappers themselves. The low-angle shot of the HLM defamiliarizes the building against the clear blue sky of the South of France. Then, the camera cuts to Shurik'n (Geoffory Mussard) peering upward, looking at the bleak, dry, and dusty housing complex; his gaze draws the viewer in to focus on the working-class surroundings. As the lyrics "Pourquoi tant de haine…" are heard, the group enters the scene, with Akhénaton leading the rappers on a leisurely walk throughout the neighborhoods of Marseille. They slowly saunter along a dirt/gravel path in the city, taking purposeful strides, walking not in step but with a semblance of unison. Their slow

[113] I am basing my knowledge of release dates for Marseille music videos on information gleaned from discogs.com, youtube.com, and Béatrice Sberna's book.

pace is more reminiscent of a funeral march rather than a military hustle. As each rapper performs his part of the song, without any ado—he picks up where the other rapper leaves off—he simply turns toward the camera and then continues walking. The camera films them from the side, and also from the front, as they walk toward the viewer, engaging us in the presentation of the song's subject. Our eyes follow Akhénaton as he gestures toward the camera, slowly catching up to the rest of the group. The absence of excessive cutaways, or fast movements and gestures, articulates unity among group members. The tracking shot's momentum, along with the use of slow motion, create a sense of harmony that reflects the lyrical flow and the groove underneath the spoken words.

While the first part of the video emphasizes Marseille's sunny climate and Mediterranean surroundings which IAM embraces as part of its identity, there are moments in the video where the group is filmed in interior surroundings which also highlight IAM's lifestyle. Even as the camera's movements follow the group members as they walk around the *cité*, the group pauses in precise formations, as though to emphasize its members' interpersonal bonds. The first interior shot occurs at roughly minute 1:58, when Shurik'n is filmed crouching toward the bottom of the frame, hand on knee, in a defeated pose. He speaks the lyric, "Ou la mémoire n'a plus d'espoir, semble trop noir/Comme la couleur de la peau de mon peuple enchaîné/ par l'esclavage mental." At first, we only see a figure posed in the frame, for shadows are cast on his face presumably by the surrounding walls or columns, an effect that adds weight to the lyrics. The camera transports us to the inside of a gym; the crosscutting and insertion of images highlight the group's activities and serve to encourage appreciation of the local hip-hop culture. This

juxtaposition of live-action with still images and clips creates a harmonious current of ideas. The group continues its walk through a boxing ring, which suggests a favored activity of its members. The image of group member posing with boxing gloves appears on the screen. Next, we see several young men boxing, throwing punches toward the camera, and punctuating the rhythm of the beat with their fists. Akhénaton points toward the boxers as he delivers the lyric, "vois-tu ce noir, au fond de mes yeux, 40 frères a mes côtés, il parle pour eux," a shot which is followed by a boxer punching toward the camera. These images are crosscut with slow pans of Marseille at dusk, followed by a shot of Marseille's bustling Estaque neighborhood.

The next interior scene highlights two other elements important to hip-hop culture, namely, dance and dee-jaying. The rappers are filmed walking through the tiled basement of a housing project, connoted as a public space for the use and enjoyment of all who live in the HLM. For rappers, basements often the spaces of impromptu hip-hop gatherings, as the acoustics were ideal for carrying voices; this is reflected in the choice of backdrop for the scene. The camera pans from right to left as Malek Bramini and Pascal Perez, clad in matching head-to-toe red (billowing, wide-shouldered suits), begin dancing. They perform break-dance moves, including jumping-jack-like motions and kicks to the side and front as they throw their hands in the air. This celebratory burst of joy emphasizes the ways of expressing identity in hip-hop culture, which is comprised not just of lyrics and rhymes but also of bodily movements. The next element is dee-jaying: the next few shots display an old-school vinyl record emblazoned with IAM's logo. A DJ scratches the record a few times, an action that is visible in the video and is also audible, corresponding to the soundtrack. The record itself turns from red to black

and then to green. The juxtaposition of these images, in between which images of Marseille at dusk and at night are shown, serves to anchor boxing, deejaying, and hip-hop dancing in IAM's way of life.

Undoubtedly one of the most interesting aspects of this video is the clothing and accessories worn by the group and their posse in the video as they saunter around Marseille. Their outfits are distinctly typical of those worn by early 1990s hip-hop artists worldwide, but each rapper her imbues his style with signifiers that call attention to the song's meaning. As Veronica Vernalis stated of clothing in music videos, "Costumes contain a secret a video never discloses" (103), suggesting that besides what seems obvious about the social function of the outfit (a suit, an athletic uniform), the viewer is left to interpret its significance and any links to the themes. Marseille rappers' clothing thus merits closer consideration. Philippe Fragione is clad in a lime-green "big shirt" made of silk, offering freedom of movement. The shirt is buttoned at the top button, making him look slightly uncomfortable; the left hand pocket is embroidered with a crescent moon and star, typically Islamic in its symbolism. Along with the crescent moon and star, he also wears a large Egyptian *ankh* necklace made of wooden beads and a gold charm. The necklace symbolizes IAM's idea of Egypt as the cradle of civilization, and the crescent calls attention to the lyric, "Allah-Akbar, protège nous des ténèbres absolues" spoken in the song. Also, fans of Akhénaton might already know that Fragione had converted to Islam and that his wife is Muslim; yet, given that one hears his music before seeing a visual representation of the artists himself, some viewers might be surprised to see a white man sporting signifiers of Islam (that is, conflating race with Islam) especially since Fragione is of Italian origin. Rapper Shurik'n sports a garish,

multicolored silk dress shirt (the block colors are black, red, and green) buttoned tightly at the collar as well as a large gold chain that prominently displays a large pendant in the shape of the African continent. Akhénaton and Shurik'n are flanked by the rest of the group, of which two members wear matching large, billowy, vibrant red suits, and two others wear a blue denim jacket and a white collared dress shirt, respectively. Another member of the group is shown from the back to display his haircut, with his head entirely shaved, save for a large portion shaped like the continent of Africa. This style of hairdo is known as a "fade" and was extremely popular during the 1990s (and worn by famous rappers Kid and Play, and Will Smith, for instance). There are two costume changes that appear in the second part of the song: Shurik'n wears a New York Yankees blazer (a nod to Fragione's ties with New York, and the group's transatlantic reach) and Akhénaton wears a black leather jacket, which signifying his "cool" posture, given that this article of clothing has come to signify rebellion. Clearly, the color scheme of their outfits symbolizes the metaphors evoked in the song title. Moreover, the rappers made conscious choices to display amulets and signifiers of Africa, such as the necklace, the hairdo, and the crescent and moon which illustrate the group's ideologies. IAM posits non-European sources for its identity as a challenge to French Republican concepts of nationhood and the growing manifestations of racism and exclusion in Marseille of the 1990s. These symbols show the influence of the African diaspora in rappers' attempts to recast French identity as inclusive of Africans, rather than excluding them. As IAM says in the song, "Et venons en paix avec trois couleurs d'émancipation/ Rouge, Noir, Vert, la seule solution." The symbolism behind the colors red, black, and green is cast as the only solution to France's future—that there is strength in cosmopolitanism.

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Fonky Family's "Sans rémission" (*Si Dieu veut*, 1999) is a performance video that uses camera work, color tones, lighting, and the rhythmic interplay of the physical gestures of the group's rappers to emphasize the lengthy, unflinching text of the song. The video seems concerned with establishing the group's claims to speak for a segment of the French youth population as they denounce their disenfranchisement and marginalization resulting from the French state's outright neglect for the neighborhoods in which they live. Fonky Family inveighs against the lack of youth job opportunities, the assimilationist national education system that prepares students for careers that are not really available to them, and describes the harsh realities of drug abuse and crime that plague their neighborhoods. In the refrain of the song the rappers claim that they belong to the "Section Nique Tout" as well as a symbolic military force called "Operation coup de poing," both of which signify the anger and rage directed toward the state, as well as the group's cohesiveness. The aesthetic of the video mirrors the grim subject matter and the rapid vocal delivery of the rappers' lyrics is graphically matched by editing techniques such as cutaways and jump cuts, keeping the pace and momentum of the video rather brisk. In this sense, the video follows the flow of the song and highlights specific beats and changes in rhythm.

The video's setting and camera work create a portrait of the group members' living space in a documentary-like fashion. The action is set in the neighborhoods where Fonky Family's members grew up and began rapping; no doubt its fans would recognize the neighborhood of Belsunce, located near Marseille's city-center. The establishing shot of the video does not show Notre-Dame de la Garde, the ocean, or other cliché symbols

of the city; instead, viewers cast their gaze upon the concrete slabs of buildings and staircases that typify life in the "blocks" as Fonky Family describes them. The lyric, "toujours ce même béton pour horizon" is illustrated in the first images of the video: a wide-angle lens is used to film the industrial-looking, cold, empty space of the rooftop of a building. The Mediterranean Sea is not visible from the rooftop; only concrete makes up the horizon. The use of stereotypical images of Marseille (the sea, the picturesque climate, and sun) is eschewed in this video in order to augment the group's message. Crowd scenes amplify the group's message of solidarity among Marseille's marginalized youth, as teenagers along with boys who are no more than seven or eight years old appear in the video, grooving and shaking along with the rappers in staged formations of twenty bodies.

The color scheme, lighting, and contrast techniques used in each of the settings graphically differentiate each rapper's (solo) section of the song. The tonality of the colors suggests the severity of the subject matter and gives weight to the lyrics, as opposed to the use of bright, sunny, and joyous colors. There are five main settings for each sequence of the video and they are interspliced according to each rapper's solo, while the lip-syncing and audio are perfectly matched in this performance video. One scene displays a rooftop building with pipes and a ventilation unit in the background, one of the typical narrow streets in Belsunce, another setting is a dark alleyway covered in graffiti, a stairwell, and finally a courtyard in Belsunce. Occasionally the camera cuts away to convey an idea in the lyrics; for example, as Sat (Karim Haddouche) raps about greed and capitalism, a Brinks truck appears. His segments are filmed in a sepia tone,

while Le Rat Luciano (Chris Carmona)'s segments are filmed using a blue-grey color, and Don Choa (François Dilhan)'s are filmed in stark grey.

The use of a fixed camera and the staged scenes draw the viewer into the frame to focus on the visual articulation of the aggressiveness and fury of Fonky Family's lyrics. Further, the contrast between the static, fixed framing of the camera and the staccato rhythms of the group's bodies emphasize the music and the backbeat; these crucial elements impart edginess to the song. The framing enhances the rappers' gestures, and does not compete with it, despite frequent cutaways to other scenes. For instance, rapper Sat's solo is the first part of the song, and he is filmed in the center of the frame atop a building. He makes broad, sweeping moves with his arms, points his fingers up and down, and uses the entirety of the space to accentuate his aggressive-toned lyrics. The camera cuts away to a large group of men and boys, all dressed in street gear (t-shirts, sport jerseys, and sneakers) as they bounce along together to the music, bending their knees toward the concrete they stand on, in perfect rhythm. At one minute into the recording, Le Rat Luciano appears for his solo, seated behind the metal bars of a stairwell banister that cast shadows on his face and give the impression that he is imprisoned—literally, behind bars. Similar "tough-guy" postures appear in scenes where groups of boys crowd the frame to support Fonky Family's music. They make threatening hand gestures, jab at the sky, flail their arms out, and present closed fists in front of the camera, blurring the rest of the scene. The fists emphasize the "coup de poing" lyric. The men mouth the lyrics, shifting their weight from side to side as though they were grooving to the beat. Menzo's solo emphasizes the crowd state of mind as he appears to the right of the screen, gazing at a group of FF supporters strutting down one of Belsunce's narrow

streets. The viewer's eyes follow his stare as the group of boys approaches the center of the screen and turns into a crowd scene of supporters. In this manner, Fonky Family's message of youth solidarity and rage are made visible.

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In contrast, Prodige Namor's video for the song "D'où viens tu?" is a *mise en scène* of the stereotypical Marseille lifestyle and uses mobile framing, blocking and set design to underscore the rappers' exalting of their city. Directed in 1999 by Mounir Belkhir, a known Marseille record producer,[114] this conceptual video features the Franco-Cameroonian sister duo known as Les Nubians,[115] who sang the melody for the song and who also appear in the video. The video illustrates the notion that the reputation of Marseille as a harmonious "melting pot" can be attributed to the city's proximity to the sea, which acts in the video as a literal and figurative site of exchange and intermixing among peoples. The video also highlights the city's stunning natural beauty and ideal climate, which further bring people together. The majority of the video is filmed with a wide-angle lens that nicely showcases the colors most associated with the Mediterranean city: bright blue sparkling sea, cloudless sky, and white rocky shore (known as the Calanques). The video meshes shots featuring the performers (les Nubians singing, Prodige Namor rapping, and a small orchestra playing) along with several mini-narrative sequences, showing young boys frolicking around the coastline, playing in the water and

[114] Belkhir's other directorial work includes a song on the CD titled "OM All Stars," a specialty disc dedicated to Marseille's soccer team, and a few tracks on a rap CD featuring rappers from the whole of France, entitled "Collectif rap 3." "D'où viens-tu" sample disco group Shalamar's "A Night to Remember."

[115] See http://www.lesnubians.com/bio. Hélène and Célia Faussart have performed the background vocals for several Marseille rap artists, including Sad Hill and Namor.

gazing at bikini-clad women, as well as slice-of-life sequences portraying Marseille people shopping in outdoor markets and enjoying refreshments at a café.

In order to enhance the nostalgic, pro-Marseille text of the song, the rhythm of the sea and the flow of the rappers' delivery are intermeshed using slow camera pans and seamless editing techniques. The first sequence of the video portrays a young boy on the verge of plunging into the ocean from a concrete cliff edge. As he dives backward into the sea, the opening guitar riff enters. Then, a sequence of ten frames portraying scenes from a day at the Marseille beach begins, showing the boy diving underwater to fetch some sort of relic from the ocean floor,[116] rocky coral, a tiny port with boats and its rocky beach, tanned bodies of young boys hanging out, each with equal amount of screen time, imparting a steady rhythm to the video, complementing the slow groove of the beat. Next, the three rappers that comprise the group appear, standing in triangular formation in front of a rocky *calanque* typical of Marseille's coast; they wear matching short-sleeved button-down shirts in different shades of light blue, symbolizing the city's dominant colors and the color scheme of the scene. As rapper Namor lip syncs the opening lyric, "Né quelque part, flow pour mes origines sur la Méditerranée/ Le sang qui coule et vous fascine, seen!/ C'est dans le sud que j'ai grandi, j'y ai forgé mon esprit," the rappers begin shifting their weight from side to side, bouncing and grooving along the beat of the song. The camera zooms to focus in on the lead rapper, then zooms away to focus on all three group members while panning right; this repetitive zoom in/zoom out motion resembles the rhythmic movement of the waves and the flow of the sea toward the shore. A left-pan films the Nubains singing the refrain of the song; they are dressed in

[116] Said relic is none other than a circular disc upon which Namor's logo is emblazoned.

triangle-bikini tops and colorful, vibrant skirts which add a bright contrast to the muted blue tones of the rappers' outfits. As rapper Saïd sings the song's refrain "D'où viens-tu….raconte-moi ton histoire" he walks toward the right of the frame, and the viewer's eyes follow him as the camera pans slowly to the right in a similar wave-like fashion. A series of four dissolves occur at the end of the refrain: the Nubians are shown standing on top of a cliff in front of the ocean; this shot is linked through a dissolve with a shot of a boy plunging underwater. The juxtaposition of ocean scenes with shore scenes suggests their inseparability.

Specific song lyrics are illustrated using shots that depict slices of life in Marseille as the rappers perform them, a technique that emphasizes Marseille's ethnic and racial diversity. For example, as Namor pronounces the lyric, "les familles entières émigrent loin des leurs," the camera cuts to a shot of two African women walking hand in hand exiting an HLM; the women wear brightly-patterned clothing and head scarves. Another lyrical illustration occurs as Namor raps the lyric, "Marseille, Marseille, je t'aimerai toute ma vie/ C'est là que je suis né, d'ici que j'irai droit au paradis" as the camera cuts to a low-angle shot of laundry hanging in between two tall apartment buildings. While not usually associated with paradise, hanging laundry is a typical image associated with working-class neighborhoods in housing projects in France. Lastly, when Namor expresses worry for the future of Marseille and the growing problem of financial strain that threatens to exacerbate inequalities between citizens ("Nous sommes sur les dents, comment l'avenir est-il profilé/ Quand on sait qu'il y a tant d'inégalité de qualités") the camera cuts to a right-pan and focuses in on an HLM, in front of which stands a beautiful African woman, clad in a long dress and headscarf, gazing directly at the camera. These

shots not only illustrate Namor's lyrics but also give a sense of the lifestyle and habitudes of Marseille's working-class citizens. While many viewers are familiar with Marseille's Vieux Port and perhaps some of the wealthier districts near the Calanques, the setting of "D'où viens-tu" depicts an area known as l'Estaque, which, although it is located north of the city, is nonetheless integrated in the space of the city, and not considered the periphery. While Namor's music video is not strikingly innovative or super-interesting technically, it is a depiction of Namor's version of how working-class people live in Marseille. Moreover, the casting—people of different skin tones, ethnicities, and races—all enjoying the beautiful climate and gorgeous setting, invites admiration for a typically Marseillais, cosmopolitan way of life.

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Shurik'n's video for the song "Samourai" (*Où je vis*, 1999) contains intertextual references to Asian martial arts movies, exemplifying the rapper's personal and artistic interest in playing the role of a Samurai warrior, using his lyrics as weapons in a battle against weaker rappers.[117] The set décor and costumes highlight the Samurai theme: the circular space of the frame where Shurik'n performs the lyrics is resembles a Buddhist temple. Two tall concrete columns structure the stage, set off by three metal garbage canisters with burning flames in them; the building itself is an industrial complex, with rows of steel supports and columns, reminiscent of the stages used in martial arts movie combat scenes. The high ceilings and various rafters and supports provide ample space for film equipment that allows directors to film fights from various angles; performers

[117] This song was used by famous mixed martial arts fighter George St. Pierre, who is of French Canadian origin, during his entrance walks to the fighting ring (Ultimate Fighting Championship, November 2006 in Sacramento and again in Houston in April 2007).

can jump around, do flips, and, if necessary, one can hang ropes and harnesses to the rafters. Though the scene is dark, mirroring the serious, evocative lyrics and Shurik'n's smooth delivery, bright light peeks in through the floor-to ceiling windows, framed in a gothic style, toward the back of the scene. A piece of cloth, resembling a Chinese brush painting, appears in the background, hanging from the ceiling. It features a large letter "S" in wide strokes; this symbolizes the insignia of the dojo the artist belongs to. This insignia is also used on Shurik'n's CD covers and on his CD inserts. Shurik'n's style of dress also suggests Asian-style martial arts themes. He is clad in a black Chinese-style silk pajama set with a mandarin collar, white fastenings, and a long, a-line skirt that fits loosely and offers freedom of movement. Shurik'n wears this outfit for the entirety of the video, even while other members of his posse appear wearing street clothes, suggesting that his outfit functions as a uniform and an identity. A melodic harp music which sounds "Oriental" complements this Asian-themed setting.

The visual codes used in the filming of "Samourai" connote the samurai way of life to which Shurik'n holds allegiance in the song. The camera work exemplifies this perspective: the video begins with a pan to the right, circling the temple-like stage. The melody and beat creep in, barely audible at first, and then become louder, similar to the way in which a warrior would sneak in for a surprise ambush. The clip then cuts to the right side of the frame, and the camera pans left, again in a circular motion, framing the stage. Toward the back of the stage, the Chinese-brush painting "S" appears out of nowhere, then it slowly fades away, as the image of Shurik'n's face dissolves into the screen. As he begins rapping, he is positioned in the center of the stage. The rapper is framed by the columns and the three fires as he performs a series of karate forms (katas)

perfectly in sync with the music. The camera continues its right-hand movement and circular pans, and rapidly focuses in on the subject, only to return to a wider angle, which disorients the viewer momentarily. Shurik'n performs karate moves, side to side sweeps, and leg bends, which seem to be filmed at a slightly lower frame rate: this imparts the sense of a slower, lyrical flow to his gestures as opposed to rapid, choppy movements. It is dance-like in its representation; his hands appear unattached to the rest of his body, floating in thin air like a magician's. As the camera makes its way around and back to the center of the frame, Shurik'n's rap posse appears and then disappears using the slow dissolve technique. Once the viewer fixates on Shurik'n as he performs his dance-like forms, he disappears and the camera pans in a different direction than it used before, and the viewer's eyes immediately scan the frame for the missing rapper. He then reappears in the scene, in sync with the music as before. This mobile framing technique and the series of dissolves underscore Shurik'n's lyrics and message, "La main sur le katana même si la peur m'assaille/Je partirai comme un samurai" as he literally leaves the scene. These techniques mirror the approach of a warrior in combat, who creeps up on his enemies in combat by circling, rather than bursting into the center. This implies pre-emption, lying in wait, patience, and most of all, planning. Shurik'n's Asian-themed music video thus exemplifies the rapper's personal style.

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Soprano's video "A la bien" (*Puisqu'il faut vivre* 2006) conveys the rapper's sense of self and community by representing the rapper's neighborhood, fans, and the physical surroundings in which he lives. The video itself was marketed first as a "teaser" video: a short clip of 30 seconds of the "making-of" the video was available in June 2006

as a free download onto a mobile device—the video itself was released in September of the same year. This pre-release shows the intermixing of commercial advertising and marketing techniques; consumers were directed to download the video for free onto their phones and to expect the full version at a later date, which created a sense of drama and anticipation for the full release. The teaser clip shows Soprano in a bar (conspicuously imbibing water, illustrating that he is a pious Muslim, though he can still hang out in a bar and not be tempted to drink alcohol) flanked by the uber-famous Marseille icon, Manchester United player Eric Cantona on his left, together with his less talented younger brother, Joël, who played for Olympique de Marseille at one point.[118] In half-fiction and half-reality mode, Eric asks Soprano whether he can star in his next video since OM coach, the Senegalese fifty-something Pape Diouf appeared in Soprano's latest clip, "Hallah hallah."[119] Soprano graciously promises the brothers a spot in his next video, and the camera cuts to a few outtakes (the microphone and key lighting are visible, and all three men laugh at a joke to which the viewers are not privy) as the beginning of the melody for "A la bien" appears.

The video for "A la bien" illustrates Soprano's identity, neighborhood, and his claims of the city's multiculturalism. Several moments in the video emphasize a branding of Marseille as a cosmopolitan space. The establishing shot of the scene, to which the

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[118] I would venture to say that very few Marseillais, or French people, would *not* recognize Cantona in this video as Cantona…though his speaking voice and accent make it obvious that he is from Marseille. Cantona is generally thought to be the second best footballer to hail from Marseille, the first of course being Zinedine Zidane.

[119] The video for "Hallah hallah" was shot partially in the Stade Vélodrôme, in locker rooms and on the field. Soprano wears an OM scarf during the video, and his posse and fans run amok on the field. Pape Diouf has a small, humorous cameo at the end of the video, where he politely asks Soprano to return the keys to the stadium to him. He uses his video-enabled phone to view the ruckus Soprano and his crew caused on the field, before admonishing the contrite-looking rapper: "Rends-moi mes clés, ça c'est pas bon."

camera refers back at least twelve times throughout, portrays Soprano standing atop the city looking down at the Mediterranean sea and the vast expanse of buildings and neighborhoods that make up Marseille. The first lines spoken are, "Marseille!" (though this is not listed on the official lyrics, suggesting that it is a spontaneous cry from the rapper) and then Soprano points back to the city. He is framed next to Notre-Dame de la Garde, Marseille's most famous monument; seven shots are edited in sequence which establish the diversity of the city: the sea, the brick rooftops in a terracotta color, the ubiquitous construction cranes, the shipping area, the Vieux Port, finally Soprano's own neighborhood, the Plan d'Aou, located in the *quartiers nord*. The camera frames Soprano exiting his HLM through the common front door (suggesting that even as a rich and famous recording artist, he remains a member of the community from which he came), and he holds a bottled water and a straw, which adds to the "slice of life" staging of this video, and also highlights the fact that Soprano is refined and classy—he would not glug from a bottle, but rather prefers to sip from a straw. Soprano casually walks through the courtyard of his housing project, gesturing at the various people, members of his crew and his fans, who are hanging about on stairwells and on the sidewalk. As Soprano lip syncs the material, he gestures toward the groups of people framed in the shot with him: groups of boys and young women strut along wearing typical hip-hop fashions: cross-body bags, t-shirts, athletic wear, and baseball caps. Soprano describes his youth and the diversity within his community as the camera cuts to various sequences that support his lyrics. In one scene he is pictured conversing with his friends, sitting in a working-class living room; the cozy touches (flowers, afghans hanging on the wall) suggest that it is a lived-in space, and not just a music video set. In the next sequence, as he pronounces the

lyrics "[ma jeunesse] a le monde comme voisin de palier," Soprano is depicted atop the hill, and he gestures toward the other side of the ocean, suggesting that Marseille youth are neighbors to their peers in Africa and the Middle East, separated only by an ocean. The next sequence shows a group of Soprano's posse drinking *thé à la menthe* using a traditional North African tea service. These elements—the tea set, the hanging out in stairwells, and the working-class apartment—might be familiar to Soprano's fans. But most importantly, rather than flaunt the trappings of wealth and status, which is a trope in contemporary hip-hop, Soprano chooses to align himself with his fans and the youth who listen to his music through the representation of his daily life.

The video contains mini-narratives that illustrate some of the problems and injustices that the community Soprano purports to represent faces. The video thus moves from semi-performance mode to narrative mode in two scenes that depict Soprano and his crew as the victims of prejudicial treatment based on their skin color and ethnicity. For instance, a sequence that takes place on Marseille's famous Corniche John F. Kennedy (a long, snaking road following the sea that links the Vieux Port with the Southern districts) highlights the infamous identity controls on the part of police which rappers frequently denounce in their lyrics.[120] Soprano raps about him and his friends

[120] Shurik'n notes this practice in the song "Esprit anesthésié" in the following lyric: "Tes papiers fils, tu les a pas, on t'amène/ Surtout si ton nom commence par Ben." Recently the CRAN released several youtube videos designed to increase awareness on this issue among whites: one video in particular shows a tall, thin black man in sport gear jogging leisurely toward a roped-off section of the Place de la Concorde in Paris. Various cops surround him and ask him for his papers. He removes his hoodie and it turns out that it is Barack Obama (of course, it is an actor's portrayal of the President), and since he does not have his passport, he is forced to go along with the police. The screen credits then display the statistics of identity controls against "minorités visibles" in France. The video can be viewed at: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x81a88_barack-obama-controle-a-paris_news.

preparing for a night on the town (a process that includes purchasing a new pair of sneakers, eating fries, and driving along the Corniche cruising for women), with shots depicting each step edited together in rapid sequence. Then, Soprano is depicted in a close-up, standing against his car, hands behind his back; the camera then cuts to a wide-angle shot of an identity control. A white police officer rifles through Soprano's pockets and pats his body down while another officer stands guard, threateningly tapping his nightstick against his hand. The lyrics, "un contrôle de flic pour gâcher la nuit/je fume pas de shit, ni de Malboro Light" emphasize how unwelcome and unjust the police's stop-and-search action is for the rappers, but also how nonchalant and routine it has become for young North African and African young people. The identity control ends only when two beautiful women walk by the car, causing the police officer to turn his head. Soprano then raps the lyric, "sur la Corniche, on s'imagine riche!" and the camera focuses on his face, as he mugs an expression of frustration, suggesting that even fame and fortune are trumped by being black. Another sequence depicts another commonplace, humiliating ritual—namely, being turned away at a nightclub on account of being Arabe—is illustrated in the following sequence. The camera cuts to a shot depicting two athletic-looking bouncers standing in front of a nightclub door, one of whom shakes his hand "no" as one of Soprano's crew members (a young man of North African origin) is denied entry at the door. The lyrics (which are sung) enter, "tu t'es fait pointer en boite/ t'inquiéte, y a du son dans le Clio" as the young man, with his friend in tow, throws up a peace sign in disgust, shakes his head, and is forced to do a walk of shame in between a gauntlet of club-goers, who promptly jeer him as he exits. However, the patrons waiting in line hoping to enter the club are themselves a diverse crowd of black, white, and Arab

men and women, and thus it appears that they are laughing "with" him, not "at" him, seeing as they might have experienced the same racist/prejudicial treatment at some point. The lyric, "il y a du son dans le Clio" offers an alternative to club-going, suggesting that this action happens often enough that even Soprano and his crew have learned to deal with it.

It is easy to see why Soprano is the most popular rap artist from the Marseille scene today; he adopts none of the aggressive, thug-like posturing of some other rappers, and instead, appears humble and appears to share the lifestyle of some of his listeners.

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The video for Keny Arkana's song "La Rage" (*Entre ciment et belle étoile*, 2006) uses video clips gleaned from the television news to denounce minority oppression on both a national and global scale. The dominant themes of Keny Arkana's music relate the problem of social inequality in France to situations of social inequality in global contexts. She makes claims for the shared experience of struggle among all oppressed peoples, regardless of their nationalities, in order to advocate for a collective movement against structures of capitalism, liberalism, and exploitation. "La rage" was a response to the Sarkozy government's declaration of war against the *banlieues*, specifically the President's avowal to clean the housing projects of its "racaille" using a fire hose ("nettoyage au karcher"). In "La rage," Arkana calls on young people in France and everywhere in the world to rise up against oppression, specifically against police brutality, identity controls, and ordinary racism. Arkana dedicates her song to, "Anticapitalistes, alter-mondialistes, ou toi qui cherche la vérité sur ce monde, la

résistance de demain." The editing of the video works to highlight Arkana's aggressive tone, and the images used in the video are decontextualized.

The video begins with a black screen; a clicking sound is heard (which is part of the song's backbeat), then an image flashes across the screen. Seven jump cuts are used, alternating between a black screen and the images themselves which depict scenes of rioting: riot police use shields to push back a crowd, they throw tear gas at a chanting mob, a rioting gang beats down a military-green wall, and finally Keny Arkana is framed in the center of the screen, standing in front of a crowd, holding up signs of protest. Each clip flashes on the screen perfectly in sync with the music, taking care to keep up with its rapid tempo and furious sound. The source of some of the clips is not immediately clear; nor can the viewer attempt to piece together their origin since they flash so quickly upon the screen. We see a young girl bawling into the arms of her father; next, we see an extremely rapid succession of mug shots in a sepia tone, presumably those of political prisoners that were taken during some conflict. The 1970s thin mustaches and feathered, voluminous hair worn by the men seem to be the only clue to their context. The clips generally depict crowd scenes: marches, demonstrations, riots, and the horrible aftermath of clashes with police, bodies strewn about, people crying, people in despair. There are black people, white people, women, children, and men. No single nation is identified, yet at a few moments, a flag is visible, or a bit of a protest sign, denoting the language or country in which the protest has taken place (we see Spanish language signs and some Korean language signs, for example). Otherwise, the clips are completely deracinated from their political, temporal, national, and social context.

Since these clips are all obviously drawn from the media, given that the music video director and producer has free access to them, and they were not filmed expressly for Arkana's video, Arkana implies that the media's role in disseminating information about movements and protests is tightly controlled by the powers that be. This is articulated toward the middle of the video, as the lyric, "Et la rage car trop lisent 'Vérité' sur leur écran télévisé," is pronounced, while the shot is framed with a thick black bar giving it the appearance of a television set. In the meta-television set, made to look like a newscast, we see the cartoonish heads of world leaders, talking out of the sides of their mouth and wearing ridiculous expressions. The rapid superimposition of the heads of Presidents Sarkozy, Blair, Putin, G.W. Bush, and more (it appears that George Washington has been pasted there as well) serves to accuse world leaders, members of the G8, of corruption, greed, and abuse of power. It also suggests that one should not believe what one sees on television. This point is further driven home in a sequence depicting the Giza Pyramids in different time periods; first, an architectural blueprint is shown, then, four shots of the pyramid are fused together as though the pyramid were evolving. Finally, the pyramid is superimposed onto its portrait that appears on an American dollar bill, which is then placed in the hands of President George W. Bush using Photoshop; it appears that he hands the cash to an adoring fan. During this sequence the lyrics, "Trop de mensonges et de secrets gardés les luttes de nos Etats/ riche de vérité, pouvoir changer l'humanité La rage car ils ne veulent pas que ça change," are rapped by Arkana. These images illustrate Arkana's belief that since the time of the Egyptian pharaohs, wealth and power has been concentrated in the hands of a few

members of the elite, and that the people should rise up against this forced economic and intellectual poverty.

This fast-paced editing technique elicits emotion from the viewer, for one is literally overwhelmed by the weight of so many protests, so many dead bodies, and so much rage and violence. The fact that none of the conflicts are contextualized emphasizes a shared struggle between all oppressed peoples. Arkana's video suggests that these struggles and this violence could happen anywhere and everywhere. She thus advocates global cooperation and collective action.

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Conclusion

In this chapter, I contend that the methods of promotion as well as rappers' music videos are important marketing sites that facilitate autobiographical self-construction. I have attempted to demonstrate how Marseille rappers both embraced and resisted the capitalist production structures of the music industry in order to self-promote. In what appear as straightforward economic and organizational business practices, broader cultural and political tensions exist. Rap is inherently closer to the street, and that this is reflected in how rap labels and production companies operate. This is generally true of Marseille hip-hop production. Through a chronicle of some of the rap labels and production companies in Marseille, we can see the processes by which Marseille rap is literally "Made in Marseille," as record label staff consciously attempt to stabilize and frame the meaning of the musical works through a direct engagement in the production and encoding of audio and visual characteristics of a given album or song, a notion Keith Negus discusses (178). Beginning in the early 1990s when the production structures were

lacking in Marseille, entrepreneurs such as Akhénaton decided to take matters in their own hands and invest funds to produce their own works. Exercising control over the naming of the label and the hiring of personnel (graphic designers, sound mixers, directors) was essential for rappers in order to express a certain knowledge of the street in the production of their music. Seeking out new acts and signing underground rappers to their labels seem also to be important components of a rapper's craft, which suggests that hip-hop itself starts from the ground up—new artists are *produced* by the streets and by the *cité*, not in a studio. Additionally, one way to avoid the accusation of "selling out" was to become a "rapper-hustler" and be responsible for one's own production and distribution.

While the videos I have chosen are diverse in their representations of Marseille rappers, a common thread is the attempt to vivify and directly address the song's themes. This seems an obvious goal for any music video, but Marseille rap videos are somewhat bound to reflect the environments and personalities of the rappers based on the conventions governing the production of authenticity in hip-hop. I demonstrate the various styles used by some of the more popular Marseille rap videos in order to show how meaning is made by artists in a genre (video) that is primarily a conduit for advertising. In conclusion, I do not feel that music videos' inherent commercial purpose implies that the texts themselves are necessarily devoid of meaning. They do more than "advertise" the song they depict: they also advertise characteristics of a way of life to which the rappers are devoted. As I have shown, Marseille rappers defined their artistic identities through the clothing, accessories, and bodily gestures illustrated in their videos. A certain "authentic" vision of Marseille is perceived through these features that is

repeated and reformulated by other rap artists. Moreover, videos such as Soprano's "A la bien" cast the rapper as maintaining the same lifestyle as prior to becoming famous and wealthy, suggesting that authenticity is a continued concern of Marseille rappers.

Conclusion

The aims of this project were twofold: first, to validate the hypothesis that youth in contemporary Marseille articulate hybrid cultural identities that can best be described as global cosmopolitan. In arguing this claim, I demonstrated that these made-in-Marseille identities are constructed in deliberate opposition to the essentialist notion of "Frenchness" through the expression of a strong connection to a localized Marseille identity, characterized in part by a long-standing regionalist opposition to the hegemonic national center. Invoking the slogan, "On est Marseillais avant d'être Français," a quote from IAM's song "Je viens de Marseille," a version of which also appears in a famous banner by the fan club for Olympique de Marseille (Gasquet-Cyrus 235),[121] youth oppose and reject Frenchness, positing Marseille-ness as the source of their cultural identity. Self and other, and self as other, are shaped, then, by what these two conflicting categories of identity are presumed to connote. As Jean-Loup Amselle states in Mestizo Logics, "Individual identities, as well as collective ones, are constantly defined by the internal and external relations within a region. The ability to name… reveals the rifts and relations of forces at work within a given social field" (41). Marseille youth express agency in affirming what constitutes Marseille-ness ("naming" their identities), thus attesting the fact that identities are socially and historically constituted, reconstituted, and reproduced.

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[121] The banner text features a series of oppositions, the first describing the "rest of France," and the second Marseille: For instance: "Ils sont pâles, nous sommes multicolores. Ils sont racistes, et Rachid, c'est notre frère. Ils sont Français, nous sommes Marseillais!"

The category of "Frenchness" as implied in dominant French national discourse entails a racial component, whereby "French" designates not only national citizenship—being French-born, to the exclusion of those who are foreign-born—but also implies Europeanness, and, most fundamentally, is conflated with whiteness. Didier Gondola argues this point skillfully in his chapter in a volume edited by Tshimanga, stating that whiteness and Frenchness have been conflated as a singular exclusionary social category that has enabled scores of white immigrants to assimilate into French society at the expense of Blacks and Beurs (160). At first glance, it seems that this identification with Marseille offers youth who belong to France's visible racial minorities the opportunity to evade racial distinctions by identifying with a "third space," to use Bhabha's term,[122] that purports to be inclusive of racial minorities; a hybrid composite. This last idea seems to be the case, at least according to my analyses of hip-hop songs, images, and marketing, but such a paradigm only "works" if the regionalist construct of Marseille-ness in the French national imaginary is itself either race-neutral (which it is not) or, if ethnic and racial distinctions within Marseille are constructed, articulated, and negotiated differently than in the French national cultural sphere. In this case, Marseille youth do not refute their ethnic and racial origins by applying another label; rather, their ethnic and racial identities can be subsumed into a Marseille identity where these identities always already belong. As Shurik'n proudly declares in "Mars contre attaque," "Avec les salutations de la première ville de France/ Fondée par des émigrés," Marseille was *founded* by émigrés and thus cannot claim a singular ethnic or racial origin as its source, unlike the national

[122] "…The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (56).

Republican model, supposedly founded on "Frenchness," by the presumably blond Gaulois.

At several points in this dissertation I examine how rappers evoke their races and ethnicities as elements that constitute Marseille-ness. Their engagement with race and ethnicity offers several threads of social critique that work to underscore and undermine the perceptions of racial difference in French society. For example, Marseille rappers respond to the rise of the National Front in the Midi by attacking not only the political party's ordinary racism, but also the specious claims to a singular cultural identity shared by the "French" which the rappers, as young men and women who are not perceived as "Français de souche," do not possess. As shown, IAM's song "Contrat de conscience" exemplifies the paradoxes inherent in such claims by evoking the stereotypical middle-class white Frenchmen who desire deeper skin tones while on vacation in Morocco, but who despise their tanned-skin neighbors of Maghrebian origin, and therefore cast their votes for the FN. In other songs, rappers Shurik'n and Soprano both describe incidents where they were confronted with racial discrimination: a white passerby reacts with fear upon crossing paths with the Black narrator in "Contrat de conscience," and in "A la bien," the narrator describes being refused entry into a Marseille nightclub, presumably on account of his ethnic origins. Troisième Oeil and Psy 4 de la Rime both take on the inaccurate conflation of skin color and foreignness in "Hymne à la racaille" and "L'enfant," where the lines "Je suis un de ceux sur qui tu mets des étiquettes d'immigré mal élevé" and "Immigré que je suis/ casse tout et le FN fait sa fête" exemplify, respectively, their personal struggles to overcome this perception. The perspective of IAM in "Où sont les roses" encapsulates the attitude toward race in Marseille as a

constitutive element in the identity to which Marseille youth attach themselves. Speaking of the Marseille region, IAM states:

> Notre culture est méditerranéenne
> Et je rappelle pour les crétins que celle du Maghreb est la même,
> Je ne vois pas de raison de gonfler les rangs
> D'un mouvement qui nous classe comme des sous-blancs.
> Assieds-toi à ma table, découvre ta culture
> Nettoie le jardin et vide l'ordure

The imperative forms of the verbs "assieds-toi" "découvre" "nettoie" and "vide l'ordure" demonstrate a call to collective action on the part of citizens of this distinctly Mediterranean region to literally clean house and to recognize that Marseille's cosmopolitan culture includes Maghrebian culture as a dominant element. This is a perspective later strengthened in Akhénaton's "Un brin de haine" where he describes Southern Italian and North African cultures as twins sitting back to back.

Explorations of Marseille rap thus offer significant contributions into the field of Mediterranean studies. One of the most complex, and illuminating, engagements of racial issues in Marseille and in France is the articulation of the Italian rappers' voices as seen in the third chapter. Akhénaton and Chiens de Paille both evoke their Italian origins as a means to expressing solidarity with other immigrants; with this political choice, they do not suggest that Algerian immigrants are the "new" Italians of yesteryear, but instead offer a gesture of solidarity that highlights the rigid conception of citizenship that contemporary youth are faced with. Querying the current status of Italians versus in France involves deconstructing the notions of "passing" and whiteness, and most importantly, how the colonial character of Algerian immigration has affected perceptions of immigrants' ability to "integrate" into French society. This is a position affirmed by

scholars such as Dominic Thomas, who states that Africans in France remain the locus of colonial anxieties (quoted in Tshimanga, 8), as well as Valérie Orlando (398), in addition to social theorist Gérard Noiriel, author of Le creuset français (1996) whose comparative study of Algerians versus Italians in France (webcast, 2006) notes the "exceptional" character of Algerian immigration to France. My research on representations of Italian identity in Marseille's hip-hop songs offers new perspectives in this debate, and calls into question the idea of Italians' having integrated at all, in order to shed light on perceptions of difference.[123]

However, one might suggest that youth who invoke "Je suis Marseillais" as the chief form of self-identification essentially express no more than an uncritical, nostalgic attachment to their home city, which offers little in the way of distinctiveness or particularity to Marseille—indeed, without benefiting from in-depth analyses of other European or other cities where a similar invocation of localized identity is taking place, my study likely describes a phenomenon that occurs elsewhere. What is more, localized attachments can often manifest themselves in dangerous ways; for instance, through football hooliganism and street gangs, who both claim territory based on where they happen to reside. This dissertation thus points toward future research to analyze similar hybrid, or "third spaces," areas where youth of minority origin express "transnational local citizenship" as opposed to a national one. Several scholars are headed in this direction, such as Nina Glick-Schiller who, in her book Beyond Methodological Ethnicity

[123] Scholars of Italian-American studies have addressed these questions variously, including Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno, in their volume Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America (New York and London: Routledge, 2003) and Francesca Canadé Sautman in "Grey Shades and Black Tones: Italian Americans, Race, and Racism in American Film" Screening Ethnicity: Cinematographic Representations of Italian Americans in the United States. Ed. Camaiti and Tamburri. (Bordighera, 2001).

and towards City Scale (2009), emphasizes the importance of the locality in assessing transnational migrants' identities with respect to settlement in their host countries, noting that particularities such as localized intergroup dynamics and urban physical structures shape immigrants' self-identifications outside of national origin (6). As for the charge of youth's localized attachment as a utopist vision of Marseille, I have argued that instead, youths' self-identification as *Marseillais* takes into account the problems and tensions existing in their city. In particular, youth grapple with the politics of racial exclusion, most notably apparent in the stratified living conditions and economic disparity among Marseille's diverse population. This exemplifies that no identity is static, and must constantly be reformulated and refigured and that this identity, unlike "Frenchness," which is supposedly unchanging and rigid, encompasses the possibility of modification and renewal.

To understand global cosmopolitanism, or the label I give to Marseille youth as exemplified by my analyses of hip-hop culture, one needs to go beyond the melting pot—and here I deliberately gesture toward Nathan Glazer's (1965) and Rudolf Vecoli's (1985) critical works on ethnic pluralism in the United States. Cosmopolitanism, I contend, is different from merely diversity or multiculturalism, and offers an ideal counterpoint to the national republican model of citizenship. It can be understood as a process, and it continues to be defined and redefined, especially when compared to the process of creolization, another popular term used to describe certain situations where transnational cultures confront, subvert, and shape, national identity.

My research focuses on the period between the 1990s to 2010; I briefly summarize how diversity and difference have been treated in French politics and culture,

to provide background for a definition of cosmopolitanism. In French politics of the 1980s, due to the government's policy of decentralization, there was popular support for the official (state) recognition of cultural and ethnic differences. As Paul Silverstein argues, the socialist government's attempts to reconstruct the French national imaginary along multicultural lines contributed to the opening up of new avenues of trans-regional and trans-national unity which defied the limits of state national territory (Silverstein 1997:30). In 1983, youth of immigrant origin staged a well-publicized march for equality that began in Lyon, and also organized a series of peaceful demonstrations that manifested their racial visibility and assertion of their rights (Kedward 503). These movements were supported by Mitterand's lifting in 1981 of a ban on immigrant associations that had been in place because of antifascist policies that dated back to pre-war times. In addition, the organization SOS Racisme, founded by Harlem Désir in 1984, sponsored a rock concert, backed with support and funding by Jack Lang, the minister of culture, which was attended by a million people. The instant media impact of SOS Racisme and the ostensible political support for multi-ethnic celebrations of diversity such as the Fête de la Musique (Looseley 144) attempted to recast French national identity as accepting of ethnic differences, or at least, that people had a "right" to ethnic and racial difference. The increasing demands for the official recognition of ethnic difference also prompted backlashes, as Nadia Kiwan maintains. Some decried that any recognition of cultural difference in the public sphere would undermine the principles of the "one and indivisible" French republic, resulting in the fragmentation or ghettoisation of French society (Kiwan 83). It is this conception of the right to *particularisme* that has manifested itself in the political right-wing, notes Robert Maestri in Du particularisme au

délire identitaire (2004), who, speaking specifically of Provençal regionalism in the post-war period, characterizes it as "passéiste, conservateur, inspiré dans l'amour de la Provence menacée, [et] nostalgique du passé provençal, respect du monde rural, artisanal et [qui] s'inquiète du progrès technique" (233). As outlined in my introduction, these debates continue, especially given the rise of the National Front in the South of France in the later 1990s, as well as the events leading up to the 2005 banlieue riots.

Cosmopolitan has come to define Marseille; I would argue that it is *the* cosmopolitan city par excellence in France, regarded as such due in part to the co-presence of an ethnically and socially mixed population. The terms "real," "vibrant," "dynamic," and of course, "cosmopolitan" are used to describe the city, and the citizens themselves. In order to describe Marseille youth as cosmopolitan, I analyze the definitions of cosmopolitanism that imply conflicting sensibilities toward cultural difference. Literally meaning, "citizen of the earth," the old definition in the Petit Robert implies a person who can go anywhere in the world and be at home precisely because he/she lacks confining national and regional prejudices: "Qui vit indifféremment dans tous les pays, s'accomode de tout" (559). Kwame Anthony Appiah notes in Cosmopolitanism that this definition was cast in a negative light, due to the idea of being "rootless," possessing no loyalties nor home country; it was often applied to European Jews while standing in as a euphemism for anti-Semitism (xi). The second definition of the term, also in the Petit Robert, specifies a notion, "opposée à national" (559) and is influenced by "de nombreux pays." This signifies a person who integrates elements from everywhere; s/he can live comfortably next to people of different national or ethnic origin and get along harmoniously. A preferable way of thinking about Marseille identity, given

the strong attachment to a local identity, in this case articulated through popular music, and its interface with a broader consciousness of belonging to a wide-open Mediterranean crossroads between Africa, Europe and the East, a cosmopolitanism *à la Marseillaise.* Unlike multiculturalism, which implies "one of each," cosmopolitanism in Marseille is characterized by complex and multiple belongings, or as Bruce Robbins states, "a reality of (re) attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance" (12), which acknowledges the local context from which it emerges, yet dialogues with other ways of belonging that may cross national, ethnic, religious, or class lines. Differing from multicultural, which is, as Robbins states, "…merely particularistic, a celebration of difference for its own sake" (12), cosmopolitanism is the deliberate fashioning of identities that adapts regional consciousness to include the local identities within.

This idea encapsulates the agency with which youth form identities. According to Amanda Anderson, "Cosmopolitanism endorses reflective distance form one's cultural affiliations, a broad understanding of other cultures and customs, and a belief in universal humanity" (Cosmopolitics 267). This universalism is a different kind than that of the Jacobin model, which posits Frenchness as a neutral universalism. Is it the cosmopolitanism of the local identity that allows the two apparently conflicting positions to coincide in the notion of Made in Marseille.

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The second aim of this dissertation was to prove that rap music is the most pertinent media through which to analyze the concepts of cosmopolitanism, ethnic identity, and regionalism as they relate to deconstructing and reformulating the current paradigm of Frenchness. This is in part, I argued, due to rap's obvious role in reflecting

the political and social polemics of contemporary society. In an article published in Le Monde in 1994, Akhénaton of IAM responded to a journalist who posed questions about rap music in French culture, and stated, "Je fais le même métier que toi" (Thomas 1), that is, describing his art of rapper as that of a journalist. This echoes Chuck D of Public Enemy's famous statement, referring to the American hip-hop scene, "rap is CNN for Black people." Both positions emphasize the social origins of rap music and its function to serve as a space for young people to speak out and testify in journalistic fashion and chronicle the daily lives and struggles of populations that are silenced in the mainstream media and in official channels of communication. But Marseille rappers went far beyond journalism; I chose to study the history and development of rap in Marseille in order to discover how the "bricolage musical," to use Morgan Jouvenet's term (59), or how the construction and articulation of the Marseille style of hip-hop reflects the cosmopolitan identities underneath the sounds and lyrics.

Jean-Marie Jacono poses an important question in his article on Marseille rap groups IAM and Fonky Family (2000); namely, can musical processes keep on expressing by themselves a form of the Marseille identity that no longer exists in the world of the songs? (22). This queries the tensions involved in rap; namely, that it is a form of expression emanating from a specific space and place that also has universal significance. The importance of a localized, *Marseillais* identity—as evidenced in how often rappers make Marseille the subject of their rap texts, how often they reference the city, tell stories about their neighborhoods, and inject their music with local signifiers—has evolved in importance from 1991 to 2010. One might argue, as Seth Whidden does compellingly (108), that Marseille rappers make local concerns prominent in their texts,

only to evolve and grow by making global concerns their identity. Indeed this process is a "natural" next step: IAM is most obviously the clear case, and reflects what Fabrice Leroy has called, the "nineties discourse" of Marseille (177) which took note of the racist Pasqua laws and growing tensions with respect to immigration and French identity. One remarks numerous elements that expressed a certain Marseille identity—from the titles of songs and albums (*De la planète mars* by IAM; "Bad boys de Marseille" by Fonky Family) as well as musical elements. Marseille rappers used localized slang and highlighted their accents (employing vocabulary items such as "gadgille" "fada" and "dégun"); Fonky Family used the sound of Provençal crickets on its audio tracks; and rappers make references to spaces and places familiar only to those who know Marseille as insiders (as in the case of, for instance, referencing Belsunce, la Rue St. Férreol, et cetera). As their listening publics grew wider, and their CDs circulated outside of Marseille to other French cities, one's "selling" of a certain idea of Marseille becomes less central to their identity.

This is opposite the case, for example, of a group such as Psy 4 de la Rime and its leader and solo artist Soprano, whose lyrics were, from the outset, imbricated in a localized social context. They reference their neighborhood of Plan d'Aou, where they began recording demo tapes and circulating them among their friends and associates. Toward the end of the 2000s, though they engage issues of global importance (such as famine in Africa, or the growing concern of unemployment even among educated youth), they nonetheless continue to articulate their Marseille origins a major part of their identities in their music and lyrics. Keny Arkana's rap oeuvre is similar in its rooted, yet global focus: though her lyrics express concerns at the global level, such as the

North/South global dichotomy and systemic poverty due to greed of the multinational enterprises in collusion with governments and their military backing, she proudly places Marseille as the fulcrum and starting point from which change can—and must—occur. Spearheading the "altermondialiste" movement, she emphasizes solidarity with other populations through cosmopolitan routes, and not national ones, to attack these problems. In her lyrics for "Entre ciment et belle étoile" she repurposes the idea of *La Marseillaise*, France's national anthem, which is named after France's second city in population (and not its capital) and which foments a Revolution, and call to arms, beginning in Marseille. (La Marseillaise also refers to, of course, Arkana herself, being a native-born *Marseillaise* of Argentinean origin). She raps:

> Dis-leur que c'est l'heure que le missile rentre dans la machine.
> Appelle-moi la Marseillaise, plus révolutionnaire que ton chant sanguinaire!
> Dis-leur que c'est le chant des oubliés qui ne veulent plus être passifs
> Dis-leur que c'est l'heure. Dis-leur car mon rap connait sa cible
> Dis-leur que ça vient du 13 M.A.R.S pour les villes en détresse

The Revolution, just as *La Marseillaise* implies, begins in Marseille (the 13th département), and on this "other" planet, "Mars." Arkana advocates for a specific type of citizenship, one that she feels is already present in Marseille (albeit in an imperfect form). In Marseille, one does not ask one's national identity or citizenship based on politics, but one is *Marseillais* before being French.

In Chapters 4 and 5, which deal primarily with production and promotion, I addressed the problem of authenticity in hip-hop. As Mickey Hess argues in "Hip-hop Realness and the White Performer," hip-hop's imperatives of authenticity center around the performance of proximity to notions of an original culture, which at one time existed outside of the record industry (374). Credibility is often negotiated through an artist's

experience of social and local struggles, which is often framed as attempts to resist co-opting and commoditization by the record label. While most of the rappers in this study have enjoyed wealth and fame, as Loïc Lafargue de Grangeneuve notes, they are careful to maintain ties to their communities and to represent themselves as "keeping it real." Grangeneuve states, "Si la culture hip-hop s'éloigne trop de sa forme originelle, ses artistes se détachent trop du groupe social dont ils sont issus, le public initial du hip-hop, les jeunes des quartiers populaires, ne s'y retrouvent plus" (15). The idea of there existing a "pure," original form of hip-hop to which rappers must return stresses the importance of the locality—Marseille—in the production of and representation of authenticity in rap. Rappers affirm local allegiances and territorial identities through the "Marseille style" which comprises signifiers of the locality that are represented in the aural and visual messages: dress, (such as the oversized shirts and athletic gear worn by IAM in "Red, black and green"), references to neighborhoods and housing projects, and certainly the local speech, accent, and slang of Marseille. Moreover, as underground hip-hop defines itself as a purer form of hip-hop, in opposition to the record industry's pop rap, and major rappers such as Soprano make attempts to return to their roots, releasing "mixtapes," on CD and mp3, which are throwbacks to the "original" cassette tapes, signifying artists' nostalgia for earlier times when mixtapes were a necessity.[124]

But authenticity has other implications than merely a question of "keeping it real," or local, in order to remain profitable and close to one's listening public. As I have argued in the introduction and in the fifth chapter on production, we cannot, and should not, consider Marseille rappers as mere creative iconoclasts, who are interchangeable,

[124] Soprano's latest mixtape is called *Mixtape Soprano*, on CD and mp3 (Hostile, 2010).

and who chronicle their lives in their texts, singing the same old song about hardship. If all poets deserve one thing, it is to not be taken at their word—or, that they deserve a little opacity, to use Glissant's term. The emphasis on realness in hip-hop can lead listeners to consider the music as strictly and unfailingly autobiographical, and to ignore the performative aspect that is so central to hip-hop making. In their lyrics, artists often switch between various narrative perspectives by performing some vocals as characters, going beyond a simple chronicling of a rappers' life. Ignoring performativity in hip-hop can lead to dire consequences. One needs only to consider the censorship and boycotting of Parisian rap group NTM in 1993 following the release of their polemical album J'appuie sur la gâchette, which lead to a court case in which members of the French national police (unsuccessfully) sued the group for inciting violence against them. The police took issue with the track entitled "Police," in which the group describes police corruption, French government complacency, and laments identity controls and racism. Though a narrator named Joey delivers the lyrics, the word "je" appears only five times (save for the refrain). This example marks the inability of officials and institutions to distinguish between performance, the construction of narrative themes, and rhetorical devices such as hyperbole and symbolism. The censurers and the critics of "Police" chose to view the narrator, Joey, as instigator of violence, rather than to view him as a victim who has suffered continual harassment and discrimination on the part of an arrogant, racist police force:

> Regarde je passe à coté d'eux.
> Tronche de con devient nerveux;
> "Oh oh contrôle de police, monsieur"
> Systématique est la façon dont l'histoire se complique.
> Palpant mes poches puis me pressant les balloches.
> Ne m'accordant aucun reproche à part le fait de passer proche.

One sees what one wishes to see in a rap song, and one assumes rappers—by virtue of the first-person narration—to be narrating reality, rather than what I believe is the process of performing identities.

Though no such official censorship has occurred, to my knowledge, of Marseille rappers' texts or performances, there is still danger involved when one disregards performance and the play of autobiography and confabulation. This is manifest in the way scholars treat rap texts, as I have attempted to argue in this dissertation, as they often select lyrics solely for their thematic content, using what the songs "say" to prove a point, but which ends up eliding the performative aspect of rappers' works. The performative and marketing context of rap are essential elements. Marseille rappers play with narratives that contain self-referential elements in their texts when they rap from other characters' perspectives. In my analysis of three songs dealing with Italian immigrant identity in Marseille (Chapter 3), I took note of the occasional and perhaps unintentional insertion of the narrator's voice to suggest that a consciousness resides beneath the surface of the story. Also, I highlighted the trying-on of identities, such as that of clandestine immigrant Mohamed in Troisième Oeil's "El Dorado" who leaves his country for a better life for his family and upon arrival in Marseille, finds nothing there but misery and violence; also, Shurik'n's playful and imaginative songs about the rapper as a Japanese samurai soldier. Rap, hip-hop, and more broadly, popular culture, is the "theatre of popular desires" as Stuart Hall has said (1993: 114)—a space where youth can try on, negotiate, reject, and reformulate identities that become their own.

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This dissertation begins and ends in New York: a few weeks before the completion of this dissertation, the most recent Marseille rap album was released by Akhénaton and Faf Larage, exactly twenty-one years after the first major Marseille rap record. Titled *We Luv New York* (La Cosca, 2011), the rappers pay homage to the Big Apple, which they claim as inspiration for their music and lifestyles. According to an interview with La Provence, Fragione (who also has an autobiography on the market, entitled *La Face B* [Paris: Don Quichotte, 2010]) expressed that he needed to revisit New York, where he spent two years as a teenager, in order to better appreciate Marseille, which he criticized as lacking structure for the cultural production that had once made it so famous: "Il y a une réelle identification…On a une super réputation, une super image, il faut une structure aux épaules, à la largeur de notre réputation" (Provence 1). Hopefully, Marseille youth will continue producing music that exemplifies this regional identity, and continue refuting and dismantling the rigid ideal of Frenchness. Perhaps they might be surprised that this New Yorker in particular is so fascinated with Marseille youth culture; thus, I view this project as a dialogue and an exchange with other global cosmopolitans.

Fig. 1. Front cover of IAM Concept (France: Roker Promotions, 1990).

Fig. 2. Front cover of IAM, Ombre est lumière (France: Delabel, 1993).

Fig. 3. Back cover of Ombre est lumière (France: Delabel, 1993).

Fig. 4. Front cover of Troisième Oeil, Hier, aujourd'hui, demain (France: Columbia Tristar, 1999).

Fig. 5. Back cover of Troisième Oeil, Hier, aujourd'hui, demain (France: Columbia Tristar, 1999).

Fig. 6. Inside left page of CD insert. Troisième Oeil, Hier, aujourd'hui, demain (France: Columbia Tristar, 1999).

Fig. 7. CD design of Troisième Oeil, Hier, aujourd'hui, demain (France: Columbia Tristar, 1999).

Fig 8. Front cover of Psy 4 de la Rime, Block Party. France: La Cosca, 2002.

Fig. 9. Back cover of Psy 4 de la rime, Block Party. France: La Cosca, 2002.

Fig. 10. CD design. Psy 4 de la Rime, Block Party. France: La Cosca, 2002.

Fig. 11. Inside page of Psy 4 de la Rime, Block Party. France: La Cosca, 2002.

Fig. 12. Front cover. Fonky Family, Si Dieu Veut, Inch'Allah. (France: Côté Obscur/Sony Music Entertainement, 1997).

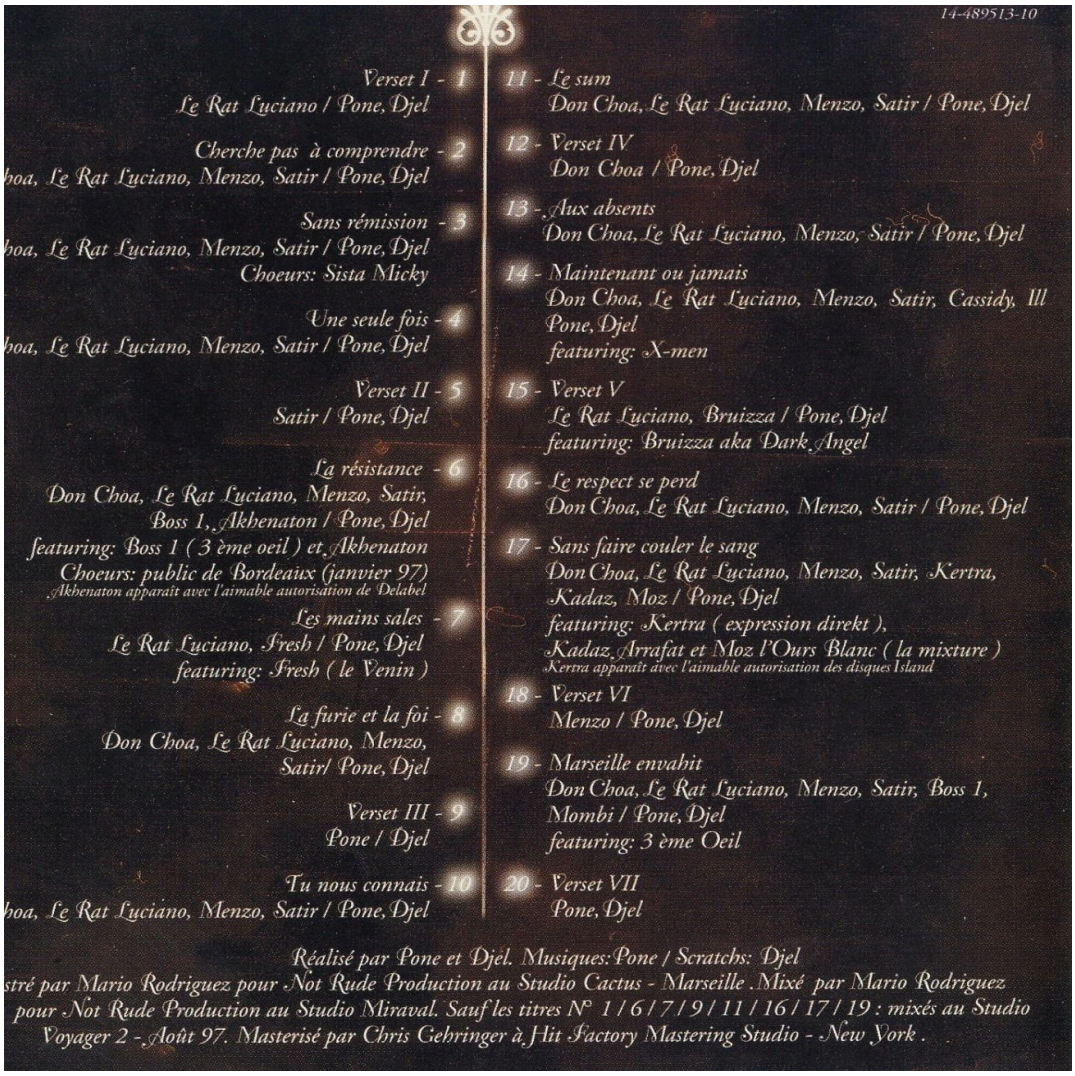

Fig. 13. Back cover. Fonky Family, Si Dieu Veut, Inch'Allah. (France: Côté Obscur/Sony Music Entertainement, 1997).

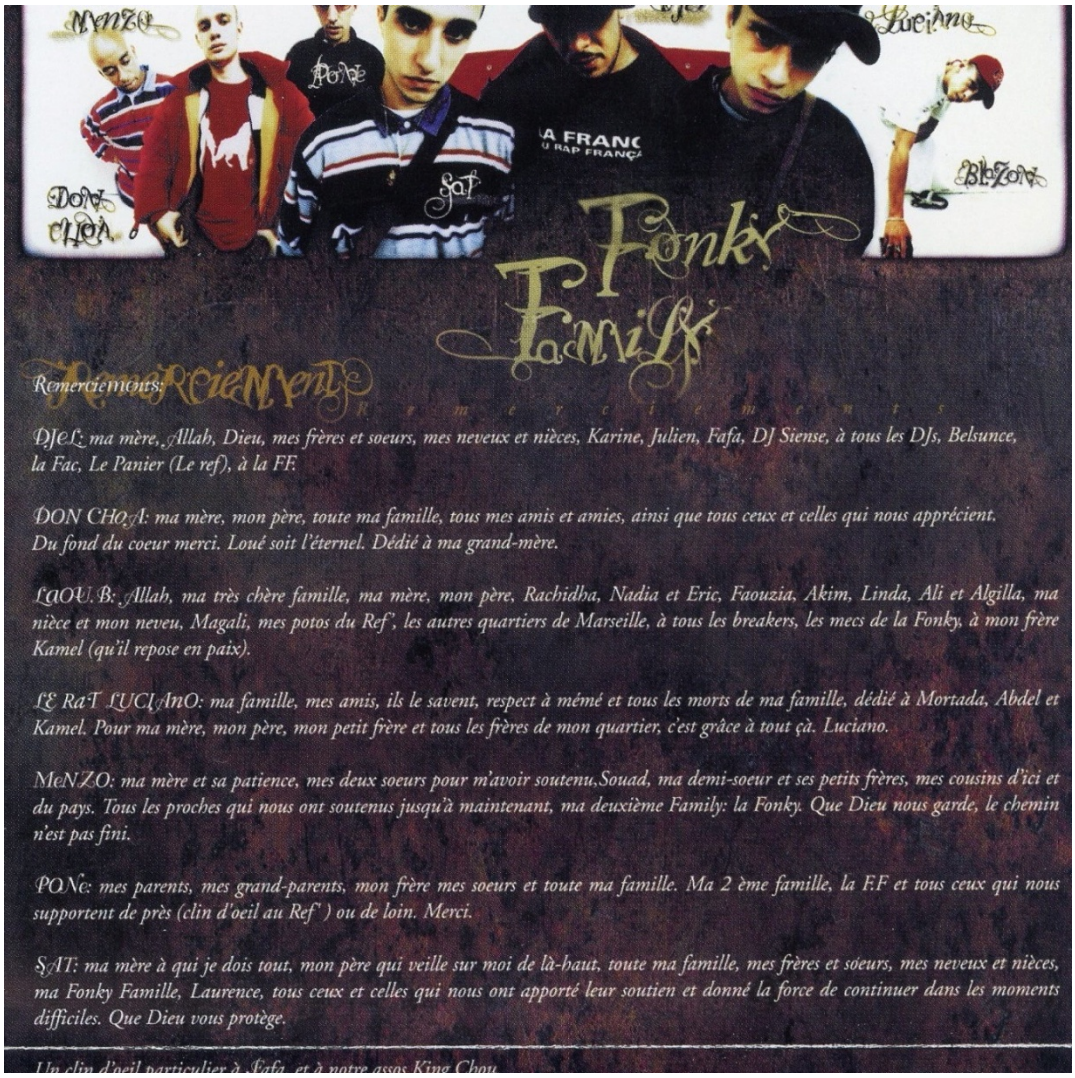

Fig. 14. Inside front page. Fonky Family, Si Dieu Veut, Inch'Allah. (France: Côté Obscur/Sony Music Entertainement, 1997).

Fig. 15. Inside back page. Fonky Family, Si Dieu Veut, Inch'Allah. (France: Côté Obscur/Sony Music Entertainement, 1997).

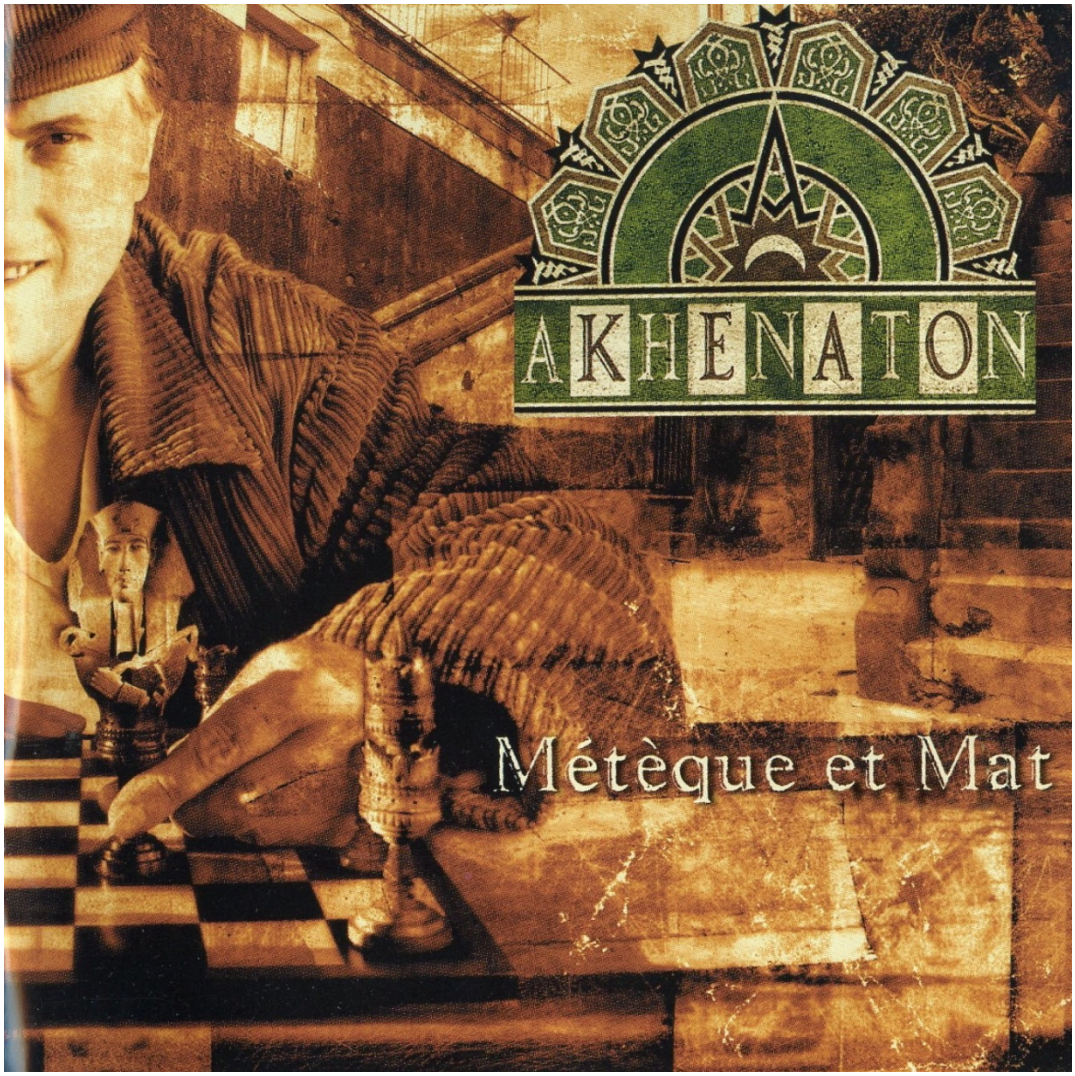

Fig. 16. Front cover, Akhénaton, Métèque et Mat. (France: Delabel, 1995).

Fig. 17. Back cover. Akhénaton, Métèque et Mat. (France: Delabel, 1995).

Fig. 18. Inside page. Akhénaton. Métèque et Mat. (France: Delabel, 1995).

Fig. 19. Inside page. Akhénaton. Métèque et Mat. (France: Delabel, 1995).

Fig. 20. Front cover. Fonky Family, Art 2 Rue. (France: Small Records, 2001).

Fig. 21. Front cover. Fonky Family, Marginale Musique. (France: Epic Records, 2006).

Fig. 22. Back cover. Fonky Family, Marginale Musique. (France: Epic Records, 2006).

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