LOCAL NOISE

Doin' damage in my native language: the use of "resistance vernaculars" in hip hop in France, Italy, and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

by Tony Mitchell.

Summary:

Ok! ok! el rap es americano/Pero, si el americano fuero amarillo/Mi musica saria una musica de chino/.... /La musica es contagiosa y al ritmo es una planta/Que cresce de Nueva York a Martignan

[Ok! ok! rap is American/But if American was yellow my music would be Chinese music/.... /Music is contagious and rhythm is a plant/That grows from New York to Martignan]

- MC Carlos, "Dans une autre langue".

This essay was first published in the UK journal *Popular Music and Society* (vol 24, no.3) in 2002, and subsequently published as a book chapters in both Bennett, Hawkins and Whiteley's (eds) *Music, Space and Place: Popular music and cultural identity* (2003) and Berger & Carroll's (eds) *Global Pop Local Language* (2004). Using examples from across the gobal hip-hop world, this essay explores the use of local vernacular's in hip-hop as a form of expressing and embodiying resistance.

About:

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Local Noise is an ARC-funded research project from the University of Technology, Sydney. Its focus is on Australian hip-hop, and the localisation of hip-hop in different cultural, societal and educational contexts.

In Spectacular Vernaculars, Russell A. Potter applies Deleuze and Guattari's comparison of Kafka's use of Prague German as a "minor language" with the use of English by African-Americans to what he regards as the heteroglossaic, marginal vernacular forms of African-American rap, which he sees as a de-territorialization of "standard" forms of English (66-68; cf. Deleuze and Guattari 16-17). Potter sees African-American rap as a form of "resistance vernacular" which takes the minor language's variation and re-definition of the major language a step further and "deform[s] and reposition[s] the rules of `intelligibility" set up by the dominant language." He concludes that African-American rappers "have looked more towards the language and consciousness of the ghetto in search of a more authentically black identity" (69). But it is arguable that the ghetto vernacular practiced by many African-American rappers has become so atrophied and ossified in its relentless repetition of a severely limited range of expletives that any claims for "resistance" have long passed their use-by date. As Paul Gilroy noted in 1994: "Hip-hop's marginality is as official, as routinized, as its overblown defiance; yet it is still represented as an outlaw form." He goes on to identify a need to interrogate "the revolutionary conservatism that constitutes [rap's] routine political focus but which is over-simplified or more usually ignored by its academic celebrants" (51). In this essay I examine the use of indigenous languages other than English in rap music in Zimbabwe, Switzerland, France, Italy, and Aotearoa/New Zealand as more appropriate examples of "resistance vernaculars" which re-territorialize not only major Anglophone rules of intelligibility but also those of other "standard" languages such as French and Italian. In the process, I also argue that rhizomic, diasporic flows of rap music outside the United States correspond to the formation of syncretic "glocal" subcultures, in Roland Robertson's sense of the term, involving local indigenizations of the global musical idiom of rap. The assertion of the local in hip-hop cultures outside the United States also represents a form of contestation of the importance of the local and regional dialect as a "resistance vernacular" in opposition to a perceived U.S. cultural imperialism in rap and hip-hop, and often corresponds to what Lily Kong has described, in reference to popular music in Singapore, as an expression of "inscribed moral geographies."

I start with an example from Zimbabwe that challenges the standard rhetoric about the Afrodiasporic and Afrocentric aspects of African-American rap and hip-hop (e.g., Rose). In the title track of Doin' Damage in My Native Language, an EP produced in the United States in 1992, Zimbabwe Legit (brothers Dumisani and Akim Ndlouvu) provide English translations of key expressions employed in their Zimbabwe regional tribal dialect, Ndbele (Jones 111). These English expressions ("Power to the people"; "The ghettos of Soweto"; "You know where to find me--in Zimbabwe") serve for the Anglophone listener both to locate Zimbabwe Legit firmly in its county of origin, Zimbabwe, and to indicate the proximity of that country to South Africa. In addition, the brothers Ndlouvu prioritize their native dialect as the main source of their art of rhyming, which finds local equivalents for certain rhetorical attributes of African-American "nation conscious" rap. The back sleeve cover and the CD itself highlight and celebrate words in Ndbele as a form of "concrete poetry," but Zimbabwe Legit's raps also incorporate Shona, the more "standard" language of Zimbabwe. So the linguistic "damage" done by Zimbabwe Legit is directed not only against the English language of their colonizers--which Zimbabwe Legit needs to use in order to be accessible in the United States--but also against standard linguistic practices in Zimbabwe. This concern for linguistic authenticity is furthermore linked to broader notions of authenticity and Afrocentricity. In a track entitled "To Bead or Not to Bead," the brothers Ndlouvu criticize African-American rappers who assimilate African fashions such as hair beading. This track is entirely in English, and includes an apparent reference to the rhetorical embrace of the Italian-American Mafia by African-American gangsta rappers:

> *Some MCs would rather be Italian/Now sportin' beads and a black medallion/Medallion on your chest, but do you feel it in your heart?/Jump off the bandwagon and pull the cart. (Qtd. in Jones 106)*

Despite its inventiveness and its "authentic" African origins, Zimbabwe Legit was a distinctly minor voice in the chorus of African-American hip-hop in 1992, and the group subsequently disappeared without a trace from the United States music industry. An entry about Zimbabwe Legit on the Rumba-kali African hip-hop website describes it as the first African hip-hop crew to break into the United States and European markets. When Zimbabwe Legit's Ndlouvu brothers were college students in the United States, they secured a record deal and an unreleased album produced by African-American hip-hop producer, Mr. Lawng (for the Black Sheep label). Dumi Ndlouvu later went on to become part of the rap group called the Last 8th, and he now goes by the name Doom E. Right.

Another marginalized African rap group which shares Zimbabwe Legit's multilingual dexterity is Positive Black Soul, a duo from Senegal who rap in a combination of English, French, and their native Senegalese language, Wolof, thus managing to address two major global linguistic groups in the African diaspora as well as those in their own locality. In the track "Respect the Nubians," Positive Black Soul identifies itself in English in relation to African-American rap as "a brother man from another land known as the motherland." In "Djoko" (Unity), rapped in a mixture of Wolof and French, they address more local concerns, describing themselves as "a brand new (political) party ... we are underprivileged, but we want the good life." Their multi-lingual rhymes enable them to address their immediate constituency as well as audiences in the United States and the world at large (the album sleeve contains the lyrics to all theft tracks in English translation). Unfortunately the United States and the world at large didn't seem to be listening, and the first album by this innovative group did very poor business in the English-speaking world.

Deleuze's notion of the "rhizome" is aptly applicable to hip-hop culture and rap music, which has rapidly become globalized and transplanted into different cultures throughout the world. This rhizomic process is expressed directly in the work of another rap group, Silent Majority, which is based in Switzerland and raps in a mixture of English, Jamaican patois, French, Spanish, and Swahili. Referring to themselves as "funky multilinguals," Silent Majority's members foreground their collective linguistic dexterity in a track entitled "Dans une autre langue" (In Another Language). In it, guest Spanish rapper MC Carlos from the bilingual Lausanne-based group Sens Unik states:

> *Ok! ok! el rap es americano/Pero, si el americano fuero amarillo/Mi musica saria una musica de chino/.... /La musica es contagiosa y al ritmo es una planta/Que cresce de Nueva York a Martignan*
>
> *[Ok! ok! rap is American/But if American was yellow my music would be Chinese music/.... /Music is contagious and rhythm is a plant/That grows from New York to Martignan]*

This use of the trope of rap music as a "plant" neatly corresponds to Deleuze's "rhizome" and serves to emphasize the "glocalization" of rap, which, although a worldwide phenomenon, is, like African-American rap, still very much concerned with roots, family, locality and neighborhood. As Sens Unik's MC Rade puts it in the same track, in a mixture of French and English: "Our music is not a pale copy of the United States, Lausanne on the map, rhymin' is the art, part of a global thing." Perhaps one of the most peripheral examples of the global linguistic indigenisation of rap as a "resistance vernacular" is the Nuuk Posse from Greenland, which uses its distinctly minority language (Inuit) to rap about the domination of their country by the Danish language (Barnes 1997).

The variety of ethnic origins among French rappers, from the French Caribbean to the Arab populations of North Africa to other parts of Europe, is notable. The origins of French hip-hop in the immigrant and working class housing projects of the banlieues (outer suburbs) of French cities, as displayed in Matthieu Kassovitz' 1995 film La Haine (Hate), are also notable. A broad variety of musical inflections ranging from hard-core rap to reggae and raggamuffin distinguish French rap from U.S. rap and give it features more in common with British and Italian hip-hop. The "adaptation" period of French hip-hop in the 1990s involved the growth of hard-core rap and Zuluism (based on Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation), where African-American models were adapted directly to French realities, but other concepts, such as

Afrocentrism, could not be translated wholesale into the French context. Andre Prevos shows how French rap crews like IAM attempted to circumvent the "return to Africa" ideology prevalent among some U.S. rappers in order to avoid playing into the hands of French right-wing anti-Arab movements like Le Pen's National Front ("Post-Colonial"). Consequently IAM constructed an elaborate "Pharaonic" ideology and mythology which boasts about Africa, but not black or Arabic Africa, rather adapting the Africa of Ancient Egypt into a religious symbology. They also mythologize their native Marseilles, a marginalized city with a high non-European immigrant population, as "le cote oscur" (the obscure side) of France, and rap in Marseilles dialect. As Steve Cannon has noted, there is in Afro-French rap "a closer physical and therefore less mythical relationship of (black) rappers in France to the `pays d'origine' [African homeland] than in the USA" (164). Cannon also notes that, despite the fact that only six percent of the population of France consists of non-European immigrants, rap and hip-hop have become a vital form of anti-racist expression for ethnic minorities:

> *studies of hip-hop in France in the 1980s and 1990s suggest that not only is the most numerical participation in both production and consumption of hip-hop "products" among people of minority ethnic origin, but also that hip-hop in France is characterized to a great extent by its role as a cultural expression of resistance by young people of minority ethnic origin to the racism, oppression, and social marginalization they experience within France's banlieues and in its major towns and cities. (155)*

Rap's rich impact on the French language was also illustrated by the publication in 1998 of a controversial dictionary of French urban slang partly derived from French rap, Comment tu tchatches? (How Do You Talk?) by a Sorbonne professor, Jean-Pierre Goudaillier. This charts the language of the French banlieues, known as Cefron, "a melting pot of expressions that reflect the ethnic make-up of the communities where it is used, borrowing words from regional dialects as well as Arab, Creole, Gipsy and Berber languages" (Bell). It also reveals that French rappers and North African immigrant youth are not, as the French mass media sometimes portrays them, an illiterate and uneducated subclass, rather, they are often talented linguists who speak French and Cefron as well as thief native "home" language. In "The Rapper's Tongue," Prevos suggests that the French rappers' use of the "reverse" slang languages "verlan" and "veul," in which words are syllabically reversed, represents a hip-hop vernacular which contests the rules of standard French. Combined with the use of borrowings from English, Arabic, Gypsy expressions, and words from African dialects, the vernacular of some North African immigrant French rappers displays a rich linguistic dexterity which constitutes another form of "resistance vernacular."

Like a number of other non-Anglophonic countries, the first compilation of rap music in Italy was almost entirely in English. Called Italian Rap Attack and released in 1992 by the Bologna-based dance label Irma, it included a brief sleeve note by radio DJ Luca De Gennaro declaring that "rap is a universal language, in whatever language and whatever part of the world it is performed." But in fact the only Italian-language track on the compilation was Frankie Hi NRG's "Fight da faida," with its half-English, half-Italian refrain urging resistance against Mafia blood feuds. This track deservedly became the most re-released and most famous Italian rap track of the 1990s. It was a courageous declaration of resistance against the Mafia, and, in marked contrast to the celebration of Martin Scorsese's Italian-American mafioso stereotypes in American gangsta rap, it became one of the dominant polemics of "nation conscious" Italian rap. Frankie Hi NRG's barrage of internal rhymes also illustrated the greater facility for rhyming that the Italian language had over English, while his use of a brief burst of a woman rapping in Sicilian dialect was also a first:

> *Padre contro figlio, frateno su fratello/Partoriti in un avello come came da macello;/Uomini con anime/Sottili come lamine,/taglienti come il crimine/Rabbiosi oltre ogni limite,/Eroi senza terra/Che combattono una guerrafDa la mafia e la comorra, Sodoma e Gomorra,/Napoli e Palermo,/Succursali dell'Inferno.*

[Father against son, brother against brother,/Born in a grave like butcher's meat;/Men with minds/As sharp as blades,/Cutting like crime/Angry beyond limits,/Heroes without land/Fighting a war/Between the mafia and the camorra, Sodom and Gomorrah/Naples and Palermo/Regions of hell.]

Although there are Italian posses based in the major cities like Rome and Milan, a notable feature of Italian rap is a tendency to manifest itself in smaller and more marginal regional centers. If Turin and Naples became major localities for rap music, Sicily, Sardinia, Calabria, and Puglia were just as important. A nationwide network of centri sociali (social centers), which were often set up in occupied disused buildings, became the focal point for Italian hip-hop culture. As Italian rappers began experimenting in their native language, they also Italianized U.S. hip-hop expressions like "rappare," "scratchare," and "slenghare" (to use slang) and began to rap in their regional dialects. Some rappers also revived the oppositional political rhetoric of the militant student groups of the 1970s, and in some cases began to excavate Mediterranean regional folk music roots which had been neglected since the Italian folk music revival of the late 1960s. A distinctive musical syncretism also emerged among the Italian rap groups that pushed out the parameters of hip-hop and more often than not became fused with raggamuffin reggae ("ragga"), dance hall, and ska influences. This led to the coinage of the term "rappamuffin" in a 1992 Flying Records compilation of Italian rap and ragga entitled Italian Posse: Rappamuffin d'Azione. The Sud Sound System, based in Salento on the Southern Adriatic Coast, took this even further, referring to their hybridized music as "tarantamuffin," referring back to the dance tradition known as tarantella. The hybridizations of both Sud Sound System and the Marseilles-based Marsilia Sound System were studied by the French ethnomusicologist George Lapassade and his Italian collaborator Piero Fumarola, and as Felice Liperi has indicated, the use of dialect in Italian rap was partly a consequence of both technical considerations and the choice of polemical subject matter: Clearly the motivation was not only cultural, it was also technical. Italian DJs and musicians who chose the musical idiom of rap, which is based on the relation between words and rhymes, found dialect a more malleable language in which to combine rhythm and rhyme. But it is also true that once they found themselves talking about the domination of the mafia in the south and urban disintegration, a more coherent use of the language of these localities came spontaneously. Dialect is also the language of oral tradition, and this brings it closer to the oral culture of rap. (201)

This is particularly evident in the work of the Bad-based group Suoni Mudu, which superimposes a street map of Bad on its name and enacts a mock Mafia murder on the cover of its polemical 1996 mini-album, Mica casuale sara (Hardly by Chance). The CD cover includes the lyrics to their track "Citt e camina (L'ambiente)" (City and Hearth [Where I Live]) in both Barese dialect and "standard" Italian. This begins with an address to local Christian Democrat and neo-fascist politicians and then proceeds to mark out a criminal cartography of Bad:

Ind'a Libberta acchemma] [nne l'omerta/Ind'a Sambasquhle acchemma] [nne u criminale/A Japigie stene na Coop addo vennevene la robba / A Carrassi uno scippo] [ogni due passi.

[A conspiracy of silence rules in Liberta/Organized crime rules in San Pasquale/There was a co-op in Japigia which sold drugs/In Carrassi a bag gets snatched every two meters.]

The track exposes a conspiracy between the government, the police, the Mafia and their Calabrian and Neapolitan equivalents (the `Ndrangheta and the Camorra), and expresses similar sentiments to those of "Fight da faida," but they are articulated very differently. The loping ragga beat gives the track a sense of grim resignation as well as denunciation, and the sung refrains--"Poverannu" (poor us) and "Ste fatt'u sccehe" (the die is cast), which use a female voice--draw on local musical idioms to express a sense of grief. Barese dialect is also used for its musical attributes, as in the line "Ask me for two hits (of heroin), there, give him two hits," which in Barese is sing-song: "Di du, da d& de du." As Goffredo Plastino has noted, "dialect is also used for its different musicality with regard to Italian, for the greater possibilities of rhythmic and musical organisation of phrases which it allows" (100). The use of local expressions,

the perorations through the main precincts of Bari, and the roll call of politicians also give the track a specificity and sense of locality which "Fight da faida" lacks. Suoni Mudu provides a detailed and intimate cartography of the Bari criminal underworld which is fleshed out by its idiomatic use of the "minor language" of Barese dialect. "Fight da faida," on the other hand, like the Rome-based rappers Menti Criminali (Criminal Minds), addresses the whole of Italy by using standard Italian. As a member of Menti Criminali put it, "my rhymes are written in [Standard] Italian so that what I experience and feel is clear from Sicily to Milan." But this kind of clarity often involves sacrificing a sense of local identity which is vital to the regional diversity of Italian rap. In the case of the Sardinian group Sa Razza, rapping in Sardinian dialect serves as a means of defending local (and national) pride. As the group puts it in its track entitled "The Road": "We prefer Sardinian slang rap. You have to defend your pride in being Sardinian, brother. That's why we're rapping, here the only hope is for my people to survive. Survive on the road" (Qtd. in Pacoda 42). For the Sicilian group Nuovi Briganti, rapping in the dialect of Messina is a way of maintaining contact with the poor and dispossessed people of its locality, who have difficulty expressing themselves in "standard" Italian:

> *We are based in one of the most devastated areas of the city, and the people in the neighbourhood have difficulty expressing themselves in [Standard] Italian. They've been used to speaking dialect since they were children. And they were our first reference point, the people who have followed us since we began. And rap is about communication. (Qtd. in Pacoda 42)*

A more paradoxically polemical use of Italian dialect as "resistance vernacular" occurs in a track by the Calabrian group South Posse, which was based in Cosenza until it disbanded in 1995. In "Semplicemente immigrato" (Simply Immigrated), Luigi Pecora, an Italian of Ethiopian origin, also known as Louis, uses the dialect of Cosenza as a way of expressing his adopted Calabrian "roots." As Plastino has stated, here "dialect serves the function of identifying the privileged interlocutors of a discussion, the people of Cosenza, and challenging them to a dialogue. At the same time ... it is a way of elaborating a personal style" (98). Influenced by the dialect ragga-rap of Sud Sound System, Pecora wrote "Simply Immigrated" in dialect as a way of expressing his ability to belong to Cosenza, and to get closer to the inhabitants, who he addresses as "brothers":

> *Eppure molti dicono tutto il mondo e paese/Eppure troppi dicono vattene al tuo paese/Ma dicu ma moni tu chi cazzu vu I mia/Ca signu vinutu druacu a lavura pe fatti mia ...*
>
> *[Many people say all the world's your home town/Too many people say go back to where you came from/I'm telling you what the fuck do you want me to do/I came here to work and mind my own business.]*

The simplicity of the language used here is abetted by musical repetitions of particular words, and there is a shift in the track from the direct address of `I' and "you" to "he" and then "we," indicating that the narrator identifies with both the immigrant and the native Italian. The use of dialect here is strategic, an act of defiance, and to emphasize this Pecora raps the first two lines in standard Italian before shifting into dialect in the second two. As Plastino notes, this mixture of dialect and Italian corresponds to

> *the way a young person from Cozsenza talks today, which is what Luigi Pecora wanted to identify himself with to communicate more clearly.... The reference to "roots" is made to indicate the need to establish an exclusively linguistic relationship to one's region. (100)*

But South Posse also uses dialect to rap about racism, in the context of both the discrimination against southern Italians by northern Italians and the exclusion of immigrants from Africa, who are often refered to as "extra-comunitario," a euphemism used to describe non-Europeans.

In spite of the fact that Aotearoa/New Zealand is on the opposite side of the globe in relation to Italy, we find that there too indigenous language is used in rap as a form of "resistance vernacular." The native inhabitants of Aotearoa, the Maori, constitute about thirteen percent of the 3.36 million population

of Aotearoa, but forty percent of Maori are in the lowest income group, and twenty-one percent are unemployed, compared with 5.4 percent for pakeha (persons of European origin). Seventy-five percent of the Maori population is under thirty years of age, but forty percent of Maori youth are out of work and four out of ten leave school without having graduated. Since the 1980s, steps have been taken by Maori towards a renewal of their cultural and social traditions, and to regenerate te reo Maori (the Maori language), which is only spoken by about eight percent of the inhabitants of Aotearoa. This establishes it as a "minor language," although it is the language of the indigenous inhabitants of Aotearoa, the tangata whenua (people of the land). The syncretization of aspects of traditional Maori waiata (song) and imported African-American musical forms is one which many Maori popular groups and performers have pursued in different ways and to varying degrees throughout the history of Maori popular music. Given the implausibility of entertaining strict notions of authenticity and purity in relation to Maori cultural traditions (or to any contemporary indigenous musical forms), the combination of traditional waiata (song) and popular musical forms from the United States is part of a cultural project of self-assertion and self-preservation which is linked with a global diaspora of musical expressions of indigenous ethnic minorities' social struggles.

Maori rappers were quick to adopt the trappings of hip-hop culture and to explore its affinities with indigenous Maori musical and rhetorical forms. This is illustrated by the way concepts such as patere (rap), whakarongo mai (listen up) and wainua (attitude) are easily assimilated into hip-hop discourse. The first Maori rapper to release a recording was Dean Hapeta (D Word), with his group Upper Hutt Posse. Hapeta was part of a "lost generation" of Maori youth who didn't have the benefits of learning the Maori language at school, as is now customary, and thus had to learn it himself. This informed the militancy with which he uses the Maori language in his raps. As Hapeta says, "Although I love and respect Hip-Hop, being Maori I only take from it what doesn't compromise my own culture. But in spite of this I have found them both very compatible" (Qtd. in Frizzell 48; cf. 50).

Hapeta and other Maori and Pacific Islander rappers and musicians have substituted Maori and Polynesian cultural expressions for the African-American rhetoric of hip-hop, while borrowing freely from the musical styles of the genre (and it is an indication of the strong position traditionally held by women in Maori and Pacific Islander societies that the misogynist aspects of U.S. hardcore rap are totally absent from its Maori and Pacific Islander appropriations). The result is a further syncretization of an already syncretic form, but one which is capable of having strong musical, political, and cultural resonances in Aotearoa. In their 1996 album Movement in Demand (a title derived from Louis Farrakhan), Upper Hutt Posse combine the use of traditional Maori traditional instruments, militant patere and karanga (raps and calls to ancestors) and invocations of the spirits of the forest (Tane Mohuta) and the guardian of the sea (Tangaroa), and rhetoric borrowed from the Nation of Islam. The album also draws on the group's reggae and ragga inclinations, funk bass rhythms, blues guitar riffs, and hardcore gangsta-style rapping which switches from English to te reo Maori. One of the album's tracks, "Tangata Whenua" ("The People of the Land") is entirely in Maori, a choice which runs the risk of receiving virtually no radio or TV airplay, as the national media in New Zealand still regard the Maori language as a threat to its Anglophone hegemony. Nonetheless, Hapeta completed a powerful video for "Tangata Whenu," was previewed on a Maori language television program. It tells the story of a polluted river, a consultation with a kaumatua (elder), traditional Maori gods destroying a factory, and an expression of Maori sovereignty:

> *Ko Papatuanuku toku Whaea, ko te whenua ia/Ko Ranginui toku Matua, kei runga ake ia/Whakarongo mai kite mea nui rawa/He take o te Ao/He kaupapa o toku whakapapa/Ko IO MATUA KORE, te mama tuatahi/ E ora! koutou! toku Iwi,/Whaia te wairua o te ahi/Whakatikangia te kupu, te mahi,/Whakatahea nga hee o Tauiwi,/Kia rere ai nga hiahia, nga moemoeaa,/O te hinengaro/Kia toko ai hoki te whakaaro moohio/Taangata Whenua--Ko Te Pake--Whakapapa/Taangata Whenua--Ko Te Take Me Te Mana/Taangata Whenua--Ko Te Hana O Te Haa/Taangata Whenua--Te Ahi Kaa*

[Papatuuaanuku is my mother, the earth/Ranginui is my father, he is above/ Listen to the thing it's very important/A root of the world/A foundation level of my genealogy/It is Io-matua-kore, the first parent Live! you all! my people,/ Pursue the spirit of the fire/Make correct the words, the work/Cause the wrongs of Tauiwi (the foreigner) to pass away/So the desires, dreams, can flow/Of the conscience/So wise thoughts can rise up also/ People of the land--The durable lineage/People of the land--The root and the authority/People of the land--The glow of the breath/People of the land--The ever burning fire]

The track starts with a woman chanting a karanga (call to ancestors), and includes the sound of the purerhua (bull roarer), a traditional Maori instrument consisting of a piece of greenstone or wood rotated on a piece of string which makes a whirring noise associated with sounding the alarm. The track draws on key concepts in Maori philosophy, which are familiar to some pakeha, such as whakapapa (lineage), mana (authority), tangata (man), and kaupapa (strategy or theme of a speech). It also draws extensively on Maori oral traditions and rhetorical figures. The track is not translated into English on the lyric sheet of the album, which suggests that it is addressed to Maori only, although most New Zealanders know the meaning of the term tangata whenua. To adapt Zimbabwe Legit's phrase, in "doin' damage in [his] native language," Dean Hapeta and the Upper Hutt Posse use the rhetoric, idioms, and declamatory styles of hip-hop to express Maori resistance and sovereignty, and in so doing, they indigenize it. Rap becomes subservient to an expression of Maori philosophy and militant dreams, and is thus absorbed into the wider project of Maori sovereignty. On 1 January 2000, Hapeta released Ko Te Matakahi Kupu (The Word that Penetrates), a twenty track rap album entirely in Maori, under his Maori sobriquet, Te Kupu (D Word).

From our consideration of hip-hop scenes in places like Zimbabwe, Italy, Greenland, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, we see that the the rhizomic globalization of rap is not a simple instance of the appropriation of a U.S./African-American cultural form; rather; it is a lingustically, socially, and politically dynamic process which results in complex modes of indigenization and syncretisim. The global indigenization of rap and hip-hop has involved appropriations of a musical idiom which has become a highly adaptable vehicle for the expression of indigenous resistance vernaculars, their local politics, and what Kong calls the "moral geographies" of different parts of the world. The "minor languages" of Maori and Italian dialects, together with the use of verlan and veul in French and the languages of other ethnic minorities within dominant languages such as French and English, however, pay a price for their status as "resistance vernaculars." While the use of these vernaculars can be regarded as constituitive of deliberate strategies to combat the hegemony of the English language in both the global popular music industry in general and in hip-hop in particular (which, its African-American linguistic variants notwithstanding, still represents a dominant language), their limited accessibility in both linguistic and marketing terms largely condemns them to a heavily circumscribed local context of reception. In contrast, a hip-hop group such as the Swedish crew Loop-troop reflect the continuing dominance of the English language and American culture in the formation of global pop:

We've all had English in school since we were 10 years old and there's a lot of sitcoms and films on TV that are English/American. The whole of Europe is becoming more and more like America basically. I guess we're fascinated with the language. But the way rap in Swedish sounds is a little bit corny and I think it's great that people as far away as Australia can understand us. I think that's the main mason why we rhyme in English. (Qtd in McDuie 31)

What Looptroop risks in their embrace of the Anglophonic and American homogenization of Europe risks, of course, is the erasure of any distinctively local or even national features in their rapping and breakbeats. In contrast, Maori rapper Danny Haimona of Dam Native sees the popularity of U.S. gangsta rap and R&B among young Maori and Pacific Islanders as the biggest threat to their appreciation of their own culture expressed in local indigenous hip-hop:

There's such an influx of American stuff, and we need to quell it, and we need to give these kids some knowledge on what's really up.... Kids don't want to be preached to, so what I'm trying to do is put it on their level, and take

> *all the good influences from hip-hop, and bring it close to home. There is a good vibe out there for New Zealand hip-hop, but it's being poisoned by the Americanisms--the Tupacs and the Snoop Doggy Doggs. You have to have a balance, and Dam Native are trying to help kids work out that they have their own culture, they don't have to adopt Americanisms. (Qtd. in Russell 18)*

In this context, the choice of local indigenous "resistance vernaculars" is an act of cultural resistance and preservation of ethnic autonomy, and as such, it is a choice that overrides any global or commercial concerns.

Note

Throughout this essay, translations from French, Italian, and Spanish are by Tony Mitchell; translations from Maori are by Dean Hapeta and Tony Mitchell.

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