Remixing the Hip-Hop Narrative

Introduction

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Hip hop's fiftieth birthday celebrations in 2023 reflected commemorations of a culture and movement truly global in its proportions, a status that the culture had begun to achieve as early as the 1980s. From its origins to present, hip hop is a culture that combines elements of uniformity with (trans)local and (trans)national symbols and expressions. We see this, for example, in hip hop's emergence in the 1970s, in the musical genres that early hip-hop DJs and pioneers Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash delved into in search of the elusive "break," including the Latin and Caribbean music of boogaloo and salsa. This applies equally in the musical wellspring that hip-hop producers dived into when developing early sampling techniques and hip-hop productions going into the 1980s.

According to the element of emceeing, hip-hop MCs developed their lyrical arsenals drawing on and developing certain lyrical tropes, pioneering, and adapting stylistic features into their own rapping styles. Introducing new language and everyday slang from the streets into their repertoire, rappers, much like the reggae *deejays*, or toasters[1], before them on Kingston's reggae sound systems, narrated a diverse range of themes, stories, and narratives relating to their lived, or otherwise imagined, experience of everyday life in the streets of New York City—hip hop being central to this everyday experience. Emceeing is an art form importantly anchored in the performative aspect of its "liveness," a term Kevin Green discusses in this volume in relation to a historical view of the development of emceeing and perspectives surrounding authenticity and 'realness' in rappers' live performances, freestyling, and battle rap culture. The meanings and connotations attached to live emceeing and performance, have of course shifted over time, however, sparking further debate within the hip-hop community on subjects of authenticity and the significance of "keeping it real." In addition, Green touches on the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ideas, discourses, and debates that contribute to the very understanding of 'realness.' From within hip hop's founding communities, to the global hip-hop nation, lively public debate and discourse continue to stake claims for what is (and what isn't) *real* hip hop. In this sense, these notions are constantly scrutinized and re-defined within the culture, community, and through hip-hop practice.

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[1] In Jamaican and reggae sound system parlance, a toaster or a deejay is an MC, not to be confused with the DJ (disk jockey). Cf. also Barber's chapter in this volume for further details on Jamaican sound system culture and the deejay.

In its originary communities and the US in general, hip hop is widely perceived as a predominantly Black and African American subculture, defined in cultural terms by the Black American experience. Hip hop "is black American music" grounded in "black American aesthetics," Perry (2004: 10, 12) states, which reflects an African American "centrality" as Ogbar (2002: 12–13) and others have reiterated. On the flipside, discussions at the academic, journalistic, and community levels all reflect vibrant, and sometimes controversial debates surrounding the presence and founding contributions to hip-hop culture from individuals of a diverse range of nationalities, ethnicities, and racial backgrounds in The Bronx, New York City, and beyond. Renowned hip-hop scholar Raquel Rivera (2003), for example, has explored the significance of Puerto Rican contributions to early New York hip hop, highlighting iconic figures in breakdance such as Crazy Legs and the Rocksteady Crew, and pointing out that many of the artists in the first hip-hop film *Wild Style* (1982) were of Latinx and Puerto Rican descent. Furthermore, as Barber details in his chapter, when considering the Jamaican contributions to hip-hop culture, according to the theory of reggae's late or delayed reception in New York, as Jamaican sociologist Orlando Patterson (1994) and American musicologist Wayne Marshall (2006) note, it is important to reinstate the idea that reggae would take some time to "percolate" (2006: 215) into hip-hop practice. This is not to say that Jamaican, West Indian, and Caribbean influences have been fully explored and represented within hip hop's originary years either, however. When looking at the intersections between hip hop and reggae sound system and dancehall culture, or as Perry puts it their "crossroads moments" (2004: 15), a notion Barber addresses further, we should in fact be paying attention to the overlaps between these two gargantuan music cultures beyond framing this in terms of claims to "originalism" (ibid.: 9–37). Further attention is still required regarding reggae's reception in hip-hop culture and practice in the ongoing evolution of both music cultures across New York and US hip hop's Golden Age, from the early 1980s through to the mid-1990s.

In short, from its very beginnings up to the present, hip hop has consistently engaged with, repurposed, and integrated diverse actors, musical elements, cultural traditions, and practices. The entanglements of different cultures and diasporas on the evolution of hip hop as a music and a cultural movement in the US, and beyond, is a core part of what this volume seeks to illuminate. Highlighting some examples of the manifold cultural variations and exchanges that have created and constantly transformed hip hop, and helped to spread it within the US and beyond, the book asks how "cultural signifiers" bound by social, ethnoracial, gender, cultural, and spatial categories are being (re-)negotiated in hip hop. While concentrating on the Americas, the volume likewise includes articles that focus on other world regions, further reflecting hip hop's transnational and transregional entanglements.

Hip Hop in Academia

Hip-hop studies is a multi- and inter-disciplinary field that has grown considerably in recent years, encompassing research areas as diverse as musicology, ethnomusicology, history, sociology, and cultural studies. From the perspective of these different disciplines, hip-hop studies incorporate a wide range of research foci, addressing issues of globalization, technology, pop culture, linguistics, geography, identity politics, race and ethnicity, electoral politics, and a variety of other phenomena relating to hip hop and wider contemporary culture (Watkins 1998). The field of hip-hop studies is often cited as having been shaped by the publication of *That's the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* in 2003, edited by Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, which brings together almost twenty-five years of hip-hop scholarship, criticism, and journalism. Nonetheless, hip-hop studies emerged as a distinct academic discipline even earlier, when in the mid-1990s Tricia Rose's (1994) seminal text *Black Noise* sparked an overdue reminder that academia had still not given hip hop the attention it deserved. Another early example in the field, Houston A. Baker's (1993) *Black Studies, Rap, and the Academy*, urged African American studies departments to take hip hop seriously and include it in their curricula, a call that given hip-hop culture's recognition in a wide range of US and international teaching practice, pedagogy, and youth work is by now evidently well advanced. Édouard Laniel-Tremblay and Bronwen Low contribute a case study on the effects of hip-hop pedagogy at a youth recording studio in Quebec in this volume, demonstrating that this is a prevalent issue for academia, education, and youth work alike.

In the early 2010s, hip-hop studies evolution reached another peak with the creation of the *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* (JHHS), a publication committed to documenting "critically engaged, culturally relevant, and astute analyses of Hip Hop" (JHHS website n.d.). Topics addressed by the JHHS include the history of hip hop's emergence and evolution, identity politics of the 'hip-hop nation,' technologies of production, debates surrounding 'street authenticity,' race, class, and gender, aesthetics of revolutionary politics, hip hop as a cultural industry, and otherwise. The journal speaks to the relevance of hip hop in academia and has been a mirror of the most relevant topics in the field, in the US especially, for over a decade. Since 2020, intellect has published the *Global Hip Hop Studies* journal (GHHS), which focuses on "research on contemporary as well as historical issues and debates surrounding hip hop music and culture around the world" (GHHS website n.d.) and like the JHHS, is peer-reviewed and available as an open access publication. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of hip hop, producer Greg Schick and hip-hop scholar Sina A. Nitzsche co-edited a "Special 'Hip Hop Atlas' Double Issue" with contributions by hip-hop scholars, educators, and artists from all five continents (Nitzsche and Schick 2023). The Board of Editors of the GHHS reads like a who's who of hip-hop studies, including scholars that we were lucky enough to have in attendance at our conference in late 2021, such as Murray Forman and J. Griffith Rollefson, and, in the case of Amy Coddington, contributors to this collection.

Thirty years after *Black Noise*, the list of significant hip-hop scholarship is far too extensive to be elaborated on in full here. Jeff Chang's (2005) *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, Nelson George's (2005) *Hip-Hop America*, and Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar's (2007) *Hip-Hop Revolution: The Culture and Politics of Rap*, among others, are crucial examples in the canon, and must-reads for any hip-hop scholar. William Eric Perkins's (1996) essay collection *Droppin' Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture* is another notable contribution, as it includes a variety of works from by now well-established contributors to the field such as Juan Flores, Robin D.G. Kelley, and Tricia Rose who had already addressed issues like Latinx agency in hip hop, the politics of gangster rap on the West Coast, and the "Institutional Policing of Rap Music," respectively. A great number of works by hip-hop scholars include forewords or commentaries by renowned artists, as for instance Michael Eric Dyson's (2007) collection of essays *Know What I mean?*, framed by contributions from Jay-Z and Nas. The former speaks to the importance of hip-hop scholars such as Dyson, calling him "the most brilliant interpreter of hip hop culture we have" (Jay-Z 2007: x). Jay-Z also speaks to the importance of hip-hop scholarship by people of color with similar socioeconomic backgrounds as the hip-hop practitioners themselves, such as Dyson, which brings us to the subject of our own positionality as White European researchers in hip-hop studies.

While the transnational fluidity of hip hop might explain the fascination of the culture outside of its original contexts, including those in comparably privileged positions, it has also shifted hip-hop-related discourses to an academic context. Due to the impact of cultural studies with its often highly abstract theoretical concepts, related academic debates have been shaped by a specific, complex language, hereby easily running into danger of excluding the voices of the founding individuals and communities who built hip-hop culture. The underlying question of who can conduct research on hip hop under these circumstances was openly addressed by Norwegian hip-hop researcher Kjell Andreas Oddekalv (2022: 115–122). Calling himself a reflective performer, he pointed to his uncomfortable position of undertaking a theoretical musical analysis of hip hop from a privileged position as a White European male researcher: "I am also a (or one could say 'yet another') White cis-male academic writing about Black music, another position which requires reflection, as does the profound *non-Americanness* of my specifically Norwegian and more generally European background, as regards both hip-hop culture and academic disciplinary traditions" (original emphasis). The transparency of Oddekalv's stance is also apparent when he describes his analytical approach as "cultural appropriation," further stating that "hip-hop does in no way need academia" (ibid.: 115) and reiterating the notion of his participation as "a guest in the culture" (ibid.: 116).

While hip hop might not need academia, it could be that academia actually needs hip hop to better understand, as the articles of this volume aim to illustrate, the general positionality of cultural (academic included) production and reflection, as well as the need for communication and translation across different cultural contexts and codes. Studying hip hop as an outsider may open up new perspectives and differentiated ways of approaching sociocultural issues that have been an underlying, yet not always visible theme (at least to outsiders) in US popular culture, and culture more generally. The study of hip hop strongly contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of globalization and transcultural processes, and the complexity of many theoretical concepts of culture that have been at the core of academic and popular debate in recent decades. The central issue is respect towards the founding protagonists and communities of hip hop, which is also evident in Oddekalv's (2022) statement that Black music does not require analysis by White means (e.g. music theory) to be respected and appreciated. The authors in the present collection represent a mixture of hip-hop scholars from varying backgrounds and positionalities. Those authors whose chapters detail personal contact and exchange with artists, architects, and archivists of hip hop, and Black and minority popular music history more generally, would all concur that the recognition and respect for the founding communities of these cultures is itself a pre-condition of even beginning to establish a research relationship with members of these musical communities in the first place. This is further a condition foremost of ethical scholarship, but second of meaningful representations of those cultures and communities, whether as insiders or outsiders. One thing that is certain is that hip hop has exerted such a deep and multifaceted impact on all levels of society, that its study matters to us all.

Situating Hip Hop Between Local Expressions and Global Connections

Buzzwords like "hybrid," "transcultural," and "multiethnic" are used excessively in hip-hop studies (and indeed elsewhere), often without contextualizing these concepts according to their wider development within the field of cultural studies. In many cases, 'transcultural' can simply mean "involving, encompassing, or extending across two or more cultures" (Merriam Webster n.d.) or "across all cultures of the world" (Collins Dictionary n.d.). But in fact, there is a rich scholarship on transculturality, as Terence Kumpf's contribution shows. His critique of transculturality concepts in hip-hop studies and academia at large sets the conceptual tone of this edited volume. Kumpf makes the case that Fernando Ortiz's original concept of transculturality, as observed and developed in Cuba, can be a fruitful approach for hip-hop scholars. The author raises his objection to the dearth of acknowledgement for the fundamental originator of transculturality, who he argues has been largely swept under the rug in wider analyses of culture in the academic literature. Additionally, Kumpf's chapter provides an overview of the literature engaging in discourses surrounding hybridity and transculturality in hip hop and beyond.

Jaspal Naveel Singh (2022) is one of relatively few hip-hop scholars who in part does base his work, *Transcultural Voices: Narrating Hip Hop*

Culture in Complex Delhi, on Ortiz, among others. Singh's understanding of transculturation is deeply informed by Pratt (1992) and questions of appropriation; he prioritizes "formulas of appropriation rather than appropriating forms" and thus moves beyond Pratt's binary of "usage" and "ownership" of culture in contact zones (Singh 2022: 13). Transculturation can thus be understood as "a multitude of voices and narratives that are circulated and negotiated to make meaning of the self and the other, in unfinished ways" (ibid.). In this sense, the present volume aims to contribute new voices and narratives to the canon of hip-hop studies that has neglected substantive acknowledgement of the stories, artists, and musical productions on the margins of the more dominant and popular narratives of hip-hop history.

Following the celebration of hip hop's fiftieth birthday in 2023, the story of the emergence of hip-hop culture and its beginnings in the early 1970s in the South Bronx, New York City, its' connections to the African American community, Black struggle, resistance, and the Black Power Movement, alongside the emergence and evolution of the four elements were widely commemorated. While these central aspects of hip-hop history and culture are by no means disputed, hip hop must likewise be considered from its very beginnings as being drawing upon and representing strong transnational and hybrid cultural currents. Hip-hop practice has also drawn heavily on musical and cultural symbols from outside of the United States, for example, from various Caribbean and Latin American communities and cultural practices (Rivera 2003; Chang 2005; McFarland 2008). Despite solid scholarship on the Latinx and particularly Puerto Rican involvement in the creation of hip hop, these claims are often disputed by critics who consider hip hop a solely African American practice, with Mausfeld referring to this recurring debate in her chapter.

In recent years, the African Caribbean heritage of numerous hip-hop pioneers such as DJ Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash, and Afrika Bambaataa has received more attention. The importance of Jamaican popular music practice on the emergence of hip hop is at once recognized, yet rarely substantiated or explored beyond a surface level—which in many cases, for example, begins and ends with an acknowledgement of Kool

Herc's foundational contributions. Barber takes up aspects of these connections in his chapter, with such debates already periodically gaining further momentum (and indeed backlash) in recent years in comments from hip-hop luminaries such as MC Busta Rhymes and producer Pete Rock, among others, who have reiterated the centrality of these connections. As Barber shows in his chapter, part of the complexity of this subject is that many individuals with African Caribbean ancestry did not reveal—in many cases actively concealed—this cultural heritage in the early period of hip hop, and therefore were simply identified as Black or African American. Going into the 1980s, Jamaican and Caribbean culture would undergo "shifting significations" (Marshall 2006: 213–221) in New York, further permeating into hip hop and wider African American popular music culture and practice.

We aim to highlight examples of ethnic diversity in the founding stages of hip hop in the US, as well as the magnitude of cultural influences that have informed the culture ever since. When referring to ethnic or racial categories, we are conscious that these are both scientific terms as well as social and political categories of everyday use, and in no way can we take them for granted or suggest that they are "real" or fixed (Büschges 2019; 2015). Following sociologists Pierre Bourdieu (1985) and Rogers Brubaker (2004), we focus particularly on the social and political use of these terms, as representations of the social world and categories of identity politics. To fully understand the ethno-racial and sociopolitical dynamics within hip-hop culture, it is essential to employ a multidimensional perspective, including, for instance, musical influences and entanglements, Black American, Latinx, and African Caribbean diasporic cultural traditions, social discourses, etc.[2] The importance of diasporic elements and the creative embeddedness of these different cultural strands in US hip hop is unquestionable, despite the difficulties in sometimes framing or representing these within existing hegemonic or dominant narratives. Since the term 'culture'—and its derivatives—is a notoriously difficult term to define, we want to clarify that we deploy the term according to a set of interacting systems, and symbolic references, that perpetuate cultural practices over time (Ember and Ember 1990). Similarly, historian Peter Burke's (2009: 5) definition of culture incorporates "attitudes, mentalities and values and their expression, embodiment or symbolization in artefacts, practices, and representations."

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[2] There are manifold possibilities to refer to ethno-racial identities in the Americas. Due to regional differences, personal preferences—of the authors or their interview partners—and differences in source materials, the authors in this volume use diverging terminologies for people of Latin American and Caribbean descent in the US, such as Latin, Latina/o, Hispanic, or Latinx. Likewise, elsewhere in the volume authors use variations for people of African diasporic descent in the Americas, including African Caribbean, Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean, Afro Cuban, and Afro-Brazilian.

Hip hop combines elements of uniformity with local symbols and expressions regarding musical forms, lyrics, performances, and social content. A close reading of these symbols, or rather "cultural signifiers," can be a good place to start in disentangling these transcultural contributions in hip hop. Here, 'symbol' is understood in the broadest sense, following biological anthropologist Terrence W. Deacon's (2011) definition that refers to "spoken utterances, inscriptions, or other culturally generated meaningful artefacts and actions created specifically for representational purposes." The idea of the "cultural signifier" introduced earlier, is partly rooted in Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of semiotics that similarly highlights the element of "representation." Peirce (1955: 99) stresses that "the sign"[3] (which he terms "*representamen*") "stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity." Thus, "the sign" or "signifier" unfolds its full potential in dialogue with its "addressees"—in this case hip-hop audiences, fellow artists etc.—who are able to understand, interpret, and identify with it, and, by extension, with the culture it represents (ibid.). All these expressions provide a good opportunity to similarly reflect on transcultural and global perspectives on hip hop, and the question of how these fusions of diverse cultural traditions, practices, and symbols emerge, and the new forms of expression yielded by these intersections.[4]

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[3] In contrast to a symbol, it does not entail a "'natural' affinity, which is to say, [an] intrinsic, perceptible, resemblance to what it signifies" (Weber 2016: 113).

The theory of "globalization as hybridisation" put forward by sociologist Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2004) is crucial to understand this phenomenon. His theory argues that cultural globalization does not simply involve a dominant culture infiltrating another 'weaker' culture, rather, it is a series of processes that involve cultural hybridization. Similarly, sociologist Roland Robertson (1995) articulates the theory of "glocalization," stating that globalization of culture does not necessarily lead to the homogenization of and, implicitly, destruction of local cultures. The processes of global homogenization and heterogenization are "mutually implicative" (Robertson 1995: 27) because the global has a local, diversifying dimension, and there is a mutual relationship between the local and the global (ibid.: 34). Robertson's argument refers to cultural interaction, which takes place when a cultural practice is accepted and then assumed in another cultural context. As Eliseo Jacob elaborates in his chapter, Afro-Brazilian hip-hop artists felt a pan-African identification with the Black Power Movement and Black American hip-hop artists in the US, owing to the similarities in the historical and political struggles they faced in societies built on slavery and structural racism. In combining universally Afrocentric themes, with specific local and cultural issues, Afro-Brazilian hip-hop artists have forged a hip-hop scene that is nonetheless unmistakably Brazilian.

Globalization has further changed musical production and its relation to, and perception of, shifting understandings of space and time, as Connell and Gibson (2003) suggest. "Music nourishes imagined communities, traces links to distant and past places," and emphasizes that all human cultures have musical traditions, however differently these have been valued (ibid.: 271). The impact of transcultural and diasporic musical traditions on the development of hip hop in the US is especially visible in the subsequent creation of distinct strands of hip hop, such as Latino rap and Chicano rap, addressed by scholars such as Juan Flores (1996), Raquel Rivera (2003), Pancho McFarland (2008; 2013), and Jason Nichols and Melissa Castillo-Garsow (2016). These currents, whether being created in the US or in Latin America, suggest a sense of belonging to the Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican etc. diasporas, much like Anderson's "imagined communities" (2006 [1983])—a phenomenon that can be found in hip-hop communities from Germany to Brazil, even if they do not share the same countries of origin, as Martin Lüthe and Eliseo Jacob demonstrate in this volume. The concept of "diaspora" according to Brubaker (2005: 3), can be applied "to an ever-broadening set of cases: essentially to any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space." Along similar lines, Robert Fox (1999: 369) points out that etymologically diaspora suggests "a scattering which is also a sowing," the dispersion of a people, their implantation in a new area, and a "harvesting" of a new culture. This "dispersion" was accelerated through migration flows and globalization, both of which have contributed to the creation of hip hop and its subsequent global dissemination.

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[4] While our understanding of "cultural signifiers" is loosely based on linguists Charles Sanders Peirce (semiosis, 1955) and Ferdinand de Saussure (*signifier/significant*), we do not only apply it to language, but to a variety of cultural expressions that could be audio-visual, musical, material, culinary, geographical etc.

Social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1993: 274) reinforces Robertson's idea of "glocalization," outlined above, arguing that "at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way." He contends that when a culture becomes transnational, the process of localization is likely to be involved. Thus, the process of developing a transnational culture is more complex than the idea of a uniform global culture implies. Appadurai further argues that "the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those which might account for multiple centers and peripheries)" (ibid.: 275). The absence of a center of cultural globalization, along with the inner dynamics of any culture or cultural practice, suggests the potential of flows, as cultural forms seem to circulate in multiple ways. The relationship between transnational and local cultures is particularly interesting when examining hip hop as a transcultural phenomenon. Because as Peter Burke (2009: 41) points out, the crux of Fernando Ortiz' transculturation concept is the reciprocity of cultural influences, that do not abide to hierarchies; a "two-way" process, rather than "the notion of one-way 'acculturation.'" Thus, globalization in the cultural realm operates in multiple directions and is likely to involve cultural interaction, appropriation, and hybridization.

Thus, as hip hop has spread nationally and globally, its manifestations in different regions and cultural contexts have renegotiated the boundaries between different locations of musical and cultural production. The assumption of New York as the "only" center of hip-hop production—despite its undisputed status as "the Mecca," not only within the US but worldwide—resulted in the by now infamous East Coast/West Coast beef during the 1990s when West Coast gangster rap became commercially successful and demanded to be taken seriously. In the late 1990s, the southern metropoles of Houston, Atlanta, New Orleans, Memphis, and Miami—the so-called "Dirty South" —developed its own sound that uniquely mirrored their environment and became just as commercially successful as New York hip hop. Several authors question and 'remix' some of these established assumptions and narratives in this volume. As Kevin C. Holt shows in his chapter, Atlanta also gave birth to the dance style "YEEK"—little known beyond the borders of the ATL, but with an origin story that fits the bill of hip-hop culture as "making something from nothing"; an expression of creativity in the context of urban abandonment and racial profiling. Miami was the cradle of the "Crossover" format, as Amy Coddington argues in her chapter, that spread to radio stations across the US in the late 1980s. She highlights the importance of radio for the commercialization of hip hop, but also points out the pitfalls of alleged "colorblindness" and ethnic marketing of hip hop on the airwaves in the "Magic City."

Outside of the US, from region to region, different hip-hop hubs have emerged, establishing themselves as more than just "peripheries" on hip-hop's global map. As hip hop conquered the world during its "Golden Age," it was catapulted to new heights of commercial and mainstream success, with local hip-hop scenes emerging on every continent. While these often emulated US hip hop at first, they soon developed their own unique (trans-) national, regional and (multi-) cultural manifestations of the form, incorporating local and international language(s), adding or repurposing new slang, musical influences, and dance practices. All of this, is of course brought about by contact between individuals from different cultural backgrounds and contexts in global urban centers especially, part of a process in which culture and music evolve and adapt (Baumann 2004). In Alan Light's *VIBE History of Hip-Hop*, Greg Tate (1999: 393) refers to hip hop as "trans-historical… obliterating a clear connection between time periods and musical styles. Hip hop is transstylistic and even trans-musical as well, since any sound can be rendered hip hop-able." This kind of cultural diffusion is of course not new and has affected the development and evolution of popular music cultures from their beginnings until now. In the late capitalist age of information overload experienced in the last decades especially, related processes and, thus, also broader categories like 'fusion music' or 'hybrid music' have become even more dominant. Rap music is probably the most significant global example of this development. In addition, the transcultural flows of hip hop allow it to move within and beyond national borders. As the Australian linguist Alastair Pennycook (2007: 5) states in this regard, "[h]ip-hop is a culture without a nation. Hip-hop culture is international. Each country has its own spin on hip-hop."

Global Hip-Hop Cultures: Adaptation and Cultural Appropriation

The global hip-hop nation as it stands today, though still hopefully centrally related—or at least aware of and paying its respects to—the culture's physical and spiritual home and the New York neighborhoods that it first emerged from, has spread, first, across the US to establish other substantial national, and later international, hubs. In these centers, the culture has flowed in from the source, been taken on, repurposed, fused, and splintered off into new forms and expressions of rap music and hip-hop culture. Having been strongly influenced by pre-digital mass media, movies, MTV, as well as stationed (often African American) GIs, German hip hop was also a central expressive means of the migrant youth generation, including groups such as Advanced Chemistry, who despite this would eventually move away from rapping in English, to choosing to rap in German, thus representing their cultural and linguistic identity as individuals born and raised in Germany (Elflein 1998; Yakpo 2004). Martin Lüthe's paper in this volume, for example, looks at the history of German hip-hop culture's emergence and the transatlantic relationship with its role model, that is also reflected in collaborations that address police discrimination, among other commonalities between artists from both sides of the Atlantic. Less political variants, as seen in the German context with groups like Die Fantastischen Vier or Fettes Brot, coexisted with groups who considered rap political activism such as Advanced Chemistry and Main Concept (Uschmann and Kleiner 2022).

Elsewhere, Jacob and Mausfeld in their respective chapters illustrate how Brazilian hip hop from the Metropoles of Brazil and Chicano rap, originally emerging in Los Angeles, express similar social critiques as African American artists from New York to Los Angeles. At the same time, both examples reflect their own narratives specific to notions of ethnic, racial, and linguistic identity, racism, and discrimination experienced within their communities. While many other US and global expressions of hip-hop culture have followed on in this spirit and tradition of narrating subjects of injustice, racism, and critique of social conditions and marginalization, highlighting the revolutionary, political potency of hip hop's foundations as in Chuck D and Public Enemy's call to "Fight the Power," a multitude of other interpretations use hip hop as a platform to express a myriad of causes, experiences and reflections for artists who step into the cipher. The lyrics and language of an MC, the sample choices of the hip-hop producer, the fashion, style and adopted symbols of MCs, b-boys and b-girls, and graffiti artists, all represent different angles on what is being expressed, by who, and to who, in hip-hop culture.

While remembering hip hop's center, we should also remember the various sources of inspiration the culture has taken from outside the US, many of which were instrumental in articulating aspects of the various political, social, and cultural issues that the culture reflects (this cultural 'bricolage' being fundamental to the aesthetic of rap music and hip-hop culture). Sources of inspiration from which hip-hop culture and practice have drawn upon, and which other music cultures themselves adapt and repurpose, is not clearly demarcated. Throughout the various styles and forms that hip hop's inherent prolific productivity yields, an abundance of authenticity claims may arise, which can be complex and even problematic (Gilroy 1991; Hodgman 2013; Ochmann 2014). However complex the notion of the 'authentic' might be, being "authentic" (Claviez, Imesch, and Sweers 2020) and "keeping it real" is vital to hip-hop culture (cf. Barker and Taylor 2007). As Ogbar (2002: 1) notes, "[a]uthenticity, however defined or imagined, has always been central to the culture." Hip-hop authenticity and claims to realness may highlight aspects of style (fashion, dress, and adoption of particular symbols), language, attitude, performance, and dance from across the global hip-hop nation, to a greater or lesser extent associated or dissociated from developments in US hip hop, combining elements of tradition and/or innovation.

In light of the utmost importance of these, and wider related debates about authenticity and cultural appropriation, it is necessary to first offer some points of reflection from the editors of this volume, pertaining to our own positionality and standpoint on the subject. Following in the footsteps of Kjell Andreas Oddekalv's reflections on being a White Norwegian rap scholar introduced earlier, it is important to note that above all, we as researchers, while coming to the research from a perspective of hip-hop enthusiasts, are very much "guests" in hip-hop culture. Oddekalv's (2022: 116) stance is informed by comments he cites from Akil the MC, member of the "legendary rap crew" Jurassic 5, who states that, even being from LA, "I am a guest in the culture of Hip Hop because I am not from where Hip Hop originated (The Bronx, New York)." Oddekalv adopts this same position as a guest in the culture, "with the extra added difference that unlike Akil The MC, I am not African American." Akil the MC's sentiment is echoed elsewhere when, for example eminent hip-hop scholar Imani Perry (2004) highlights "Teacha" KRS One's suggestion that you can't understand the origins of hip hop, and where it's coming from, if you've never stepped foot in The Bronx. The importance of these considerations neither escape the editors of this volume, as we too recognize that we are guests in the house of hip hop.

Some of these authenticity-related discourses would, for example, in part frame the recurring debate in hip hop centered on White US-American rapper Marshall Bruce Mathers III aka Eminem, although here, the issue of street credibility as a factor of authentication, was clearly decisive. As Bonsu Thompson (2020) concisely summarized in the online magazine *Black Level*:

> In his early days, Eminem was to hip-hop what Black folks have been to America. He's from the bottom—reared on the side of 8 Mile Road where poverty was life—and was raised by a culture that doggedly oppressed his talent, dreams, and purpose. Like brave Black men pre-Civil War, his calling to battle was met with mobbish resistance. When allowed to join predominantly Black ciphers, he was marginalized. Until he began rhyming, that is. "It was always a White Men Can't Jump situation every open mic," says Bizarre, Em's childhood friend and fellow member of rap group D12. "Then, after the first 10 bars, they'd start changing their minds."

Thompson's authentication related back to a longstanding 'beef', lyrically and personally, between Eminem and MC Lord Jamar (Lorenzo Dechalus), which re-emphasized that "White people are guests in the house of hip-hop that black people built" (Jones 2020) when Eminem finally acknowledged this statement in 2020. Yet, the fragility of this situation became apparent when the debate stirred up again following the release of the *Elvis* biopic movie (2022). In "The King and I" (feat. CeeLo Green), the fourth single from the film's soundtrack, Eminem compared himself to Elvis by pointing to similar experiences of being in-between Black and White cultures and of having been successful with Black genres that were, as Eminem openly emphasized in the lyrics, "stolen." However, the rap line of having likewise been called "king" subsequently provoked major criticism, although Eminem repeatedly rejected having made the claim himself. Rather, as was also stated in the lyrics, it had come from the outside (Beame 2022). These debates are significant precisely because they point to the issue of the past and ongoing racism, discrimination, and marginalization faced by BIPOC groups highlighted throughout, discriminated and exploited by White hegemonic structures. These structures have dominated many directions of the global flows of the music industry, not to mention central social and political structures.

Similarly, the practice of cultural appropriation also directly relates to hegemonic power imbalances (Rogers 2006). Cultural appropriation is, as outlined in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, generally defined as an "adoption of certain language, behavior, clothing, or tradition belonging to a minority culture or social group by a dominant culture or group in a way that is exploitative, disrespectful, or stereotypical" (Kendall 2022). In addition, as Kitwana (2006) illustrates, the line between appreciation and cultural appropriation is very thin. For instance, adopting hip-hop style and dress can either be a form of honoring the culture, or of appropriation, e.g. when specific symbols are just used for entertainment or commodification. It could also be summarized as the opposites of respect versus fetishism, or stereotypes versus a deeper understanding. Beyond the question of legitimization, a further central issue has thus been the respect factor—of understanding the deeper sociopolitical factors behind this music culture and genre to which this volume likewise wants to contribute further insights, taking into account that, according to the codes of hip-hop culture, and the streets and neighborhoods from which it emerged, it is a question of 'keeping it real.'

While the Eminem case clearly illustrates the importance of understanding and acknowledging the post-colonial and post-slavery context of African American history regarding the emergence and development of hip hop in the United States, the study of hip hop on a global scale is determined by a diverse range of other historical and sociopolitical realities. One important contribution to answering this dilemma and envisioning new and nuanced ways of approaching hip hop from this perspective is developed by author, singer-songwriter, and scholar Raquel Z. Rivera (2003: 15) who has pointed out that "[h]ip hop is a fluid cultural space, a zone whose boundaries are an internal and external matter of debate. A profoundly diverse, translocal, multiethnic and multiracial cultural phenomenon."[5] Rivera thus emphasizes the idea of a "hip hop zone" rather than a "community" or "nation" (ibid.), a notion that could be tied in to Mary Louise Pratt's concept of a "contact zone" (Pratt 1991) where cultures meet and clash. Consequently, if cultural adaptation is understood as a natural and positive process of creativity, the revelation of hegemonic, abusive, or ridiculing acts as forms of negative cultural appropriation, as well as actively including and highlighting the role of previously disadvantaged groups, constitute central steps in re-balancing and decolonizing historical representations of these processes and the cultural appropriation debate at large.

The Scope of this Book

An ongoing question for the editors of this volume, then, is how do we conceptually frame the dynamics of the local, national, and global spread and interactions of hip hop? As discussed above, the process of cultural globalization does not necessarily imply cultural homogenization. Rather, the result has been a process of cultural 'glocalization' and cultural hybridization, in the sense of a blending of different cultural elements (Yazdiha 2010), where cultures continuously interact with and interpret each other to produce hybrid cultural forms. As Arjun Appadurai (1993) argues, neither centrality nor peripherality of culture exist in the context of cultural globalization. We should perhaps instead think of the idea of *multiple* centers and peripheries. The discussion of transnational and translocal cultural flows in hip hop presented up to now, also reflects the notion that these flows, fusions, and mergings, however fleeting or sporadic, are not only bi-directional or reciprocal, but can often branch off in multiple directions. One important consideration in this regard, is the question of how global adaptations outside of hip hop's physical, originary communities, rooted in Black, African American culture and historical experience, are to be viewed according to the discourses of cultural appropriation, and recent historical events such as the overdue emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement that started in 2013 and came to global visibility after the death of George Floyd in 2020. Furthermore, where do the debates, and discourses emerging from these events sit in relation to wider identity and cultural hybridity discourses presented (and indeed critiqued) in this volume and elsewhere?

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[5] See also Dennis, Christopher. 2014. "Locating Hip Hop's Place within Latin American Cultural Studies." *alter/nativas Latin American Cultural Studies Journal* 2 (Spring): 1–20. https://alternativas.osu.edu/en/issues/spring-2014/essays1/dennis.html.

The contributions of this book address the fluid and hybrid nature of hip hop's musical and cultural production in different spatial, social, and political contexts, while also reflecting critically on academic approaches to hip-hop culture, and the challenges and blind spots these different approaches face, including reflections on the central failings of White, Western scholarship depicted by Oddekalv (2022), and their claims to an overarching and universal applicability. Such discourse has obscured many important concepts already influential in their shaping of modern postcolonial discourses, including the concept of transculturality, which was first developed outside of a Western context. In the chapter "Epistemological Quandary: Why Hip-Hop Scholars Must Ground their Transcultural Arguments in the Work of Fernando Ortiz," *Terence Kumpf* introduces this collection by casting a deeper look at the writings of Cuban politician, anthropologist, and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz who strongly shaped discourses on transculturalism in the 1940s. Kumpf, however, argues that Ortiz has been widely negated by cultural theorists, illustrating how we might revive his ideas and apply them to studies of hip hop moving forward.

The following three chapters not only illustrate how transculturalism and hybridity manifested themselves within different media formats, but also within different cultural contexts in the US. *Amy Coddington* in particular addresses the multicultural adaptation of hip hop with her chapter "Hip Hop Becomes Mainstream: or, How to Commodify Racial Hybridity." Focusing on the ethnic orientation of "Cross Over" radio formats in Miami during the 1980s and 1990s, Coddington's analysis of the local radio industry exemplifies the complexity of "commodifying racial hybridity" in an ethnically divided city that came together on the airwaves in a shared appreciation for rap music. *Dianne Violeta Mausfeld* also presents a historical analysis of mass media in her discussion of the representation of Chicano and Latino hip-hop artists in East Coast-based hip-hop publications in her piece "'Double the Struggle': Chicano/Latino Hip Hop in *The Source* Magazine." In the context of the East Coast-West Coast 'beef,' Mausfeld examines the often assumed alliance between Latino artists in the US and finds that they were rarely featured in major hip-hop publications during the 1990s. *Kevin P. Green* asks "'Where the Rhymes at?,'" examining "How Contemporary Artists are Transforming Notions of Liveness in Hip Hop" in his exploration of how and why the use of performance tracks in hip hop has become acceptable, though nonetheless subject of spirited debate between the old and new generations of the US hip-hop community. Unpacking the ways in which artists construct themselves as consumable brands, and how this is mediated by fans through television, social media, and interaction on streaming platforms, Green's chapter illustrates how the practice of using performance tracks has been a natural conclusion to hip hop's transformation from countercultural entity to mainstream fixture over the last two decades.

The performative aspect of hip-hop culture, including the themes of dance, the body, and physicality, is further explored by *Kevin C. Holt* who takes us on a historical journey to Atlanta showing how racial and spatial segregation, discrimination against Black youth, and skating rinks contributed to the evolution of the local dance form YEEKing that emerged during the 1980s. In his chapter "YEEK! Atlanta Hip-Hop Dance and the Subversion of Expressing 'Your Energetic Explosive Klimax,'" Holt shows how yeeking became an embodied language of resistance that allowed African Americans to fight for their presence in public spaces. *Martina Bratić*'s "Identity Transgressions as Transgressions of the Art Form: The Case of Frank Ocean" focuses on the work of one artist singlehandedly challenging boundaries of expression from within hip-hop culture. Exploring the unique artistic world of African American artist Frank Ocean, Bratić highlights Ocean's navigation and critique of heteronormative values within hip hop and popular music culture at large, illustrating how the artist has not only opened up new spaces for gender debates and discourse in hip hop, but in doing so has developed new forms of artistic expression and production in the process.

The last four chapters add case studies of global and transnational entanglements, analyzing how central sociopolitical and sociocultural aspects have become reference points for hip-hop cultures outside the US. However, and this is also central to the idea of transculturalism and cultural hybridity, these contributions illustrate how these elements were adapted into the respective cultures—and vice versa. In "Afro-Cosmopolitanisms: Discourses on Race and Urban Identities in Brazilian Hip Hop," *Eliseo Jacob* addresses the global role of hip hop in expressions of racial inequality. Given that Brazil features the largest population of African descent outside of the African continent, hip hop plays a central role in the reaffirmation of the ethnic identity of marginalized groups within an urban context. *Martin Lüthe* contributes another global perspective in his analysis of the transculturality of the German "Straßenrap" (street rap) scene in Berlin from the 1990s onward in "'Ich lebe für Hip Hop': German Hip-Hop Music, Cultural Hybridities, and the 'Berlin Moment.'" His detailed overview of German hip-hop history shows that the influence of US hip-hop on local artists changed over time, and that the stylistic emancipation from "the motherland" gains importance with every new generation of hip-hoppers. The experience of racialized youth discrimination and marginalization is also a central feature in *Bronwen Low and Édouard Laniel-Tremblay*'s case study "Producing Hip-Hop Culture and Identity: How a Youth Recording Studio Supports Well-Being." The authors' study of a community-based recording studio in Montreal, Canada, shows how hip hop can become a means of creating alternative spaces of belonging, which also intersects with the central importance of an acquisition of related performance and production skills. In the final article, *James Barber* brings us back to the source of hip-hop culture in his piece "Chronicling New York Reggae and Hip Hop's Crossroads, and Community Media as Historical Archives from the Ground Up." Barber presents a selected outline of the significance of reggae and Jamaican sound system and dancehall culture in New York after 1965, drawing on aspects of his ethnographic research in New York and the work of two central archivists of reggae and hip-hop culture established in the 1980s and 1990s respectively, to illuminate the underrepresented intersections, dialogue, and historical reciprocity between these two gargantuan global music cultures in hip hop's source and beyond.

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