

The African diaspora through Portuguese Hip Hop music: a case study

A diáspora africana através da música hip-hop portuguesa: um estudo de caso

Federica Lupati

CHAM, FCSH, Universidade de Lisboa e Universidade dos Açores
lupati.federica@gmail.com

Palavras-chave: Hip Hop culture, African diaspora, Music of the African diaspora, African diaspora in Portugal, Portuguese hip hop, Valete.

Keywords: cultura hip hop, diáspora africana, música da diáspora africana, diáspora africana em Portugal, Hip hop português, Valete.

The present work is part of a wider investigation on the specificities of the Portuguese hip hop movement and on its current representatives. Our project aims at understanding how the young generations in Portugal have received and integrated the creative strategies that came as a consequence of the global spreading of hip hop culture. We would also like to discuss the relevance of hip hop as a marginal, but very powerful, device. We believe that its contributions to the reinforcement of new identities and new cultural spaces allow us to question issues related to capitalism, globalization and migration flows in the modern world while they undermine the traditional beliefs and dynamics of legitimation. Our intent is to restore a reliable view on this urban, non-canonical and highly pragmatic cultural manifestation.

This being said, the following paper is structured in two main sections. The first part is dedicated to some brief, general considerations on hip hop culture, with the intent to highlight some of the social and cultural factors that led to its appearance in New York in the 1970s. We believe that having a clear view on the historical path and development of this subculture is necessary to understand how the phenomenon reached Portugal in the mid-1980s and why some specific socio-political circumstances favored its reception and appropriation by the young generations of that time. This will inevitably lead to some observations on the close relationship between the African diasporic cultures and youths, and their evolution into new, original – often subversive – creative manifestations. Particularly, we intent to observe the relationship that the young afro-descendants in Portugal have developed with hip hop, and how this finds its realization in some recurring themes, creative strategies and general apprehensions.

Yet, in the second part of our work we will have a closer look to the track *Quando o sorriso morre*, by rapper Valete. This will allow us to contribute with some solid examples to our postulates and observations. In this perspective, we intend to observe how this Lisbon-based rapper – who is currently an established artist, involved not only at a musical level, but also at a social one – rebuilds the perception and the memory of Africa and of the African diaspora, as well as its relationship with the Portuguese history and culture.

When approaching the study of hip hop culture, the first thing we notice is that in the last four decades it has grown stronger and more powerful, becoming nowadays a global phenomenon with a very peculiar code (a mixture of language, clothes, attitude, and values, in one word, a “style”) recognized and adopted worldwide. As M. Morgan and D. Bennett say, hip hop is today “a lingua franca for popular and political youth culture around the world” (Morgan & Bennett 2011) representing a transnational community with which youth groups identify and thanks to which they find their own ways of expression. Being a result of the reaction to different forms of subalternity (spatial, political, cultural and social) it can also be considered as the response to what Roberto Francavilla points out as being “the congenital faults of the city plans, [...] the failure of capitalism [...] and the deficits of democracy” (Francavilla 2012; our translation). In his view, the young inhabitants of the urban peripheries manage to overcome their “state of exception”, transforming their urban areas in “cultural workshop[s] in constant agitation, where new languages are being produced, a territory for redemption and affirmation in which the subject, although influenced by the constraint of subalternity, manages to build his own strategies” (Francavilla, 2012).

In fact, the motives and impulse of the political frustration and creative ferment of the young Afro-Americans and Latinos that led to the first *block parties* around 1972 in the South and West Bronx can be traced back to some radical urban changes, to the lack of employment due to New York’s economic paralysis, as well as the migratory fluxes that from the Caribbean, and more specifically Jamaica, drew entire families to the United States seeking for better quality of life in the 1950s and 1960s.

In this sense, Jeff Chang’s book *Can’t stop, won’t stop* (2005) offers a more detailed analysis of the intricate network of factors that led to the appearance of hip hop culture in New York in the late 1970s. Literary in style, the book offers an engaging text filled with valuable historical data, as well as many original interviews. In Chang’s view, the man responsible of causing the major damages to the citizens of New York at that time, was named Robert Moses, who the author describes as “the most powerful modern urban builder of all times” (Chang, 2005). Chang argues that, on one side, Moses’ project of the Cross Bronx Expressway (built between 1948 and 1972) was “a modernist catastrophe of massive proportions” that “left behind a wake of environmental violence [...] destroying entire apartment buildings and private homes” (2005). This led to what he calls “the white exodus out of the Bronx”, also drastically lowering the property value in the area. On the other side, Moses’ proposal was part of a bigger plan of urban renewal that gave him the right to relocate the poor African-American, Puerto Rican and Jewish families living in Manhattan’s ghettos in new “tower-in-a-park” vast

housing complexes, a concept by the modernist architect Le Corbusier as part of his vision of a “Radiant City”. As a consequence of “the Manhattan decontamination”, by the mid-1970s the official youth unemployment in the Bronx hit the official rate of 60 percent, one of the highest ever. With Chang’s words, we can say, “if blues culture had developed under the conditions of oppressive, forced labor, hip-hop culture would arise from the condition of no work” (2005). This plan of urban renewal ended up increasing the social and political gap within the population exacerbating the urban space as a field of segregation and exclusion. Due to the state of abandonment and dissatisfaction, the young generations of the neighborhoods found their response to this situation through new, alternative ways of self-realization that allowed them to reinvent themselves as well as the space they were living in.

However, despite being officially rooted in the Bronx, hip hop is part of a long line of black American and African diasporic cultural traditions. As *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* explains: “many of the hip-hop pioneers were Caribbean immigrants, who brought some of the musical practices from their native countries and adapted them for their new situation” (Norfleet, 2001). The Encyclopedia is here referring in particular to the Jamaican traditions of toasting and mobile disk jockeys, which were for themselves African-based musical traditions that could be traced back to the ancient African oral arts, such as the art of chanting over a beat.

Back in Kingston, social events where true arenas for DJs competitions: using large sound systems, they battled one against the other through volume and song choices, using toasts to capture the audience’s and dancers’ attention and to give information on the next dance. Therefore, when Dj Kool Herc – who had arrived to the West Bronx precisely from Kingston in 1967 – started providing music at school events, in homes and public spaces, as well as community centers – he brought with him his record collection, as well as the Jamaican tradition. He then “recontextualized the phonographs, turntables and mixing units as musical instruments” (Norfleet, 2001) performing true live shows by scratching, cutting and playing his records at massive volumes.

Jamaica was the kind of place where it was hard to tell where the politics ended and the music began, and this original interdependence and cultural heritage probably also speeded the process that transformed hip hop from an aesthetic manifestation to a political weapon for the young generations of the era who felt the heavy weight of a politics of abandonment and of being ignored.

Being mostly descendants from Afro-American, Jamaican and Puerto Rican families, these young performers permeated their musical entertainment with a new, subversive meanings. Hip hop events came to represent a moment of free expression and self-manifestation, where the rough rules of violence, power and gang fights of the daily life in the ghetto were suspended in order to make space for peaceful interaction through music, poetry and dance.

Another interesting observation about hip hop culture and its African roots can be made by following the works of many scholars such as Toop (1984), Gilroy (1991), Tenaille (2002), Watkins (2005), Charry (2012), among others, who through their investigations have been reinforcing the strong connection between rap

and the West African oral traditions. In his book *Rap attack* (1984) David Toop identifies strong connections between the rapper and the west-African griot. He describes the griot as a member of a caste of musicians who embodies the functions of living history book and newspaper through vocal and instrumental virtuosity and the meticulous learning and recital of traditional songs, but also masters improvisation on current events and incidents with profound local knowledge. Moreover, and with Patricia Tang's words, griots serve as "oral historians, praise-singers, musicians, genealogists, and storytellers" (Tang, 2012), and this, in effect, reminds partially of the role that the MCs hold: they are the masters of the ceremony, the spokespersons for the community, acting as legitimized witnesses and narrators who claim for justice, civil rights and equality within and beyond the community, telling stories about neighbors and friends, reporting the daily life of their social space. As Damon Sanjani states, "there is no question that the griot and the rapper share similarities in their aesthetic repertoire" (Sanjani, 2012), although it is necessary to underline that they represent two different historical and social figures.

In addition to this, Richard Shusterman's pioneer studies on rap (the verbal component of hip hop culture) are to mention, where this pragmatist philosopher points out that rap music has its ancient origins in the art of poetry, which has always been celebrated as being able to captivate the traditional wisdom, the ideals and deepest religious beliefs that were embodied in the myths and experiences of ancient cultures. Philosophy, for its part, was considered the key for good politics. In this way, a "dogmatic dichotomy" took place and it suggested that "art is somehow only fiction and deceit rather than a powerful reality that can purvey the truth and represent in ways just as powerful as the scientific and philosophical discourse" and that it "pertains only to a pure aesthetical sphere, entirely apart from the real world of practical and political action" (Shusterman, 2005). However, the American philosopher proves that the set of skills related to poetry is also central to rap's style and self-understanding and that one of the most interesting and revolutionary aspects of hip hop culture is the challenging of that initial dualism. R. Shusterman explains: "Some of the more thoughtful MCs claim not only to be creative artists but also philosophers; and they see their artistic expression of truth as part and parcel of a political struggle to achieve greater economic, social, political and cultural power [...]" (Shusterman, 2005). The subversion of the traditional theoretical divisions is part of what R. Shusterman calls the deep "philosophy of the mix", which is also what makes it a postmodern popular art. In his words, "rap's cultural roots and prime following belong to the black underclass of the American society; and its militant black pride and thematizing of the ghetto experience represent a threatening siren to that society's complacent status quo" (Shusterman, 2000).

Finally, in our view the connection to the African oral tradition and poetry also shows how hip hop is the result of the ability to reinvent the traditional rituals and adapt them to the new circumstances of the urban space.

Although hip-hop has undergone radical transformations during its shifting from the streets to the international marketplace, it has preserved its capacity to transmit a signifying and powerful *africanity* through its aesthetic forms and

emotive force. In this sense, it is to say that “rap music in the mid- to late 1980s experienced [...] an economic shift as its distributions means moved from local [...] labels to international conglomerates with much larger audience-reaching potential” (Norfleet, 2001). By opening to the large, global, market hip hop culture started to expand and reach the most disparate regions of the world, through radio, television and cinema.

Despite the spreading of a uniform code, the local appropriation of hip hop culture represents the unique encounter of contingencies, each one showing different peculiarities and concerns, each one carrying its own message and meaning as a product of a specific context and moment.

Most researchers – such as António Contador, Teresa Fradique, Rui Cidra, Soraia Simões, Derek Pardue, among others, – agree that hip hop made its first appearance in Portugal between 1984 and 1986, mainly in the Miratejo neighborhood and in the city of Almada – which Barbara Barbosa Neves’ describes as the Bronx of Portugal (Neves, 2004) – reaching its full expression between 1994 and 1996. A closer look at the country’s socio-political situation can be useful to trace some of the elements of the complex network of factors that stimulated its reception and proliferation among the young generations of that time. It also helps understanding how a globalized product can end up being interpreted and redeployed transnationally, becoming the channel for the expression of the young urban voices around the world with their different local cultures.

First of all, it is to remember that the second half of the XX century has deeply changed the Portuguese society: with the end of the dictatorship and the fall of the colonial empire, the years after 1974 have been marked by intense mass movements from the Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP) back to Portugal. After the wave of returnees that followed the 25th of April, that brought back to Europe all those Portuguese families who had had to live in exile due to the dictatorship, another important wave of immigration took place precisely around the second half of the 1980s, when a heavy flow of manpower deployed around Lisbon’s metropolitan area probably attracted by the new workplaces created by the European Union’s funds. Unfortunately, as a consequence of a state of precariousness and illegality, to which should be added the real estate speculation and the difficulties in accessing housing, these families of African immigrants ended up occupying mainly Lisbon’s commuter districts. Thus, as Carlos Elias Barbosa points out, “we are talking about flows of immigration in a postcolonial context, which would deeply mold the identities of these immigrants’ descendants who were already strongly associated to a diasporic experience” (Barbosa 2011, 2; our translation).

In addition to this, Barbosa also refers to the negative impact of some radical legal changes that took place in 1981 in Portugal. In particular, the Decree-Law 264-B/81 regulated the entry, exit and status of foreigners in Portugal and the DL 37/81, or the Citizenship Law, substituted the *jus solis* with the *jus sanguinis*. The consequences were dramatic: all the young sons and daughters of the immigrants, despite being born in the country, had no access to Portuguese citizenship and were considered illegal, causing an undeniable feeling of exclusion, marginalization and ethnical segregation. Having undergone a hurried integration

that left aside all the cultural differences, these groups continued to suffer of a clandestine state of being, which made them hold on to the hope of going back “home”, since Portugal could not be considered one.

It is easier now to understand why hip hop culture took root so strongly in Portugal from the mid-1980 to the end of the 1990s, in a specific moment of the Portuguese political and social history characterized by strong contrasts and dissatisfactions. When the films *Breakin'* and *Beatstreet* reached the young public in 1984, break dance spread fast through the country and rap came soon after, and by the beginning of the 1990s the phenomenon had taken wide proportions, especially in Lisbon's suburbs. Here, for the youth groups, mostly of sons of African immigrants, rap became one of the central elements of social life: they improvised rhymes in the streets of their neighborhood or during festivals (the ones from the *Incrível Almadense* and the *Voz do Operário*, for example), in school parties, in bars and in nightclubs (like *Zona Mais*) around the city. As Rui Cidra clearly explains hip hop, and rap in particular, provided the young descendants of African immigrants with “a language of resistance and protest against a condition of racial exclusion and social marginalization that was felt in the Portuguese society” (Cidra, 2010; our translation).

In fact, most of the pioneers of the hip hop movement in Portugal had African origins and cultural roots, and most of them were born in the diaspora (some examples are Black Company, Da Weasel, Boss AC, TWA, General D, Chullage, among others). Their cultural heritage – probably – made it easier for them to identify with the lyrics, the experiences and the life stories that were circulating through rap from the African-American youths. Through a direct contact with a musical experience that valorized subjectivity and not subalternity, these young performers became increasingly aware of their social condition and of their right to speak their truth. Furthermore, the creative strategies of sampling, mixing and rhyming allowed them to translate their hybrid, syncretic identities, since the African heritage and imaginary could encounter the musical influences of Lisbon's urban scene: the different African traditional music was mixed with other domains (such as rock and hardcore) and new, revisited, sounds converged into hip hop, giving shape to a feeling of duality (being African and being Portuguese) that the Portuguese establishment was unable to face. In this sense, António Concorda Contador explains that, when trying to understand hip hop, “the African music embodies the quintessential representation of an imagery linked to ethnicity”, also functioning as a “sense of the past, promoting the notions of back to Africa, back to the roots and of Motherland that aestheticize ethnicity” (Contador 1998, 58).

The African diasporic condition figured not only through the use of samples taken from African popular music such as funaná, batuko, makwaela and marrabenta, among others, and in the themes and desires disclosed by the MCs' rhymes, or but also by the frequent use of Cape-Verdean creole, which was the language that was learned and spoken within the family and with the peers in the neighbourhood. According to Derek Pardue, the use of Kriol is to attribute to the need: “to be effective, to be ‘real’: to represent lived experiences of marginalization in an honest and informed manner. [...] The main message is one of

distinction: to be or to speak kriolu is not to be or to speak tuga, or Portuguese” (Pardue, 2012). Pardue then argues that “Kriolu rappers use Kriolu [also] as a provocation to Cape Verdeans non-Kriolu-speakers alike to consider categorical alternatives within the social and ideological dynamics of language in Portugal” (43). Furthermore, Rui Cidra explains that creole is used in order to “give sense to the different topics of their reality and personal experience” (Cidra 2010; our translation). In fact, MCs such as Boss AC, Chullage, or Family, for example, in the early years chose to relate their stories in creole, sometimes switching to English, but rarely to Portuguese. The use of a minor language that also worked as an argot exemplifies once again the need of these young performers to make a statement of their own, finding their space of belonging and identification – in some sense their own nation – searching for references in their cultural heritage and using them in contrast to the main establishment, in this case is identified with the Portuguese language.

Finally, by establishing a continuity between the cultural movements coming from the African and the Afro American expressions these young Afro-Portuguese artists were able to establish their own identities starting from different interpretations of the history of the African diaspora and questioning their condition of being descendants of African families in Portugal (Cidra, 2010). They also contributed to hinder what Eduardo Lourenço identifies as being a typically Portuguese ideology of “derramamento, expansão e criouliização” (Lourenço, 2010), referring here to the tendency to perceive the national cultural space as absorbing and mestizo, without enhancing, however, the different cultural identities that coexist in the Portuguese territory but instead disseminating controversial beliefs that remind the past colonialism.

With Teresa Fradique’s words we can state that “rap in Portugal emerged from the consumption of a globalized product through a process of local appropriation that took place in [...] urban contexts” (Fradique, 2003) by young groups of mainly African descendants. And this actually proves what Marc Perry affirms, this is, that “hip hop culture finds particular expression within the Afro-Atlantic world” (Perry, 2008).

After a first phase of mainly live and improvised performances during social events, from the mid-1990 hip hop in Portugal has developed its own localized expressions – for example, by adopting Portuguese instead of creole in the rhymes –, it has opened to the mainstream musical market and it has built its own public. However, hip hop’s preoccupation with African-related matters and with African diasporic identities, or its campaigns against racism and ethnic prejudice, is still present in the performers’ works, since these still represent issues and limitations within the Portuguese society.

In this sense, the works of Valete, a Lisbon-based rapper, born of Santo-mean parents, can be valuable examples of how hip hop music, in Portugal, still maintains its connections to the African culture and the African diaspora, and to the matters related to it. Having joined the “movement” in 1997 and having produced and released since then two main albums, *Educação visual* (2002) and *Serviço Público* (2006), Valete’s works show his political and social commitment

with loud and clear anti-capitalistic tones. Rui Miguel Abreu considers him “the only political rapper in Portugal” nowadays.

In the numerous interviews available online we notice that Valete frequently presents himself as a conscious rapper, focused on the educational mission of music and on the fight against consumerism, as well as on creating more awareness about the condition of the African immigrants in Portugal and about their African roots. He frequently makes clear references to the episodes of racism suffered by the black community of Lisbon and fights – through his music – for the rights of the working class in general. Most of his concerns and critical views can be found in the track *Quando o sorriso morre* (2011).

Here, Valete refers constantly to the hard times lived by the African immigrants in Portugal and the state of subalternity that they continue to experience. In the first three stanzas he celebrates the end of colonialism and the beginning of the independent era for the African countries, as well as their re-appropriation of the land and of a restored state of freedom and happiness: *O colonialismo acabou / Independência / Os tucas já se foram bro / A terra é nossa*. The dichotomy between black and white is very clear, where the black indicates a state of contentment and beauty and the white stands for the memory of oppression and devastation: *Vê como a terra fica mais formosa / Vestida de negro / Sem esses tons pálidos / a destoar nas nossas roças. / Vê como as crianças / Agora correm sem destino / Vê como o povo / Agora não poupa sorrisos*.

After celebrating the end of an era of submission, a state of abandonment unfolds before him, which is precisely what the Portuguese left behind when they left Africa: *Não há comércio, não há serviços / Não há nada / Os tucas bazaram / Deixaram toda a gente condenada. / Desempregada...* Having exploited the land and the people, the colonizers have written a sentence for them and convicted them to unemployment and suffering.

The lack of financial resources and opportunities at home have contributed to the creation of the myth of the European “el dorado”, a place where people thought they would find decent jobs and a better quality of life. This in part proves what R. Vecchi explains about modernity, and this is that it has created “unequal forms of accumulation and distribution, of exchange and supremacy [...] influencing the hierarchy of relationships” (Albertazzi & Vecchi, 2004). Thus, despite the end of colonialism, the unbalanced distribution of opportunity over space and society still deeply affects our world.

Valete seems to tell the story of contemporary migration and mass movements, and seems to be talking to a global community by sharing their experience of exodus, evoking a memory that is transnational as people can relate to it worldwide. He’s telling the story of any family rooted in Africa, appealing to that new sense of blackness that helped setting the foundation for the building of the complex identities of the new generations born from immigrants in foreign lands.

The lyrics continue describing the arrival of the African immigrant in Lisbon, the city where the sun is replaced by concrete buildings, the land of the ghettos that were being built by African companions (*Isto é Lisboa / Não há sol todos os dias / Muito cimento / Flora só em fotografias / Tens compatriotas a construir* /

vilas que eles chamam ghettos). Valete almost seems to imply that the immigrants, without knowing, were building their own space of segregation, were being used – again – by the “ex” colonial system that took advantage of their dreams and aspirations and treated them like slaves. The lyrics then go on picturing the different opportunities to which immigrants have access when compared to the Portuguese people: despite having the same education, the African workers are condemned to precariousness (*Tugas dizem / Que não podes ter outro desenlace / Para além dos trabalhos precários / Porque só tens a quarta classe / Mas a maioria dos tugas / Também só têm a quarta classe*). He concludes that the lack of education is, somehow, a consequence of the colonial regime: *Diz-lhes que na época colonial / Eles não queriam que tu estudasses*. Using direct, effective tones, using no ornaments, but brutally depicting the course of history, he then exhorts: *Diz-lhes que eles só queriam os pretos / Para mão de obra escrava / Os putos sonhavam em ser doutores / Mas o sistema desincentivava*.

The lyrics continue with tones of disdain describing the daily life of a worker, who is exploited and who has no basic right guaranteed: *Entras às 7 horas / Sais quando o sol se ausenta / Vais para a tormenta diária / Que todo o africano enfrenta / Para carregar centenas de tijolos / E baldes de massa / Levantar vigas man / Como é que o teu corpo aguenta?*

“How can you body bear it?” he asks, and the answer is: “Because you have no other option” (*Aguenta.. / porque tu não podes ter outro trabalho [...]*). Again it looks as if, despite the fact that “o colonialismo acabou”, the position of the African citizen within the Portuguese society is characterized by the lack of opportunities and by a constant state of unjustified subalternity.

The stanza continues offering sharp descriptions of the injustice suffered by black people, due to prejudice and ignorance. The worst consequence is the impossibility to redeem from this condition: *Pediste-lhe para sair / Ela disse “Jamais” / Estranhaste porquê? Tu és preto, não sonhes alto demais*.

As the lyrics come to an end, the dreams that moved the people, the desire of emancipation from unemployment and the myth of the “first world” collapse and reality, again, has the best on everything: *Passaram-se trinta anos / E estás pobre como tavas na terra / Desempregado porque trabalho nas obras / Já não é o que era*. The initial enthusiasm makes room to deception, frustration and anger, to alcoholism, sadness and a sense of defeat prevails in the final verses: *Não era nada disto / Que tu sonhaste / Perdeste tudo neste primeiro mundo / Que tu nunca encontraste*.

Valete’s sense of realism finds its expression through an open, almost naked, sometimes sarcastic lyrics, where the past and the present are displayed in their sharp edges, with no filter. The rapper builds his rhymes as if he was talking to somebody who can relate to his narrative, as if he was trying to exhort him to react to a condition of marginalization telling him his truth about the facts. His rhymes indicate the conscious intention to denounce the inequality and exclusion that lead to a series of unfavorable circumstances experienced by the African people living in postcolonial Portugal. Valete’s lyrics can also be considered partly pedagogical, since they refer to real historical facts and describe the deep changes that affected the Portuguese society in the contemporary era.

To our reflection, it's interesting to notice that Valette, despite being born in Portugal, doesn't consider himself Portuguese and constantly refers in his works to the feeling of not belonging to the place he lives in. This is an important mark of the tensions between his ethnical heritage, his diasporic memory and the conflict with his nationality, which often do not find a solution in the experiences of the daily life in a country that is still dealing with the consequences of a long era of colonial policies. Therefore, in line with the considerations raised in the first part of our presentation, we would like to conclude that the experiences of the African descendants in Portugal, and the diasporic and hybrid identities that have been generated from them, continue to find in hip hop culture a solid point of reference and a way of creating what Rui Cidra calls "imagined cultural narratives" (Cidra, 2002): through the articulation of different expressive strategies, rappers establish new views on the African diaspora integrating them with their personal experience and therefore contributing to the creation of individual and collective identities based on a new concept of "africanity" (Cidra, 2002). They also find a way to give meaning and sense to things that sometimes don't seem to have much of it.

References

- Albertazzi S., V. R. (2004). *Abbecedario postcoloniale. Venti voci per un lessico della postcolonialità*. Macerata: Quodlibet.
- Barbosa, C. E. (2011). A música rap e espaços de representação juvenil negra em Portugal. *O Cabo dos Trabalhos: Revista Electrónica dos Programas de Doutoramento do CES/ FEUC/ FLUC*, III (5), 1-20.
- Chang, J. (2005). *Can't stop, won't stop: a history of the hip-hop generation*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Charry, E. (2012). *Hip hop Africa: new African music in a globalizing world*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Cidra, R. (2002). "Ser real": o rap na construção de identidades na área metropolitana da Lisboa. *Ethnologia*, 12 (14), 189-223.
- Cidra, R. (2010). *Enciclopédia da música em Portugal no século XX*. (S. Castelo-Branco, A cura di) Lisboa: INET.
- Contador, A. C. (1998). Conciência de geração e etnicidade: da segunda geração aos novos luso-africanos. *Sociologia – Problemas e práticas* (26), 57-83.
- Fradique, T. (2003). Fixar o movimento nas margens do rio: duas experiências de construção de um objecto de estudo em terreno urbano em Portugal. In G. V. (Ed.), *Pesquisas urbanas: desafios do trabalho antropológico* (p. 99-117). Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed.
- Francavilla, R. (2012). Non chiediamo permesso. Sfondiamo la porta'. La letteratura e la favela. In R. Francavilla, *Voci dal margine – La letteratura di ghetto, favela, frontiera* (p. 77-88). Roma: Artemide.
- Lourenço, E. (2010). *O labirinto da saudade*. Lisboa: Gradiva.
- Morgan M., B. D. (2011). Hip-hop & the global imprint of a black cultural form. *Deadalus*, 140 (2), 176-196.
- Norfleet, D. M. (2001). Hip-hop and rap. In E. Koskoff, *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: The United States and Canada* (Vol. 3, pp. 692-735). New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Pardue, D. (2012). Cape Verdean Creole and the Politics of Scene-Making in Lisbon, Portugal. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 22 (2), 42-60.
- Perry, M. D. (2008). Global Black Self-Fashionings: Hip Hop as Diasporic Space. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 15 (6), 635-664.
- Sajnnani, D. (2013). Troubling the Trope of "Rapper as Modern Griot". *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 6 (no. 3), 156-180.

- Shusterman, R. (2000). *Pragmatist aesthetics: living beauty, rethinking art*. New York: Rowman Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Shusterman, R. (2005). Rap aesthetics: violence and the art of keeping it real. In D. Darby, & T. Shelbie, *Hip Hop and Philosophy: Rhythm 2 Reason* (p. 54-64). Peru, IL: Carus.
- Tang, P. (2012). The rapper as modern griot. Reclaiming ancient traditions. In E. Charry, *Hip hop Africa. New African music in a globalizing world* (p. 79-91). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Abstract

Hip-hop culture emerged in the 1970s in New York's black neighborhoods, particularly in the Bronx. With roots in Kingston, Jamaica, it found a rich space for its development in the block parties where a DJ played samples and entertained the community. Being at first an aesthetic manifestation, it soon became a social and political tool for the new generation who found a different way to express itself through deejaying, emceeing, breakdancing, and graffiti art. These forms of political action laid the groundwork for what became a much wider, deeply conscious, and globally dispersed cultural movement.

Portugal's first contact with hip-hop culture dates from the decade of 1980 and it happened through breakdance. It is precisely in the decade of the 1980s that the migratory traffic of people coming from the PALOPs towards Lisbon intensifies. The African immigrants had to undergo a hurried integration that left aside all the cultural differences. Thus, they continued to suffer of a clandestine state of being and to hold on to the hope of going back home. Although at that time hip-hop had little space in the Portuguese media, through radio and television the residents of Lisbon's peripheral areas were able to access the works of the North American rappers. They became aware of their similar conditions and experiences and this led to the birth of rap. Hip-hop also aims at negotiating between the experiences of marginalization, oppression, and ethnic prejudice, through the constant exercise of meta-language that allows it to translate the feeling of injustice lived by the young afro-descendants and at the margins of society. In this perspective, we intend to observe how the perception and the memory of Africa and of the African diaspora is rebuilt by Valette, a Lisbon-based rapper, son of Santomean parents.

Resumo

A cultura hip hop surgiu nos anos 70 nos bairros pobres das periferias de Nova York, em particular no Bronx. Tendo as suas raízes na Jamaica, encontrou um importante espaço de desenvolvimento nas festas de quarteirão onde um DJ tocava seleções de músicas para entreter a comunidade. Num primeiro momento tratou-se duma manifestação apenas estética; contudo, não demorou muito para que se transformasse numa ferramenta política para as novas gerações que encontraram formas diferentes de expressar-se nas artes do deejaying, mcing, breakdancing e do graffiti. Estas novas formas de ação política prepararam o terreno para o que se virou num movimento cultural muito mais amplo, profundamente consciente e globalmente espalhado.

Em Portugal, o primeiro contacto com a cultura hip hop remonta à década de 1980, através da dança. É precisamente nesta década que o fluxo migratório dos PALOP para Lisboa se torna mais intenso. Contudo, os imigrantes africanos foram objeto de uma integração apressada que deixou de lado as suas diferenças culturais, continuando desta forma a viver na clandestinidade e a agarrar-se à esperança de voltar para a terra nativa. Embora naquela altura o hip hop não tivesse muita ressonância nos media portugueses, foi através da rádio e da televisão que os residentes das áreas periféricas de Lisboa tiveram acesso aos trabalhos dos rappers norte-americanos. Tomaram assim consciências das suas condições parecidas e das estratégias de resistência que a música lhes proporcionava: surgiu assim o rap em Portugal.

Finalmente, a cultura hip hop visa negociar entre as experiências da marginalização, da opressão e do preconceito étnico através dum exercício constante de metalinguagem que lhe permite traduzir o sentimento de injustiça vivido pelos jovens afrodescendentes e nas margens da sociedade. No presente trabalho tencionamos aprofundar estas reflexões e observar como é reconstruída a perceção e a memória da África e da diáspora africana pelo rapper Valette, artista filho de santomenses mas a viver em Lisboa.