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Language Choice of Bilingual Musicians

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THE LANGUAGE CHOICES OF
BILINGUAL MUSICIANS

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor Arts in Linguistics
With Honors College Graduate Distinction at
Western Kentucky University

By
Macy R. Lethco
May 2017

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I dedicate this thesis to the musicians that inspired my research and have served as its soundtrack. They have likewise inspired me as they use music and language to present the truest forms of themselves and unite people across cultures and nations with their work.

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ABSTRACT

Often unconsciously, every bilingual makes a choice in each interaction of which language to use. These choices have many motivating factors but are mainly based on the content of the message and the identity of the speaker. This may occur in seconds and without hesitation. If even here, a choice is taking place, how much more in the writing, composition, and production of a song or album?

Artists, unlike speakers in a conversation, can choose the audience they communicate with. Musicians and music listeners who choose to define themselves in a personal bilingual identity, which at the same time is situated in a sociolinguistic context, use language as a means of both connecting and drawing boundary lines around their listener community, who must have some knowledge of the artist's language and, potentially, culture in order to relate to and understand the artist's message.

This project aims to uncover the themes of language choices made by musicians who have more than one language available to perform in. This was done using specific contexts as the basis for a cross-cultural comparison of how musicians communicate their bilingual identity, using linguistic conventions such as domains of use, group and ethnic affiliation, and the flexibility of grammar and language mixing in poetry.

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SECTION ONE: BILINGUAL IDENTITY AND DOMAINS OF USE

People who are not exposed to more than one language in early childhood and who go on to acquire only one language are generally accepted to be in a global minority. Reliable statistics on the number of bilinguals around the world are hard to come by as the measurements of bilingualism and language competency are difficult. While proficiency tests in schools and university foreign language classes cover a broad scope of language skills, many bilingual persons fit into a variety of categories such exams might not reach. There are adult immigrants who are not part of a public education system, third generation immigrants who can communicate in their heritage language but who have never taken a formal course, and people who have spent time abroad or who study another language as a hobby. Each of these types of people exists on a spectrum of bilingualism, able to communicate in some or all domains of use in their second language. Everyone on the spectrum, though, engages in a language choice, in which they call upon the resources of one of the languages over the other in a given interaction based on the context. These contexts are called domains of use (McGregor 168). Domains may be based on the topic of conversation, social setting, or the geographical location, but are generally based on the language use and ability of the interlocutor and the respective identities of the speakers. Speakers who share multiple languages in common may use both to communicate to each other through code-switching, or patterned language mixing.

When a bilingual is able to communicate in either language in the given setting without sacrificing comprehensibility, the language choice is based largely on personal identity and ethnic affiliation. The greater the speaker personally identifies with the ethnic community and with the language group, the more he or she will speak it. In

cross-cultural settings when the second language is in the minority, interaction with media in the second language reinforces ethnic identity and helps with language maintenance, particularly if the second language is spoken less often in this context. Acculturation, “the process of cultural change resulting from the contact between two groups,” usually takes place in these settings, but it typically affects the minority group to a greater degree (Clément, et al. 400). “The dominant group has the ability to limit access to social and cultural institutions and/or force acceptance of their cultural values” (Hipolito-Delgado 61). The melting pot metaphor used to describe the diversity of the United States supports the explicit and implicit message that immigrants to the country should assimilate to the majority culture and go through an acculturation process. Unless a country has a robust enclave of speakers of the minority language, most immigrants will be forced to acquire some second language skills.

The use and choice of a language depends on the relevance and prestige of the given language. If a bilingual is speaking to a monolingual, the use of one language over the other will clearly be relevant, as they are only able to understand each other through that language. Unless a monolingual speaker is speaking exclusively to monolinguals, and even then a choice would be made among dialects and registers, language choice always communicates power dynamics. The fact that not everyone speaks one of the languages excludes them from the act of communication and participation. They are not the intended audience, and a line is drawn around the people able to understand the language and participate in the dialogue, who belong to the ingroup, or the speech community. Language learners and bilinguals must interact within the power dynamics and social distance or social inclusion that comes when they speak in a particular language.

When the “linguistic landscape” surrounding individuals reinforces their native language, it leads to greater “ethnolinguistic vitality and usage of their language” (Clément, et. al 400). Ethnolinguistic vitality is connected to the prestige element of language use, in which “a group’s social, economic, and demographic strength” is measured in a given situation (Clément, et al. 402). The usage of the language depends on how relevant a speaker feels the native language is, not simply in context, but to personal and social identity. Use of a native language that is significant to one’s cultural and ethnic heritage solidifies ethnic identity, particularly in a multicultural setting, in which identity may be context dependent (Clément, et al. 402).

With increased globalization bringing more cultures and language speakers in contact with each other and with even basic access to technology, bilinguals are able to exercise more control over the language they interact in and consume. Media can accommodate the acculturation process by allowing the bilingual individual to experience the environment through his or her native language regardless of the linguistic opportunities, or “landscape” of the geographical environment. Larger scale media, like television, films, and music, however, differ quantitatively and qualitatively from smaller scale or personally produced media. Speakers of a minority language will find themselves pressing against the media most readily available to them, which may also appear most relevant to their social context, in order to participate in minority language media. Language learning applications on mobile phones, the ability to sustain contact with native speaking family members and friends over long distances, access to print and online text, the vast amount of language learning materials in varying mediums, and the global nature of social media platforms all support bilinguals in their language identities by offering opportunities to engage others or to engage their minds

in their first and second languages.

Globalization has ushered in the changing dynamics of nation-states, in which political order and national identity have traditionally rested on the idea of commonality to achieve unity. This commonality may be of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or language, but it is binding to the ideology of a state. Those within the borders are the same, those without are enemies or allies. Countries can no longer be classified in terms of one racial or ethnic identity and very few nations have national religions. The nations which lack these defining cultural and ideological symbols look to language to unite them, but increasing globalization and immigration have made classifying a population under one ethnolinguistic banner difficult.

Because language is such a crucial component of culture, the language choice in mass media is akin to declaring a national language, in that it declares the speakers of one language group the audience for public communication. Media, like the government, may choose to serve one group above others in a nation by regulating minority language use through program choice, adherence to negative language stereotypes, or minimal use of dialectal and linguistic diversity. The problem is not that the majority language is typically or even exclusively chosen for the sake of convenience and efficiency, it is the associations of the majority language as normative and the minority language as inappropriate for official use or as not valuable in creative fields. If both native groups and immigrants are to be viewed as equal in terms of their humanity and in their relation to the state, the use of a minority language, in media or in foreign language or bilingual education cannot be viewed as unpatriotic or as dangerous to the unity of the state.

Referring to bilingual education practices, Carlos Ovando discusses the complex

processes, both theoretical and practical, of assimilation, preservation, and participation:

Because bilingual education is much more than a pedagogical tool, it has become a social irritant involving complex issues of cultural identity, social class status, and language politics. Is language diversity a problem? Is it a resource? Is it a right? (14). All of these questions can be raised in relation to media as well. While some degree of acculturation must take place in order for a heterogeneous nation to function well, the process should be leading the immigrant group toward an ideal of coexistence and collaboration with the majority group, where the strengths provided by both languages and cultures are deemed useful and valuable. If minority languages, as well as minority cultures and communities, are isolated rather than integrated, hostility and discrimination will develop and underrepresentation in the media will only be emblematic of the general repression of the group.

Media does not have the same legal force as a government or education system, but it does enforce the norm of its audience. Access to print media through literacy makes the language more salient and consistent in the lives of bilinguals, particularly students, as they continually interact in their second language and increase levels of both proficiency and identity in the second language. In a study by Isabel Velázquez on bilingual university students in the U.S. who spoke Spanish as a heritage language, it was found that 91% of the students reported listening to music in Spanish and 79% had recently watched a television show, movie, soccer game, or news program in Spanish (Velazquez 8). Their use of Spanish away from their parents' home and their accompanying first language input, through media and through personal reading, writing, and other communication, represents the importance of the language in their

idea of identity and intimacy, two primary challenges faced in “emerging adulthood” (Velazquez 2). These interactions in Spanish in various facets of students’ personal lives and in various forms of media allow them to engage in identity negotiation in their first language, even while immersed in a second language environment.

Similarly, in a study on the music preferences of young people, Brittin found that listeners who heard the Spanish language version of a song versus the English version by the same artist (Shakira), reported higher preference for the Spanish version if they also indicated an identification with Hispanic/Spanish culture. This pattern also occurred for students with a greater affiliation with Asian culture who listened to a recording by the group Wonder Girls in Mandarin versus English (Brittin 423). The research of Brittin and Velazquez both took place in low risk environments, particularly that of Velazquez that was a longitudinal study. When students were away from their heritage language environment and no one was making the choices of language use and consumption for them, they were still engaging in L1 maintenance. All students-- from the heritage speaking, native speaking, and L2 groups-- reported listening to music by Spanish-language artists and agreed that music was one of the realms of highest relevance for their use of Spanish (Velazquez 9).

As these choices are made on an individual level, music listeners negotiate their cultural and ethnic identity amidst pressures from social networks and norms to undergo acculturation through media in their L2. Decisions to interact in their L1, through interpersonal communication, media consumption, and personal production, therefore, mark the high significance of the L1 and its associated culture to the bilingual subjects.

SECTION TWO: MUSICIANS & THE EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY THROUGH LANGUAGE CHOICE

Whereas larger scale, nation-wide media communicates and reinforces normative linguistic behavior with language use and representation, musicians, as smaller scale producers, have the unique ability to declare a specific audience or audiences for their work through their language choices. Musicians and music listeners who choose to define themselves in a personal bilingual identity, which at the same time is impacted by their sociolinguistic context, use language as a means of both connecting and drawing boundary lines around their listener community. They in turn must have some knowledge of the artist's language and, potentially, culture in order to relate to and understand the artist's message.

Language choice in music is different from spontaneous bilingual speech in this way, as well as in its premeditated nature. Although place may determine the language used in a given interaction, it is also the theoretical and actual context in which language use and identity occur. Musicians effectively choose the sense of place communicated in their music as they convey elements of ethnic and cultural identity through language, lyrics, and instruments used. One or more languages may be used, but even in the event of rapid code switching, each lyrical decision is calculated and planned in order to meet the artist's objective of communication, alignment, or exclusion within a complex and changing sociolinguistic world that measures authenticity and intent of the piece.

Musicians from a majority language group, such as English speakers, may use language elements or feature artists who speak another language as a stylistic element in a song; artists from a minority language group may use a majority language in order to appeal commercially or culturally to the majority group; musicians may perform in their

native minority language in order to appeal to their specific language group; musicians that speak a minority language may choose either that language or the majority language as a form of political and social activism, including preserving elements of a heritage culture and counteracting a negative narrative from majority language media.

Artists who collaborate with, borrow from, or feature other artists from a minority language group reflect the artist's inspiration drawn from that culture rather than an affiliation with the particular minority group. This treads on the territory of the postmodern idea in music, as in other realms, that this is appropriation, which it is. Appropriation, traditionally defined, means taking something for oneself and adapting it to fit one's needs ("Appropriation"). Postmodern thought, however, has attributed significant negative association to appropriation, likening it to modern linguistic and cultural colonialism, in which the minority artist is exploited for the stylistic value of their ethnic background, as a symbol of 'contra normative' non-Western European and North American traditions.

In the age of globalization and technology, the music world has also entered into the age of sampling, where any artist can take a riff, bassline, or lyrical portion from an original song and include it in their track. While sampling has raised many questions without clear answers about copyright laws and royalties, it has also raised questions about appropriation, namely, 'what is exploitation and what is collaboration?'

A feature of the postmodern view of appropriation is rooted in historical colonialism. Questions of appropriation are particularly relevant and divisive when an artist comes from a nation or language group (like English, French, Spanish, or Arabic) that formerly exploited or colonized less powerful nations. Public reaction may differ if the sampled artist is seen as having sufficient agency or power, if a majority language

artist chooses to sing in a minority language, and if a minority language artist sings in a majority language.

One of the most famous examples of a majority language artist featuring a minority musician is Paul Simon's feature of South African choral group Ladysmith Black Mambazo on his 1986 album *Graceland*. In an extremely controversial collaboration, Simon followed his personal source of inspiration, a bootleg cassette tape recording of the group, to Johannesburg, South Africa during Apartheid and violated the cultural exchange boycott from Artists United Against Apartheid and the United Nations in protest of the governmental system. Simon was widely criticized, blacklisted by the United Nations, and banned from the country by the African National Congress (Zuckerman). The release, however, became the highest selling in South Africa since Michael Jackson's *Thriller* in 1982 and sold over six million copies worldwide in its first year. Many issues arose as Simon was accused of not giving royalty rights to some of the featured musicians, although he claimed to pay them all triple the average wage for their work on the album (Zuckerman). Ladysmith Black Mambazo has been continuously touring since the release of *Graceland*, and credits much of their international success to Simon's feature of their music, which was an opportunity to work in the imperfect system of appropriation-collaboration by a majority language artist which superseded the not only imperfect, but horrendously suppressive system of Apartheid.

Simon's goal to skirt the political system of the United Nations and the South African government, and instead go into the country seeking local producers, was both impossible and contentious. Approaching the creation of the album from a position of privilege and relatively low personal risk, as Simon did, may have prevented him from seeing the idealistic nature of what he thought would be a project representing equality

within an unequal system and world. Whether or not he exploited the South African musicians, or the other artists, such as Los Lobos and Good Rockin' Dopsie and the Twisters, Simon's intentions appear to have been artistically motivated, desiring to elevate, rather than exploit, the status of South African musicians, who he later toured with and credited as his source of personal revitalization and commercial success at a time when the music industry had discounted him as an artist past his prime (Denselow). Defending his decisions made concerning language and culture on the album, Simon stated, "What was unusual about *Graceland* is that it was on the surface apolitical, but what it represented was the essence of the anti-apartheid in that it was a collaboration...an acknowledgement of everybody's work as a musician" (Denselow).

Graceland was, above all, an awakening of societies dominated by monolingual media to the talent and possibilities for creative work produced in the parts of the world outside Europe and North America. Simon shared a common sentiment among artists, that "when there are radical transfers of power on either the left or the right, the artists always get screwed. The guys with the guns say, 'This is important', and the guys with guitars don't have a chance" (Denselow). He had not, however, come from a suppressed minority culture and had to fight with said guitars, which groups like Tinariwen found powerfully symbolic as a voice for the sociopolitical issues of the Tuareg people in their rebellion against the Malian government in the 1990s.

Tinariwen, like *Graceland*, is classified under the genre of "world music," which in its broad scope, encompasses everything from ceremonial chants to electropop collaborations between Western pop artists and minority musicians (Nickson). Words like 'ethnic,' 'indigenous,' 'traditional,' and 'folk' are often used in connection to world music in an attempt to describe the diverse category. What binds musicians and their

work to the genre is the sense of locality, of roots, that the music is coming from somewhere specific that differentiates itself from music performed in majority languages or lacking such elements of cultural traditions that could be from anywhere. The world music magazine *fRoots* calls it “local music from out there” (Nickson).

In the current age of electronic music sampling, a number of music producers align themselves within the genre of world music by embedding minority language artists within their tracks or by producing tracks based on recordings from artists worldwide. Yip Wong, under the artist name Deft, is a music producer from the United Kingdom who samples from many genres, including world music, heard in his track “For Sudden,” which features a recurring loop of a song by Bengali artist Asha Bhosle. Bhosle has performed in over twenty Indian and foreign languages and has generated a large body of work from which to sample, both lyrically and melodically, as in the 2005 track “Don’t phunk with my heart” by the Black Eyed Peas (Who Sampled).

Brian D’Souza, a London-based artist who deejays under the name Auntie Flo, takes sampling further into the realm of fusion, creating a type of world music that is explicitly interested in equal collaboration. Situated in the genre of high life music, he draws upon the traditions of Afro-funk, a descendant of West African music that later mixed with Cuban rhythms but retained its typical jazz and guitar elements, along with the definitive use of the clave bell pattern (“Highlife”). He uses his music to introduce electronic music listeners and clubs to a world music that attempts to break away from the “neo-imperialism” of the genre when it is led by artists from majority language groups (Perry). As an explanation for his production choices he states, “There’s a massive commercial drive to sell dance music, but what we’re doing is about breaking down barriers” (Perry).

A language does not have to belong to a minority group in order to be used stylistically in a song by a musician who does not speak that language. Partition, a charged word related to the period of Apartheid in South Africa, was used as the title for a song by Beyoncé in 2013, in reference to the dividing wall in a limousine. On that track, an excerpt from the American film *The Big Lebowski* is sampled, in French. While the original scene involves a woman discussing the male misperception of feminists disliking sex, already a provocative conversation, it is included in “Partition” in French (Who Sampled). Here, the sample of a language other than that of the main artist draws on stereotypical qualities or attitudes associated with the language itself through ethnosymbolism and is presented as an identifier of those associations rather than as an ethnic or cultural identifier of the artist (Androutsopoulos 221).

Beyoncé, though herself a minority artist in the U.S., has much more social power and agency than other ethnically minority artists and is not immune to the question of appropriation. In her song “***Flawless,” from the same album as “Partition,” Beyoncé sampled another prose piece, this time from a TED talk by the Nigerian writer and activist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, on feminism. The sample was in English, but raised questions that the French sample from *The Big Lebowski* did not, namely that Adichie felt her speech had been used to align the song with feminism in a way she did not agree with. Although her name was listed as a contributor on the track title, Adichie resented the ‘newfound’ fame as media sources contacted her for comments on how the seconds long feature had changed the life of the acclaimed author, speaker, and MacArthur genius grant recipient (Kuo). The feature seeks to draw the listener out of the initial level of the song’s message of personal power and connect Beyoncé as an artist to the global feminist movement. While the sample in “Partition” is also related to feminism, if

Beyoncé had desired the song to be a form of activism, she would likely have included the sample in its original English, the native language of her primary audience, rather than in French as a more stylistic feature.

French is often seen as a romantic language, illustrated by the “Partition” sample, linked to the central theme of a romantic relationship rather than to sub-themes of feminism. As in the classic song “La Vie en rose,” it is seen to transcend typical identification of language with place in favor of language with stylistic features. The song, originally written by French artist Édith Piaf in 1945, garnered international success in the U.S., Italy, and Brazil and was later featured in dozens of films, including Piaf’s biography, and was adapted by numerous artists, including Donna Summer, Louis Armstrong, Bing Crosby, Tony Martin, Lady Gaga, and Madonna.

Grace Jones, a singer from Jamaica, adapted the song into a lengthened version that incorporated bossa nova style rhythms, based on Tom Moulton’s production of the song as a dance track. She kept the lyrics in French while other artists covered the song in English or Spanish. Drawing inspiration from her move to Paris to pursue modeling and her study of French, Jones recorded what would become one of her most successful releases through a linguistic choice that aligned her with the freedom and the drama of her life in France, linked through the jazz and samba style beats to the religious island community in Spanish Town, Jamaica where she grew up (Connelly).

‘Bilingualism as a style resource’ illustrates the shift in the “sociolinguistic condition of a domain that has traditionally been dominated by ideologies and practices of monolingualism” (Androutsopoulos 2007). It still exists, however, in a largely peripheral realm of the media. When choosing which language to perform in, musicians must weigh the cost of singing in a minority language as a marker of cultural or ethnic

heritage and singing in a majority language because it may be more marketable to a global audience.

Artists who sing and perform in Spanish have a much larger potential fan base from their language group than others who sing in a language only spoken by the community in their home country and the diaspora. There are well over 500 million native and bilingual Spanish speakers throughout the world, who have made their homes everywhere from Chile to Hungary to Japan. The number of native and bilingual Spanish speakers in the United States is the second largest in the world, behind Mexico, whose population is over 98% Spanish speaking (“Number of Speakers”). Although this audience is comparatively massive to other “minority” language groups, bilingual Spanish-English artists are faced with the same choice involving language identity and the idealized global audience offered the musicians who perform in English.

Many Spanish-English artists undergo a process of identity negotiation and may utilize both languages in order to reach the broader, English-speaking audience while presenting themselves as belonging to a Spanish-based speech community. Shakira, from Colombia and of Lebanese descent, rooted herself first as a Spanish language artist with her first four studio albums. *Magia* (1991) and *Peligro* (1993) were produced under Sony’s Colombian label and enjoyed moderate success within the country. As Shakira gained more control over her own image and sound, she released *Pies Descalzos* and *Dónde Están Los Ladrones?*, followed by a live album for MTV Unplugged, the first episode to be aired in Spanish. These three albums marked the formation of her identity as a Spanish language artist with pop star appeal. *Pies Descalzos* sold enough copies to reach at least platinum certification in six Latin American countries, as well as in Colombia and the U.S. *Dónde Están Los Ladrones?* remained in the number one spot

on the Latin Billboard album charts for eleven weeks while two songs from the album reached number one on the singles chart (Huey).

This album also drew upon the Arabic influences of the music she had grown up listening to, most notably in the track “Ojos Asi,” through the inclusion of traditional Arabic musical elements, like vocal inundations called *mamaqat* and the use of instruments like the oud and the *doumbek* (Maqam World). While her identification with Arab culture and language remains peripheral, the use of a refrain in Arabic on this track calls upon her identity as connected to both Arab and Hispanic cultures, linking love and religion in the lyrics that she later mirrors in Spanish in the final verse.

Enrique Iglesias, with whom Shakira was competing for the top slots on the Latin Billboard charts in the late 1990s, made a similar decision to initially place himself within a Spanish language community, first in Spain, where he was born, and then in the U.S., where he moved at the age of seven (Nimmervoll). Although he separated himself from his father, Julio Iglesias’s, music career, he did not do so linguistically. He released his first three albums in Spanish, followed by a split language album, *Enrique*. It featured Whitney Houston on one of the tracks and balanced Enrique’s emerging language identity through three songs with both English and Spanish versions. Another three songs-- “Oyeme”, “Bailamos”, and “Alabao”--were centered on one line in Spanish, the title of each of the tracks, that repeats throughout an otherwise English song. *Escape*, released in 2001, followed a similar pattern (Nimmervoll).

Between 1996 and 1997, Shakira and Enrique toured internationally and became the highest earning Spanish language musicians in the world. Shakira won the Billboard Latin Music Award for Best New Artist, Album of the Year, and Video of the Year, while Enrique was named Best Latin Performer and Artist of the Year and was awarded

Album of the Year, along with the World Music Award and eight Premio Lo Nuestro awards (Huey). Even as they achieved stardom in the Spanish speaking community and broke into the U.S. Latin market like no other artists before them, they were both drawn to the title and fan base of a mainstream pop artist that could only be achieved by releasing material in English. Enrique in 1999 began the visible transition into a “crossover” Latin-English pop artist with his self-titled album. Shakira began learning English around this time in order to write the eight (out of thirteen) songs on the bilingual album *Laundry Service*, which came out in 2001. Two of the tracks on the album reached the top ten in mainstream music charts, in contrast to her previous albums, *Pies Descalzos* and *Donde Están Los Ladrones?*, which at their heights ranked 180 and 131, respectively, on the Billboard 200 (“Shakira”).

A later crossover into the mainstream English pop market did not compromise Enrique or Shakira’s Spanish speaking fan base because their English releases had much in common, musically and thematically, with previous albums. It instead drew listeners from the U.S. and other countries to their sound that, although in English, retained salient elements of Hispanic and Spanish culture through the musical composition and was therefore not seen as an unnatural break from the Spanish speaking identity constructed through the early years of their careers.

In contrast, Jennifer López and Pitbull entered the music world performing in English while still referencing their Latin-American heritage. Jennifer López, coming from an early acting career with a number of roles as a Latina, released her first album, *On the 6*, alongside Hispanic producers Gloria Estefan and Manny Benito and featured Marc Anthony, of Puerto Rican origin, on the track “No Me Ames.” Included in tropical and ballad versions, “No Me Ames” was one of only two Spanish songs on López’s first

album. *On the 6* blended multiple genres, such as R&B in “Feelin’ So Good,” and beat-driven disco with evidently Latin instrumental roots in “Let’s Get Loud,” which features largely symbolic bilingualism through tag code switching in Spanish. Her next album, *J.Lo*, was released in 2000 with as many tracks in Spanish, produced by Manny Benito, as were produced by Sean “P. Diddy” Combs of New York (“Jennifer”).

This Is Me...Then is much more at home in the R&B and pop genres of the early 2000s (the album debuted in 2002) than in Latin-pop. López used hip-hop artists LL Cool J, Jadakiss, and Styles P-- all from New York --as producers and contributors on the exclusively English album that features samples from other English speaking artists like soul-funk performer Debra Laws. “Jenny from the Block,” as well, samples 20th Century Steel Band, The Beatnuts, and two previous songs by López, one with the repeated vocal “I’m real.” The sample of the 1987 track “South Bronx” by Boogie Down Productions may be the most thematically relevant to her identity as a performer from New York, which she calls upon with the repeated line “No matter where I go, I know where I came from (from the Bronx!).” Although she does not deny her Puerto Rican heritage, and would later go on to release a full Spanish album, *Como Ama una Mujer*, in 2007, López roots herself in the urban music scene of the U.S. through her choice to sing the majority of her songs in English and be influenced more by pop and R&B than Latin producers and musical elements (Ankeny).

Pitbull was born in Miami to a Cuban family and, like Jennifer Lopez, gained fame by aligning himself with the popular urban music scene at the time. Instead of R&B, Pitbull joined the rising movement of crunk and was first featured on the 2002 album *Kings of Crunk* by Lil Jon & the East Side Boyz, rapping on the track “Pitbull’s

Cuban Rideout.”¹ He introduces himself as “that little Cuban from Miami,” and goes on to mention Cuba three times and Miami four times, among other references to cities in the U.S., including Atlanta, where Lil Jon is from. His next release was featured on the *Fast 2 Furious* soundtrack and consisted of English lyrics with “Oye!” (“hey!” in English) repeated throughout the hook (Jeffries).

His first full length album attached to a record label was called *M.I.A.M.I.* (Money is a Major Issue). The album cover shows Pitbull wearing a hat that reads “305,” with a Cuban flag on the wall behind him (Jeffries). The majority of the tracks are sung in English, while the remaining few exhibit codeswitching between English and Spanish. Some contain tag code switching as a form of token bilingualism, heard in his frequent use of iconic phrases like “dale” and in introduction segments, like “Que vuelta? Di le nota” in the song “We Don’t Care About Ya.” He closes the song stating his aspirations to become “the first Latin rapper from the South.” In others, full verses are in Spanish, as in “Culo” and “Toma,” which also feature tag codeswitching throughout the verses in which English is the base language. Through his musical style, based in the crunk subgenre of Southern hip-hop, also called Dirty South, and his choice of English as his dominant performance language, Pitbull sets up his identity as a both a bilingual English-Spanish and a bicultural Cuban-American artist (Jeffries).

Pitbull, like Jennifer López in “Jenny From the Block,” continually references his place of origin, Miami, which follows tropes in the genre of hip-hop while also leaning into sociolinguistic theories of language and place. Representation of a city as the roots or the origin of a musician’s hometown is typical in hip-hop and other subgenres, as

¹ Crunk is a subgenre of hip-hop, originating mainly from cities in the southern U.S. The mostly repetitive and explicit verses focus thematically on partying, while musically based in heavy, club dance beats.

seen throughout Drake's discography, particularly in his 2016 album *Views*, originally titled "Views From the 6," a reference to Toronto where Drake grew up. He references specific streets in "Keep the Family Close" and "Weston Road Flows," local businesses in "Views," and mentions "the 6" multiple times throughout. His previous album, *If You're Reading This It's Too Late*, contains the songs "6 God," "6 Man," and "You & the 6," a conversation with his mother in which he states "You and the 6 raised me right." This trope of the hip-hop genre, often called out in the first few seconds of a song along with the names of the main and featured artists, can be seen across cities and decades, like Kendrick Lamar with Compton, the previously mentioned group Boogie Down Productions with the South Bronx, Lil Jon with Atlanta, and Eminem with Detroit.

In addition to repeated references to Miami, including the titles for two albums, Pitbull uses the city's telephone area code, 305, as a place marker throughout his lyrics. "Mr. 305" serves as one of his monikers, in addition to "Mr. Worldwide," adopted in the transition of his image and musical style from a rapper to a bilingual pop artist who raps between the albums *El Mariel* and *The Boatlift* (2007). A few years later, in 2009, Pitbull named his record label "Mr. 305" while continuing to push the image of his music as Latin-based globalized hip-hop with the albums *Planet Pit* (2011), *Global Warming* (2012), and *Globalization* (2014) (Jeffries).

There are fewer French than Spanish speakers in the world, but even an estimated native speaking audience of 72 million may not be enough if a musician desires international stardom, like Céline Dion ("Status of French"). Originally from Québec, Dion began writing and singing in French and achieved success first within

Canada, where her 1983 album reached gold status.² She was also nominated for Artist of the Year Achieving the Most Success Outside Québec (Proefrock). After releasing nine albums before the age of eighteen, including one live and two seasonal albums, Dion began her transition into the role of mainstream English pop star, which included language study in a private school while working on her first exclusively English album, *Unison*, released in 1990. Its sales reached gold certification in France and the U.K, and platinum in U.S.³ (RIAA). Shortly after, she sang the theme song to *Beauty & the Beast* with Peabo Bryson, which earned a Grammy and an Academy Award. A few Top 40 hits and a heavily awarded album later, Dion performed at the 1996 Olympic Games, sang the Titanic's theme song "My Heart Will Go On," and proceeded to book a three-year long performance contract in Las Vegas. Only after this did she release more music in French with *D'Elle* and *On Ne Change Pas*, an album of her greatest hits in French (Proefrock). While Dion has released a large body of musical content in both French and English, she has paved separate paths for her work in the two languages. In her early career, her French albums were released exclusively in Canada and France, establishing a geographical nature to her already language specific fan base (Proefrock). The release of her albums in English to a more physically global market also marked a personal evolution for the artist whose English-speaking, pop-ballad persona dominated her releases and performances for the next decade.

Artists who make the choice to sing in a language other than that of their native language group may face questions of authenticity and rejection from a number of sources, including their native community. Saber Rebai, a musician born in Sfax,

² 100,000 copies sold

³ 1 million copies sold

Tunisia, chooses to sing in a dialect of Arabic closer to Classical Arabic, rather than in Tunisian Derja, because it has a wider commercial appeal to the pan-Arab community reached by the Saudi Arabian music label he performs under, Rotana Records. Tunisian artist Nour Chiba was outspoken in his criticism of Rebai, saying that he is not a true Tunisian musician because he has chosen not to perform in the local dialect or with local musicians. Chiba, who performs in Tunisian Arabic, faults Rebai and other musicians like him for not having done the hard work of releasing music and gaining success in their native dialect, leaving the struggle to other artists like Chiba who feel abandoned by local musicians who perform in a majority language (Mosaique Fm). This is not uncommon, though, and follows trends set by Tunisian media which draws from the U.S. Billboard charts and may split radio airtime between global pop hits and more pan-Arab artists (Kagan).

Other artists, like Israeli rock group Haya Miller, may make minimal adjustments to increase their appeal to a majority language audience by listing their name and the titles of their songs and albums in English rather than Hebrew, the group's performance language. Artists like Saber Rebai or Asaf Avidan, another musician from Israel, may gain a larger audience pool but sacrifice the associated cultural identity communicated by vocals or instruments tied to a specific ethnic group or geographic location. Avidan has produced multiple successful albums, both with his band Asaf Avidan & the Mojos and in his solo career, but little separates him musically from other folk-tinged rock artists who perform in English. His vocals and talent, however, have kept him from being swallowed by the genre, and his language choice has also kept him out of the complex waters of tokenism and linguistic iconicity that many minority musicians find

themselves in as they become trapped under the category of world music and are featured for the exotic qualities of their music.

While majority language artists may perform with minority artists in the name of social activism, it is usually in works like *We Are the World*, an album whose proceeds went towards famine relief efforts in Ethiopia, in which majority language artists represent more global entities and nations and align themselves with issues affecting the minority language group rather than with the group itself (Discogs). Abigail Washburn, however, is one of the rare few who takes on issues affecting both groups, like a lack of dialogue and understanding between two countries, and crosses the bridge herself to share the message of exchange and cooperation. Originally from Illinois, Washburn first wanted to take on the issues of US-China relations by becoming a lawyer. She became fluent in Chinese and studied law but was sidetracked on her way to study in Beijing by her interest in the banjo. Some time spent at an Appalachian bluegrass festival and some fateful connections later, Washburn was recording music in Nashville, Tennessee in English and Chinese, reimagining the task of improving national relations from using legal to musical means (Washburn). Playing a distinctly American instrument, the banjo, Washburn sings in Chinese, “Outside your door the world is waiting. Inside your heart a voice is calling. The four corners of the world are watching, so travel daughter, travel” (adapted in this speech from “Song of the Traveling Daughter”) (Washburn).

Immigrants in European cities, likewise, are calling upon the social influence of music to overcome cultural and ethnic divides. Due to its origins in the urban U.S. as an artistic form of social commentary and activism for the African-American community, hip-hop was a reasonable choice for minority communities in urban areas experiencing injustice around the world. While immigrant hip-hop has much in common with the

genre in the U.S., it is not a direct parallel and has gone through what John Clarke terms “recontextualization,” transforming into a uniquely local form and taking on style markers and social issues relevant to each immigrant community (Androutsopoulos and Sholz 1). Other than citing their city, hip-hop artists may use register and vernacular in order to communicate authenticity and belonging to a particular community and its issues. Use of a non-standard language, such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in American hip-hop, functions as an authenticator of the artist, whose image is based in non-conformity and rejection of the majority culture and its language.

Rappers from France, of whom over 90% are of immigrant, mainly African, descent, engage in identity construction through language choice by performing in the sociolect Verlan in order to align themselves with the Parisian minority community (Androutsopoulos and Sholz 6). In raps that involve codeswitching between English and Verlan, Verlan is used to discuss issues and themes more specifically related to minority youth and the immigrant community. English is used to conjure images of life in the inner city, including violence and criminal activity, that connect immigrant rappers with the global hip-hop culture (Androutsopoulos and Sholz 6).

Not all hip-hop is socially conscious— much lies in the realm of romantic relationships, partying, and depiction of the rap group’s city and social context. The language used, in the sense of morphology and vocabulary, depends on the musical equivalent to domains of use: song subject and genre affiliation. Raps that center on partying or that deal with the artist’s identity and context tend to use more non-standard speech and dialectal variance. R&B inclined songs, that center on relationships and reflection, typically have more features of standard speech and may be performed in a majority language (Androutsopoulos and Sholz 24).

In a comparison of fifty French, German, and Italian rap songs, researchers found that nearly half of the French songs engaged in social critique, followed by one fourth of rap songs from German artists, of whom around 60% are of migrant origin (Androutsopoulos and Sholz 7, 13). The base language in which these artists perform reflects the desired audience of the social critique, whether it is a call to the immigrant community, a criticism of the majority society, or a message to the global listeners of hip-hop (Terkourafi 23). The use of a particular vernacular may be symbolic, but social critique is still meant to be heard and understood by a particular audience.

Cartel, a hip-hop group in Germany, raps in Turkish and incorporates traditional Turkish instruments in their songs in order to appeal to and legitimize the Turkish-German immigrant community rather than call to the larger German community (Teal-Cribbs 14). Turkish immigrant youth living in Germany are mainly descendants of guest workers who came to the country in the 1960s. This population has and is still negotiating culture and ethnicity, both Turkish and German, further complicated by the inability of the Guest Worker generation to acquire citizenship. Hip hop has served as a means of discussing and debating identity as young people who are not fully ethnically German supplant the largely monolingual media that dominates the narrative of the German experience (Teal-Cribbs 8). Even as Cartel appeals linguistically to Turks, the group has described its aims to address the lack of equality and cultural preservation issues faced by German-Turks and the larger population, not to address issues facing the Turkish community at large or in their native country (Teal-Cribbs 14).

While Cartel is still immersed in a Turkish speaking community, some musicians, like A-WA and Yemen Blues, choose to sing in their heritage language in order to identify linguistically and culturally with their ethnic community even if they are not

geographically connected to them. Both A-WA and Yemen Blues are descendents of Yemeni immigrants who fled their home country to Israel due to the oppression of the minority Jewish population. Ravid Kahalani, the frontman for Yemen Blues, has never been to Yemen himself but grew up in a religiously and culturally Yemeni environment created by his parents within the significant immigrant population living in Israel. Although his band consists of diverse members, from New York, Israel, and Uruguay to name a few, Kahalani roots their music in uniquely Yemeni traditions, alongside the genres of jazz and blues, exhibited in the name chosen for the group. Kahalani sings in the Yemeni dialect of Arabic and bases his lyrics on the chants and prayers that he heard from his father as a child (Farber).

A-WA is made up of three sisters who, like Kahalani, grew up in Israel, the descendants of immigrants from Yemen. They did not grow up as immersed in the immigrant community and learned the Yemeni dialect of Arabic from extended family members (Gehr). The sisters connected strongly to the oral traditions of Yemen, brought into their lives by their grandparents, heard in their first album, released in 2016, on tracks like “Yemenite Lullaby.” Their most popular single, as well, “Habib Galbi,” is a Yemeni folk song produced as an electronic dance track by Tomer Yosef, the Yemeni-Israeli vocalist of Balkan Beat Box (Gehr). A-WA, the transliteration of “yeah” in the Arabic of the region, reimagines the musical traditions passed down by women who used music as a way to negotiate and practice their cultural and religious identities. The sisters feel that they are taking part in that tradition, citing the use of “the language, the dialect, and tribal singing” as the most important components of their songs, that range from jazz to hip-hop to electro-pop (Gehr).

Before studying music in a university and forming the band, the eldest Haim sister, Tair, knew she “would record an album in the Yemeni dialect” at some point in her life (Gehr). While she is hesitant to identify as belonging to one primary ethnicity or culture, because her familial roots come from the Jewish diaspora of many countries including Ukraine and Morocco, the language and lyrical choices made by the group cite the sisters’ identities as musicians of Yemeni and Mizrahi heritage as one of the most personally salient (Gehr). Although these decisions carried a high degree of commercial risk, appealing primarily to the small population of listeners who share their mixed cultural and linguistic heritage and context, A-WA has achieved international success. They have been featured in many Israeli publications as well as magazines *Elle*, *Stylist*, and *Cosmopolitan* in the U.S. The music video for “Habib Galbi” reached 500,000 views in its first two weeks and has since attained well over four million more (Artsy). The song was the first sung in Arabic to hit the number one spot on Israeli music charts and shortly after, the sisters began their headlining tour, after performing with Balkan Beat Box, across Europe and North America, which included a show at the SXSW music festival in Texas (Ship).

While *Yemen Blues*, along with other musicians singing in their heritage languages, aims to be apolitical, A-WA recognizes their platform as women from a minority religious group in the Arab world who also belong to an ethnic minority in their country (Farber). Following in the footsteps of Ofra Haza, one of the first women to record music in Yemeni Arabic in Israel, the sisters have embraced all of the potential conflicts within these identities and created work of amazing musical production that can serve as a “bridge to connect people from Arab countries and from Israel and from all over the world” (Margolin).

Luzmila Carpio, another woman engaged in social activism at a cultural crossroads, has served as the voice of forgotten indigenous people groups in Latin America, including her own, which is part of the Quechua language group from the Andes Mountains in Bolivia. She, like the members of A-WA and Yemen Blues, grew up learning traditional songs and oral literature in her native language while living in a majority Spanish speaking country. Quechua, along with other indigenous languages spoken in Bolivia, were not officially recognized, but Carpio rejected both official and societal assignments of Spanish as the only appropriate language for media and the arts, and she began writing and singing songs in her native Quechua (Monger).

As the Multinational State of Bolivia was forming, UNICEF began an initiative in the 1990s, called Yuyay Jap'ina, to preserve and promote the native languages spoken by indigenous peoples in South America through literacy. Many of these languages were unwritten, further endangering the intangible cultural heritage of an already marginalized group. Carpio recorded a series of songs in Quechua that were made publicly available and that became part of her personal ambition of representing and reclaiming the ethnic identity she felt had been taken through centuries of colonial rule and more recent exclusionary societal practices. The institutionalized pain, she felt, had “not left space for any type of tolerance or whatever intercultural dialogue, relinquishing the native culture and the musical knowledge of American indigenous groups to debates in chat circles about the exotic, and orienting the Latin American education system towards the ignorance and forced rejection of [indigenous] identity, values, and traditions” (Carpio, translation own).

Her music wedged itself into the space created by the literacy project, assigning both value and legitimacy to ancient languages (Quechua is believed to be over 2,000

years old) in the age of modern and digital music and drawing attention to the lack of voice, opportunity, and agency of her people. Many of her songs feature environmental themes and call listeners to protect and honor nature, the Pacha Mama, which is incredibly central to the lives and culture of the Quechua people. Others discuss the empowerment of women and issues of injustice and segregation (Carpio).

As one of the earliest and most famous indigenous musicians from Latin America, Luzmila Carpio has used her musical talent as a strong platform for change in her home country and around the world. After her participation in the literacy initiatives, she was appointed Bolivia's ambassador to France by the nation's first president of indigenous origin, who began restructuring the constitution to increase the rights and inclusion of Bolivia's native population and recognize their linguistic diversity by naming thirty-six additional languages as co-official languages with Spanish in 2009 (Lewis, et al.). Her songs, which purposefully feature the tonalities, instruments, and languages of Bolivia's native people, were originally created to "increase the awareness of indigenous populations about the rich diversity of their own culture." Her message, according to ZZK Records, who compiled an EP of some of the Yuyan Jap'ina Tapes remixed by Latin influenced electronic producers, "transcends the boundaries of language; even without understanding the words, the listener can feel its beauty" ("Luzmila Carpio").

First Nations musicians in North America, both in the U.S. and Canada, have connected with artists from other indigenous groups, like Luzmila Carpio and musicians from South America and Australia, who are grappling with ethnic identity in a post-colonial but presently repressed culture (Barnes). A Tribe Called Red has stepped into the confusing space, both physical and cultural, to engage the remnants of confusion

and pain that Native American tribes face in preserving, reimagining, and asserting their cultural heritage.

DJ NDN, 2oolman, and Bear Witness, the producers and musicians that make up the aboriginal EDM and powwow step group, A Tribe Called Red, belong to different tribes but grew up on indigenous reservations in Ottawa, dissatisfied with the current state of the rights and representation of Native American groups (Barnes). Like immigrant hip-hop artists in Europe, A Tribe Called Red drew inspiration from hip-hop, specifically from A Tribe Called Quest, active from the mid 1980s through the early 2000s, that addressed issues of African-American identity and racial tension in U.S. The musical influence of hip-hop is clear in the group's songs as well, that blend features of step, rap, and trap alongside traditional drums and native language vocals. While some minority artists, whether singing in a majority or native language, choose not to engage in the political issues affecting the ethnic group they belong to, the members of A Tribe Called Red felt there was no real choice to make other than to take on the responsibility of ambassadors, role models, and activists as well as artists. "As First Nations peoples everything we do is political" ("A Tribe Called Red").

One of first things the group noticed was a lack of physical space available to Native American people, specifically young people who were negotiating ethnic identity in the more urban context of Ottawa. In a decision analogous to the movement of disco and house music in Chicago in the 1980s, the group sought to create that space in the form of monthly DJ nights at local clubs, drawing in indigenous students and young people looking for a place to dance.⁴ This was the target audience for the group, who was

⁴ See podcast "Switched on Pop" episode, "Breaking Down the House" for a discussion on the history of house music in Chicago and its implications for minority and LGBTQ communities.

faced with different questions when non-indigenous listeners caught on to the music and began coming to the Pow Wow nights. Rather than excluding them or avoiding the complex waters of appropriation and participation, they established boundaries, banning headdresses and encouraging the crowd to celebrate their commonalities, namely their appreciation for the music (Colhoun). They have also taken on issues within the indigenous community, like substance abuse, and keep Pow Wows and their music void of alcohol, both in the space and in their songs, in attempt to counteract its historical baggage in native communities as “a symbol of defeat” (Colhoun). By carefully curating the space, the group has noticed a change in the indigenous crowd. Bear Witness said, “We never expected non-indigenous people to show up at our parties and listen to our music.” When the indigenous space became a shared space, the native audience had to negotiate its use, which Witness sees as “a kind of action. In the past, indigenous people were silent...There wasn’t a space to complain about.” Now it is “a new kind of privilege for indigenous youth to have: to be able to complain” (Colhoun).

Through the Electric Pow Wow and their music and language choices, A Tribe Called Red is also establishing and reclaiming cultural space. They use the blend of genres and heavy use of sampling to connect the traditional First Nations identity with the urban youth culture of today, forcing the native community as well as the majority Canadian community to redefine long held expectations and practices. Rejecting labels like that of the aboriginal music category in the Juno Awards and of stereotypical representations of First Nations groups in the media, A Tribe Called Red sets their music up against more mainstream artists in hip-hop and dance and uses trippy compilations of film depicting Native Americans to take on the “one-dimensional misrepresentation of of aboriginal people in the media” (Shingler).

Language choice and representation of culture define the overall mission of the group in the tension between negotiating and preserving their First Nation culture. In contrast to previously discussed artists, whose choice of performance language and audience may be subconscious and fluid, reflecting a personal identity and affiliation without significant risk of the artist to exercise power and agency on their platform in addition to producing music, A Tribe Called Red, and other First Nations artists like Black Bear, Northern Voice, Chippewa Travellers, and Eastern Eagle, feel they “don’t have a luxury of saying, ‘OK, we’re going to just be a band.’” “[As] indigenous artists...it’s not a choice. It’s a reality, and it’s a responsibility” (Shingler). They have taken this responsibility both on and off the stage, becoming advocates in the Idle No More protests against environmental mismanagement and social injustice against native peoples, and building off of what poet John Trudell called the Halluci Nation, a “collective of artists and activists [against] colonialism,” using their powwows to call both the indigenous and non-indigenous audiences to action.

Cultural and ethnic affiliation, being some of the greatest predictors of the language choices made by musicians, may place them in dangerous circumstances when, unlike groups like A-WA, their alignment with a particular group is not well received and is seen as threatening to majority group in power. Tinariwen, mentioned earlier, is one such group, whose members are originally from Mali. Their original name translates as something like “People of the Desert,” a fitting homage to the nomadic Tuareg group they come from. Although they started playing music for local events, they soon began writing songs about the socio political issues affecting the Tuareg people during the period following independence from French colonial powers in Mali, one of the nations whose borders fell in the homeland of the tribal group. The band members

met in a refugee camp in Algeria and began playing together in 1979, between two major uprisings of Tuareg rebels against the national government in the 1960s and 1990s (Love).

The group has spent considerable time in exile, both in Algeria and in other countries, and the lyrical themes of their music center around the idea of home, culture, and searching for peace. One of their primary goals in making music was to find solace in the creativity and to call for the rights the Tuareg people feel they have been denied for decades. Rather than singing in French, the official language of a number of formerly colonized North African countries, or in Arabic, widely spoken in the region, or even in English, Tinariwen performs in Tamasheq, the principal Tuareg language, in order to root themselves in the ethnic group and align themselves with the traditional culture at a time when Berber groups in Northern Africa are seeking to promote both in opposition to the Arabization backed by national governments (Love).

The members of Tinariwen have also come into opposition with militant groups who aimed to enforce religious law, which included repressing secular music and destroying instruments, like that of the band's guitarist that he was forced to leave behind in order to escape arrest (Love). Amid all of these obstacles, the group that began handing out free cassette recordings among friends has toured worldwide, including performances at world music festivals, received the BBC Award for World Music and a Grammy for the Best World Music Album, performed at the FIFA World Cup in 2010, and spread awareness of their ethnic group, its richness and its struggles, far outside North Africa (Love).

Even so, their language choice has declared their own people as the primary audience for the music they produce. Many songs use terms like “my friends,”

“brothers” (in “Imidiwan Afrik Temdam”) and collective pronouns to reference narratives of the Tuareg rebellions and address their people, as in the song “Chet Boghassa,” that discusses the desire to restore a particular village to the Tuaregs (Romig). “Kel Tamashek” (Tamashek people) was written as a call to the Tuareg people to act in preservation of their culture and language, “Tamashek people, open your eyes; Tamashek people, wake up; We’re in a world that’s moving fast; He who doesn’t pay heed will be lost” (Romig). One of the group’s guitarists, Abdallah Ag Alhousseini, has stated their mission as “military artists” who have used music in “the defense of our culture and our people [that] is the very spirit of Tinariwen” (Romig). Likewise, members of the group have fought alongside the rebels in battle, saying “if we see that our brothers need fighters rather than musicians, we will go to the front...This is what we do through music, and we will do it again with arms!” (Romig).

Another Tuareg musician, Omara Moctar, who performs as Bombino, was born around the time that Tinariwen was forming and has also spent much of his life outside his native Niger as a refugee. Like one of Tinariwen’s founding members, Ibrahim Ag Alhabib, he has found power in the electric guitar which, thanks to Ibrahim, is common in Tuareg music and functions as a symbol of resistance. Bombino also performs in Tamashek and met similar resistance for his musical choices. After the rebellion in the 1990s, the government of Niger banned the use of the electric guitar and executed musicians who they feared were spreading messages of opposition through cassette tapes (Ruiz).

While Bombino’s music is still rooted in Saharan traditions, it builds off of the sounds pioneered by bands like Tinariwen and further connects to the genres of reggae (that he calls “Tuareggae”), pop, and rock through the engineering of producers like Dan

Auerbach (of The Black Keys) among others (Rubin). He represents the next generation in the fight of the Tuareg people, continuing in the struggle for their rights and the preservation of their culture. “Akhar Zaman,” from his 2016 album *Azel* describes this desire: “Our ancestral language and alphabet are threatening to disappear and our dearest practices are losing their place” (Rubin).

In the music video for the same track, Bombino is seen walking from the sea into New York and Times Square, as footage describing him as a performer is juxtaposed with him as a refugee. Part of the song translates as a call to the Tuareg people, “My brothers! Far from your ancestral culture, your personality disappears along with you spirit” (Bombino). As Bombino and the members of Tinariwen are aware, preserving culture and language while forced outside your native context as a refugee is difficult, made even more so with the pressures of assimilation and what can feel like a hopeless system of relocation and asylum-seeking. Through his music, Bombino draws attention to the issues faced by the Tuareg people and by refugees in general.

The musicians of Khebez Dawle, all from Syria, found themselves fleeing their home country as refugees after the brutal civil war made it become impossible for them to stay. They sold their instruments in order to pay smugglers to get them from Syria through Turkey and then across the Mediterranean Sea into Greece. As they washed up on the European shores, they greeted the tourists on the beach and passed out their CDs. Though they had planned to end their journey in Germany, the young men were stopped in Croatia and registered as refugees. An activist group asked them to play in a concert benefiting refugee resettlement efforts, and Khebez Dawle found themselves connecting with refugees from other countries, Croatian tourists, and even prison

guards, who listened to their music when the group was detained for attempting to cross a border (Larsson).

In a physical parallel to Bombino's video, the band found their situation as refugees set against their identities as musicians. A number of the members had been trained in classical Arabic music and singing and had played together for a few years before recording their first album in a studio in Beirut, the first place the band had fled, in 2014 (Fordham). Just months after a concert to launch the album, the group played their first European concert for the activist group wearing the clothes they had worn from their journey across the Mediterranean (Larsson). The self-described oriental-indie rock concept album tells the story of a young man living through the Arab Spring and the Syrian war (Larsson). Although the tragedies experienced by the members of the band, including the execution of their drummer and forced exile and repatriation, can seem incredibly distant from the group's increasingly global audience, they choose to keep singing in Arabic, telling the story of Syrian refugees in concerts across Europe (Larsson). Khebez Dawle sees their music as an opportunity and a responsibility "to tell Europeans about the other Syrians who are not heard...to play music in front of different cultures, different nationalities and [make] sure that the language barrier is not a barrier anymore" (Larsson). They see their native language as well as the music itself as a source of identity and power to change: "Music is the language we use to say that we are civilized people, we always used to take planes to travel abroad, but circumstances have forced us to go on this smuggling trip across sea and land" (Arja).

Many refugees have found hope and humanity through music, prompting programs like the Refugee Music Project and the Mosaic Choir in Turkey. The Music Project, based in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, seeks to provide musicians with

the means and the platform to tell their stories through music (“Refugee Music”). The Mosaic Choir serves as a source of community and hope for refugees and a challenge to the narrative of Syrians in the country as negative or needy members of society. Maisa Alhafez, who organized the group, says the “project is more than a choir...It’s a social project, it’s therapy.” “War separated us and music connected us.” One mother who brought her daughter to the choir said the music “is like an international language that crosses all barriers” (Ashdown). A man involved in the Refugee Music Project said, “Music is the language of the world, the language of souls” (“Refugee Music”).

Abdallah Rahhal, also from Syria, would agree that music was his salvation. In the chaos and pain of the war and his journey through Europe to Germany, where he lives now, he says, “Music helped me to survive” (Vickery). Rahhal, like some of the members of Khebez Dawle, studied music at a university in Syria. He sings a more traditional style of Arabic music, called Tarab. He sang on the boat as it drifted through the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, to audiences of refugees living in camps, and in concert halls with the accompanying band members he met in Germany (Vickery). Although he had initial fears of performing for a German crowd amidst anti-refugee rhetoric, in the country and across Europe, Rahhal chose to sing in Arabic and set his music up as a meeting point for Syrians and Germans (“Germany”). His percussionist, Ali Hasan has found hope and purpose in performing, carrying the memories and message of his home into the places where exiled Syrians are settling. “Here is my identity, here is something that I can bring with me to Germany,” he says. “It’s an amazing feeling when you see people are enjoying and dancing, even people that don’t understand any of the words” (Vickery).

SECTION THREE

It comes as no surprise to me that during the two months I spent working in a refugee camp in Greece, music was a near daily experience. Mothers singing with their children, a grandmother singing to a sleeping baby, a man sitting in the shade on a hot day strumming on an oud, a group of young men dancing to a drum beat, friends connecting over American pop. When an aid group working in the camp announced they would host an open-mic style concert for the refugees, many, myself included, initially felt confused. With issues of health care, nutrition, clothing, and shelter, couldn't money and time be spent on something better than music? The true answer was no, it couldn't. As young men stepped up on the stage to rap in their native language and as a singer performed a traditional song, I was struck by the idea that music is a language in itself, connecting people in their humanity as they recognize the beauty in lyrics and vocals, whether they are understood or not.

The power of presenting identity, both personal and cultural, through music compels listeners to engage the material artistically and emotionally. By extension, they must also engage the artist's message, which may be portrayed in the lyrics or by the artist and accompanying sources if the song is in a language they do not speak. This message may be one of cultural exchange, minority representation, preservation of heritage, or one of social activism against injustice or oppression. As music listeners follow patterns of listening according to ethnic affiliation and language identity, they will construct and employ their language identity through the linguistic landscape afforded them (Clément, et al. 400). Musicians, however, are able to negotiate their linguistic and cultural identities through entirely displaced environments, if they wish, and create their own landscapes by keeping their entire musical careers within a digital

or global context. That a musician would choose to be rooted in a particular place, culture, and ethnic group, then, marks a strong degree of identification with a language group that the musician sees as more integral to personal identity and more valuable in terms of production for an audience than the possibility of lower commercial and social risks that come with performing in a majority language.

Music can be an education, a weapon, and a source of healing as multilingual artists from the urban U.S., descendants of immigrants in Europe and the Middle East, indigenous groups in the Americas, desert tribes of North Africa, and refugees resettling in a new host country work out the tension between language identities when more than one is available to them. Their messages, transmitted through complex societies divided by power dynamics and representation, are evidence of the artist's personal linguistic identity and identification with a language group as well as what may be the beginning of a shift toward acceptance of bilingualism in the overwhelmingly monolingual media of modern societies.

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APPENDIX

Recommended Listening: a complete list of songs mentioned in this thesis, listed in order of appearance.

1. *Graceland* by Paul Simon, featuring Ladysmith Black Mambazo
2. For Sudden by Deft, with a sample from Asha Bhosle
3. Chura Liya by Asha Bhosle
4. Don't Phunk With My Heart by the Black Eyed Peas, also sampling Asha Bhosle
5. *Theory of Flo* by Auntie Flo
6. Partition, ***Flawless by Beyoncé
7. La Vie en Rose, by Édith Piaf, later adapted by Grace Jones
8. Ojos Así by Shakira
9. Oyeme by Enrique Iglesias
10. No Me Ames, Jenny from the Block by Jennifer Lopez
11. Pitbull's Cuban Rideout, We Don't Care About Ya, Toma by Pitbull
12. Keep the Family Close, You & the 6 by Drake
13. La Voix du bon Dieu, My Heart Will Go On, On ne Change Pas by Céline Dion
14. Sidi Mansour by Saber Rebai
15. Barra Rawah by Nour Chiba
16. Haya Miller (artist)
17. Asaf Avidan (artist)
18. *We Are the World* (album)
19. Song of the Traveling Daughter by Abigail Washburn

20. RMI by MC Solaar
21. Stromae (artist)
22. Cartel by Cartel
23. Habib Galbi, Yemenite Lullaby by A-WA
24. Kum Kum by Balkan Beat Box
25. Jat Mahibathi by Yemen Blues
26. Ofra Haza (artist)
27. *Yumay Jap'ina Tapes* by Luzmila Carpio; ZZK Remix EP
28. Electric Pow Wow Drum by A Tribe Called Red
29. Black Bear, Northern Voice, Chippewa Travellers, Eastern Eagle (artists)
30. Kel Tamashek by Tinariwen
31. Azamane Tiliade, Akhar Zaman by Bombino
32. Belsharea' by Khebez Dawle
33. Ya Msafer Wahdak by Musiqana