

HIP HOP PRACTICE AS IDENTITY AND MEMORY WORK IN AND IN-BETWEEN CHILE AND SWEDEN

ABSTRACT

Over 40 years have passed since the coup d'état in Chile on September 11th 1973. Although Augusto Pinochet's military regime officially came to an end in 1990, the political and societal consequences of the coup and 17 years of dictatorship live on to this day, both in and outside of Chile. In this article I discuss hip hop practice as a form of identity and memory work in, and in-between Chile and Sweden, the country that welcomed the highest number of Chilean refugees in Europe after the coup. I focus on those instances in which rappers in both Sweden and Chile refer to specific versions of the past in their lyrics, music, videos, biographies, and in TV programs. My analysis shows that artists in both countries use hip hop culture in order to create meaning and a sense of shared history by engaging in strategic and self-conscious identity and memory work.

Keywords: hip hop, Chile, Sweden, Chilean diaspora, memory work, identity work, solidarity

INTRODUCTION

In both Sweden and Chile, hip hop artists became involved in different societal debates from the late 1980s onward (Sernhede and Söderman 2010; Poch Plá 2011; Tijoux et al. 2012). Although earlier research on Swedish hip hop has described it as a glocal collective culture that has served to render earlier migration experiences obsolete, I here explore the way in which hip hop becomes a platform for memory work in both Chile and the Chilean diaspora in Sweden. I specifically discuss a number of instances in which rappers in both countries engage in memory work by referring to specific

versions of the past, and analyze these instances as examples of self-conscious and strategic identity work. My analysis is based on two interviews, a biography, and the lyrics, music, and visual narrative of a video, all of which I describe in greater detail in the sections below.

In Sweden, I interviewed Cristian *Salla* Salazar Campos, a former member of the seminal group The Latin Kings, as well as a co-founder of the record label Redline Recordings, and the production company The Salazar Brothers, in July 2015. *Salla's* parents were among those Chileans who came to Sweden in the later 1970s. In Chile, I interviewed Eduardo *Lalo* Meneses, an early b-boy and co-founder of the hip hop

group *Panteras Negras* (the Black Panthers) in June 2015. I also use his autobiography *Reyes de la Jungla* (Kings of the Jungle) that was published in 2014. I conducted my interview with *Lalo* in Spanish, and my interview with *Salla* in Swedish. All translations from Spanish and Swedish included in this article are my own.

My analysis is also based on the lyrics, music and visual narrative of the joint video *Ett land som är tryggt / Betongbarn* (A country that is safe / Children of the concrete) by the Malmö-based group Advance Patrol. The group consists of rappers *Juan Havana* (Juan Hektor Paez Larraguibel), *Gonza* (Gonzalo Rodrigo del Rio Saldias), and DJ Lucutz (Lucas Simon Alsén). Both *Juan's* and *Gonza's* parents emigrated from Chile to Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s. Finally, I also discuss an episode of the Swedish TV program *Lyckliga gatan* (The Happy Street) that features The Salazar Brothers as producers.

Before engaging in a discussion of this material, I briefly introduce the historical background in, and in-between Sweden and Chile, as well as the specific way in which I use the concepts of identity and memory work in this article. The following analysis falls into five parts. The first and second part exemplify the identity and memory work of Cristian *Salla* Salazar Campos in Sweden, and Eduardo *Lalo* Meneses in Chile in relation to hip hop as an emerging music genre in the 1980s and 1990s in their respective countries. In the third and fourth sections I discuss the joint video *Ett land som är tryggt / Betongbarn* by the group Advance Patrol as an example of conscious identity and memory work by Swedish-Chilean hip hop artists. In the fifth and final part I outline the continuing importance of the Chilean *nueva canción* movement for the identity and memory work of both Swedish-Chilean and Chilean hip hop artists today.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On September 11th 1973 the Chilean government was overthrown by a military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet. In its immediate aftermath, the military regime shut down congress and banned all unions and political organizations that were not in line with its political views. Between 1973 and 1990 the regime tortured, exiled, and killed thousands of civilians (Constable and Valenzuelo 1991: 21). Outside of Chile, the coup was followed by an international wave of solidarity (Christiaens et al.: 10). It also became a central societal and political issue in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s, a time when issues such international solidarity, multiculturalism, and the welfare state were high on the political agenda.

Large numbers of Chileans who sought refuge in Sweden were not only warmly welcomed by the Swedish government under Prime Minister Olof Palme, but also by a number of civilian groups such as the *Chilekommittén*, the Chile committee (Gradszkova 2015: 15). As a result, Sweden became the country that welcomed the highest number of Chilean refugees in Europe. During the 1970s and 1980s, both the Swedish solidarity movement and the Chilean exile community focused on opposing the Pinochet regime through political and cultural activism (Lindqvist 1991; Olsson 2007; Tornbjer 2008).

Democratic elections finally took place in 1990, making Patricio Aylwin Azócar the first democratically elected president since 1970 (Sjöqvist and Palmgren 1990: 20). However, the end of the Pinochet regime did not bring an end to military influence on Chilean politics. Different generals kept threatening to take over the government throughout the 1990s, and Pinochet remained in his position

as commander-in-chief of the military until 1998 (Sørensen 2011:3). In such a political climate, media outlets did not dare to be openly critical of the regime, especially since Pinochet had been granted immunity for all crimes committed between 1973 and 1978. As a result, media rarely mentioned the regime, and if they did, they only discussed it in hushed tones. To this day, there are still individuals who advocate the *borron y cuenta (nueva)* approach that was based on forgetting the past and instead focusing on the future (Sjöqvist and Palmgren 1990: 17; Camacho Padilla 2009: 88.).

The elections in Chile also changed the situation of what had now become the Chilean post-exile community in Sweden. It had to find new strategies for group mobilization, as political resistance to the Pinochet regime no longer served to unite the group (Lindqvist 1990: 34). These new strategies included challenging social hierarchies that create economic and racialized marginalization in Sweden. Owing to the very heterogeneous nature of this post-exile group, earlier research has come to contradictory conclusions regarding the children of these Chilean refugees. While, for instance, Erik Olsson argues that they no longer automatically identify themselves with Chile, María Denis Esquivel Sánchez refers to a study that states that the children of Chilean refugees have started to identify themselves with Chile to a greater extent than their parents' generation (Olsson 2007: 220; Esquivel Sanchez 2005: 78). I here specifically focus on the work of hip hop artists in both Sweden and Chile who engage in identity work by remembering specific versions of a Chilean or Swedish past.

IDENTITY AND MEMORY WORK

In this article, I am not concerned with diaspora identities as such (Georgiou 2006; Hall 1990; Clifford 1994), but rather with describing the kinds of memory work that give rise to different constellations of identity expressions among Swedish-Chilean and Chilean hip hop artists. The concept of identity work has been applied by a number of scholars in different fields in order to describe the way in which individuals relate to broader societal structures and historical processes by creating or narrating different identities (Ibarra Insead and Barbulescu 2010; Watson 2008). For the purpose of this article, I define identity work as a practice that serves to create meaning and a sense of shared history over time and space (Brah, Hickman and Mac an Ghail 1999: 19; Gillis 1999:3). However, such a shared history is not rediscovered, but rather constructed by individuals and groups who create and define their identities in the present based on remembering specific versions of the past (Hall 1990: 224).

Identity work is, in other words, closely connected to memory work, a concept that I here apply to explore the process whereby individuals create and negotiate their identities by remembering specific versions of the past in both national and transnational contexts (Onyx and Small 2001: 774; Assmann 2014: 547). I specifically use the concepts of identity work and memory work in order to discuss those instances in which rappers in both Sweden and Chile refer to specific versions of the past in and in-between Sweden and Chile in their lyrics, music, videos, biographies, and in TV programs that I will describe in greater detail in each section. By defining these instances as examples of self-conscious and strategic identity work, I explore the way in which hip hop can

be a means through which individuals engage in memory work in Chile and the Chilean diaspora in Sweden. In the following, I start my analysis by discussing the emergence of hip hop culture in Sweden, and the role of the seminal group The Latin Kings.

THE EMERGENCE OF HIP HOP IN SWEDEN AND THE LATIN KINGS

This first section is based on an interview I conducted with Cristian *Salla* Salazar Campos in Norsborg, a suburb of Stockholm in July 2015. *Salla* was a member of the seminal group The Latin Kings, and is a co-founder of the record label Redline Recordings and the production company The Salazar Brothers.

In both Sweden and Chile, a dominant narrative exists which claims that hip hop emerged in the mid-1980s, when U.S.-American movies such as *Wild Style*, *Beat Street*, and *Breakin'* were being shown on television (Poch Plá 2011: 68). These movies, which mainly focus on graffiti painting, breakdancing, and DJing in New York and Los Angeles, inspired young men in Sweden and Chile to become b-boys and graffiti artists.

Earlier research on hip hop in Sweden links the emergence of the culture to the *förorten*, that is, low-income areas outside of the city centers of the three largest Swedish cities of Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö (Sernhede and Söderman 2010). The areas that are today known as *förorten* became the marker of a city segregated along the lines of class, ethnicity, and race in the 1990s, and are therefore often compared with inner-city neighborhoods in the United States (Lilja 1999: 101; Sernhede 2007). While the *förorten* were often described as problematic even before the emergence of hip hop in Sweden, the culture quickly became

the representative of these problems in public debate in the 1990s (Ristilampi 1994; Ericsson et al. 2002; Sernhede and Söderman 2010:3). Consequently, Swedish hip hop has mainly been studied as a collective culture that has united youth in the *förorten*, whereas the importance of earlier personal or familial migration experiences expressed within Swedish hip hop has not been the main focus of previous research.

In the mid 1990s, the group The Latin Kings was credited with having made audible and visible these *förorten* in Swedish mainstream media. The Latin Kings consisted of the brothers Cristian *Salla* and Hugo *Chepe* Salazar Campos whose parents were among those Chileans who migrated to Sweden in the late 1970s, and their friend, Douglas *Dogge Doggelito* León. The group released their successful debut album *Välkommen till förorten* (Welcome to the *förorten*) in 1994, and a Spanish version of that album called *Bienvenido a mi barrio* (Welcome to My Neighborhood) under the name Los Reyes Latinos in 1996. One of the songs featured on that album was called *Latinos somos* (We Are Latinos) and became a hit in Latin America. It was featured on MTV Latino and The Latin Kings traveled to New York, Miami, and Mexico to promote it.

However, although they mention their Chilean background in the lyrics of that song, The Latin Kings did not specifically intend to launch their music in Chile. During our interview *Salla* also stressed that the group resisted being reduced to representing the *förorten*. The success of The Latin Kings inspired other Swedish-Chilean artists such as *Juan Havana* (Juan Hektor Paez Larraguibel) and *Gonza* (Gonzalo Rodrigo del Rio Saldias) from the Malmö-based group Advance Patrol whose video I will discuss below to start rapping themselves. While The Latin Kings never travelled to Chile, Advance Patrol recorded an

album in Spanish and went on tour in Chile in the late 2000s. Two members of The Latin Kings, *Salla* and *Chepe* later also founded the production company The Salazar Brothers with a third brother, Marcelo *Masse* Salazar Campos. This production company is today not only very visible in Swedish mainstream media, they also produce artists and collaborations between artists in both Sweden and Chile.

The identity work through hip hop I discuss in this first section is clearly connected to the historical context of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Sweden. This context includes the emergence of the *förorten*, both as physical, and imagined locations, combined with an economic crisis, the arrival of migrants from non-European countries, and the accompanying increase of anti-immigration sentiments in Sweden during the late 1980s and 1990s (Lilja 1999). By naming their debut album *Välkommen till förorten* (Welcome to the *förorten*), the Latin Kings tied their initial work and identity as hip hop artists to these low-income areas. Yet, although they produced a Spanish version of that album on which they mention their Chilean background, they did not connect such an identity to a specific past in Chile. In the following, I will turn to identity and memory work and the emergence of hip hop culture in Chile.

THE EMERGENCE OF HIP HOP IN CHILE AND THE PANTERAS NEGRAS

This section is based on an interview that I conducted with Eduardo *Lalo* Meneses, a co-founder of the group Panteras Negras (the Black Panthers), in Santiago in June 2015. I also use excerpts from his autobiography *Reyes de la Jungla* (Kings of the Jungle) that was published in 2014.

In Chile, hip hop culture emerged in the *poblaciones*, low-income areas outside of the city centers of the larger Chilean cities of Santiago, Valparaiso, Temuco, Viña del Mar, Iquique, and Concepción. The areas were the results of the military regime's resettlement programs, implemented during the economic crisis of the early 1980s (Quitow 2001: 40; Hardy Raskovan 1989). While Swedish youth had access to hip hop culture through TV, newspapers, and concerts during the late 1980s and early 1990s, such content was not readily available to marginalized youth in these *poblaciones*.

Eduardo *Lalo* Meneses, who became a b-boy in the 1980s, grew up in Renca, a *población* located in the urban district of Huamachuco in the north of Santiago. In his autobiography he points out that many of the young men who imitated the moves and styles of the b-boys they saw in U.S.-American movies like *Breakin'* and *Beat Street* were school dropouts (Quitow 2001:16; Poch Pla 2011:77). After the end of the Pinochet regime, *Lalo* became one of the co-founders of the rap group, Panteras Negras. The group's name is based on the Black Panther Party in the United States by whose political stance they were influenced in their socio-critical lyrics and their critique of both the Chilean government and media. As *Lalo* outlines in his autobiography, the Panteras quickly positioned themselves as the voice of the *poblaciones*:

We, the Panteras sometimes performed at fund-raisers that were organized by people who decided to do something about the problems that their municipality was ignoring: the pavement of a street, renovating a school. You could see examples of inequality surrounding you on a daily basis.

Los Panteras a veces tocábamos en actividades a beneficio, pero organizadas por gente que decidía hacerse cargo de problemas de los que se desentendía su municipalidad: la pavimentación de una calle, la infraestructura de un colegio. A diario recibías ejemplos de la desigualdad en el ambiente.
(Meneses 2014: 57)

According to *Lalo*, the Panteras Negras are the founders of one of the two schools in Chilean hip hop that marks the culture to this day. The second school, which, according to *Lalo*, had a great impact on the development of Chilean hip hop, is the rap of the *retornados* (those who returned to Chile after living abroad during the Pinochet regime) that began in 1991 as Jaime Jimmy Fernández co-founded the group, La Pozze Latina. *Lalo* argues that these *retornados* influenced the development of hip hop in Chile as they returned with ‘many lessons learned outside of Chile’ which made them ‘[see] the music from a different angle.’ In the late 1980s Jimmy introduced the Chilean b-boys to new moves and dancing techniques that he had learned outside of Chile. He also informed them that they were part of a universal culture that also existed beyond the United States. During our interview, *Lalo* even added that hip hop culture in Chile would have died without Jimmy.

Nevertheless, the ‘more universal rap’ of La Pozze Latina did not heavily feature political lyrics. As Chilean mainstream media did not address human rights violations or openly criticize the Pinochet regime during the 1990s, it is not surprising that the less political form of the *retornados*’ hip hop became visible in mainstream media, while the socio-critical lyrics of the Panteras Negras did not receive such visibility (Meneses 2014: 68). As Cultural Theorist Kristin Sørensen points out in her book, *Media, Memory, and Human Rights in*

Chile, democratic rule was volatile even after the democratic elections, as different generals kept threatening to take over the government all throughout the 1990s (Sørensen 2009: 2).

The identity work that I have discussed in this second section is also clearly connected to the historical context of the late 1980s and early 1990s, this time in Chile. I argue that *Lalo*’s identity work is connected to a specific form of memory work in Chile as, throughout our interview, he stressed the importance of remembering the Pinochet regime. In both Sweden and Chile, hip hop emerged in low-income areas outside of the city centers. Yet while *Salla*, a former member of The Latin Kings, is critical of the fact that Swedish hip hop is mainly defined as a culture that represents the *förorten* to this day, *Lalo* stressed the close connection between Chilean hip hop and the *poblaciones* both during our interview and in his autobiography. It here also becomes clear that *Lalo*’s identity work as a hip hop artist is tied to transnational connections, as he claims that the *retornados* of the 1990s had a great impact on the development of the culture in Chile. In the following, I will return to Sweden and discuss a video by the Swedish group Advance Patrol that also sets out to remember the Pinochet regime.

REMEMBERING A COUNTRY THAT IS SAFE

In this third section, I focus on the first part of the lyrics and the joint video of the songs ‘Ett land som är tryggt’ / ‘Betongbarn’ (A country that is safe / Children of the concrete) that were released in 2005 by the Malmö-based group Advance Patrol. The group consists of rappers *Juan Havana* (Juan Hektor Paez Larraguibel), *Gonza* (Gonzalo Rodrigo del Rio Saldias) and DJ Lucutz (Lucas Simon Alsén).

Chafic Mourtada, an earlier member of the group, died in 2002. Both *Juan's* and *Gonza's* parents emigrated from Chile to Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s. The above-mentioned production company The Salazar Brothers produced a number of songs featured on their four full-length albums released between 2003 and 2009.

The first part of the video that I discuss here addresses the flight of their parents' generation from Chile to Sweden in the 1970s. It starts with *Gonza* rapping the following lines:

Sacrifice in order to give their children everything
Gave her / his life, fled to another country
To give us a better world.
Viejos (parents) we understand why we are here

Offra sitt för att ge sitt barn allt
Gav sitt liv, flydde till ett annat land
för att ge oss en bättre värld.
Viejos, vi förstår varför vi är här
(Advance Patrol, 'Ett land som är tryggt' /
'A country that is safe')

Meanwhile, *Gonza* and *Juan Havana* make their separate entrances to a venue in which *Juan* proceeds to perform in front of a small audience consisting of four middle-aged, well-dressed individuals. While *Juan* is dressed in a suit and tie, *Gonza*, who arrived before him, accompanied by a group of other young people, wears a hoodie, saggy pants, a baseball cap, and sneakers. *Gonza's* group gets seated in the back of the room where they laugh, move, gesticulate, comment, and thereby disturb *Juan's* presentation all throughout the video. Their manner stands in clear contrast to the seriousness of *Juan* and the four middle-aged audience members who start to nervously shift in their chairs, and to signal to *Gonza* and his friends to be quiet.

After the refrain, in which *Gonza* (from the off) states that people were fleeing from torture in Chile to Sweden (that is, 'a country that is safe'), *Juan*, who thereby starts his presentation, begins rapping:

When Olof was the boss, a hand reached out to us
Palme protected us, gave us a job, a place to live.
I cannot just stand and stare, we have things to do,
Not for our sake but for the dead,
Thirty years have passed and they remember,
They were younger than I am now and they left
everything behind.
My parents among a hundred thousand couples,
Spread over the entire world with their children.
I will become president some day.
Let a certain general take his responsibility.
My mother says Juan you have your own fights
Your fight is when you narrate and write.
Do not want to sound too naïve but I am active
Cannot cope to simply stand aside.
Want to know more about politics and write
About many people's lives, oppression and war.

När Olof var boss, sträcktes handen mot oss
Palme gav oss skydd, ett jobb, ett ställe att bo på.
Kan inte glo på, vi har att göra.
Inte för vår skull utan för dom döda
30 år har gått och dom minns tillbaks.
Dom var yngre än mig och lämna allting kvar.
Mina föräldrar bland hundratusentals par
utspridda över hela världen med sina barn.
Jag ska bli president nån dag.
Låta en viss general få ta sitt ansvar.
Min mamma säger Juan du har egna strider
din kamp är när du berättar och skriver.
Vill inte låta allt för naiv men jag är aktiv
klarar inte av att stå bredvid.
Vill kunna mer om politik och skriva
om många människors liv, förtryck och krig
(Advance Patrol, 'Ett land som är tryggt' /
'A country that is safe')

In this excerpt, Advance Patrol create a clear connection between the political fight of their parents who fled from Chile to Sweden during the 1970s when Olof Palme was the Swedish prime minister, and their own political activism as hip hop artists. Yet, although *Juan* mentions Pinochet ('let a certain general take his responsibility'), who was still alive as the video was released, he places his activism in the present. He has his 'own fights' that consist of addressing current 'oppression and war' as a hip hop artist.

The visual narrative of the video further stresses such a connection. In addition to *Juan's* presentation, the video displays captions of newspapers, black and white film clips and family photographs. The captions read: 'EXTRA—Chiles president död' (Extra—The Chilean President is dead); '11. september 1973—Stadshuset Brinner!' (11th of September 1973—the town hall is burning!), and: 'Inbördeskrig Hotar i Chile' (civil war is threatening Chile; see at 0:15 in the video). These captions are cut against black and white film clips showing soldiers driving, walking, standing, or shooting guns in the air, as well as groups of people demonstrating and holding up pictures of Chilean President Salvador Allende (0:04). As both the lyrics and the newspaper captions are all in Swedish, the video is clearly directed at a Swedish audience. The family pictures, on the other hand, convey a more personal history. They display individuals—parents and children—who are smiling or seem relaxed, dressed in 1970s clothing (0:33).

As the song also features a sample of the song 'Alturas' by Chilean folk music ensemble Inti-Illimani that was published in 1973, it places Advance Patrol in the general context of the Chilean exile. The group Inti-Illimani is

part of the *nueva canción* (new song) movement, a folk-inspired genre of socially conscious protest music with origins in Chile (Morris 1986; Foxley 1988; Cervantes and Saldaña 2015). The group managed to flee after the coup, and the song, 'Alturas', was featured on 'Viva Chile', their first album recorded in exile in 1973. This first part of Advance Patrol's music video thus not only presents a specific version of the past, but also imagery of the kind of person who speaks about the past in this way: the young, clean-cut, politically active, correct gentleman in suit and tie.

The identity work discussed in this third section is clearly based on remembering a specific version of a Chilean and Swedish past. Much in the same way as *Lalo*, Advance Patrol stress the importance of remembering the coup d'état and its consequences for the Chilean people. Yet they add the dimension of Swedish solidarity and political activism in the 1970s to this version of the past. It is notable that this version does not take into account any political or societal opposition to solidarity during the 1970s or 1980s, or the heterogeneous nature of South American migration to Sweden and subsequent debates within the exile group. By connecting the flight of their parents to such a version of the past, Advance Patrol not only legitimize their political activism as hip hop artists; they also claim such activism as a continuation of solidarity and resistance, not only on the part of their parents' generation, but by Swedish society in general, against 'oppression and war'. Their definition of a Chilean identity is thus closely tied to creating continuity based on remembering this specific version of the past between Sweden and Chile. However, the second part of the video that I will discuss in the following section tells a different story.

CHILDREN OF THE CONCRETE

In this fourth section, I focus on *Betongbarn* (Children of the concrete), that is, the second part of the joint video *Ett land som är tryggt / Betongbarn* by Advance Patrol. As mentioned above, *Gonza* disturbed *Juan*'s presentation that focused on solidarity between Sweden and Chile in the first part of the video. As the song *Ett land som är tryggt* is nearing its end, *Gonza* starts walking towards *Juan* who remains standing in front of the audience. The audience becomes increasingly nervous as *Gonza* approaches the front of the room, and a new song is sampled in the background as he starts rapping. *Juan*, who was immediately accepted as a speaker by the audience greets *Gonza*, the representative of hip hop youth who was regarded with suspicion by the audience during the first part of the video.

After this introduction, *Gonza* starts rapping. He dedicates the song to different areas in Malmö that have been perceived and defined as *förorten* by the mainstream media, starting in the 1990s: Rosengård, Lindängen, Sofielund, and Kroksbäck. He calls on all the inhabitants of these areas to raise their hands and to sing the *allsången* whereupon two of his friends who have remained in the back of the room get up and start gesticulating excitedly. The *allsången*, roughly translated as 'singalong' or 'song of all', is a popular music program on Swedish TV during the summer months, and *Gonza*'s reference to it is a means of bringing the marginalized voices from the *förorten* into mainstream culture. Before starting to address the situation in which youth living in these areas find themselves, *Gonza* stresses the importance of his message by rapping, 'This is important, this is real, this is what happens in my district.' He continues with the following lines:

Because we are stupid, we are suspicious
We are youth who are high
Aggressiveness is our personality
The problem is that we do not find our identity
Glamorous dreams are serious
I grew up with parents who are long-term
unemployed
Like that, what underclass
That I make the wrong moves no matter what
kind of compass
I am so tired of being treated badly
So I roll a fat joint
Because my hope has died

*För vi e dumma, vi e skumma
Vi e ungdomar som flummar
Aggressivitet i vår personlighet
Problemet är att vi inte hittar vår identitet
Glamorösa drömmar är seriösa
Jag är uppväxt med föräldrar som är
långtidsarbetslösa
Så pass, vilken underklass
Att jag trampar fel oavsett vilket slags kompass
Jag blir så trött på att bli dåligt bemött
Så jag blandar upp en fet holk
För att mitt hopp har dött
(Advance Patrol, *Betongbarn* / Children of the
concrete)*

The tone of these lyrics is completely different from the tone of the first video. *Gonza* states that he has grown up with parents who were long-term unemployed, and that he had to sell drugs to make a living. Whereas the first song *Ett land som är tryggt* clearly constructs a Chilean identity by referring to a specific version of a past between Sweden and Chile, *Gonza* here states that his problem, which is also that of other youth, is that they cannot find an identity.

As he starts rapping, the music that is sampled changes from Inti Illimani's song to

an Arabic tune. The images that are displayed in this second part of the video consist of black and white film clips and images that show male youth standing in groups: in front of a brick wall, in front of high-rises, and in the streets (1:57). The video ends with a block party in the *förorten*: children are playing with a small remote-controlled toy police car, and a group of young girls in white t-shirts and black sweat pants dance to the Arabic tune (3:33). In the refrain, Juan raps that they, the ‘children of the concrete’, are now ‘continuing to tie the ties of blood’ (*Betongbarn, knyter vidare på blodsbandet*). That means that Advance Patrol here define those who live in the *förorten* as their extended family. Solidarity and a Chilean identity based on solidarity, is thereby extended to all marginalized youth living in the *förorten*.

The identity work discussed in this fourth section is once more clearly connected to the historical context of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Sweden that earlier research on Swedish hip hop has pointed out as central for the emergence of the culture in Sweden: the economic crisis, the emergence of the *förorten*, the arrival of migrants from non-European countries, and the increase of anti-immigration sentiments in Sweden. Combined with the first part of the video, it is nevertheless connected to identity and memory work that is based on remembering a past in and in-between Chile and Sweden by focusing on the atrocities committed by the Pinochet regime and the solidarity expressed by Swedish society towards Chileans during the 1970s. I argue that the combination of these two songs can be seen as a means to remind Swedes of a past between Chile and Sweden that was marked by solidarity, a ‘special history’ that was forgotten during the 1990s. In other words, although Advance Patrol creates a Chilean identity in the first part of the video, the memory work on which this identity

is based places it in a Swedish, rather than a Chilean context. As mentioned above, this first part of the video contains a sample by Inti Illimani, a *nueva canción* group. In the following, I will take a closer look at the continuing importance of the *nueva canción* movement for the identity work of hip hop artists in both countries.

NUEVA CANCIÓN AND HIP HOP IN CHILE

This fifth and final section is once more based on my interview with Eduardo Lalo Meneses, as well as extracts from his autobiography *Reyes de la Jungla* (Kings of the Jungle). It also discusses an episode of the Swedish TV show *Lyckliga gatan* (The Happy Street) that features The Salazar Brothers as producers.

During our interview, Lalo repeatedly stressed that both the *retornados* and the *nueva canción* movement were highly important for the emergence and development of hip hop in Chile. As *nueva canción* musicians had been supportive of the Unidad Popular, that is, the party that stood behind the successful presidency of Salvador Allende in 1970, their music was forbidden in Chile after 1973. While some members of the movement such as Inti Illimani managed to flee after the coup, other artists such as Victor Jara were killed in its wake.

During our interview, Lalo mentioned that it was fairly common for the police to stop and frisk youth in the streets and to inquire whether they were communists and / or listened to *nueva canción* music during the 1980s. When Lalo himself was subjected to such a search, he answered that he was not a communist, but rather a b-boy, and that the cassettes he carried with him contained hip hop, a form of music originating from the United States. The police accepted that explanation and let them pass

without further comments. As *Lalo* points out in his autobiography, such interrogations were not limited to the streets. At work, he was called to his boss's office, who asked him:

'Meneses, in what part of Huamachuco do you live?'
'In the area of Los Lirios and Las Margaritas,
'I answered.
'Ah. And in what part do the communists hold their meetings?'
'I don't know; I have no idea.'
'There are some die-hard communists in your *población*. Are you a communist?'
'No, I am a boy. And I don't get involved in stuff. I am a breakdancer.'
'Aaaah, then. Continue working.'

'Meneses, ¿usted en qué parte de la Huamachuco vive?'
'En Los Lirios con Las Margaritas', respondí.
Ab. ¿Y en qué parte se juntan los comunistas?'
No sé, no tengo idea.'
'Hay hartos comunistas en su población. ¿Usted es comunista?'
No, yo soy chico. Yo no me meto en wéas. Yo bailo break.
Aaaah, ya. Siga trabajando.
(Meneses 2014: 34)

In other words, while young people had to distance themselves from any form of communism and were forbidden to listen to music by Violetta Parra or Victor Jara during the regime since their lyrics were deemed incendiary, they were allowed to listen to socio-critical groups such as Public Enemy. This shows that, as neither the police, nor *Lalo's* boss understood the socio-critical background of hip hop, it became a Trojan horse that could replace the socio-critical function of *nueva canción* music in Chile. During our interview, *Lalo* also repeatedly stressed a clear connection between the resistance of the *nueva canción* movement and his work as a hip hop artist.

Many of the exiled *nueva canción* musicians and writers who had been able to flee the country after 1973 visited Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s where they were warmly welcomed by members of the *proggrörelsen* (Svensson 2012: 111). During the 1970s, the 'progressive' music movement or *proggrörelsen* was a considerable force in Swedish popular culture. Much like the *nueva canción* movement, it was a left-wing and anti-capitalist movement that emerged in the late 1960s (Thyrén 2009). Its political engagement included expressing solidarity with those segments of the Chilean population that were prosecuted, killed, repressed, or had fled the country after the military coup. Musicians who were members of the *proggrörelsen* wrote songs in support of *nueva canción* musicians in particular, and the Chilean population in general.

The song, *Gracias a la vida* (A thank you to life), originally performed by Violetta Parra, one of the most important members of the *nueva canción* movement, became especially important for the Swedish solidarity movement, as Finnish singer and songwriter Arja Saijonmaa covered the song that in its Swedish version was called *Jag vill tacka livet* (I want to thank life), and later performed it at the funeral of Prime Minister Olof Palme on the 28th of February 1986.

The song then resurfaces in contemporary Swedish hip hop culture. It is part of an episode of the Swedish TV show *Lyckliga gatan* that features The Salazar Brothers as producers. The TV station TV4 describes the show as follows:

The show *Lyckliga gatan* on TV4 describes unique musical meetings across generations and genres with the aim to create new interpretations of both well-known Swedish songs from the 'Swedish musical treasure', and hits from the hip hop genre.

I Lyckliga gatan i TV4 skildras unika musikaliska möten över generations- och genregränserna, för att skapa nya tolkningar av både välkända svenska låtar ur den svenska musikskatten och hits ur hiphopgenren.

In the episode that I focus on here, the Swedish rapper *Gee Dixon*, who does not have a familial connection to Chile, covers Arja Saijonmaa's song *Jag vill tacka livet*. The song is introduced as a cover of Violetta Parra's original version, and *Salla* and *Masse* from The Salazar Brothers argue that while Saijonmaa's version is depressing, the original Chilean version is even more depressing since it is seen in connection to Pinochet's dictatorship (0:28 in the clip). The episode also features two other Swedish rappers whose parents came from Chile to Sweden during the regime: rapper *Carlito* and Ulises Infante Azocar, also known as *Stor*. *Carlito* and *Masse* from The Salazar Brothers claim that Swedish-Chilean rappers are 'returning' to Chile by creating a musical connection to *nueva canción* musicians, whereby they—that is, what *Carlito* calls the 'second generation'—are now 'closing the circle' (1:01). The episode ends with rapper *Gee Dixon* performing a new version of the song produced by The Salazar Brothers together with Swedish-Chilean rapper *Stor*. This episode thus not only represents identity work that is based on remembering the solidarity movement of the 1970s, it also represents this version of the past as an important part of hip hop culture in Sweden in general.

The identity and memory work I discuss in this fifth and final section shows that hip hop artists in both Chile and Sweden engage in identity work by creating a connection to the *nueva canción* movement. In Chile, *Lalo* creates such a connection in order to claim continuity with a Chilean past before the Pinochet regime, and to link such a past to his work and identity

as a hip hop artist. In Sweden, *Masse* and *Carlito* also link a specific version of the past to their work and identity as hip hop artists. In the episode of the TV program *Lyckliga gatan* discussed above, they connect their work to Chile through the *nueva canción* movement. Thereby they create continuity with their parents' generation on the one hand, and remember the 'depressing' time of the Pinochet regime on the other. They also connect such a narrative to the Swedish solidarity movement in particular and Swedish history in general by mentioning that Arja Saijonmaa performed a cover of the *nueva canción* song 'Gracias a la vida' at the funeral of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. As the artist *Gee Dixon*, who does not have a Chilean background, interprets the song in the TV program in 2015, this connection is further stressed as part of the Chilean exile world in general, and the broader landscape of Swedish popular culture in particular. Their identity work as Swedish-Chilean artists is, in other words, not limited to Swedish-Chilean artists; rather, it is based on a form of memory work that sets out to remember a past in and in-between Sweden and Chile.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this article, I have discussed a number of instances in which Chilean and Swedish-Chilean artists refer to specific versions of the past in and in-between Sweden and Chile as examples of self-conscious and strategic identity work. Although both the Swedish and the Chilean hip hop artists on whom I have focused create a Chilean artist identity, my analysis shows that this identity work is based on different versions of the past. In Sweden, the group The Latin Kings connected their early work and identity as hip hop artists to the emergence of the low-income,

immigrant-dominated areas known as the *förorten*, that is, the historical context of the late 1980s and 1990s in Sweden. Yet while *Salla*, a former member of The Latin Kings, is today critical of the fact that Swedish hip hop is mainly defined as a culture that represents the *förorten*, Chilean artist Eduardo *Lalo* Meneses continues to stress the close connection between Chilean hip hop and the *poblaciones*, low-income areas at the outskirts of metropolitan areas such as Santiago. His identity work as a hip hop artist is also clearly connected to remembering the atrocities committed by the Pinochet regime, which means that it is not in line with the *borron y cuenta (nueva)* approach that is based on forgetting the past and focusing on the future that emerged in post-Pinochet Chile (Sjöqvist and Palmgren 1990: 17; Camacho Padilla 2009: 88).

Although The Latin Kings mentioned a Chilean identity in a Spanish version of their debut album, they did not explicitly link their early identity work to a Chilean context. However, the production company, The Salazar Brothers, created by *Salla* and *Chepe*, two former members of The Latin Kings and their brother *Masse*, became very important for other Swedish-Chilean hip hop artists such as the group Advance Patrol. In their joint video, *Ett land som är tryggt / Betongbarn*, Advance Patrol create a Chilean artist identity based on remembering a past between Sweden and Chile that is marked by solidarity and political activism in the 1970s. By connecting the flight of their parents' generation and their critique of xenophobia and marginalization to this version of the past, they not only legitimize their political activism as hip hop artists, but also claim such activism as a continuation of solidarity and resistance. As they thereby set out to remind Swedish society of a forgotten past marked by solidarity, their definition of

a Chilean identity is based on a Swedish rather than a Chilean past.

I argue that Advance Patrol claim their activism as hip hop artists as a continuation of solidarity and resistance, not only on part of their parents' generation, but by Swedish society in general. Such a continuation also becomes visible when discussing the continuing importance of the *nueva canción* movement for the identity work of hip hop artists in both countries. In Chile, *Lalo* creates a connection to *nueva canción* artists in order to claim continuity with a Chilean past before the Pinochet regime, and to link such a past to his work and identity as a hip hop artist. In Sweden, on the other hand, Swedish-Chilean hip hop artists create continuity with their parent's generation and remember the time of the Pinochet regime by referring to the *nueva canción* movement. They thereby draw on a number of historical connections: they refer to a Chilean past that is marked by the Pinochet regime, the past of the Chilean diaspora, the Swedish solidarity movement, and, by mentioning Prime Minister Olof Palme, Swedish history in general. Their identity work as Swedish-Chilean artists is, in other words, not limited to Swedish-Chilean artists, it is established as a form of identity work that engages the broader landscape of Swedish popular culture.

To sum up, my analysis shows that artists in Sweden and Chile use hip hop culture in order to create meaning and a sense of shared history in both national and transnational contexts. My article also demonstrates that such a shared history is indeed not simply rediscovered. A Chilean past is also not necessarily important to all Swedes who have familial ties in Chile. The hip hop artists discussed here rather engage in strategic and self-conscious identity and memory work by remembering the past in specific ways depending on their situation and position in the present.

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