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# Minority Identity as German Identity in Conscious Rap and Gangsta Rap: Pushing the Margins, Redefining the Center

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After rap entered the German music scene in the 1980s, it developed into a variety of styles that reflect Germany's increasingly multiethnic social fabric. Politically conscious rap assumed greater relevance after unification, focusing on issues of discrimination, integration, and xenophobia. Gangsta rap, with its emphasis on street conflict and violence, brought the ghetto to Germany and sparked debates about the condition of German cities and the erosion of civic consciousness. Alternately celebrated and reviled by the media, both styles utilize rap's synthesis of authenticity and performance to redefine the relationship between minority identity and German identity and debunk *Leitkultur*.

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## A Brief History of Rap in Germany

Rap music with the attendant phenomena of break dancing and graffiti gained a foothold in Germany in the early 1980s. Early manifestations of rap in Germany were heavily influenced by the U.S. hip-hop culture that inspired them, including the use of English as the language of rap. From the late 1980s onward, rap in Germany appeared in multiple, temporally overlapping forms. In his article on the ethnic appeal of hip-hop, Timothy Brown argued that there are no distinguishable phases in the evolution of German rap, but only differences in approach and style.<sup>1</sup> As in the U.S., rap groups and artists seek to showcase their popularity, their politics, their affinities with the mainstream, or their links to the underground cultural scene. In her essay "Hip-Hop Made in Germany," Sabine von Dirke distinguishes three "strains" in German rap since the 1980s, beginning with Old School rap or "message rap" focused on themes of respect, activism, community, and "realness"—defined by von Dirke as "being true to oneself."<sup>2</sup> The second strain is New School rap, best represented by the commercially successful group *Die Fantastischen Vier* (the Fantastic Four), which emerged in the early 1990s. New School rap moved away from the consciousness-raising focus of Old School "message rap" toward the party-style rap favored by white middle-class crews such as the *Fanta Vier* and their fans. While the Old School rappers resisted appropriation by the mainstream, New School rappers embraced this appropriation in pursuit of popularity and commercial success.<sup>3</sup> Simultaneous with the rise of the New School in the 1990s came the shift to rapping in German, a move that von Dirke explains stemmed not only from the limited English proficiency of some German rappers but also

from an increase in national pride after unification.<sup>4</sup> Timothy Brown offers a somewhat different perspective on the linguistic turn in German rap, stating that the use of English made German rap “too derivative” and lacked appeal for a broader German audience.<sup>5</sup>

The shift to rap in German also resulted in a reevaluation of what constituted German rap. “Deutsch-Rap” became the marketing term for rap in German, while the term “Oriental Hip-Hop” was coined to designate multi-ethnic rap produced in Germany in other languages, most frequently Turkish.<sup>6</sup> Von Dirke describes “oriental rap” as the third strain of rap in Germany, which in its *Kanaksta*, Turkish-infused variant protests against both exclusionary social politics and conventional expectations for cultural integration. Although I will not address oriental rap in any detail here, its redefinition of ethnicity in relation to the majority culture is significant for the evolution of rap in Germany.

When the multi-ethnic crew Advanced Chemistry, formed in Heidelberg in 1987, released their album *Fremd im eigenen Land* (“Foreign in our own country”) in 1992 under the German hip-hop label MZEE, they were asserting their German identity as minorities in the wake of unification and the subsequent waves of nationalism and xenophobia exemplified in the attacks in Rostock, Hoyerswerda, and Solingen. The founding members of the group, Torch (Haitian-German), Toni L (Italian), and Linguist (Ghanaian-German) were all German citizens. They were influenced and inspired by Afro-American groups such as Public Enemy,<sup>7</sup> who did not shy away from frontal attacks on racism in politically critical texts that made no secret of their anger toward oppression and discrimination. Advanced Chemistry added a uniquely German element to that protest, drawing attention to the persistent association of Germanness with ethnicity and skin color despite reforms since 1999.<sup>8</sup>

Several members of Advanced Chemistry would later join the activist group Brothers Keepers, an alliance of predominantly Afro-German rappers founded by Adé Bantu in 2000 that has become one of the most important antiracism initiatives in Germany.<sup>9</sup> In 2001 Brothers Keepers produced an album entitled *Lightkultur* under the Downbeat/WEA label (Warner Music), with songs offering updated reflections on the state of Afro-Germanness and discrimination against minorities. While the album title clearly plays on the concept of *Leitkultur*, in reference to the debate about the role of the dominant culture in German immigration and integration policies, it can also be read as a clarion call for a different perception of German culture and identity, a new enlightenment based on inclusivity. The term “Light” in conjunction with *Kultur*, however, can also be understood as a designation for the nationalistic opponents of a *bunte Republik* where lightness becomes a signifier for whiteness. The polyvalence of the term is expressive of the complexity of the conscious rap genre, with its layering of social criticism, parody, and linguistic subversion. It also serves as a prism for the range of signification and the stakes involved in identity politics

in German rap culture.

By the early 1990s, styles of German rap music could be grouped into two broad categories: politically conscious rap and *Spaß-rap* (“fun rap”) or party rap, i.e. rap divorced from social critique. Advanced Chemistry belongs to the first category. *Die Fantastischen Vier* established in Stuttgart in the late 1980s by Michael Beck, Thomas Dürr, Andreas Rieke, and Michael Schmidt, belongs to the second. Timothy Brown has argued that Advanced Chemistry and *Die Fantastischen Vier* were antagonists on the German hip-hop scene, with the former representing the voice of minority issues and the latter catering to the popular tastes of the German middle class.<sup>10</sup> The *Fanta Vier* dominated the German rap market after the release of the group’s first album in 1991 under the Columbia label (Sony Music) and pushed minority rappers largely to the sidelines.<sup>11</sup> One exception is the all-female Afro-German pop-rap group Tic Tac Toe that enjoyed a brief period of fame from 1995–1997. Tic Tac Toe achieved a breakthrough by straddling both categories with songs like *Ugu Ugu—Wer hat Angst?* (“Ugu Ugu—Who’s afraid?”) and *Funky*. The group’s eponymous hit album was released under the RCA label in 1996 and reached number five in the German longplay pop charts, climbing to number three in 1997.<sup>12</sup>

Other minority rappers, who sought to express themselves through rap albeit not in the socially critical vein chosen by Advanced Chemistry or Brothers Keepers, honed their skills in underground battle rap sessions where they told tales of abuse, crime, and violence using the hyper-masculine rhetoric adapted from American gangsta rap. In her study on the performative nature of identity in hip-hop, Stefanie Menrath argues that the underground scene offered those with no space for self-expression an outlet for defining themselves in a social environment that showed little interest in their wellbeing.<sup>13</sup> Some of the rappers who began their careers communing with like-minded individuals in the underground music scene would eventually go mainstream, popularizing an indigenous variant of “gangsta rap.” Gangsta rap songs stemming from this milieu emphasized the rappers’ street credibility in texts describing tough neighborhoods, violence, misogyny, and the achievement of material wealth.

Although U.S. hip-hop culture and Afro-American rap music have been the object of scholarly studies since the 1990s, discussions and debates about German rap music in Germany have largely taken place in the media. Scholarship published on German hip-hop, such as the work of Stefanie Menrath, Gabriele Klein, and Malte Friedrich, has focused on the performative nature of the rapper persona (Menrath) and the intersections of the global and the local in German manifestations of rap (Klein/Friedrich). Other German publications include a study by Hannes Loh and Murat Güngör that weaves together observations from inside the German hip-hop scene with questions about rap’s potential for misappropriation by neo-Nazi groups. Loh also collaborated with Sascha

Verlan on two surveys of German hip-hop that foreground interviews with individuals connected to the rap scene. In addition, there are studies specifically devoted to Turkish rap.<sup>14</sup> While researchers have examined a diverse array of topics, including ethnicity, racism, and nationalism in German rap, as well as links between U.S. hip-hop traditions and their German appropriations,<sup>15</sup> there are no comparative analyses of conscious rap and gangsta rap as they relate to German identity as well as perceptions and self-perceptions of minorities. Also lacking in German Studies research is any sustained engagement with rap lyrics as they reflect the play with identity in both conscious and gangsta rap. The aim of this essay is to examine the impact of conscious and gangsta rap on perceptions of national identity and ethnicity by delving into how rappers construct their texts and examining their reception in the German media.

### **Authenticity, Minority Identity, and Integration in Rap**

Both conscious rap by Advanced Chemistry and Brothers Keepers and gangsta rap by Bushido, Fler, and B-Tight lay claim to a minority identity in a simultaneous assertion of belonging, otherness, and power. Although my analysis addresses a narrow sample of rap production in Germany, my conclusions have broader relevance for the study of identity politics and youth culture in the German context. One of the keys to rap's success historically has been the marketing of minority identities as "authentic." Since authenticity in rap is simultaneously a construct and a requirement for being taken seriously, it often boils down to an ability to tell a convincing story. Whether that story is considered credible depends both on the rapper's persona and on the preconceptions of the audience. By cultivating and critiquing stereotypical images, both conscious rap and gangsta rap ensure that those images continue to dominate public consciousness. Gabriele Klein and Malte Friedrich have argued that ethnicity is a category of the collective imaginary that must always be reconfirmed in practice.<sup>16</sup> In effect, conscious rap and gangsta rap reaffirm ethnic and minority images that impact social life in Germany and elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

In the title song to *Fremd im eigenen Land*, Advanced Chemistry sharply criticizes the duplicity of integration in Germany, where minority citizens are perceived as threatening outsiders:

All das Gerede vom europäischen Zusammenschluss  
fahr' ich zur Grenze mit dem Zug oder einem Bus  
frag' ich mich warum ich der Einzige bin, der sich ausweisen muss,  
Identität beweisen muss!

(All this talk about European community,  
if I drive to the border with the train or the bus,  
I ask myself why I'm the only one who has to show a passport,  
provide proof of identity!)

“Nicht anerkannt, fremd im eignen Land, / kein Ausländer und doch ein Fremder” (“Not recognized, foreign in my own country, not from another place but still a foreigner”). A year after the attacks in Hoyerswerda, the group alluded to the restrictive changes to Germany’s asylum law (which had previously been among the most generous in Europe), accusing politicians of harnessing anti-foreigner sentiment for political gain:

Klar, Asylbewerber müssen raus, und keiner macht den Faschos den Garaus!  
Dies ist nicht meine Welt, in der nur die Hautfarbe und Herkunft zählt,  
der Wahn von Überfremdung politischen Wert erhält,  
mit Ignoranz jeder Hans oder Franz sein Urteil fällt

(Sure, asylum seekers have to get out, and no one gets rid of the fascists!  
This isn’t my world, where only skin color and heritage count,  
where the fear of foreign infiltration has political value,  
and every Tom, Dick, and Harry makes judgments based on ignorance)

The government’s ongoing refusal in the early 1990s to acknowledge that Germany was a land of immigration, combined with the populist strategy of catering to xenophobic tendencies by arguing that violence against foreigners was a kind of natural outcome of *Überfremdung*, did nothing to improve the situation. Subsequent revisions to Germany’s immigration and naturalization laws have met with mixed results. Although Ayhan Kaya argues in a recent study that Turks in Germany are better integrated than they were before the immigration reform, he also admits that fewer Turks are applying for German citizenship.<sup>18</sup> Ray Taras, in his book on transnationalism, belonging, and xenophobia in Europe, maintains that German attitudes towards foreigners have hardened since the eastward expansion of the European Union in 2004 and that Germans are less likely to hold inclusive views on immigrants than they were in 1980.<sup>19</sup>

Regardless of how foreigners may be perceived in the political sphere, minority status is an asset in hip-hop culture with its roots in the Afro-American ghetto and its emphasis on triumphing over adversity. Belonging to the minority is at once a mark of authenticity and authority. While immigrant rappers are seen to bring their authenticity (and thus credible authority) with them merely by virtue of their origins, German-German rappers are perceived to lack the necessary background.<sup>20</sup> This was not a problem for a group like the *Fanta Vier*, whose texts focused primarily on white, middle class experiences and concerns. It was an issue for those German-German rappers trying to make it in the gangsta rap scene. For both immigrant rappers and those who stemmed from the majority culture, however, the adoption of a gangsta persona was simultaneous with the assumption of a constructed “ethnicity” that played on negative stereotypes.

The independent (indie) label<sup>21</sup> that first recognized the market potential for German gangsta rap was Aggro Berlin, established in Kreuzberg in 2001 and masterfully directed by Eric Remberg (Specter), Jens Ihlenfeldt (Spaiche), and Halil Efe.<sup>22</sup> Specter specialized in provocation and in the careful tailoring of gangsta images for each Aggro artist.<sup>23</sup> Gold and platinum rapper Bushido, for example, began his lucrative career in the guise of an Arab-German rapper with a predilection for comparing himself to a terrorist and an enemy of the state. B-Tight was promoted as an Afro-German who unabashedly referred to himself as the *Neger* (“Negro/nigger”) rapping about his sexual prowess and drug use. Fler became the symbol of white German nationalism with the release of *Neue Deutsche Welle* (“New German Wave”) in 2005, followed by debates in the German press about his possible affinity with neo-Nazism.

By the early twenty-first-century gangsta rap had become the dominant form of contemporary mainstream rap in Germany and Aggro Berlin was in competition with other labels, large and small, for a growing market.<sup>24</sup> Aggro’s formula of borrowing from the American gangsta model by appealing to the “ghetto” origins and criminal backgrounds of its rappers was very successful, even as it promoted a diverse array of MCs (MC derives from Master of Ceremonies and is another term for rapper). The common denominator was the use of violent, misogynist, and racist lyrics, where the escalation of provocation and shock value correlated with album sales.<sup>25</sup> It was a formula that the bigger labels wanted to cash in on as well. Initially an Aggro star, Bushido left for Universal in 2004, enticed away by the promise of a larger public and bigger dividends. In 2008, he changed companies again to link up with the formidable marketing power of Sony/BMG.

### Provocation and Posturing in “Minority” Gangsta Rap

Bushido, whose real name is Anis Mohammed Youssef Ferchichi, is of Tunisian-German descent and is arguably the most successful German gangsta rapper to date. Since 2001 he has produced 11 studio albums and three live albums. Five of his albums have achieved gold or platinum status.<sup>26</sup> Bushido enjoys great popularity among the teenage public, in part because of the attention he receives from the German media, which long regarded him as the specter of gangsta rap’s threat to German youth and German values. At least three of his albums have been placed on the index of media deemed dangerous to German youth (*Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien*), but Bushido remained loyal to the Aggro philosophy that the index is actually good for business.<sup>27</sup> With song titles such as *Endgegner* (“Ultimate opponent”), *Staatsfeind Nr. 1* (“Enemy of the State”), and *Gang Bang*, Bushido aims to offend almost every constituency, yet he is frequently featured in teen magazines such as *Bravo*, has opened his own King Bushido shop in Berlin offering signature clothing and accessories, and has sold hundreds of thousands of albums. The extent to which he is willing

to go to provoke the public is evident in his song *11. September*<sup>28</sup>:

Meine Feinde euer Blut läuft ich spür's,  
vielleicht werd' ich dieses Jahr ein Flugzeug entführen,  
Kontert wie ihr wollt, ich bekomme noch mal Gold,  
ich hab Chemowaffen bei und komme durch den Zoll.  
Scheiß auf Hengst, scheiß auf Fler seine Diss-Tracks,  
ihr fetten Schweine ich hab eure Airline gekidnappt [...]  
Der 11. September, der Tag der Entscheidung,  
Ich bin dieser Junge über den man las in der Zeitung,  
wenn ich will seid ihr alle tot,  
Ich bin ein Taliban, ihr Mißgeburten habt nur Kugeln aus Marzipan.

(My enemies I feel your blood flowing,  
maybe I'll hijack a plane this year,  
just try to counter my attack, I'll get gold again,  
I have chemical weapons and get through customs.  
Shit on Hengst, shit on Fler and his diss tracks,  
you fat pigs I've kidnapped your airline [...]  
The 11th of September, the day of reckoning,  
I'm the guy you read about in the paper,  
if I want, you'll all be dead,  
I'm a Taliban, you freaks only have bullets made of marzipan).<sup>29</sup>

Assertions of superior masculinity and power are the quintessence of battle rap. Bushido weaves together a diss (put-down) of other rappers with his self-stylization as a world-class terrorist. The song shamelessly exploits the attack on the World Trade Center as the backdrop for Bushido's claim of being the king of the 'hood, combining his appropriated Japanese moniker (Bushido means "way of the warrior" in Japanese) with his Muslim origins: "Ich bin King Bushido, zweiter Name Mohammed" ("I'm King Bushido, middle name Mohammed"). While the conflation of terrorist and Muslim references is inflammatory particularly in a country with a large population of Muslim Turks, the reference to "Kugeln aus Marzipan" can be read as a diss on soft Germanness.

Fler, whose beef (feud) with Bushido lasted for five years and ended with the demise of Aggro Berlin in April 2009,<sup>30</sup> takes on the accusation of German weakness in a series of tracks on his own *Fremd im eigenen Land* album, released in 2008. Emulating the minority assertions of pride and identity evident in Advanced Chemistry's 1992 album, Fler asserts his minority status while proclaiming his superior Germanness. His redefinition of German identity as a minority identity in nationalist terms could be read as a slap in the face to minority rappers with legitimate complaints about their lack of recognition as equal citizens in German society. Fler's gangsta persona reflects the marketing



of stereotypes for profit as practiced by Aggro and other gangsta rap producers. The purpose is not to promote a critical assessment of the effects of racial stereotypes or blood and soil nationalism but to capitalize on those stereotypes and the perceptions that accompany them.

Gangsta rappers such as Bushido and Fler and the record label Aggro Berlin appropriate a superficial understanding of diversity to defend their productions. In the case of Bushido, the defense rests on his immigrant origins as a Tunisian-German. For Fler, it is his acquaintance and friendship with ethnic minorities. Aggro fends off criticisms of negative stereotyping by pointing to its multi-ethnic line-up of artists. What these assertions of ethnic origins and affinities reveal is the constructed nature of identity in gangsta rap, where the appeal to a “symbolic ethnicity” or “defensive ethnicity” justifies the appropriation of negative stereotypes and ghetto clichés.<sup>31</sup> This position is echoed but not developed by Philipp Oehmke in his *Spiegel* article on German ghetto culture, where he contends that the world of gangsta rap is a reflection of unsuccessful integration.<sup>32</sup> Oehmke sees the predominance of rappers from migrant backgrounds as evidence of this, but the appearance of German-German rappers such as Fler and Sido on the gangsta stage has complicated that position. Furthermore, researchers such as Ayhan Kaya have argued that in the case of the Turkish minority in Germany, integration is far more successful than is generally believed.<sup>33</sup> It is also not unreasonable to suggest that the push for a German *Leitkultur* is just the latest version of conformist authority that demands a counter-cultural response, not only from minorities but also from those ostensibly within its own ranks.

The emphasis on minority status as an identifying mark in hip-hop has generated some interesting twists in self-conceptualization for German rappers who by virtue of their appearance and place of birth belong to the majority, as Fler’s example illustrates. While groups such as Brothers Keepers offer visible evidence of their ethnic origins that adds credibility and force to their anti-fascist, anti-racist message, majority rappers like Fler have more work to do to convince their audiences of their authenticity as underdogs battling their way out of the ghetto. In an article entitled “Deutschland, du Opfer!” (“Germany, you victim!”), journalist Sascha Lehnartz discusses the phenomenon of *Deutschenfeindlichkeit* (“animosity toward Germans”) and *Inländerfeindlichkeit* (“animosity toward insiders”). Lehnartz notes a growing number of crimes committed by juveniles of immigrant background against “Germans” and discusses how “victim” has become a pejorative term, particularly in the rhetoric of German gangsta rap and in the vernacular of the schoolyard.<sup>34</sup> Lehnartz’s article exemplifies the “moral panic” Werner Schiffauer has observed in debates about immigration and citizenship in Germany. For Schiffauer, this “moral panic” reflects the fears of the majority culture that German-Germans are becoming minorities in their own country. Schiffauer notes that this sense of panic intensified in

the aftermath of 9/11 and is particularly acute toward Muslim identities, an element that Bushido manipulates in his self-stylization as a Muslim terrorist in *11. September*.<sup>35</sup>

In German gangsta rap, the appropriation of a minority identity occurs simultaneously with the vehement rejection of victim status. While the position of victim is repugnant—*Opfer* recurs frequently as an insult in rap lyrics—growing up in an urban underclass district is practically a requirement for being seen as “authentic.” Rising above the ghetto implies both strength in overcoming adversity and a minority position that is equated with power. This combination of power and marginalization is evident in the following excerpt from Fler’s controversial hit song *Neue Deutsche Welle* (“New German Wave”) of 2005<sup>36</sup>:

Komm nach Berlin und du siehst wie die Leute hier boxen.  
Das ist normal, das hier ist Multi-Kulti, meine Homies kommen von überall

Ihr holt die Bullen, wir sind die Außenseiter, wir sind Aggro-Berlin  
Schwarz, Weiß—egal, jeder ist hier Aggro in Berlin....

(Come to Berlin and you’ll see how the people here fight.  
That’s normal, this here is multi-culti, my homies come from everywhere,  
you call the police, we’re the outsiders, we’re Aggro in Berlin,  
black, white—it doesn’t matter, everyone here is Aggro in Berlin....)

Here Fler allies himself with the minorities of a multi-culti subculture, underscoring their categorization as social outcasts and their link to the Aggro label. While Aggro in the song text figures as the community for a diverse group of social rebels, Fler offers an authenticating narrative for his outsider status as a *Heimkind* in Kreuzberg in an interview after the release of *Neue Deutsche Welle*:

Wenn du in einem Milieu aufwächst, wo du nur Ausländer um dich drumrum hast, dann ist das ein Thema, dass du dich da behaupten musst. [...] Wenn du in Kreuzberg zur Schule gehst, da sind die Türken und die Araber die Coolen. Als Deutscher kriegst du da Probleme. Und entweder du zeigst den Leuten, dass du dich behaupten kannst, oder du hast ein Problem.

(When you grow up in an environment where you only have foreigners around you, then it’s an issue that you have to assert yourself [...] If you go to school in Kreuzberg, there the Turks and Arabs are the cool guys. As a German, you’ll have problems. And either you show the people that you can hold your own, or you’ll have a problem.)<sup>37</sup>

In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Bushido provided an explanation similar to Fler's own for his German-German emphasis but belittled alarmists who regarded the song as evidence of a resurgence of German nationalism<sup>38</sup>:

Fler musste das selbst machen, aus Notwehr. All seine Freunde sind verdammt stolz darauf, dass sie Araber oder Türken sind. Da hat sich Fler halt als stolzer Deutscher hingestellt. Jetzt schreien alle, die Aggro-Rapper mobilisieren das nationale Denken.

(Fler had to do that out of self-defense. All of his friends are damn proud that they are Arabs or Türks. So Fler presented himself as a proud German. Now everyone is screaming that Aggro rappers are mobilizing nationalist thinking.)<sup>39</sup>

The move to integrate German nationalism into the vocabulary of rap goes hand in hand with the perception that Germanness itself is under siege as the object of *Inländerfeindlichkeit* and prejudice. To imbue his German identity with a minority flavor, Fler chose to adopt a particular strategy of revaluation: the reconfiguration of derogatory terms as terms of assertive self-affirmation, as in the transformation of “nigger” into “nigga” in black American culture. The term “nigga” and the device of substituting an “a” for an “er” ending has also been appropriated by German hip-hop. Tic Tac Toe's 1996 hit album included the song *Ruhrpottniggaz* with the refrain: “Ruhrpottniggaz, wir sind die Besten ... // Ruhrpottniggaz, wir sind die Ersten...” (“Ruhr niggas, we're the best ... Ruhr mggas, we're the first ...”). Fler adopts this model in his use of *Deutscha* in songs such as *Ich bin Deutscha* and *Deutscha Bad Boy*, both of which are tracks on *Fremd im eigenen Land*.

Fler's *Ich bin Deutscha* illustrates the complexity of appealing to a minority identity in the posture of nationalism. Even as Fler lays claim to his Germanness, he is dependent upon the migrant population to affirm it:

Ich bin Deutscha, du hast keine Identität,  
du bist ein niemand okay Junge, ich zeig dir wie es geht.  
Ich bin Deutscha, auch wenn es niemand versteht,  
ich bin stolz auf was ich bin, denn ich hab Identität.  
Ich bin Deutscha, ich bin Berliner hoch zehn  
und meine Ausländerjungs sagen ich hab Identität

(I'm Germa', you don't have an identity,  
you are no one okay boy, I'll show you how it's done.  
I'm Germa', even if no one understands it,  
I'm proud of what I am, because I have identity.  
I'm Germa', I'm a Berliner to the tenth degree  
and my foreigner boys say that I have identity)

Taking a cue from Bushido's terrorist pose in *11. September*, Fler also appropriates a Germanic version of that role for himself in his claim: "ich bin der neue Osama, der deutsche Osama" ("I'm the new Osama, the German Osama"). In both instances, the reference to the foreign other is intended to strengthen the fearsome image of the German, yet the dependence on the relationship to the foreigner only serves to undermine the assertion of supremacy.

In *Deutsche Bad Boy*, Fler leaves the native-foreign dynamic behind and pushes all of the buttons that the arbiters of German culture and self-image seem guaranteed to react to with lyrics that manipulate neo-Nazi associations:

Ich bin deutsch, bin drauf stolz, Leute sagen, Fler ist proll,  
 Leute sagen, ich bin Nazi, mir egal, sagt, was ihr wollt,  
 Hauptsache der Rubel rollt, ich im Benz und du im Golf,  
 Adler auf der Motorhaube, Ledersitze, Schwarz Rot Gold  
 (I'm German and proud of it, people say, Fler is low class,  
 people say, I'm a Nazi, I don't care, you can say what you want,  
 the main thing is that the money rolls in, I'm in a Benz and you're in a Golf,  
 an eagle on the hood, leather seats, black red gold)

As Fler cynically notes, he is unperturbed by any neo-Nazi associations as long as the "rubel rolls." This is part of Aggro's marketing strategy: if raising the specter of German nationalism qua National Socialism sells albums, then it is a savvy business move. The label and the rappers themselves can further appeal to the conflation of rap with performance to deny that any racist, nationalist or misogynist implications in the lyrics should be taken seriously.

The cynical manipulation of rap as performance is perhaps best expressed in the track *Fler vs. Frank White*, where Fler faces off against his alter ego Frank White, another moniker he has used as an MC. In this staged battle, complete with a bell sound similar to that used in boxing matches, Frank White represents the "underground" and Fler the "mainstream" of German rap, with Fler playing on his neo-Nazi image in the media but also on the superficial arguments that his own label used to cast aside criticisms. In the first round, Frank White taunts Fler with the words: "Jeder weiß, dass du ein Nazi bist. Man guck dich an, du bist ne fette Kartoffel" ("Everyone knows that you're a Nazi. Man, look at yourself, you're a fat potato"). Fler's response is: "Du sagst ich bin Nazi, guck mein Bodyguard ist Araber" ("You say I'm a Nazi, look my bodyguard is an Arab"). In the parlance of ethnic minority youth, *Kartoffel* is a pejorative term for a German. Frank White assumes that vocabulary to align himself with the underground and its minority affiliation. Fler's parry with his Arab bodyguard is an equally superficial move of claiming credit by association. Such lip service to diversity reduces issues of integration and cultural conflict to accessorized ethnicity and stereotypes. The question is what politically conscious rap does to encourage dialogue and inclusivity.

### Conscious Rap's Campaign against Racism: Brothers Keepers

After the brutal murder of Alberto Adriano by three drunken skinheads in Dessau in June 2000, Brothers Keepers came together and produced *Adriano (Letzte Warnung)* ("Adriano—final warning"), which quickly climbed to the top 10 of the German charts where it remained for six weeks in the summer of 2001.<sup>40</sup> The song called for solidarity with Afro-Germans and resistance against neo-Nazis:

Dies ist so was wie eine letzte Warnung  
 Denn unser Rückschlag ist längst in Planung  
 Wir fall'n dort ein, wo ihr auffällt,  
 Gebieten eurer braunen Scheiße endlich Aufhalt  
 Denn was ihr sucht ist das Ende  
 Und was wir reichen sind geballte Fäuste und keine Hände  
 Euer Niedergang für immer. Und was wir hören werden, ist euer Weinen  
 und euer Gewimmer

(This is like a final warning  
 because our revenge is already planned  
 we'll attack where you appear,  
 and finally put a halt to your brown shit  
 because what you're seeking is the end  
 and what we're offering are balled fists and not hands  
 your demise for ever. And what we'll hear is your crying and whimpering)

The music video for the song combines solo shots of the individual black Brothers rapping their texts with clips of neo-Nazis pursuing a black man. The video concludes with a street scene showing the assembled Brothers in a homogeneous show of force and defiance against the now invisible skinhead menace.<sup>41</sup> In their study of German hip-hop, Murat Güngör and Hannes Loh note that the success of *Adriano* on the charts was viewed by some as the result of a calculated move to capitalize on a topic that was guaranteed to sell, while elsewhere in the German hip-hop scene others questioned whether Brothers Keepers was fomenting racism.<sup>42</sup> This charge of racism was echoed in criticism from other minority groups, who accused Brothers Keepers of practicing a politics of exclusion by focusing solely on oppression and violence toward blacks.<sup>43</sup> In the song text itself, some passages appropriate the coarse and violent rhetoric of gangsta rap mixed with allusions to concentration camps to specifically target former East Germany: "Ich hoff' der Track hier ist'n Dildo, der die Zone fickt / Ich will nicht mehr erzählen zum nationalen Befreien / Ich sage K, sage Z, sage Nazis rein" ("I hope that this track is a dildo that fucks the eastern zone / I don't want to talk about national liberation / I say K, say Z [KZ = concentration camp], say in with the Nazis"). Anger and self-righteousness veer into visions of

vigilante justice, and the blanket assertion of racism as indigenous to the eastern German states would seem to hinder the kind of outreach and understanding that Brothers Keepers has aimed for in its antiracism initiatives.<sup>44</sup> It also perpetuates a stereotype held by many West Germans that xenophobia and racism are largely an East German phenomenon, something that is not borne out by surveys of public perceptions such as the 2008 study conducted by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Ein Blick in die Mitte* (“A look at the middle”), which revealed aggressive attitudes toward foreigners as well as widespread antisemitic and anti-Muslim sentiment in all parts of Germany.<sup>45</sup>

In 2005 Brothers Keepers produced *Bereit* (“Ready”), a song showcasing unity across groups and cultures, denouncing neo-Nazism, and offering a new definition of German identity: “Wenn wirklich jeder Brothers Keeper ist, sind wir die Mehrheit. Aus ist es mit der Reinheit. Für Nazis gibt es mein Beileid. Schwarze, Weiße und Kanaken sind die neue deutsche Einheit!” (“If everyone really is their brothers’ keeper, then we’re the majority. Out with purity. My condolences to the Nazis. Blacks, Whites, and Kanaks<sup>46</sup> [Turks] are the new German unity!”). In the music video, a predominantly black, almost exclusively male group assembles and marches forward to confront a group of exclusively white skinheads who are protected by police in riot gear.<sup>47</sup> These images contradict the diversity alluded to in the text, although a few token “others” appear among the Afro-German and Afropean protesters.<sup>48</sup> The video ends with the image of a newspaper clipping featuring a photo of Adriano and the words *Prinzip Hoffnung* (“principle of hope”). Although the imagery continues to foreground the righteous defiance of the Afro-German minority, the message is more inclusive than *Adriano*. The text expounds a conception of identity and belonging grounded in the acceptance of heterogeneity that can only follow after current discriminatory practices are acknowledged and overcome.

In 2007 Brothers Keepers embarked on a campaign to protest against racism and sexism in German rap, publicly denouncing the Aggro label and its MC B-Tight in particular. B-Tight, whose real name is Robert Edward Davis, was born in California to an Afro-American father and an ethnic German mother. His debut album *Neger Neger* reached number six on the German charts in 2007.<sup>49</sup> The album cover portrays a light-skinned man in black face with the bloody severed head of a white man in one hand and a knife in the other held to his own blackened neck. In his own explanation of the album cover, B-Tight has claimed it represents the white and black sides of his identity where the black has destroyed the white: “Der Neger hat dann dem Weißen den Kopf abgeschlagen und kommt jetzt raus. Ich habe die weiße Seite in mir zerstört, und so haben wir die Offenbarung von dem Neger in mir” (“The nigger cut off the white’s head and is now coming out. I destroyed the white side of myself, and thus we see the revelation of the nigger in me.”)<sup>50</sup> In the title song, B-Tight plays on stereotypes of the black male as a drug-addicted sexual predator:

Wer ist wieder da und wieder mal überragend,  
 wer raucht immer noch dein Gras weg?  
 Der Neger Neger,  
 Wer rammt immer noch sein Penis in dein Loch,  
 sag mir wer ist immer straff?  
 Der Neger Neger!

(Who is back and once again dominant,  
 Who is still smoking all your grass?  
 The nigger nigger,  
 Who still shoves his penis in your hole,  
 Tell me who is always horny?  
 The nigger nigger!)<sup>51</sup>

One could argue that the text and its performance are a blend of parody and self-hatred that could be intended as humor or even perhaps, with a generous ear, as some form of social criticism. Yet the fact that B-Tight also enjoys celebrating his image as a sexually potent recreational drug user in the persona of Bobby Dick, another of his aliases that transforms his male member into a pseudo-patronymic, seems to undermine any implied or imposed social critique.

In interviews with the media, B-Tight comes across as fully conscious of the racist stereotypes he is promoting even as he revels in their shock effect: “Das Wort Neger entertained mich ... ganz besonders, weil ich immer Leute sehe, wie sie darauf reagieren, wenn das Wort fällt—das ist wie eine Bombe, die man schmeißt” (“The word nigger entertains me ... especially because I always see how people react when the word is used—it’s like a bomb that you throw”).<sup>52</sup> For B-Tight as for Bushido, the fact that they have scores of white German fans is sufficient evidence for them to dismiss concerns about diversity and multiculturalism as passé, or to use Bushido’s formulation: “Ich mach’ doch nicht Musik, um Multikulti-Brei zu fördern. Mir ist das egal” (“I’m not making music to support multi-culti mash. I don’t care about that.”)<sup>53</sup> For Brothers Keepers, the racist and misogynist images that B-Tight and Bushido promote represent concessions to those consumers who find enjoyment in having their prejudices confirmed or pleasure in flirting with taboo subjects in defiance of what is considered politically correct.

Brothers Keepers vehemently disagreed with criticisms they received from B-Tight fans in response to their petition against Aggro and B-Tight’s *Neger Neger* album, namely that the n-word is ubiquitous in American rap and that B-Tight’s appropriation renders the term affirmative and positive.<sup>54</sup> The song’s celebration of clichéd images of black male sexual potency and drug use hardly represent a positive revaluation of the term, even if one accords the exaggerated posturing in the song with a parodic intent. In their protest against racism and sexism in hip-hop, Brothers Keepers have denounced the commercialization

of prejudice as irresponsible and called upon Aggro Berlin to stop distributing B-Tight's album.<sup>55</sup> B-Tight responded by referring to Brothers Keepers as hypocrites, while Aggro resorted to its typical defense, highlighting its multi-ethnic line-up of artists and its support for artistic freedom.<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to B-Tight, Brothers Keepers have called for a refutation of clichéd representations of blackness, not only in their petition against Aggro, but also through ironic acclamations of *Positiv Rassismus* ("positive racism") as articulated in the song *Afrodeutsch* (2001) by Tyron Ricketts. In the song, Ricketts refers to his childhood experiences as a *Negerjunge* ("Negro boy") and the prejudice he encountered for most of his life. The solution he offers to his plight bears strong resemblance to the stereotypes that B-Tight enacts in *Neger Neger*. In flat staccato tones, Ricketts raps about his conversion to *Positiv Rassismus*:

Rassismus hin und her, tangiert mich lediglich noch peripher  
daher wird's einfacher—wow—flow mit dem Verkehr  
meine Hände nicht mehr leer [...]  
mime den Drogendealer, spiele den Basketball und Fußballspieler  
Liebling vieler—Angstauslöser auch von vielen  
die nicht vernünftig zielen, weil sie mir beim pinkeln auf den Pimmel schielen  
Angst vorm Negroiden—schafft den Platz im Zugabteil  
Der Positiv Rassismusmeister nutzt Klischees zu seinem Vorteil...

(Racism here or there, that only touches me peripherally  
for that reason it gets easier—wow—go with the flow,  
my hands are no longer empty [...]  
mimic the drug dealer, play the basketball and football player,  
the favorite of many—also the bogeyman for many  
who can't aim correctly, because they're squinting at my dick when I take a  
leak. Fear of the Negro—that gets you a seat in the passenger train car,  
the master of positive racism uses clichés to his advantage ...).

Even as this song sets out to deconstruct stereotypes and gangsta clichés, the irony may be lost on the listener in the same way that B-Tight's self-serving self-parody can be taken seriously. Both MCs use the rap medium to question and caricature perceptions of identity, yet the employment of stereotypical imagery, whatever the intention, may not be the best vehicle for changing public attitudes.

### Influences on Youth Culture

In *Fear of a Kanak Planet*, Güngör and Loh argue that the adoption of derogatory ethnic stereotypes and Nazi metaphors by MCs of all backgrounds has a negative effect on youth culture by making racist clichés acceptable.<sup>57</sup> While data on the demographics of German rap fans is not readily available, visual



inspection of live concert videos from 2008–2010 puts the majority of the audience in the 15- to 25-year-old age range.<sup>58</sup> Audiences for gangsta rappers such as Bushido and Fler are mostly white and mixed in gender, with considerable numbers of squealing female tween and teen fans. The concern expressed by Güngör and Loh and in the German media was that the popularity of gangsta rap would contribute to an erosion of civic consciousness by promoting the use of violent rhetoric and racist stereotypes attractive to neo-Nazi groups.<sup>59</sup> In order to counter negative stereotyping in rap and its possible effects on youth, Brothers Keepers and regional initiatives such as those sponsored by *Schule ohne Rassismus* (School without Racism) and *Mut gegen rechte Gewalt* (Courage against Right-Wing Violence) started community outreach projects at youth centers and schools. These projects utilize rap's appeal to encourage dialogue, raise awareness, and promote cross-cultural understanding among youth of all backgrounds.

In 2002, several members of Brothers Keepers embarked on a school tour of cities and towns in eastern Germany as a follow-up to the message expressed in *Adriano*. Their intention was not to show balled fists, but rather to gain an understanding of the social context in those regions and try to establish a conversation about combating racism and strengthening civic courage.<sup>60</sup> They gained access to a variety of schools and also communicated with local initiatives against right-wing extremism and xenophobia. Individual members of Brothers Keepers have since started their own outreach projects including rap lyric competitions against racism and discrimination.<sup>61</sup>

In 2007 Samy Deluxe founded Crossover e.V. together with Marvin Willoughby, a former player for the German national basketball team, and Julia von Dohnanyi. As explained on the Crossover website, the goal of the program is to bring together young people from diverse backgrounds in the Hamburg metro area through group projects that combine music and sport to teach about integration and effective social communication.<sup>62</sup> Samy Deluxe has enjoyed a successful solo career, producing eight albums since 2001. His 2009 album, *Dis wo ich herkomm* ("Dis where I come from"), rose to number three on the German longplay charts in April 2009.<sup>63</sup> In the album's title song, Deluxe reflects on his complicated relationship to Germany and the need to establish a collaborative sense of identity and belonging:

Dies hier ist unser Deutschland; Dies hier ist euer Deutschland  
 Dies ist das Land wo wir leben; Dies ist das neue Deutschland.  
 Dis wo ich her komm; Dis is' wo ich her komm.  
 Dis wo ich her komm; Dis is' wo ich her komm

(This here is our Germany; this here is your Germany  
 this is the land where we live; this is the new Germany)

Diss where I come from; dis is where I come from  
 Diss where I come from; dis is where I come from)<sup>64</sup>

Deluxe uses the vocabulary of rap to create a word play on “dis” signifying both an affront (“diss”) and a location (“this”), combining a critique of his country with an affirmation of his place in it. In the same song, Deluxe alludes to his youth initiative and his high expectations for what it can accomplish: “ich werd’ beweisen, dass ich mehr für Deutschland mach’ als der Staat / Mit meinen Partnern, denn wir geben Kids Perspektive / bisschen Aufmerksamkeit und eine bisschen mehr Liebe” (I’ll prove that I do more for Germany than the state / with my partners, because we give kids perspective, / a little attention and a little more love”). In June 2009 Crossover sponsored *Dis wo ich herkomm—die Deutschlandreise*, a bus tour for the five winners, two female and three male, of a video contest on how young people relate to Germany. The winners were of varied ethnic backgrounds and came from different regions across Germany. Samy Deluxe served as the travel guide for the tour, conveying the message that everyone should learn about the many facets of the country, both in order to pass judgment on it and to make it a better place. The two-week trip was filmed by ZDF and broadcast in five segments in October 2009.<sup>65</sup>

Federal and state sponsored initiatives such as the *Schule gegen Rassismus* project have also incorporated rap to reach out to youth and provide an outlet for both frustrations and social interaction. *Schule gegen Rassismus* launched its first rap contest for young people in 2006, specifying strict criteria that young rappers had to meet in order to qualify: no discriminatory language or imagery allowed. What emerged in the lyrics penned by the winners of the 2007 competition was a clear rejection of the gangsta rapper image.<sup>66</sup> Like the outreach projects launched by Brothers Keepers, these initiatives seek to harness rap’s appeal to a broad cross-section of youth in order to effect a change in perceptions while countering neo-Nazi and xenophobic tendencies.<sup>67</sup>

### Pushing the Margins, Redefining the Center

From today’s perspective in 2010, Samy Deluxe and Bushido—because of their popularity and public stature—perhaps best embody the transformations of what began as Deutsch-Rap in its conscious and gangsta variants. Both rappers initially utilized their minority backgrounds as the foundation for their criticism of and opposition to the majority culture. Both asserted their difference as a manifestation of minority power in the medium of rap and attracted thousands of fans. With the success of his *Dis wo ich herkomm* album, the spin-off Crossover contest and the ZDF mini-series that followed it, Samy Deluxe is actively reshaping how multi-ethnic youth in Germany view their position in society while confronting the majority culture with a new definition of Germanness and belonging. Bushido, once feared as *Staatsfeind Nr. 1*, has become

a regular on the German talk show circuit, appearing multiple times on the *Johannes Kerner Show* and *3nach9*, arguing that the violent and discriminatory language in his songs should not be taken literally.<sup>68</sup> *Spiegel TV* ran a segment in February 2010 documenting Bushido's morning as a substitute teacher for a 10th-grade class in a Berlin school, attesting to his reformed character and his desire to have a positive influence on German youth.<sup>69</sup>

Bushido's metamorphosis from gangsta to popstar, catalogued in his bestselling biography *BUSHIDO* (2008) and the 2010 film *Die Zeiten ändern dich* ("The Times Change You"), appears to have secured him a position as a motivational role model for young people of diverse backgrounds. In the end, Bushido's tribute to his ghetto origins may be both as superficial and permanent as his assortment of tattoos. In his shifting incarnations as Bushido, Anis Ferchichi has made a fortune constructing and marketing his gangsta-pop image by simultaneously asserting and undermining its authenticity. While the wedding of gangsta and pop has caused rap aficionados to dismiss Bushido, it has brought him fully into the mainstream.<sup>70</sup>

The demise of Aggro Berlin in April 2009, following the exit of Royal Bunker in 2008, indicates that hardcore gangsta rap in Germany has passed its peak. Although Deutsch-Rap still has its gangstas, the fears expressed in the German media and by Güngör and Loh have not materialized. Rap has instead become increasingly accepted as a form of performance and role-playing in popular culture, with a German TV personality like Oliver Pocher assuming a rap persona under the guidance of Bushido himself, broadcast by RTL on Pocher's show *Gefährliches Halbwissen* ("Dangerous Partial Knowledge").<sup>71</sup> While the mainstreaming of rap has smoothed the edges of both conscious and gangsta styles, there are still differences in focus and message. Brothers Keepers and Samy Deluxe want to transform German society from within. Fler, B-Tight, and Bushido are most invested in promoting themselves. Both of these motivations resonate with the idealism and self-centeredness that characterize youth culture and explain the genre's continued appeal. The popularity that both Samy Deluxe and Bushido enjoy in Germany also signals a generational change in regard to German identity. Crowned by their commercial success, Deluxe and Bushido are recognized stars of the German pop-rap scene whose songs appeal to a broad socio-cultural sweep of young fans. Whether their texts celebrate unity in diversity or the mean streets of the ghetto, Deluxe and Bushido illustrate the redefinition of minority identity as German identity on the rap stage where *Leitkultur* has given way to the recognition of multiple voices.

All translations from German to English are by the author—kb.

<sup>1</sup> “Keeping it Real in a Different ‘Hood: (African)-Americanization and Hip Hop in Germany,” *The Vinyl Ain’t Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Culture*, ed. Dipannita Basu and Sidney Lemelle (London: Pluto, 2006), 140.

<sup>2</sup> Sabine von Dirke, “Hip-Hop Made in Germany: From Old School to the Kanaksta Movement,” *German Pop Culture: How “American” Is It?*, ed. Agnes C. Mueller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 97–99.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. von Dirke, 102.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Brown, 140.

<sup>6</sup> Von Dirke, 103. The highly successful Turkish-German rap crew *Cartel* is one example of Oriental hip-hop.

<sup>7</sup> Murat Güngör and Hannes Loh, *Fear of a Kanak Planet: HipHop zwischen Weltkultur und Nazi-Rap* (Höfen: Hannibal Verlag, 2002), 104ff.

<sup>8</sup> In 1999 the Red-Green coalition spearheaded changes to naturalization laws that incorporated a modified *tus soli* (place of birth) policy. Children born in Germany to legal immigrants who had resided in Germany for at least eight years qualified as German citizens, but had to decide whether to retain their German citizenship by age 23.

<sup>9</sup> See Daniel Bax, “Schluss mit lustig!,” *taz, die tageszeitung*, 7 July 2007: 18.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, 140–41.

<sup>11</sup> Güngör and Loh, *Fear of a Kanak Planet*, 301. See also Sascha Verlan and Hannes Loh, *25 Jahre HipHop in Deutschland* (Höfen: Hannibal Verlag, 2006), 217.

<sup>12</sup> Data available on [www.musicline.de](http://www.musicline.de), accessed 8 January 2010.

<sup>13</sup> *Represent what ... Performativität von Identitäten im HipHop* (Berlin: Argument Verlag, 2001), 113–15.

<sup>14</sup> See Ayhan Kaya, “Sicher in Kreuzberg” *Constructing Diasporas: Turkish Hip-Hop Youth in Berlin* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2001), for an assessment of Turkish hip-hop in Berlin. See also von Dirke and Brown for references to this category of rap in Germany.

<sup>15</sup> For a sampling of the range of scholarship on German hip-hop see: Andy Bennett, “Hip-hop am Main, Rappin’ on the Tyne: Hip-Hop Culture as a Local Construct in Two European Cities,” *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* (New York/London: Routledge, 2004), 177–200; Timothy S. Brown, “Keeping it Real in a Different ‘Hood: (African)-Americanization and Hip Hop in Germany,” *The Vinyl Ain’t Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Culture*, 137–50; Michael T. Putnam and John T. Littlejohn, “National Socialism with Fler? German Hip Hop from the Right,” *Popular Music and Society* 30.4 (October 2007): 453–68; Sabine von Dirke, “Hip-Hop Made in Germany: From Old School to the Kanaksta Movement,” *German Pop Culture: How “American” Is It?*, 96–112.

<sup>16</sup> *Is this real? Die Kultur des HipHop* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 70.

<sup>17</sup> “Nationwide surveys of Germany in 2008 by the US Pew Institute and Germany’s Friedrich Ebert Foundation revealed alarmingly high levels of general xenophobia, antisemitism and anti-Muslim attitudes throughout the country, and there has been serious racist violence in towns and cities in both east and west Germany.” Quoted in: <http://www.mut-gegen-rechte-gewalt.de/debatte/rechtsblog/xenophobia-in-dresden-the-murder-of-a-young-egyptian-women/>, accessed 30 July 2009.

<sup>18</sup> *Islam, Migration and Integration: The Age of Securitization* (London: Palgrave, 2009), 3, 49–50.

<sup>19</sup> *Europe Old and New: Transnationalism, Belonging, Xenophobia* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 135–36.

<sup>20</sup> Klein and Friedrich, *Is this real?* 74.

<sup>21</sup> An independent or “indie” label is a designation for record companies that are unaffiliated with major labels, such as Universal Music or Sony BMG. In practice, however, some indie labels do have collaborative agreements with major labels, so the distinction is sometimes blurred.

<sup>22</sup> Martin Wittmann, “Übelst tolerant,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 July 2007: 46.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Kage, “Weich gekocht,” *taz*, 23 April 2009: 13.

<sup>24</sup> Royal Bunker was another independent label for German gangsta rap until it closed up shop in 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Bushido had ten singles in the top 50 of the German charts between November 2004 and May 2010. Seven of Bushido’s albums have been in the top ten in the German music charts since 2004. Four of Fler’s albums, including *Neue Deutsche Welle*, were in the top ten from 2005 to 2009. Data available on [www.musicline.de](http://www.musicline.de).

<sup>26</sup> According to the German music industry database, Bushido had three gold records and one platinum record after he joined Universal and two gold records after he established his own label, *Ersguterjunge*, in 2007. See [http://www.musikindustrie.de/gold\\_platin\\_datenbank/](http://www.musikindustrie.de/gold_platin_datenbank/), accessed 25 May 2010.

<sup>27</sup> “Was die Bundesprüfstelle anbelangt—soll sie doch weiter indizieren, das belebt das Geschäft!” See Thomas Groß, “Avantgarde der Härte,” *Zeit Online* 34/2005: 35. [http://www.zeit.de/2005/34/B\\_9aser\\_Rap](http://www.zeit.de/2005/34/B_9aser_Rap).

<sup>28</sup> Ralph Geisenhanslüke and Thomas Groß, “Rap dich reich,” *Zeit Online* 41/2006: 17. <http://www.zeit.de/2006/41/HipHop2>, accessed 9 July 2010.

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.songtexte.tv/bushido/songtext/479794\\_11-september.htm](http://www.songtexte.tv/bushido/songtext/479794_11-september.htm), accessed 20 September 2008.

<sup>30</sup> “Bushido/Fler: Die neue Macht,” *Bravo HipHop Special* 6, 30 April 2009: 34–38.

<sup>31</sup> Brown, 145–46.

<sup>32</sup> “Poesie aus der Siedlung” *Der Spiegel*, 16. April 2007 (16/2007): 180.

<sup>33</sup> Kaya, *Islam, Migration and Integration*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> “Deutschland, du Opfer!” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 January 2008: 53.

<sup>35</sup> “Enemies within the gates. The debate about the citizenship of Muslims in Germany,” *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship: A European Approach*, ed. Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 111.

<sup>36</sup> *Neue deutsche Welle* peaked at number nine in the German single charts in 2005, while the eponymous album peaked at number five in the longplay charts. Data available on [www.musicline.de](http://www.musicline.de).

<sup>37</sup> Rapp, “Der Härteste im Kiez”: 16.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Putnam and John Littlejohn have argued for a more generous reading of the nationalist elements in Fler’s song as evidence of a “newly forming German national identity” in their article “National Socialism with Fler? German Hip Hop from the Right,” *Popular Music and Society*, 30.4 (2007): 465.

<sup>39</sup> “Harte Texte und die Härte der Nazis: Interview mit Bushido, Loh, Güngör,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 27. June 2005 <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/artikel/666/55611/print.html>, accessed 14 August 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Data available on [www.musicline.de](http://www.musicline.de)

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXawL-LFgi8>, accessed 20 September 2008.

<sup>42</sup> *Fear of a Kanak Planet*, 260–61.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel Bax, “Alle Rapper werden Brüder” *taz*, 26 May 2005: 17.

<sup>45</sup> Oliver Decker, Katharina Rothe et al., *Ein Blick in die Mitte: Zur Entstehung rechtsextremer und demokratischer Einstellungen* (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Forum Berlin: May 2008).

<sup>46</sup> *Kanake* is a pejorative term for Turkish guest workers that has been refigured by Turkish youth as a term of affirmation and pride.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wdBmuBCSpM&NR=1>, accessed 4 August 2009.

<sup>48</sup> The term “Afropäer” (Afropean) is one that Adé Bantu uses to describe himself. See Michael Pilz, “Was ist Afrodeutsch?” *Die Welt*, 15 February 2007. [http://www.welt.de/kultur/article715288/Was\\_ist\\_Afrodeutsch.html](http://www.welt.de/kultur/article715288/Was_ist_Afrodeutsch.html), accessed 2 February 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Data available on [www.musicline.de](http://www.musicline.de).

<sup>50</sup> Andreas Hartmann, “Wege der Integration; Der Kampf der Kulturen findet mitten in diesem Rapper statt: B-Tight, Hipopper aus Berlin, tötet seine weiße Seite und erklärt sich zum Neger,” *taz*, 15 May 2007: 16.

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.magistrix.de/lyrics/B-Tight/Neger-Neger-196270.html>, accessed 12 August 2009.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in [http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen\\_petition.php](http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen_petition.php), accessed 3 September 2008.

<sup>53</sup> “Harte Texte und Härte der Nazis.” In the text of his song, “Endgegner,” Bushido further underscores his distance from the conscious rap scene and its multicultural correctness with the line: “das hier ist nicht Brothers Keepers.”

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen\\_petition.php](http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen_petition.php): “In zahlreichen E-mails wird argumentiert, dass das N-Wort in den USA (vor allem im Rap) inzwischen Alltag und schon allein deswegen nicht mehr negativ besetzt sei. Vielmehr trage B-Tight mit seinem Album doch dazu bei, dass der Begriff auch in Deutschland neu/positiv besetzt und damit salonfähig werde—wir, Brothers Keepers, sollten uns freuen, anstatt gegen ihn zu wettern.” Accessed 3 September 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Bax, “Schluss mit lustig” and [http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen\\_petition.php](http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen_petition.php), accessed 3 September 2008.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.laut.de/B-Tight/Brothers-Keepers-sind-Heuchler/05-07-2007>, accessed 25 May 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Güngör and Loh, 315. For more on antisemitic rhetoric in German gangsta rap, see Jan Buschbom, “Antisemitische Tendenzen in der Musikart Rap,” *Antisemitismus: Gleichklang zwischen den Extremen*. Dokument der Fachtagung des brandenburgischen Verfassungsschutzes am 22. November 2007 in Potsdam: 31–39.

<sup>58</sup> Based on a survey of live concert videos on YouTube.

<sup>59</sup> In an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* from 27 June 2005, Bushido boasted about how one of his neo-Nazi fans asked him to autograph his shaved head after a concert. “Harte Texte und die Härte der Nazis.”

<sup>60</sup> [http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen\\_schultour.php](http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen_schultour.php), accessed 15 July 2009.

<sup>61</sup> [http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen\\_lyrikwettbewerb2007.php](http://www.brotherskeepers.org/aktionen_lyrikwettbewerb2007.php), accessed 15 July 2009.

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.crossover-ev.de/0.1\\_aktuell.php](http://www.crossover-ev.de/0.1_aktuell.php), accessed 24 July 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Data available on [www.musicline.de](http://www.musicline.de).

<sup>64</sup> See also the music video for this song, which features a diverse range of faces in the

“new Germany”: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeNdOpw90-M&feature=fvw>, accessed 23 July 2009.

<sup>65</sup> [http://www.crossover-ev.de/2.4\\_projekte.php](http://www.crossover-ev.de/2.4_projekte.php), accessed 26 May 2010. See also: <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/hauptnavigation/startseite#/suche/deluxe>, accessed 27 May 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Julia Walker, “Rap mal anders: gegen Diskriminierung,” *taz*, , *die tageszeitung*, 9 July 2008: 18. For MP3 tracks of *Rap for Q-Rage Vol. II* CD go to <http://www.schule-ohne-rassismus.org/rap-qrage-vii.html>, accessed 15 July 2009.

<sup>67</sup> *Mut gegen rechte Gewalt* is particularly thorough in tracking news of neo-Nazi activity and violence against foreigners. See <http://www.mut-gegen-rechte-gewalt.de/>, accessed 28 July 2009.

<sup>68</sup> For an excerpt from the *3nach9* interview from January 25, 2008, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P90u9BIQymU&feature=related>, accessed 13 July 2009.

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/schulspiegel/leben/0,1518,678541,00.html>, accessed 27 May 2010.

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.laut.de/Bushido/Zeiten-Aendern-Dich-%28Album%29>, accessed 27 May 2010.

<sup>71</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZ0BwFwsnYg>, accessed 27 May 2010.