



‘Keep scopin til you hear me, words is spoken clearly’ Hip-hop music and the art of exclusion

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Abstract

In the last twenty years hip-hop culture has been fairly extensively researched within academia. However, relatively little work has considered, in detail, the language of rap lyrics. Approaching the lyrics of a hip-hop track from a stylistic perspective and employing cognitive linguistic frameworks, this article has two primary aims: firstly, to stimulate further discussion of the rich linguistic texture inherent to the genre and secondly to consider how these lyrics problematise simplistic notions of belonging and identity in hip-hop culture. I consider a number of different raps, but particularly focus on a track by Rakim, one of the most revered MCs in hip-hop history.

Key words: African-American culture, cognitive poetics, conceptual metaphor, deictic shift theory, hip-hop music, modernity, postmodernism, Rakim.

1. Introduction

Most people today, they can’t even define in words, hip-hop. They don’t know the whole culture behind it.

– Afrika Bambaataa (George 2004: 46)

It is unfortunate yet predictable that academic research into hip-hop culture tends to start on the defensive. Tackling such a controversial area of popular culture requires some justification. Hip-hop culture, and in particular the lyrics of rap music, have been widely condemned for its promotion of violence, misogyny, and racism. This condemnation has come from the African American community as well as from outside. In 1996 Joseph Lowery, the former leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, argued that the civil rights movement had lost its way in more recent times and had sacrificed its respectability and moral conscience (Perry 2004: 4). Lowery’s implication was that the spread of hip-hop culture was to blame. In spite of this criticism, the academic world has

not been deterred from claiming hip-hop as a legitimate and complex art form and hip-hop culture as a site where postmodernism is not just played out but (re)created. In this article I continue this academic trend, offering a detailed cognitive stylistic analysis of the lyrics of Rakim – one of the most acclaimed rappers in USA hip-hop. I have three interrelated aims in this paper: to inspire further stylistic analyses of rap lyrics, to show through detailed linguistic analysis why Rakim is held in such high esteem as a lyricist, and to emphasise that hip-hop is truly a postmodern art form. The latter aim is the main focus and I approach this issue of hip-hop as a postmodern art form through an examination of the way hip-hop lyrics construct identity through the interplay between the global and the local.

At this point it is necessary to give a definition of hip-hop culture. Given Afrika Bambaataa's warning at the start of this article and the inherent complexity of hip-hop, this is a tricky task. In general, hip-hop culture is a highly popular urban youth movement that is typically regarded as being comprised of five elements: rapping, graffiti-writing, breakdancing, DJing, and beatboxing. Over the last twenty years the popularity of hip-hop has exploded: research conducted by the Recording Industry Association of America found that while in 1989 the genre comprised 6% of the music sold in the USA, in 2000 that figure had more than doubled and continues to rise (Watkins 2006: 33-4). The amount of research conducted into hip-hop has reflected its meteoric rise in popularity. Sociology and American Studies departments in the USA and the UK have been responsible for much of this study. The scope of this paper does not allow for a detailed appraisal of this work, but it is important to give a summary of the general points made so that the current paper can stand in relation to them.

Much research has focused on the historical origins of hip-hop, specifically the culture's relation to African and African-American societies (e.g. Perry, 2004; Perkins, 1996; Smitherman, 1994; Smitherman, 1997). Smitherman famously traced a line from African oral storytelling tradition to rap:

The rapper is a postmodern African griot, the verbally gifted storyteller and cultural historian in traditional African society (Smitherman 1997: 4)

Similarly, Perry (2004: 30-1) sees rapping as a continuation of the African tradition of 'toasting' – that is, the practice of telling a story of one's own superiority over others in a given field. In modern-day hip-hop, this superiority tends to be related to a rapper's sexual prowess, how dangerous he/she is, and their skill as a rapper. This approach to hip-hop does not see the genre as merely updating past practices passively, however, but considers the ways that hip-hop culture functions in Western society, often in comparison with the ways that African-American linguistic practices of 'toasting' and 'the dozens' operated in the past. Pennycook is particularly insightful on this issue of hip-hop culture's appropriation and adaptation of past linguistic practices, conceiving of hip-hop's creativity as resting 'in the recontextualisation of others' expressions' (Pennycook 2007b: 580). This theory of 'recontextualisation' and its links with postmodern notions of creativity and originality is a subject we shall return to later.

Hip-hop culture's development of African and African-American verbal traditions should not be viewed as a process that emerged apolitically. These seemingly playful and benign traditions have always served as socio-political comment. A case in point is the African-American oral tale of the 'Signifying Monkey', most extensively discussed by Gates (1988). As an oral tale, the 'Signifying Monkey' has multiple instantiations but the

basic plot is as follows: a monkey, lion and elephant are in the jungle. The playful monkey tells the lion (sometimes referred to as Whitey) that the elephant has insulted him, which rouses the lion to seek out and attack the elephant. The result is that the lion is heavily beaten by the physically-superior elephant, at which point the lion realises that he has been duped by the monkey's wit and trickery. According to Quinn, amongst many others, the tale stands for 'black America's celebrated improvisatory and innovatory skill', as the white-coded lion is fooled by the black-coded monkey (2000:119). This act of signifyin(g) is at the heart of much rapping, specifically in the verbal insults that MCs trade with one another. Often in these insults, MCs satirise or parody something another MC has said in order to undercut the other's pretensions to greatness. More generally, however, it has been argued that hip-hop culture's appropriation of African/African-American linguistic practices like signifyin(g), toasting, and semantic inversion serve as a forum for rebellion against White America's continued degradation of Black Americans (Upski, 1993). Similarly, others see hip-hop culture as a contemporary response to joblessness and disempowerment (Ogbar, 1999; Smitherman, 1994), and creating an order amidst chaos for disenfranchised communities of varying colours and nationalities (Allen, 1996).

More recently, hip-hop studies have expanded and spread to other academic disciplines. For instance, there is a burgeoning area of hip-hop study in music departments. This research broadly attempts to link cultural context with music theory (e.g. Chang, 2009; Krims, 2000; Krims, 2007). Many of these studies have considered the contradictions inherent in hip-hop: how the hip-hop mantra of 'keeping it real' co-exists alongside the need/desire in many rappers to make much money by 'selling out', the simultaneous degradation and glorification of females, and the fact that many rappers overtly reject traditional (White) American values while endorsing some of the most notorious (and exploitative) brands in mainstream Western culture (e.g. Nike, Adidas, Fila).

This brief overview demonstrates there is fascinating research into hip-hop culture from a diverse range of academic disciplines. However, I suspect most researchers would agree that only the surface has been scratched of what is a highly complex and contradictory art form. Approaching hip-hop from a linguistic perspective, as I do here, is more pressing than any other approach because relatively little work has been undertaken in this specific area. Alim (2009: 5) laments the way in which language is 'taken for granted in most of the scholarship on Hip Hop Culture' despite being 'one of the most useful means by which to read Hip Hop Culture'. There is, however, a rapidly growing corpus of research that approaches hip-hop culture from a linguistic angle, and Alim is at the forefront of this approach.

Many of the earliest treatments of language in hip-hop culture took a historical sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on the way that the language of hip-hop culture reflects (and creates) African American Language dialect (AAL) through its grammatical, phonological, and rhetorical features (Smitherman, 1997), and furthermore how this example of 'resistance vernacular' undermines notions of a standard American English (Potter 1995: 68-9). More recently, a number of researchers working within sociolinguistics have approached hip-hop culture as a global language. As hip-hop is a popular music genre in the vast majority of countries around the world, these sociolinguists have considered how the genre is co-opted into various diverse cultures.

Androutsopoulos's consideration of hip-hop culture in Germany and Greece (2009), Roth-Gordon's account of Brazilian hip-hop (2002), and Prevos's work on French hip-hop (2001) are just three examples of the plethora of studies into the globalisation of hip-hop. This research has shown that thinking about hip-hop's popularity across multiple national contexts as a 'globalisation' of an African-American cultural form, spreading from a centre (e.g. New York) to various outposts around the world might not, however, be the most useful way of approaching the phenomenon (e.g. Mitchell, 2003; Pennycook, 2007a; Pennycook, 2007b). Rather, many of these sociolinguists prefer to see hip-hop as a global cultural form that is locally appropriated in different contexts, adopting Robertson's term 'glocalization' (1995). I shall return to this issue later.

Although there is plenty of research within linguistics that considers the use of hip-hop language across a variety of cultures and countries, there is far less research that approaches the lyrics of hip-hop from a stylistic perspective. The reason for this relative lack of stylistic criticism may well be because in order to justify this approach, a claim needs to be made for rap as literature, or at least as evincing some of the typical stylistic traits of literature. The potential problem with analysing the *style* of rap lyrics relates to what this kind of analysis might fail to do. Entirely justifiably, the dominant concerns in hip-hop scholarship have been on the genre as a sociological phenomenon, and traditional stylistics makes no bones about choosing not to focus on broader societal issues in detail. Following Alim (2003: 63), I argue that the balance does need redressing, however, as stylistic analyses of rap lyrics can both benefit from and, in turn, complement the valuable sociological/sociolinguistic research that exists. Some inroads have already been made in approaching rap lyrics from a stylistic perspective: Bradley (2009) considered rap using a classical rhetoric framework. He argued that rap is a modern manifestation of lyric poetry, shedding light on the specific use of certain rhetorical tropes in rap lyrics. Alim (2003) likewise made a strong case for rap as 'literature', focusing particularly on the lyrics of Pharoahe Monche. Alim's analysis is fascinating, demonstrating the poetic complexity embedded in rap lyrics through innovative rhyming, alliteration, and metaphor. Other studies have also considered specific stylistic devices typical to hip-hop lyrics. Drawing on the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) proposed and developed by Lakoff, Turner and Johnson (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff and Turner, 1989), Androutsopoulos and Scholz (2003) found that the conceptual metaphors

RAP IS BATTLE

RAP IS KNOWLEDGE

RAP IS A DRUG

were highly prevalent in rap lyrics and could be used in a variety of particular ways in local contexts. Crossley (2005) similarly employs CMT in his analysis of the imagery that permeates rap lyrics. He found the following metaphors dominant:

LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD IS A PRISION

LIFE IS A FIGHT

SEX IS VIOLENCE

Methodologically, however, Crossley's treatment of the metaphors is superficial as he does not get to grips with any of the more difficult (and potentially more insightful)

aspects of metaphor analysis: for example, the forms that the metaphors take, the features that are mapped from one domain to the other in the metaphors, and the polyvalence of the metaphors. Whereas the first two problems here are mere absences in Crossley's method, his failure to tackle the polyvalence issue does damage to the conclusions he draws. Crossley begins his discussion of the NEIGHBOURHOOD IS A PRISON metaphor by looking at Scarface's track 'On My Block'. He focuses on the lines

On my block it's like the world don't exist
We stay confined to this small little section we livin in

Although Crossley does not say in any detail how this occurs, he is right to argue that these lines are evidence of the NEIGHBOURHOOD IS A PRISON metaphor. However his conclusion that 'it is clear that Scarface pictures his neighbourhood pejoratively' (2005: 501) is suspect given that the three successive lines from 'On My Block' run

Oh my block, I wouldn't trade it for the world
Cos I love these ghetto boys and girls
Born and raised on my block

While Crossley is correct to assume that the NEIGHBOURHOOD IS A PRISON metaphor is endemic to rap, these same neighbourhoods are also seen positively as places where tightly-knit yet diverse communities thrive. This is evidenced across a range of rap lyrics:

Aiyo, I come from da ghetto, I live for ghetto
I even cry for da ghetto
Aiyo, I might have a verse for da ghetto
That means I might have to die for da ghetto (Lost Boyz, 'Straight From The Ghetto')

From Oakland to Sacktown
The Bay Area and back down
Cali is where they put the mack down (2Pac and Dr Dre, 'California Love')

Many rappers' relationship to their neighbourhood is highly ambivalent, therefore, as both negative and positive facets of ghetto life are invoked side-by-side.

My reasons for focusing on the shortcomings of Crossley's article are two-fold. Firstly, part of my analysis, like Crossley's, employs conceptual metaphor as a framework. Secondly, the shortcomings of Crossley's article shows how rigid analyses of hip-hop lyrics are likely to fail. Crossley's analysis falls short because it does not adequately account for the textually-embedded multiplicity in hip-hop lyrics and culture. He prefers to see the genre instead as one-dimensional, conveying fixed messages.

1.1 Brief History of Hip-hop

Why oh why oh why well why not
Shouldn't I represent this shit called hip-hip
And it don't stop

– Warren G featuring Jah Skillz, Twinz, and Bo-Roc, 'Runnin Wit No Breaks'

Any history of a musical genre as diverse as hip-hop is likely to fall short in doing justice to its complexity, and the limited space in this article exacerbates this problem. However, being a musical genre that is heavily based on tradition and its past, any analysis of hip-hop needs to be sensitive to this history. For much more comprehensive histories of the movement see the first section contributions in *That's the Joint!: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, edited by Forman and Neal (2004: 9-55).

It is generally (although, importantly, not unanimously) agreed that hip-hop as we know it was born in 1974 in the South Bronx, New York (Perkins 1996: 5). Most commonly Grandmaster Flash is attributed as the pioneer of hip-hop, but more recently Kool Herc has been championed as the originator of the form (Chang, 2005). Regardless of its provenance, hip-hop began life as a mesh of various other musical genres, with early DJs mixing together the beats, melody and lyrics of various funk, soul, and disco tracks in order to create a new sound. This exercise has remained a central element of hip-hop, known today as 'sampling'. In its early years, then, hip-hop was strictly a live performance art (Dimitriadis, 2004). The art of rapping (speaking over the blended records) developed later, but was key to the emergence of hip-hop as a commercial success. The Sugarhill Gang's 'Rapper's Delight', released in 1979, was the first major chart success for hip-hop and is widely regarded as the first hip-hop single, although Fatback Band's 'King Tim 111 (Personality Jock)' actually predated 'Rapper's Delight' by a few months. The rapping on these early tracks tended to be rudimentary with simple narratives couched in single, monosyllabic rhymes, for example:

Broken glass everywhere

People Pissing on the stairs

You know they just don't care (Grandmaster Flash and the Furious 5, 'The Message')

In the late 1970s and the early 1980s DJs and MCs started signing to major record labels. Those who had begun as hip-hop pioneers in New York parks and clubs now masterminded commercial smash hits: Afrika Bambaataa released 'Planet Rock' in 1982, while Grandmaster Flash and his group the Furious 5 released several further hits. At the same time, new acts started emerging, including Big Daddy Kane, LL Cool J, and Run DMC. It is generally agreed among hip-hop scholars that these 'second wave' artists put more emphasis on lyrical quality than those who came before (Dimitriadis, 2004; Perkins 1996: 14). Rakim, the main subject of analysis in this article, was one of the most influential artists of this second wave, and will be discussed in greater length in the next section. It was during this second wave that hip-hop began to spread out of New York, with groups and artists emerging in the West Coast, Chicago, and some Southern states.

The 'third wave' of hip-hop artists started coming to prominence in the early to mid-90s, and included some of the most eminent names in hip-hop history. The Notorious BIG, Nas, and Jay-Z hailed from New York, while 2Pac, Snoop Doggy Dogg, and Dr Dre represented LA. Many argue that it was during this 'Golden Age' that hip-hop reached its creative peak, with albums such as Nas's *Illmatic*, Wu-Tang Clan's *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*, and Dr Dre's *The Chronic* just three of the hundreds of acclaimed albums produced. Unfortunately, this period in rap is better-known for the rapid growth in animosity between different groups of rappers, culminating in the deaths of Tupac Shakur (a.k.a. 2Pac) and Christopher Wallace (a.k.a. The Notorious BIG). Bizarrely, rather than

dampening the appeal of the genre, these tragic events actually heightened hip-hop's popularity.

As the twentieth-century drew to a close, hip-hop had established itself as one of the most popular forms of music in America (Perry 2004: 191). When a particular artistic movement achieves mass popularity, it is common for 'high' and 'low' manifestations of the form to be differentiated. The late-90s saw a proliferation of rappers who were perceived by many as mediocre yet achieved far greater commercial success than their more respected peers. This on-going feud between 'real' and 'fake' hip-hop has led many to question the legitimacy of hip-hop today. Nas's 2006 album *Hip Hop is Dead* is an obvious example of rap's self-questioning, serving both as a lament for the perceived demise of hip-hop since its 'golden era' and as an acceptance that 'fake' rappers have come to dominate the hip-hop genre today. Alim (2009: 18-9) makes the point that Nas is failing to see the wider picture. While there might be a case for arguing that New York hip-hop is 'dead', the growth of Southern US hip-hop and the popularity of diverse forms of hip-hop around the world would suggest the culture is in rude health. No-one would have believed it when it started in the parks of New York but it is true to say that hip-hop has been 'co-opted' into the mainstream and, as the appeal of the genre broadens, it is natural that certain acts will 'sell-out' (Perry 2004: 192-3). This has forced those acts who stake a claim to being true to 'real' and 'authentic' hip-hop to adapt and find a different voice in a crowded world.

1.2 Analysis

The focus of this article is on the lyrics of Rakim Allah, who for over 20 years has been one of the most respected MCs in hip-hop. Born William Griffin in 1968, he changed his name to Rakim Allah when he was 16, having met the influential Nation of Islam preacher Clarence 13X. At this time in the early 1980s, the Nation of Islam was undergoing a resurgence, in particular Clarence 13X's 'Five Percenters' brand of Islam. The Five Percenters's name derives from their belief that 85% of the world's population is blind to knowledge of the truth, 10% are aware of this truth but use their knowledge purely for personal gain, and the remaining 5% are the 'poor righteous teachers' who know the truth and do not corrupt it. A fundamental aspect of this 'truth' is the knowledge that the Five Percenters are their own gods and that they are the Original Man. The Five Percenters's leaders like Clarence 13X found appreciative ears in the 1980s hip-hop community, in particular in groups like Brand Nubian, Poor Righteous Teachers, and Dignable Planets. Likewise, many of Rakim's own lyrics relate to this theme of Islamic identity in the Western world.

To date, Rakim has released seven albums. Four of these were collaborations with Eric B, a producer from Queensbridge, New York. Across the four albums Rakim shows a great diversity of style and an ability to rap on a variety of topics. In their debut album *Paid in Full* (1987) Rakim signalled a shift in hip-hop back to the slow rapping style of the pioneers. The payoff of this laid-back style is that it allows the opportunity for more intellectually dense lyrics. Rakim's early rap was the one of the first to lend itself to analysis, as the slowed-down style allowed listeners time to process the import of his lyrical content (Dimitriadis, 2004). This laid-back delivery combined with lyrical density is referred to by many as a 'quiet storm' – one of Rakim's own phrases (Eric B and Rakim, 'As The Rhyme Goes On').

On his first solo album, *The 18th Letter* (1997), Rakim collaborated with some of the preeminent producers in hip-hop, in particular DJ Premier and Pete Rock, and this production quality combined with Rakim's rapping lead to the album receiving highly favourable reviews from all areas of the music press (e.g. Qa'id, 1997; Morales, 1997). On *The 18th Letter*, Rakim continues in a similar vein to his previous two albums with Eric B, demonstrating his ability to rap in a variety of styles and on a number of different topics. The title track 'The 18th Letter' and 'The Mystery (Who Is God?)' are both intellectually-challenging accounts of the fundamental beliefs of the Five Percenters, 'It's Been a Long Time' and 'Guess Who's Back' are Rakim's reflections on his own career, and 'Stay a While' and 'Show Me Love' are R&B-inspired love songs.

The subject of this article, the track 'When I'm Flowin'', is the 14th song on *The 18th Letter* and is produced by Pete Rock. My reasons for choosing this track as the subject of cognitive stylistic analysis are partly subjective – the track brings together my favourite rapper and my favourite producer – but also relate to the diversity and breadth of material incorporated. Producer Pete Rock samples heavily when creating his beats and, given the diverse range of musical genres from which he samples (e.g. psychedelic rock, Motown, funk), it is clear that he has a great knowledge of music and, furthermore, understands which sounds complement each another in musical composition. 'When I'm Flowin' is dominated by two samples in particular: piano and bass guitar sounds drawn from Monty Alexander's 'A Time For Love' (1984), and strange synthesizer sounds from Don Sebesky's 'The Distant Galaxy' (1968).

My broader decision to study Rakim's lyrics is grounded in his significance within hip-hop culture. Rakim is regarded by many as one of the greatest rappers and recently topped a poll in the magazine *Hip Hop Connection* (2009) to find 'The Greatest Rapper of All Time', as voted for by 100 other rappers. Just two of the accolades he received were from the rappers Jehst and Freestyle:

Rakim's got it all – voice, flow, delivery, lyrical content, wordplay and charisma. Once you break down his work, especially the early stuff, you realise he's the main reference point for everyone [in rap]. (2009: 54)

[Rakim] still has lines, similes, and metaphors that can't be matched (2009: 54)

A detailed cognitive stylistic analysis of Rakim's 'When I'm Flowin' will yield insight into the high esteem in which Rakim is held. The principal aim, moreover, is to explore the invocation of the local and the specific in hip-hop culture. I approach this question considering the effect that this specificity has on different communities of listeners, who (due to hip-hop's wide popularity) differ greatly in terms of race, nationality, and epistemic positioning. It is the last variable that I shall focus on in detail, because in spite of hip-hop's mass appeal the genre plays greatly on the contextual knowledge that listeners bring. I argue that hip-hop actively seeks to exclude those who do not bring sufficient shared knowledge of hip-hop: knowledge of its conventions, its historical origins, and the discographies of its main rappers. I demonstrate that this exclusion and inclusion operates on the subtle level of linguistic texture.

1.3 Textual Analysis

High-tech dialect you ain't catch yet[.]

– Rakim, ‘New York – Ya Out There?’

A constantly reoccurring motif in hip-hop lyrics focuses on the exclusivity of the genre. In particular, this exclusivity is manifest in the implied audience that hip-hop lyrics often construct. An expected audience is frequently addressed overtly, as in the following example:

Understand all whites must be perceived as potential predators
 I paraphrase historian Ishakamusa Barashango
 "Understand that regardless of the lofty ideas engraved on paper
 in such documents as the Constitution or Declaration
 the basic nature...of the European American white man
 remains virtually unchanged" so check
 This is the nature of the threat (Ras Kass, ‘The Nature of the Threat’)

Ras Kass’s lyrics are typically concerned with elevating ‘Black’ consciousness in opposition to ‘White’ culture. His track ‘The Nature of the Threat’ is an attack on White culture, describing in painful detail the past and present atrocities that Whites have inflicted (and continue to inflict) on Blacks. The construction of a Black listenership, and hence the exclusion of a White audience, is clear in this track. The quoted extract constructs and addresses a collective and cohesive Black audience through the use of the imperative with the implied second-person. In opposition, Whites are defined as ‘potential predators’ – the alliterative plosive sounds here forging an iconicity between the phonetic and semantic sense of the line, thus heightening the threat that Whites are seen to pose to Black culture. As mentioned, this is a rather explicit example of the exclusivity embedded in many rap lyrics. Ras Kass draws on a common dichotomy explored in rap (White/Black), clearly aligning himself with one over the other. There are more subtle ways that rappers can evince the exclusivity of hip-hop culture through their lyrics and I demonstrate this in the following cognitive stylistic analysis. The question of hip-hop’s ‘exclusivity’ has been addressed in research on the genre, particularly in relation to the way that hip-hop cultures are often tied to a particular local space (e.g. Mitchell, 2001; Pennycook, 2007a;) and are fixed in a specific time (e.g. Shusterman, 1991). Rakim’s ‘When I’m Flowin’ affirms this exclusivity principally through its use of conceptual metaphor and its explicit construction of listener identity. In both of these ways, the lyrics of ‘When I’m Flowin’ (and hip-hop lyrics more generally) play on shared knowledge between listener and rapper, positively *including* those who are ‘down with’ hip-hop culture and *excluding* those who are not party to this knowledge.

2.1 Conceptual Metaphors

It has been argued that rap music is one of the modern-day variations of the poetic lyric (Bradley, 2009), and that metaphor is integral to the genre. Similar to other language contexts, metaphor in rap can serve a multitude of possible uses, although these tend to fit into one of the following broad categories:

- Intensification of an experience
 e.g. ‘Gettin live like we at the Mardi Gras’ (Slum Village, ‘Climax (Girl Shit)’).

- Making a potentially unfathomable sensation relatable to the listener
e.g. ‘This rap shit is raw not to be touched / The ingredients if tampered with, could get you fucked up’ (Bumpy Knuckles, ‘Who Knows Why’).
- Making the fathomable unknown to the listener, thus making a fresh comment on the nature of an object/experience
e.g. ‘We at the weedgate, waitin for Jake, / We want eight ravioli bags, two thirsty villians yelling bellyaches / Heavyweight rhyme writers hittin the grass’ (Ghostface Killah, ‘One’).
- Demonstration of poetic prowess
e.g. ‘My poetry’s deep, I never fell, / Nas’s raps should be locked in a cell’ (Nas, ‘It Ain’t Hard To Tell’).

Although this list is not exhaustive, these are some of the major rhetorical functions of metaphor in rap lyrics. Hip-hop lyrics are an expression of identity, whether individual or collective (for further discussion of these issue see Androutsopoulos, 2009; Maxwell, 2003; Omoniyi, 2009), and the metaphors employed in rap testify to this, either through demonstrating the formal capabilities of the speaking rapper or through defining the rapper against another object/experience.

Metaphor is endemic to the language we use; not least in the way we articulate ideas about time, space, ideas and emotions. Two areas in which research on metaphor has been substantially developed are cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, most influentially by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Lakoff and Turner (1989). Moving away from the view first adopted by Aristotle (1996) that figurative language is purely ornamental, cognitive linguistic research has regarded metaphor in terms of a meaningful mapping of conceptual properties between a familiar concept – the source – and a less familiar concept – the target (Simpson, 2004; Stockwell, 2002; cf. Glucksberg et al 1997 for a different view). These researchers claim that metaphors are fundamental to our mental activity and regard our conceptual systems as structured by metaphor. This research has found, for example, that the following conceptual metaphors are firmly entrenched in English:

GOOD IS UP

ARGUMENT IS WAR

TIME IS MONEY

Rakim’s ‘When I’m Flowin’ contains two conceptual metaphors that run through the track: RAP IS BATTLE and UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING. Both metaphors are fairly conventional, the former is common to the rap genre (Androutsopoulos and Scholz, 2003) and the latter is so pervasive in everyday language that it is, arguably, a ‘dead’ or ‘conventional’ metaphor (Goatly, 1997; Goatly, 2007). Having said this, Rakim employs the two in ways that defamiliarise the conceptual metaphors, thus producing a particular effect on the attentive listener.

2.1.1 RAP IS BATTLE –

This conceptual metaphor is employed frequently by rappers, and became particularly prevalent in West Coast-based ‘Gangsta Rap’ of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Artists like Ice-T, Snoop Doggy Dogg, and groups like Niggaz With Attitude (NWA) used the metaphor as part of their wider fight against rival groups and against perceived corruption of the police force and government. Some examples of the RAP IS BATTLE metaphor from this era of rap include:

Don’t make a move for your gat so soon cos / I drops bombs like Platoon[.]
(Snoop Doggy Dogg featuring Kurupt, Daz, and RBX, ‘Serial Killa’)

My adversaries cry like hoes, fully eradicate my foes / My lyrics explode on contact,
gamin you hoes[.] (2Pac, ‘No More Pain’)

The RAP IS BATTLE metaphor may have been most prevalent in the Gangsta era of rap, but is still frequently employed by rappers. One example comes from ‘Once Upon a Time’ by Slum Village:

On the mic I never fight
I call an angel of war,
Slice an MC with my tongue,
A lyrical sword[.]

‘When I’m Flowin’ contains twelve examples of this conceptual metaphor. The metaphor appears in clusters, so much so, in fact, that the second verse contains no manifestations of this metaphor whatsoever and the fourth verse only three. Conversely, the first and third verses contain several examples of the RAP IS BATTLE metaphor each. Both these verses are ‘Brag n’ Boast’ raps, that is, verses in which Rakim focuses on conveying his own artistry through his lyrical content and his mastery of form. The table below shows the textual manifestations of the RAP IS BATTLE conceptual metaphor in the song, taking into account the various forms the metaphor takes, and whether the source and target are visible in the different forms:

Table A – showing the examples and metaphorical realisations of RAP IS BATTLE

Line number	Line	Metaphor form
11	I choke the mic and keep squeezing	Grammatical
13	Bustin techs	Grammatical
14	Freestyles like hand grenades without the pin	Simile
15	Composin, then leave the mic full of corrosion	Genitive
16	Don't test this, or best to expect this explosion	Metonymy
20	Killin syllables with poisonous synonyms in 'em	Grammatical
33	Two pages cause panic	Grammatical
33	Freestyles is frantic	Copula
35	Mic is volcanic	Copula
48	My lyrics is fury	Copula
51	My techniques wreck and disrespect beats	Grammatical
53	I rip a song	Grammatical

As the table shows, the most common form of metaphor for RAP IS BATTLE is grammatical. According to Stockwell (1992, 2002), the grammatical metaphor construction is one of the less visible forms. This is mainly because, unlike in copula and simile constructions, the source of the metaphor is not textually realised. In cases where target and/or source are invisible, the listener must go through the process of 'vehicle-construction' (Stockwell 2002: 107), filling-in the missing domain(s) in order to make sense of the line. While it would be overly simplistic to argue that grammatical metaphors

are *always* more interpretively complex than the other forms, it is true to say that the grammatical form *tends* to require more readerly effort, although much depends on the complexity of the conceptual metaphor in question.

The conceptual metaphor RAP IS BATTLE is highly common in rap music, something found by Androutopoulos and Scholz (2003). The prevalence of this mapping in the hip-hop context perhaps renders the conceptual metaphor ‘dead’. Use of the metaphor persists, however, because of its cultural value. In depicting itself as a battle, and an often fatal one at that, rap can exist both as an apolitical account of life on the streets *and* as an alternative to the violence that blights impoverished inner-city communities – as Superb says: ‘Metaphors’ll keep me out of the projects’ (Ghostface Killah feat. Superb, ‘Ghost Deini’).

Given that the RAP IS BATTLE conceptual metaphor is apposite for the context yet potentially timeworn, rappers must find novel ways of representing it. Rakim achieves this by using a diverse range of metaphorical constructions, the majority of which are at the opaque end of the scale: grammatical and genitive forms. The grammatical form contains the figurative content in the verb (‘choke the mic’, ‘killin syllables’), thus typically making this construction more concise than most of the other metaphorical forms. This linguistic punchiness not only accentuates the violent message being conveyed, but also allows Rakim to pack in as much meaning as possible into a short space, giving his lines a linguistic richness.

The underlying RAP IS BATTLE conceptual metaphor is sufficiently prevalent through Rakim’s ‘When I’m Flowin’ to be described as an extended metaphor. This is particularly true in the first verse, in which the prevalence of the metaphor affects some of the individual instances of the metaphor. For example: ‘Composin, then leave the mic full of corrosion / Don’t test this, or best to expect this explosion’ (15-16).

These lines contain the underlying metaphor RAP IS CHEMICAL REACTION, which is part of the megametaphor RAP IS BATTLE. Line 15 contains an example of metonymy (‘mic’ standing for ‘music’) and a genitive form of metaphor (‘full of corrosion’), conveying the idea that Rakim’s music is a chemically reactive object. The next line continues this idea with the imperative ‘Don’t test this’, and a warning of the consequences if this advice is not heeded: ‘best to expect this explosion’. In Table A, I categorised ‘this explosion’ as metonymical, which, on the face of it, seems incorrect. However, I want to argue that it does operate metonymically. Metonymy is generally defined as a conceptual mapping within one domain, as opposed to metaphor which is mapping across two domains (Stockwell 2002: 110). Seen out of context, and without the surrounding underlying conceptual metaphor RAP IS BATTLE, the expression ‘this explosion’ cannot be metonymical for the simple fact that bombs are not part of the same conceptual domain as music. Possible metonymies for music include a microphone, a CD, a speaker, but not the more abstract concept ‘explosion’. My reasons for arguing that ‘this explosion’ is metonymical are based on the surrounding context and the cumulative effect of the RAP IS BATTLE metaphor that dominates the first verse. Forceville argues that metaphors are rarely processed in a strictly ‘bottom-up’ fashion, so the context in which a metaphor occurs largely dictates how it is likely to be interpreted (1995: 696-7). This is evidenced here. The importance of linguistic context to metaphor comprehension has been empirically tested: Gibbs and Nayak (1990) found that an idiom was perceived to be more congruent by participants if it contained the same underlying conceptual

metaphor as the prior text. If we consider the previously quoted lines in their immediate context, we find that the RAP IS BATTLE is present across the four lines:

Bustin techs like Russian Roulette, I doubt you win
 Freestyles like hand grenades without the pin
 Composin, then leave the mic full of corrosion
 Don't test this, or best to expect this explosion (13-16)

The metaphor RAP IS BATTLE is likely to be primed in the listener's mind by the end of the line 15, so much so, in fact, that the literal referent of 'this explosion' can only be Rakim's own rapping. The proximal deictic 'this' in 'this explosion' helps the resolution that the expression is metonymical. As a proximal deictic, 'this' shows physical or emotional closeness between the speaking subject and the object (compare 'this chair' 'this man' with 'that chair', 'that man'). By using 'this' in the determiner position, Rakim signals he is referring to something in close proximity to him, and, given that the conceptual metaphor RAP IS CHEMICAL REACTION has pervaded the preceding lines it is clear that he is referring to his own lyrics. In short, the conceptual metaphor RAP IS BATTLE is extended so much that 'explosion' becomes an acceptable metonymical signifier for Rakim's rapping rather than a mere metaphor for it. 'Explosion' and 'Rakim's rapping' become part of the same single domain rather than two distinct domains, so that Rakim's rapping *is* an explosion.

The frequent repetition of the RAP IS BATTLE metaphor in Rakim's 'When I'm Flowin' is not just particular to this track but rather a ubiquitous conceptual metaphor throughout hip-hop, making self-reflexive performativity a key component of many rappers' lyrics. This performative nature of hip-hop culture and lyrics is something that Quinn (2000) has theorised. Discussing gangsta rap lyrics, Quinn argues that there is always a disjuncture between the 'persona' of the rapper and the 'reality' of the individual behind the microphone. On one level, this point is obvious enough and could describe all art forms where an element of performance is present. What sets rap apart, however, is its constant self-reference and the fact that the two performances almost always co-exist:

In all gangsta rap tracks there are two performances going on simultaneously: the action of the (usually first-person) character within the narrative, and the rhetorical action of the rapping itself. (Quinn 2000: 126)

The disjuncture between 'persona' and 'reality', and between the narrated and the act of narration is not just particular to gangsta rap, however. A close cognitive stylistic analysis of 'When I'm Flowin' shows Rakim repeatedly drawing attention to the power that his own act of narration possesses, so much so that RAP and BATTLE become part of the same domain through metonymical reference.

2.1.2 UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING –

Another metaphor that dominates 'When I'm Flowin' is UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING. As some cognitive psychologists (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1996) have shown, this conceptual metaphor is deeply entrenched in the English language, most obviously in the phrase 'I see'. Other expressions include 'let's take a closer look', 'have you got the picture now?', 'what's your perspective on the issue?'. In 'When I'm Flowin'

Rakim employs this conceptual metaphor in fairly conventional ways in the earlier verses, only to problematise the truth of the metaphor later.

The first manifestation of the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor comes in lines 3-4: 'My adventures show like a three dimensional screen / Cos I mention many things and I'm presentin many scenes' (7-8). The specific metaphor here is RAPPING IS VISUAL, transferring notions of lucidity and stimulation from the source domain VISUAL to the target domain RAPPING. This metaphor rests on the underlying conceptual metaphor that UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING. Although the two monotransitive verbs ('mention' and 'presentin') take no indirect object, the implication throughout is that Rakim is 'mentionin' and 'presentin' to an audience. That Rakim's raps are visual implies there must be an audience to understand them. This audience 'seeing' is textually realised at the end of the first verse: 'Ideas is blowin, mics is blowin / From what I'm showin, see it, I keep it goin when I'm flowin' (19-20). The 'see it' is a direct address to the listener and a full realisation of the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING conceptual metaphor that had been covert earlier on in the verse.

Continuing this, the second verse contains numerous references to the audience. Four lines in the second half of the verse address the listener, continuing the conceptual metaphor that UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING:

More watts you got, more things to watch
 Third eye's wide open, you're focused on the theory
 Keep scopin til you hear me, words is spoken clearly
 Its no smokescreens on the scenes that I'm showin (28-31)

Line 29 is particularly important here. Emanating from Hindu and Buddhist philosophy, the 'third eye' is used as a concept across various spiritual systems to represent inner knowledge or enlightenment. When translated across multiple languages, this sense of enlightenment remains an 'eye', so is, in itself, an instantiation of the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor. Rakim plays on this concept of the 'third eye' over the following two lines. The clause that immediately follows it on line 29 ('you're focused on the theory') is a grammatical metaphor; likewise, it is the verb phrase 'keep scopin' in line 30 that contains the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor, making this too an example of a grammatical metaphor. Line 31, the penultimate line of the verse, negatively defines Rakim's rapping against 'smokescreens', thus further demonstrating the visual quality of his rap through metaphor and extending the dominant metaphor that, for Rakim's listeners, UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING.

The second half of the third verse runs as follows:

Raw footage is shown, but only showin scenes of my own
 Leavin your peripheral vision in a zone, but not the twilight,
 From the insight that I write and recite
 In my mic will be bright, cos I like
 The night glowin, it's out of sight when I'm showin (39-43)

The first part of this extract extends the dominant UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor from the previous two verses. The 'peripheral vision' is best interpreted as a synecdoche for UNDERSTANDING. Although the term does not really relate to this concept in a literal sense, 'peripheral vision' is most likely understood in this way because of the dominance of the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor in the

surrounding context. The rest of the extract flits between the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor and the related KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT metaphor. The phrase ‘but not the twilight’ equates impending darkness of twilight with reduced understanding, and thus is an instantiation of the KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT metaphor. The ‘insight’ of line 41 continues the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor, although ‘insight’ is a sufficiently common expression in English as to be a ‘dead’ manifestation of the metaphor. The ‘bright’ of line 42 reverts back to the KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT metaphor, contrasting the dark ‘twilight’ of line 40 with the ‘bright’ intelligence of Rakim’s rap. The phrase ‘night glowin’ of line 43 brings the dark and the light together, with Rakim once again indicating that his intelligent rap is capable of lighting up the unthinking darkness through the metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS LIGHT.

The final clause of this quoted extract (‘it’s out of sight when I’m showin’) is particularly interesting in light of the dominant UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING metaphor that precedes it. Up to this point, the appropriateness of applying this metaphor in the track has been accepted, so that the message to the listener has been: my lyrics will present to you truth and enlightenment and it is your job to *see* it. With the expression ‘out of sight’, however, this sense is challenged and the RAKIM’S RAPPING IS VISUAL micrometaphor is negated. It continues the UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING megametaphor, as an object or concept that is ‘out of sight’ is one that is unachievable, ineffable, and/or incomprehensible. The pronoun ‘it’ (that which is ‘out of sight’) refers cataphorically to the noun phrase ‘what I’m showin’ at the end of the line. So this clause constitutes an oxymoron, with Rakim effectively saying that what he is showing is unable to be seen. This would only be an oxymoron were one to say it literally, but under the guise of metaphor the expression is rational. One of the central tenets of cognitive metaphor research is that metaphors are unidirectional, that is, the source transfers its properties over to the target rather than the other way around (Turner, 1990). Stockwell (1999) has argued against this ‘invariance hypothesis’, claiming that in certain metaphorical manifestations the target transfers some of its properties onto the source, making the metaphor bidirectional. By challenging the previously accepted metaphor RAKIM’S RAPPING IS VISUAL in the clause ‘it’s out of sight what I’m showin’, Rakim focuses attention on the target domain of the megametaphor (SEEING). Any literal sense of ‘seeing’ suggested by the terms belonging to the semantic field of visual perception (‘three dimensional screen’, ‘scopin’, ‘scenes’) is negated in this clause, so that ‘seeing’ becomes something beyond the merely optical and more akin to the ‘third eye’ concept Rakim introduced in verse two: spiritual and intuitive.

Analysis of the dominant conceptual metaphors in ‘When I’m Flowin’ yields fascinating results. Not content with unthinkingly utilising well-worn metaphors within rap (RAP IS BATTLE) and highly conventional metaphors in everyday language (UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING), Rakim rather employs these metaphors in novel ways in order to foreground the performativity of his rapping, and in particular the evident disjuncture between metaphor and reality, word and deed, and the narrator and the narrated. Rather than just using metaphors in order to *say* how good he is, Rakim *shows* how accomplished a lyricist he is by challenging the applicability of these metaphors to this own rapping. Aside from being evidence of his skill as a rapper, the way Rakim employs metaphors in ‘When I’m Flowin’ also shows the exclusivity of his rapping and, more widely, the rap musical genre. As discussed, the RAP IS BATTLE

metaphor is extensively used in rap, and Rakim plays on this. I imagine most people are aware how endemic the RAP IS BATTLE metaphor is to rap, and that its existence is a source of controversy for the genre. Rather than merely deploying a series of highly visible constructions (i.e. simile and copula forms), Rakim predominantly uses the grammatical form to show the murderous nature of his rap. Being less visible, spotting these grammatical forms as metaphors rather than literal threats of violence requires a fairly developed knowledge of how the RAP IS BATTLE metaphor operates in rap.

As I have been arguing, then, the issue of listener knowledge is crucial in rap lyrics, and this can be seen on the level of the metaphors. In the next section I consider a related issue: the deictic positioning of the listener in 'When I'm Flowin'. That is, how the listener is constructed in the lyrics and where they are positioned in relation to the text.

2.2 Deictic Positioning of the Listener

A large body of research has theorised hip-hop as a modern day manifestation of African and African-American oral story-telling traditions (e.g. Perry, 2004; Smitherman, 1994; Smitherman, 1997; Warner-Lewis, 2004). Crucial to this past and present oral context is the role of the listener. While written narrative presupposes an audience and is clearly composed with audience(s) in mind, the presence of a listening audience is absolutely integral to the very physical performance of an oral narrative. Oral narratives occur in a particular time and place, and are spoken by a specific person or a specific group. One of the key features of oral narrative, therefore, is the direct address terms used to invoke and involve the audience (Bauman, 1986), found across a variety of oral texts that are seen as setting the foundations of Western literature. Take, for example, the opening word of *Beowulf*, the epic Old English poem seen by many as forming the bedrock of English literature: 'Hwaet!' This is variously translated as 'Listen!' (Liuzza 2000: 53), 'Hear me!' (Burton 1999: 23), and 'So' (Heaney, 1999: 3). Whatever the particulars on how this 'Hwaet!' is translated it serves a pragmatic function, drawing attention to the oral nature of the poem and directly addressing the listener. This convention of listener address also underlies much African and diasporan oral narrative (Warner-Lewis, 2004). This is most explicit in the call-and-response patterning that typifies much rapping. Call-and-response in rap is most evident in live performance at hip-hop gigs, where it is highly common for rappers to implore the audience to repeat a series of chants, usually between performances of individual tracks. The importance of this explicit form of call-and-response does not appear to be as fundamental to hip-hop any longer because, as with so many musical genres, rap has transposed from its live performance roots to a largely recorded and packaged commodity (Dimitriadis, 2004; Rose, 1994). When we listen to a hip-hop CD we are consuming the music 'away from the performance context' (Rose 1994: 58), there is a temporal and spatial divide that cuts the listener off from the very immediacy that many of the oral narrative conventions, such as call-and-response, invoke. Rappers, however, do continue this tradition of listener invocation on their recorded material (albums, singles, mixtapes etc). Call-and-response is often employed on albums where the rapper attempts to recreate a live performance:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah
 Can I kick it?
 (Yes you can)

Can I kick it?
 (Yes you can)
 Can I kick it?
 (Yes you can)
 Ya'll muthafuckas musta heard of A Tribe Called Quest
 Let's do it again (Jay-Z, '22 Twos')

Here, Jay-Z draws on a call-and-response chant coined by the group A Tribe Called Quest, using it to preface the track '22 Twos'. The lines in parenthesis are chanted by the audience. Of course, explicit examples of call-and-response, such as this one, used on albums by rappers can seem artificial and can draw attention to the fact that the CD album is definitively *not* the same as live performance. As Rose points out the former can be seen as much more of an 'institutional context' than the latter, with all the constraints that that entails (Rose 1994: 58). On the recorded format rappers can use other, more subtle, means by which to invoke the audience as an active participant. I shall demonstrate this listener-centrality of hip-hop using a cognitive stylistics framework typically used for approaching the issue of reader involvement in literary texts.

The issue of reader/listener involvement in a text is potentially sprawling and complex, but recent developments in the field of cognitive poetics offer us a way to discuss it in a disciplined and thorough manner. Deictic Shift Theory (DST) was first proposed in an interdisciplinary edited collection (Duchan, Bruder, and Hewitt, 1995) and starts with the premise that the main appeal of literature is that it enables readers to get "inside" texts when experiencing them (Segal 1995: 14-5). The proponents of DST argue that deixis is key in establishing the way readers are positioned in relation to a text. This reader positioning is referred to as the "cognitive stance" (Stockwell 2002: 46) and is established, maintained and voided in a text through a series of deictic shifts. The deictic terms I shall focus on here are the personal pronouns, particularly the use of the second-person address 'you'.

The track constructs various identities for the listener(s), ranging from constructions of the listener as another rapper to a rap novice. As we shall see, this has the contradictory cumulative effect of both embracing a variety of different potential listeners *and* tacitly excluding those listeners at the novice end of the scale.

The listener is referred to directly straightaway in the first verse in an apostrophe: 'Yes, yes y'all, I still fiend by any means' (5). 'Yes, yes y'all' occurs throughout the track as a sampled sound effect, addressing the sum of potential listeners. Later in the first verse, however, the identity of the listener shifts to a more particular entity, that of a fellow rapper who is in competition with Rakim:

Bustin techs like Russian Roulette, I doubt you win (13)
 Don't test this, or best to expect this explosion (16)
 From what I'm showin, see it, I keep it goin when I'm flowin (20)

In the first instance the listener is constructed as someone in a duel with Rakim. The 'techs' here is a pun, acting both as a concrete noun (a Tech 9 is a semiautomatic hand gun) and an abbreviation of 'techniques'. So the sense of a duel is polysemous, and the act of 'bustin techs' refers to both a John Wayne-esque high-noon battle and a linguistic battle. Whether we prefer one realisation of this pun or allow both to exist simultaneously, Rakim constructs the 'you' negatively as a likely loser in this duel. This

verbal attack is part of the ‘signifying’ practice so important to AAL (Gates, 1988). ‘Signifying’ refers to the rhetorical battles that AAL is famous for (the dozens and toasting), and the term also covers the kind of verbal putdown through invocation that Rakim indulges in here. Three lines later a similar listener referent is invoked. As with most examples of imperatives in English, the initial ‘you’ is omitted but implicitly understood. If the line were completely realised linguistically it would be: ‘You don’t test this, or its best for you to expect this explosion’. Of course, had Rakim rapped this line with all omitted elements realised then the pentameter would have been skewed and the line would have lost all power, but showing the full version does highlight how the listener is invoked across the two halves of the line. Similar to line 9, the listener is constructed pejoratively as a rival of Rakim, one who would challenge ‘the God’ Rakim at their peril. In verse three, the deictic positioning of the listener is similar to that at the end of verse one:

I hope your microphone’s accident prone (38)
Leavin your peripheral vision is a zone (40)

Once again, the constructed identity of the listener is that of a rival, particularly in this case, a rap rival. Although the tone of the attack is not as aggressive as in the first verse, the listener is still constructed as a passive agent at the mercy of Rakim.

Conversely, the relationship between Rakim and the constructed listener in verse two is much more amicable. The opening line of the second verse indicates that the verse will be more typically narrative in nature, as there are two adverbial clauses, one after the other: ‘When I’m flowin, theoretically speakin like a drummer’ (21). Various studies in discourse psychology have found that readers/listeners closely track time in narrative texts (e.g. Zwaan et. al. (1995); Zwaan (1996)), and the temporal adverbial (‘when I’m flowin’) encourages us to focus on the current act of Rakim’s rapping. The following adverbial clause of manner (‘theoretically speakin...’) is metaphorical, making little sense until we have processed the three lines:

I take you through the streets to the parks in the summer,
Or illustrate a time and place you never been in
And make you focus on the future after seein the beginning[.] (22-24)

In light of these three lines, the simile ‘like a drummer’ creates an image of Rakim as a Pied Piper figure, leading the listener on a journey with his rhymes. While the ‘you’ is not portrayed negatively here, the listener is constructed more generically as a fan who wants to be guided by Rakim. Line 22 is worth analysing in some detail, as the use of prepositions creates a rich image. In cognitive grammar terms, the line contains two landmarks (‘the streets’ and ‘the parks’), the second usurping the first. The trajector is the ‘you’ figure throughout the line. The first landmark (‘the streets’) is construed as a container due to the preposition ‘through’ (Lee 2001: 26). Unlike the preposition ‘in’, a more prototypical preposition showing a spatial relationship of containment between trajector and landmark (e.g. ‘the cat slept in the lounge’), the preposition ‘through’ suggests the arbitrary containment of the trajector as part of an ongoing action. The final destination of this action is ‘the parks’ – the second landmark. The temporal adverbial at the end of the line (‘in the summer’) further adds to the specificity of the listener’s situation model. So over the course of the line, the listener is constructed as the trajector, moving with Rakim across the streets to its parks. Although the line possesses a

specificity that aids the construction of a rich situation model, the nouns ('streets', 'parks', and 'summer') are sufficiently general that the line has a timeless quality, something that is compounded by the use of the habitual present tense. Line 19 and 20 offer the listener another possibility: 'Or illustrate a time and place you never been in / And make you focus on the future after seein the beginning' (23-24). The situation model created in these lines is much less specific than that created in the previous line. There are no vaguer terms for locating temporal and spatial coordinates than 'time and place', and this is not helped by the non-finite clause that postmodifies this ('you never been in'). This postmodification negates the chance of the listener being able to accurately visualise Rakim's verbal illustration. However, this is not to say that this negation dissuades the listener from imagining anything at all. Text world theory has shown that when an object or idea is negated at the surface level of the text this still encourages the reader/listener to imagine the 'presence' object or idea if only to then render it absent (Gavins 2007: 102). Think of the probable outcome of a parent telling a child *not* to climb the big oak tree in the garden – the child will more likely climb the tree because in the process of verbalising the command the parent has allowed the child to entertain the idea of climbing the tree, something they may not have considered had the parent said nothing. In 'a time and place you never been in', however, the referent of the negation is so vague as to conjure up a multiplicity of possibilities. In effect, Rakim is not only idly claiming that his lyrics can transport the listener to a world they know nothing about, but also allowing listeners to try this for themselves.

Throughout verse two, Rakim assumes the role of a teacher educating his pupils (the listeners) through storytelling. While at the start of the verse the narration is highly imaginative, transporting the listener to firstly a specified place then a more general place, the narration in the second half of the verse locates the listener in his/her present context:

And my style wilds like Miles on the trumpet
Volume dial is kind of low, need to pump it
Up another notch, turn the dial til it stops[.] (25-27)

Line 24 refers to the real-life physical existence of the listener for the first time in the track. Although Rakim can guess at nothing else about the current listener, one thing is for certain – that he/she is listening to Rakim at this moment. Rakim plays on this certainty by instructing the listener to turn up the volume because 'More watts you got, more things to watch' (28).

The listener and Rakim share the same deictic space (Bühler's "ad oculus"[1982]), brought about by the use of the present tense and the use of direct address terms. This breaking down of 'coding time' and 'receiving time' (Levinson 1983: 73-9), that is, the time at which a speech act is uttered and the time this speech act is received respectively, brings an immediacy to the lyrics and shifts the listener's cognitive stance back to the default 'real-world' level: 'you're focused on the theory / Keep scopin til you hear me, words are spoken clearly' (29-30). At this default 'real-world' level, the listener is encouraged to reflect upon their own act of comprehension. Of course, Rakim's assumption here is that the listener will already be analysing the lyrics with great attention, and his use of second-person imperative supports this.

The readerly dichotomy that Rakim establishes between 'expert' listeners and 'novice' listeners is further accentuated in the final verse. To those not acquainted with

Rakim's discography, this verse probably sounds similar to the bravado of the previous verses – 'My lyrics is fury and rappers hate to hear me rhyme' (48) – and continues the conceptual metaphor RAP IS BATTLE that is so prevalent in the other verses. Similarly, and the line 'Have you followin the leader up and down the streets' (48) is reminiscent of lines 22-24 where Rakim casts himself as a hip-hop tour guide. However, rap aficionados are likely to see another layer of meaning in the verse. Virtually all the lines in this verse contain track titles from Rakim's back-catalogue, some of which are underlined below:

Yo, accurate tactics make em clap to this (45)
 Breeze through melodies cos it's been a long time (47)
 As the rhyme goes on I get paid in full (54)

For listeners who bring this knowledge there is the opportunity to see this verse as highly sophisticated, with Rakim's command of form complementing his verbal content. In other words, Rakim is not only *saying* that he is an accomplished rapper, he is *showing* it too. The irony is, however, that only those listeners with a substantial knowledge of Rakim's discography (and therefore likely fans) will see this, so Rakim's wordplay here is unlikely to convert others. This sort of irony is quite acceptable in hip-hop and, as I argued earlier, it is easy to view the genre as wilfully exclusive to the point of being impenetrable to many. The notion of rappers as teachers who 'drop science' to their listeners is a common trope, making the knowledge that rappers impart a thing of special, and exclusive, value. What makes the conveyed 'knowledge' exclusive is its customary self-reflexivity. As Potter argues

to an even greater extent than has been the case with earlier African-American artforms, hip-hop constitutes itself as a knowledge, complete with its own discursive forms, citing and siting its own tradition(s)[.] (1995: 22)

Given that hip-hop has its roots in deprived, predominantly African-American areas, the genre often acts as a reaction against (White) middle-class sensibilities. This reaction takes a variety of forms, most infamously in taboo language and subject matter, but also in the use of AAL slang (Ebonics) and in the kind of introverted self-reflexivity we see Rakim indulge in here. In this track and elsewhere, Rakim does not tend to use taboo language (much), but nevertheless his lyrics are not particularly accessible – his relative lack of sales testifies to this. Rakim's main method of excluding some listeners is through his complex lyrics, many of which refer to subjects, people, and events that only 'hip-hop headz' are likely to understand. There is a rich tradition of this wilful exclusivity in African-American artistic output: Gates (1988) argues that contemporary Black writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker indirectly comment on Black writers of the past, thus establishing a Black literary canon in defiance of the (more or less entirely White) canon in Western literature. A similar thing happens in the exclusivity of hip-hop lyrics, most obviously when rappers cite other rapper's rhymes in order to demonstrate that they have knowledge of this rapper and, usually, feel they have affinity with them. Rakim's lyrics are some of the most quoted, and the following has been appropriated twice famously:

I'm the R the A to the K-I-M
 If I wasn't then why would I say I am? (Eric B and Rakim, 'As the Rhyme Goes On')

I am whatever you say am
 If I wasn't then why would I say I am? (Eminem, 'The Way I Am')

I'm the N to the A to the S-I-R
 If I wasn't I must have been Escobar[...] (Nas, 'Got Yourself a Gun')

This kind of within-rap intertextuality thus makes Rakim a fundamental part of the fabric of hip-hop, and a touchstone for many other rappers.

3. Conclusion

I rap for listeners, blunt-heads, fly-ladies and prisoners
 – Nas, 'Memory Lane (Sittin' In Da Park)'

Following Shusterman (1991), I see hip-hop as a postmodern phenomenon. Shusterman posits a host of reasons for rap as an example of postmodernism, including its emphasis on recycling appropriation rather than original creativity, its eclectic mixing of styles, the importance of modern technology to the genre, and its focus on the local and temporal rather than the universal (1991: 614). Shusterman argues that rappers frequently

extol their own achievement of consumerist luxury while simultaneously condemning its uncritical idealization and quest as misguided and dangerous for their audience in the ghetto community (1991: 623)

It is this sort of internal contradiction that make hip-hop a postmodern genre, one that ruptures the strictures of modern society while existing within them – 'turning consumption into production' (Potter 1995: 18). Given this centrality of the listener to hip-hop culture, I have focused on the way that rap lyrics often idealise a certain audience. At its most extreme, this expected audience is strictly defined according to race, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic class: for example, gangsta rap targets young, black, heterosexual males from the working-class. Other genres of hip-hop are not quite so overtly prescriptive in their targeting, but these forms still play on certain knowledge that the real audience may or may not possess.

I am mindful of the fact that any academic treatment of meaning-making in hip-hop cannot be 'prefigured by textual analysis of rap lyrics alone' (Dimitriadis 2001: 63). As such, the present conclusions drawn from the cognitive stylistic analysis of Rakim's 'When I'm Flowin' are partial and provisional. However, a cognitive stylistic approach has the benefit of being essentially reader-centred, or in this case listener-centred (Semino and Culpeper, 2002; Stockwell, 2002). So while cognitive stylistics cannot shed light on the practices of four of the five central components of hip-hop (breakdancing, DJing, graffiti, and beatboxing), it can get us closer to accounting sensitively for the lyrical content of rapping and, more importantly, the effect of these lyrics on listeners.

'When I'm Flowin' plays with two of the more dominant conceptual metaphors in rap (RAP IS BATTLE and UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING), implicitly subverting them and thus showing how broad conceptual metaphors fail to account for, and represent, human experience. Further to this, the multiple personae constructions of the listener leads to as series of deictic shifts, requiring the listener to adopt a variety of

different cognitive stances over the course of the track – something common to contemporary literature (Gavins 2007: 45-50; Jeffries, 2008; Simpson 2004: 130). Similarly, Rakim's constant shifting in the lyrics between his role as the narrator and the narrated lends the track a non-linearity that is, at times, hard to follow. This slippage between narrative modes is particularly evident in the final verse in which Rakim is both the narrator telling the story and the narrated – given that the story is a patchwork of his own back-catalogue of lyrics and track titles. Of course, being able to spot this narrative slippage depends on the listener's knowledge of hip-hop culture.

The typical concerns of hip-hop lyrics make it an unlikely contender for the most widely-consumed musical genre in the world. Even leaving aside the highly problematic issues of hip-hop's often rampant sexism, homophobia, and racism, the genre's distinctively narrow focus on the highly local and temporally specific do not provide the conventional ingredients for one of the most globalised forms of music currently in existence. However, with *exclusivity* comes, of course, a heightened sense of *inclusivity* amongst those people who form the hip-hop community. From its beginnings, hip-hop has been centrally concerned with fostering a sense of identity for those people traditionally denied such privileges in Western society (Dimitriadis, 2004; Hazzard-Gordon, 1990). The mass commercialisation of hip-hop in recent years, however, has problematised this notion that hip-hop culture can produce a fixed identity, and hence the idea that hip-hop only appeals to a specific group. This dissolution of fixed identity in hip-hop culture is an area discussed in academia by Ards (2004) Boyd (2004) and Kitwana (2004; 2005), and a point lamented in rap by R. A. The Rugged Man:

But see, rap is corporate now
It's all about endorsements
So now the rich kids love it
So fuck the poor kids now[.] (R. A. The Rugged Man, 'On The Block')

Perhaps, however, this is the wrong way to look at the development of hip-hop. For sure, if we were to consider hip-hop as a homogenous entity, we would have to conclude that the genre no longer 'speaks' to a fixed and specific group, let alone the disenfranchised people it was originally produced by and for. To take this perspective, however, would be to forget the very localism that defines hip-hop. Pennycook (2007a; 2007b) and others (Alim, 2009; Androutopoulos, 2009; Pennycook and Mitchell, 2009) have argued that the 'globalisation' of hip-hop actually serves to testify to the genre's inherent localism. In its multinational and multicultural manifestations, hip-hop is appropriated in ways that demonstrate the local and specific concerns of the particular culture that produces and consumes it. Pennycook notes that for many hip-hop artists around the world 'the first move toward localization is a rejection of aspects of rap from the United States and a turn toward overtly local themes' (2007a: 106).

Today, then, it is in this 'glocalisation' (Robertson, 1995) that we see most evidently the exclusive/inclusive dichotomy that defines hip-hop played out. Back in the day, though, Rakim showed that U.S. hip-hop was capable of both achieving great popularity *and* creating a community of listeners who the lyrics covertly targeted. The identity of these listeners was not defined along national, racial, or sexual grounds, but by a love for and a great knowledge of hip-hop. As Rakim said: 'It aint where you're from, its where you're at' (Eric B and Rakim, 'I Know You Got Soul').

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AppendixChorus 1X:

(Yo) I find a show, rhyme til it's time to go	1
I'm designed to blow, my mind's inclined to flow	2
Yo, my M.O., makin all kind of dough	3
From the info that Rakim show, y'know?	4

Verse One:

Yes yes y'all, I still fiend by any means	5
to flow, and I go through extremes don't intervene	6
My adventures show like a three dimensional screen	7
Cause I mention many things and I'm presentin many scenes	8
Guess I'm telegraphic, motions energetic	9
Better tell em forget it, cause I'm telekinetic	10
Crowds is screamin, I choke the mic and keep squeezin	11
Styles seemin like I used a thousand words without breathin	12
Bustin techs like Russian Roulette I doubt you win	13
Freestyles like hand grenades without the pin	14
Composin, then leave the mic full of corrosion	15
Don't test this, or best to expects this explosion	16
At shows I spit flows with seven deadly venoms	17
Killin syllables with poisonous synonyms in em	18
Ideas is blowin, mics is blowin	19
From what I'm showin, see it, I keep it goin when I'm flowin	20

Chorus 1XVerse Two:

When I'm flowin, theoretically speakin like a drummer	21
I take you through the streets to the parks in the summer	22
or illustrate, a time and place you never been in	23
and make you focus on the future after seein the beginning	24
And my style wilds, like Miles on the trumpet	25
Volume dial was kind of low, need to pump it	26
Up another notch turn the dial til it stops	27
More watts you got, more things to watch	28
Third eye's wide open, you're focused on the theory	29
Keep scopin til you hear me, words is spoken clearly	30
It's no smokescreens on the scenes that I'm showin	31
Man I keep it goin, damn I keep it flowin	32

Chorus 2XVerse Three:

Two pages cause panic, freestyles is frantic	33
Thoughts is organic, flow is aerodynamic	34

Mic is volcanic, rhymes spread across the planet	35
I send out the scribe now the vibes gigantic	36
Now, I'm internationally known, mental capacities blown	37
I hope your microphone's accident prone	38
Raw footage is shown, but only showin scenes of my own	39
Leavin your peripheral vision in a zone	40
But not the twilight, from the insight that I write	41
and recite, in my mic'll be bright, cause I like	42
the night glowin, it's out of sight when I'm showin	43
Man I keep it goin, damn I keep it flowin	44

Chorus 2X

Verse Four:

Yo, accurate tactics make em clap to this	45
When I move the crowd, my rhythm still don't miss	46
Breeze through melodies cause it's been a long time	47
My lyrics is fury and rappers hate to hear me rhyme	48
Every antidote that I quote, is no joke	49
Nobody's smilin in the ghetto from the notes I wrote	50
My high techniques wreck and disrespect beats	51
Have you Follow-in the leader up and down the streets	52
So kick along as I rip a song with pull	53
As the rhyme goes on I get paid in full	54
It's Rakim, I'm indicatin rhymes for the showin	55
Check it out y'all, I keep it goin when I'm flowin	56

Chorus 2X