Refereed Article

Incorporating Resistance Practices in Hip-Hop: How Kendrick Lamar morphed from Black Saviour to Black Salesman

Krishan Meepe

Black cultural practices have a rich and storied history of political resistance. Messages have been encoded into the sounds and lyrics of songs for centuries to circumvent institutional control of Black knowledge. Today, hip-hop has become a global voice for marginalised peoples and the most consumed genre of music in the US. However, Black politics have not found the same mainstream representation as black artists. This article examines the work of rapper Kendrick Lamar and argues that by moving away from a politics of resistance on his 2015 album To Pimp a Butterfly *and catering to a mainstream audience on his 2017 album* DAMN.*, Lamar has fallen victim to the process of incorporation by the mainstream culture industry. By accommodating an audience that ignores or misreads the political history of hip-hop and Black resistance, Lamar has unwittingly transformed cultural resistance into cultural capital.*

KEY WORDS: Blackness, resistance, incorporation, identity, hip-hop

Introduction

Rapper Kendrick Lamar released his breakthrough album *To Pimp A Butterfly (TPAB)* in 2015 to widespread acclaim from fans and critics alike. His fusion of jazz, soul, and hip-hop, laced with incendiary critiques of institutionalised racism in the United States, struck a chord of pro-Black[1] sentiment at the genesis of the Black Lives Matter movement. His hit single *Alright* became an anthem for protestors, following a failed attempt by police to arrest a 14-year-old boy in Cleveland, Ohio. Fox News criticised the lyrics to *Alright*, with anchor Geraldo Rivera saying, 'Hip-hop has done more damage to young African Americans than racism in recent years' (Unruly 2015[2]).

Three years later, Lamar became the first rapper to win a Pulitzer prize for his 2017 triple-platinum album *DAMN.*. On *DAMN.*, however, Lamar distanced himself from his political views and delivered a more accessible sound whilst simultaneously, hip-hop became the most consumed music genre in the US (Nielsen Music 2018: 31). Shifting his sound in line with mainstream trends, and catering to a homogenous, white audience in the process, Lamar found the kind of success rarely seen by black artists. While one can view this as a grand achievement not only for Lamar, but for hip-hop as a whole, I believe the de-politicisation of his music and mass consumption by mainstream audiences, rendered it inert as a force for socio-political change.

In this article, I argue that by straying from his politics of resistance on *TPAB* and catering to a mainstream audience on *DAMN.*, Lamar has fallen victim to the process of incorporation by the mainstream culture industry. By accommodating an audience that ignores or misreads the political history of hip-hop and Black resistance, Lamar has unwittingly transformed cultural resistance into cultural capital. To explore this phenomenon, I will firstly discuss how racial identities are produced. Drawing on Butsch's (2001: 74) conceptualisation of incorporation as a tool of hegemony to nullify resistance, I will explore how black artists must express themselves through tropes created by dominant institutions (Asante 2008: 20), controlling their identities (Love 2016: 62) and commodifying their cultural ideas (Brooker 2014: 222). I will then examine the messages encoded into *TPAB*, conceptualising the album as an educational text speaking directly to Black audiences, before arguing that *DAMN.'s* message indicates Lamar has internalised hegemonic ideals of blackness.

Constructing Blackness

Before we can understand how racial identities are incorporated, we must understand how they are constructed. Lamar grew up in Compton, California, the spiritual birthplace of West Coast hip-hop, but also a city shaped by a history of racist policies and institutional control. After the 'Second Great Migration'

and the fiery 1965 Watts Riots, the larger South Los Angeles area experienced 'white flight' as middle-class whites fled the area in fear of brewing racial tensions. Additionally, property owners engaged in the practice of 'redlining': reserving housing areas considered hazardous, for minority applicants by outlining them in red on city maps, relegating them to areas increasingly subject to urban decay. Such practices systematically enforced racial divisions and the ghettoisation of black communities, leading to ongoing over-policing and media demonisation.

Lamar's upbringing illuminates one aspect of racial identity: blackness as a political construct born of oppression. A relationship to blackness that is forced upon a subject through lived experiences of racial discrimination. This discrimination crosses class boundaries and reduces fully formed humans to a single colour, an unfortunate by-product of the legacy of white supremacy that liberal democracies are founded upon. When spruiking the virtues of freedom and equality, it is important white liberals are aware of how their national identities are shaped by a cultural-political history rooted in conquest and genocide (Love 2016: 62). As Asante (2008: 20) elaborates, the images of blackness we are sold in liberal democracies are simply another form of control. More than just unconscious biases, stereotypes function as a way for oppressors to justify their treatment of the oppressed. The images oppressors produce – the gangster, pimp, hoe, person of colour, even the 'real' or 'conscious' rapper – are all one-dimensional prisons of image. These images are accepted, internalised, and reproduced by the oppressed, enacting their own defeat. If minorities cannot control how 'real' is constructed, how can we live an authentic life? How can our cultural practices speak truth to power?

As Tricia Rose (1994: 17) has argued, contemporary cultural practices are deeply shaped by the commodity system. This creates an institutionalisation of cultural practices that Theodor Adorno dubbed 'the culture industry'. Black cultural practices within this industry must speak to both a Black audience, and a larger, predominantly white context. As post-colonial, liberal democracies are founded upon systems of white supremacy, racial minorities must develop what Du Bois influentially labelled 'double consciousness' (2007). This entails an understanding and acceptance of normative behaviour, to minimise one's marginalisation within a society, whilst simultaneously being able to identify the shortcomings of the system; retaining a sense of personal identity and a link to one's cultural heritage. Mainstream representations of Black culture lacking double consciousness have an othering effect; a symbol of rebellion, or forbidden narrative, holding the power to fascinate white audiences without directly involving them. Subsequently, according to Rux (2003: 4), race must not be thought of as real but as a constructed Dream. Blackness and whiteness are not inherent, but exist only as social constructs to affirm racial identities. These identities are expressed through symbolism, skin colour being but one such symbol.

Viewing hip-hop from this perspective where political contestation is central, Lamar's musical output has become, as Cornel West feared, 'highly packaged, regulated, distributed, circulated and consumed' (quoted in Brooker 2014: 222). Because these aesthetics are defined by, and serve, white hegemony, Lamar's racial symbolism has drifted from blackness towards whiteness. Ironically, white audiences are unable to decipher these symbols from within the white hegemony they have created, lacking the double consciousness it takes to view representations of black people as more than a racialised other (Love 2016: 47).

Though not completely inaccessible to white audiences, *TPAB* makes numerous references to Black history and iconography whilst paying tribute to an Afrocentric musical heritage. By coding messages into his work about historical Black icons and almost exclusively sampling African American artists, Lamar constructs a form of blackness that Arzumanova dubs 'proprietary' (2016: 423). It is owned by, and speaks directly to, Black audiences, all from the platform of a major music label. 'I don't know what to call this album,' co-producer Terrace Martin says in an interview with Complex. 'Some people call it jazz. I just call it a bunch of the homies playing, and going hard. It's heavily jazz-influenced, but it's heavily black in general! We didn't listen to the Beatles to do this record. No disrespect' (2015). While blackness can be a tool employed by state powers to create and disempower a racial 'other', blackness is of course defined by Black people. Black cultural expressions operating within the culture industry are expected to speak to the aforementioned larger white context. To speak directly to a Black audience then, is a radical move; a prioritisation of Black desire over white expectations that poses a tangible threat to the American state.

As Butsch (2015: 91) describes, there is an ongoing intellectual battle between hegemony and resistance within capitalist structures. While resistance is reliant upon understanding hegemonic power, hegemony is in constant flux, giving it the power of incorporation. This is the process by which resistance practices are 'corralled and rearticulated within the framework of hegemony' (Butsch 2015: 91). Incorporation is the oppressor's most insidious weapon. It is consumption personified; the symbols of the resistance reproduced by the hand that holds the whip. Resistance practices are stripped bare of political content and transmuted into commodities to

be sold back into the mainstream. Dominant institutions treat subcultures as little more than a source for fashionable products representing a meaningless and acceptable form of adolescent rebellion (Butsch 2001: 77). Butsch does not suppose incorporation to be the end of resistance however, as hegemony and resistance can never truly be complete. Instead, he calls for a more nuanced understanding. Untangling Lamar's process of incorporation may then prove fruitful to understanding cultural resistance.

Championing the Resistance

Much of the disempowerment minorities face is the result of a divisive status quo instituted by state powers. In the culture industry, this translates into a devaluation of minority cultural practices, racial or otherwise, which can have lasting effects on communities. On *TPAB's* opening track 'Wesley's Theory', Lamar tells the listener how he originally participated in the music industry out of love, but soon became enthralled with the power it afforded him. He initially hopes to use his power to create political change:

> I'ma put the Compton swap meet by the White House
> Republican run up, get socked out
> Hit the prez with a Cuban link on my neck
> Uneducated, but I got a million-dollar check like that

However, he finds his newfound power is an active threat to the status quo, and the powers that be have an interest in tearing him down. He discovers the material riches wealth afforded him were not desires of his own, but in truth, actively pushed upon him as a means to abrogate his newfound power.

> What you want you? A house or a car?
> Forty acres and a mule, a piano, a guitar?
> Anythin', see, my name is Uncle Sam, I'm your dog
> ...
> And when you hit the White House, do you
> But remember, you ain't pass economics in school
> And everything you buy, taxes will deny
> I'll Wesley Snipe your ass before thirty-five

This reference to African American movie star Wesley Snipes, is an allusion to the criminal charges and ensuing imprisonment he faced for tax evasion, a cutting reminder that black people in positions of social and financial power are not beyond control. Using the character of Uncle Sam to represent US institutions exploiting black artists who lack economic education, Lamar illustrates the education system's failure to empower marginalised communities to make informed decisions. Powerful institutions like the IRS can then further exploit those communities, preventing them from gaining independence and continuing the cycle of marginalisation. Lamar implies this is an intentional tactic, that the music industry itself is designed to rob black artists of power and maintain the institutionalisation of white supremacy. He confirms as much in an interview for MTV:

> It talks about something that we weren't taught in school. When we get this money. I've spent all my time in school, and in escaping prison, and escaping the system. So you mean to tell me, the moment I become successful and I get some money and I don't know how to manage my money, that you gon' throw me back in jail? For taxes? (2015)

Lamar encoding this message into his music both illustrates the pain of black experience, and converts his art into an alternative mode of education with the power to speak directly to Black audiences. 'I put that through my music to give game to the kids that's not being taught in them schools, it's up to me, 'cos I'm going through it' (MTV 2015).

On the song 'Institutionalized', Lamar delves into his struggle escaping behaviours he learned growing up in Compton.

> What money got to do with it?
> When I don't know the full definition of a rap image?
> I'm trapped inside the ghetto and I ain't proud to admit it
> Institutionalized, I keep runnin' back for a visit, hol' up
> …
> Institutionalized, I could still kill me a nigga, so what?

Here, we see Lamar struggling to reconcile his newfound fame and fortune with his personal identity. Not understanding the 'full definition of a rap image', he becomes 'institutionalised' by the tropes rappers are expected to fulfil to maintain high-profile positions. Although Lamar grew up with gang members, poverty, and violence, he has never fitted the role of 'gangster' or 'pimp' et cetera. 'He's a nice guy,' proclaims rap icon Snoop Dogg, 'so they have a problem with it' (Thisis50 2013). These lyrics expose a troubling issue for black artists and African American cultural expressions within the culture industry. Not only are black artists forced to satisfy hegemonic stereotypes, these stereotypes conversely mould black artists. Lamar finds himself running back to the ghetto 'for a visit', unable to reconcile his new powers with his marginalised identity. Despite

gaining the upward economic mobility he sought, he finds his identity in conflict. He finds himself free from economic institutions, but remains trapped by social ones. 'After a lifetime of embodying difference, I have no desire to be equal,' writes Black feminist author Reni Eddo-Lodge. 'I don't wish to be assimilated into the *status quo*. I want to be liberated from all negative assumptions that my characteristics bring' (2017: 184). Until action is taken against this type of epistemological violence to transform institutions into wholly inclusive spaces, change can never be realised and Black knowledge will continue to be devalued and eradicated.

These institutions do not only hold power over black people who have escaped economic instability or have a public profile, they also control everyday citizens. On 26 July 2015, police arrested a 14-year-old African American boy for allegedly being intoxicated on a bus at a Black Lives Matter event held at Cleveland State University. As Pitchfork reported, attendees at the event blocked the police vehicle from leaving until the boy was released (Gordon 2015). 'We gon' be alright!' – the hook to Lamar's hit single 'Alright' – was the celebratory chant that broke out, cementing the song as the anthem for the next generation of Black activism. In the song, Lamar raps:

> Nigga, when our pride was low
> Lookin' at the world like, 'Where do we go?'
> Nigga, and we hate po-po,
> Wanna kill us dead in the street fo sho'

This stanza highlights the tension between African Americans wanting to express their culture and identity, and the widespread police violence and discrimination they are met with. A tension symptomatic of the white supremacist foundations of the American State, and liberal democracy's inability to address this issue (Love 2016).

While Lamar's expressions of black experience were not met with the police violence or censorship that predecessors such as N.W.A. or 2 Live Crew faced, they were met with strong criticism from conservative media. In 2015, Lamar opened the Black Entertainment Television Awards with a live performance of 'Alright', rapping from the rooftop of a vandalised police car while a tattered USA flag heaved in the background. A Fox News panel took particular umbrage with the display. 'Oh please. Ugh. I don't like it,' Kimberley Guilfoyle said. 'I get it, that's his right to express himself, let the free market decide, personally it doesn't excite me' (Unruly 2015). The panellists then accused Lamar of inciting violence. 'This is why I say that hip-hop has done more damage to young African Americans than racism in recent years,' retorted Geraldo Rivera. He continues to say that linking the white supremacist 2015 Charleston church shooting, with systemic police brutality towards black people is, 'So wrong, so counter-productive, it gives exactly the wrong message.' While this can be viewed as an inconsequential misreading of Lamar's work by media personalities catering to a conservative viewer base, the panel takes a somewhat sinister turn. 'It doesn't recognise that a city like Baltimore ... 7 percent the size of New York, has just as many murders as New York.' Here, Rivera implies the real issue is not the effects of institutionalised racism, but black-on-black crime. Crime that should be policed more comprehensively, as Rivera gave the call to action: 'We've got to *wake up* at a certain point and understand what's going on here'.

Model Minority

To this day, racial hegemony successfully perpetuates whiteness as default in neoliberal democracies. As black people and Black liberation politics gain visibility within mainstream discourse, a new method of self-protection must be devised. If explicit racism or racial violence is no longer a common part of life, does this mean racism is over? Rather than excluding racial groups, we experience what Kwak (2019: 1709) calls, 'racial realignment', that is, 'the resignification of multiculturalism as part of neoliberal governance'. This phenomenon allows the American state to define what is and is not racially acceptable, to control racialised bodies so they cannot further destabilise neoliberal democracy. By carefully selecting 'model minorities' to be included in state sponsored media, hegemony corrals racialised others into political frameworks of whiteness. In turn, minorities idealise white standards and legitimise symbolic racial violence instead of advocating for structural change. This culminates in a reproduction of whiteness as normative, morally superior, and culturally dominant.

Symbols of 'acceptable blackness' are commodified and consumed by white audiences, controlling the boundaries of black identities. In developing the idea of 'gender as consumption', Kay Siebler proposes, '[i]n a culture where consumption is a way of life, a way to validate one's existence, a way to display one's status and worth, queerness has been co-opted' (2015: 139). Applying this framework to racial identities, the fetishisation and commodification of African American experiences allows whites to buy into blackness. By signifying elements of blackness through consumption, whites are able to adopt the 'cool' of African American cultural practices, inoculate themselves against accusations of racism, and ignore demands for structural change. It has become increasingly accessible for whites to cover their laptop cases with 'Black Lives Matter' or 'Anarchist' stickers, don their favourite rapper's new sweatshirt, and say the n-word at hip-hop shows whilst black people look away

in discomfort. 'When I go to work, thousands of white people scream the word n***** at me,' rapper Noname tweeted in 2019. '[I am] consistently creating content that is primarily consumed by a white audience who would rather shit on me than challenge their liberalism because somehow liking Lizzos [sic] music absolves them of racist tendencies' (Consequence of Sound 2019). As figureheads who do not serve Black interests control the institutions black artists are forced to use to express their message, black bodies become incorporated into the politics of whiteness, moulding boundaries of inclusion and exclusion through commodity.

Although I have argued that blackness is a political construct that exists outside of, and in resistance to, hegemony, this does not mean black people within the mainstream should be denied their status as Black. No minority group has ever been freed without help from those in power. Appealing to, collaborating, or even identifying with mainstream white audiences, bears no inherent wrong. Building solidarity across racial lines, particularly from a Black perspective, is an important act. Black people do hold power in shaping Black symbolism, even if it may serve white interests. It is not the act of becoming mainstream or catering to white audiences that erodes blackness, but the commodification and sale of Black politics as cultural capital, for personal gain. In Lamar's case, we see this manifest as a shift in political goals on *DAMN.*. While *TPAB* saw Lamar searching for an answer to internal conflict and finding it in Black political resistance, on *DAMN.* we find him searching for a different perspective. A central theme throughout the album is the relationship between wickedness and weakness, exemplified in the opening track 'BLOOD.':

> [Intro: Bēkon]
> Is it wickedness?
> Is it weakness?
> You decide
> Are we gonna live or die?

A decided move away from the hints at class conflict and social power divisions, these lines about wickedness and weakness consider personal choices. Confusingly, this new message about personal demons undermines his previous work of raising class-consciousness. He asks the listener whether his demons are a sign of one of two options and to deliver judgement upon him, granting life or death.

During the song 'FEAR.', Lamar's cousin Carl Duckworth is heard on a voicemail saying:

> The so-called Blacks, Hispanics, and Native American Indians
> Are the true children of Israel
> We are the Israelites, according to the Bible
> The children of Israel
> He's gonna punish us for our iniquities, for our disobedience
> Because we chose to follow other gods
> ...
> That's why we're in the position that we're in
> Until we come back to these laws, statutes, and commandments
> And do what the Lord says, these curses is gonna be upon us
> We gonna be at a lower state in this life that we live
> Here, in today, in the United States of America

Here we find Lamar's central narrative for the album: his internal wickedness is a result of God's damnation. Until they are able to return to God's commandments, racial minorities are doomed to live in a 'lower state' in life. Lamar discusses his ideological shift in an interview for *Beats* 1:

> The best way for me to put it, To Pimp A Butterfly would be the idea of ... changing the world … DAMN. would be the idea: I can't change the world until I change myself (2017).

Here, Lamar explicitly states his belief that responsibility for social change rests solely on the shoulders of the individual. No longer does he believe institutional change is the key to restructuring society and ending marginalisation of minority groups. Instead he embraces the neoliberal doctrine of changing oneself to meet the expectations of society. Lamar's rise to fame appears to have cost him his 'double consciousness' and led him to internalise hegemonic ideals. 'The roots of these injustices are political, they're social, they're economic, to blame it all on God's will just kinda seems disgusting to me', popular music critic Anthony Fantano declares in his review of *DAMN.* 'Bordering on self hatred and, most definitely self-flagellation. And, in my opinion, the exact *opposite* of being conscious' (Theneedledrop 2017). Lamar's perspective here conflicts with the core message of *TPAB*. Turning his back on the unique identity he created on *TPAB*, he plays into non-threatening tropes of blackness that are palatable to the culture industry, crafting a new identity that is no longer proprietarily Black.

On the lead single from *DAMN.*, 'HUMBLE.', Lamar also faced criticism for his lyrics about women. He raps:

I'm so fuckin' sick and tired of the Photoshop
Show me somethin' natural like afro on Richard Pryor
Show me somethin' natural like ass with some stretch marks

As African-American writer Sesali Bowen wrote for *Refinery29*,

> Kendrick is cute, but my self-worth is not contingent on whether or not he (or anyone else) would fuck me on my mom's couch ... The unfortunate truth is that fitting into hetero-normative beauty standards is a very real commodity for women. There are social benefits and privileges that come with being considered beautiful under a male gaze. Instead of challenging that system of value, Lamar is prioritizing his preferences in it (2017).

Despite these criticisms, Lamar won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for *DAMN.*, the first musical album to win outside of the jazz or classical genres. Recognising *DAMN.* with a Pulitzer has little to do with its social importance or musical qualities, functioning instead as a way for mainstream institutions to pretend hegemony supports African American music and Black politics. As the critic Kyle Gann stated in 1991, 'The Pulitzer has become a Reward for Conformity and a Compensation Prize for Ineffectuality. But it gives the public the idea that the winners represent the best modern music, and an excuse to conclude that American music sucks' (2006: 122). The unfortunate reality of a state-instituted culture industry is that for an artist to achieve such great heights, the state must endorse their media. Although *TPAB* catapulted Lamar's reach and success, it was due largely to its circumvention of the American state. However, as the methods of censorship and criticism used to control practices of cultural resistance are slowly eroded, incorporation has become an increasingly sophisticated tool to enforce boundaries upon what can and cannot be said. Rather than simply commodifying the cultural products of artists – turning songs into recordings to be sold on CDs, an artist's image into posters and figurines, live performances into exclusive DVDs – practices of incorporation have begun to commodify artists identities altogether.

Conclusion

Political movements are rarely started by politicians alone. They spark cultural movements, produce cultural artifacts, and are fought by cultural means. Politics often presents itself as a game of aesthetics, and as *TPAB* shows us, resistance culture is a powerful weapon. Through this album, Lamar created a text that spoke directly to Black audiences, pushed Black politics into mainstream discourse, and produced an anthem for a protest movement that echoed across the globe. Yet a mere two years later, the messages encoded into *DAMN.* radically altered in tone. As Lamar's views shifted in line with neoliberal thought, and his sound became tailored towards a homogenous, mainstream audience, his political voice is undermined and his identity commodified. No longer does Lamar discuss how neoliberal democracies protect whiteness as default and disempower racial minorities; instead he finds solace in religious salvation and personal change.

Some might see Lamar's changing political beliefs as nothing more than a symptom of his ambition or religious beliefs. They very well might be. However, they are also a symptom of operating within a music industry built for a specific kind of audience. While *DAMN.* afforded him a larger audience, Lamar has failed to address his newfound fans in a way that is politically meaningful, allowing for them to misread his previous message of Black liberation. For his ambitions of braggadocious financial success to be realised, Lamar must be able to cater to white audiences and voice messages about African American communities that do not pose a radical threat to the status quo. By de-politicising his art, Lamar allows white liberals to engage in his music without a critical examination of its socio-political context, including the racial formation of neoliberal democracies themselves. His work on *TPAB* may have thrust Black liberation politics into the public spotlight, but *DAMN.'s* message has overshadowed it. The critical reception *DAMN.* received from white institutions like the Pulitzer Prize has only served to cement its place as a 'superior' album and affirm his voice as non-radical.

Black cultural practices like blues and jazz have historically been adopted, institutionalised, and appropriated by white artists. This may just be the beginning of the end for hip-hop. As capitalism consumes another genre of music, it also consumes another Black identity. It consumes the diversity of racial representation people of colour call for, reducing it to the highly packaged and regulated commodity Cornel West warned us of. I believe it is important that further research is undertaken to examine methods of reclaiming resistance from incorporation, and the nuance marginalised artists can utilise within a system that seeks to destroy them. If we are to truly gain freedom from the capitalist machine that controls our cultural practices, our identities, and our hopes for sustainable life on this planet, we cannot allow artists like Lamar to be 'cancelled' and discarded. Artists and celebrities do not exist outside of such socio-political discourse and should be included in conversations of aesthetics, culture and politics.

References

Arzumanova, I. 2016 'The culture industry and Beyoncé's proprietary blackness',s, 7, 3: 421-424.

Asante, M.K. 2008 *It's Bigger Than Hip Hop: The Rise of the Post-Hip-Hop Generation*, St. Martin's, New York.

Bowen, S. 2017 The Problem With Kendrick Lamar's "Humble" Video, *Refinery29*, https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2017/03/148071/kendrick-lamar-humble-lyrics-stretch-marks-natural-women (accessed 5/10/2020).

Brooker, P. (ed) 2014 *Modernism/Postmodernism*, Routledge, New York.

Butsch, R. 2001 'Considering resistance and incorporation', *Leisure Sciences*, 23, 2: 71-79.

Butsch, R. 2015 'Reconsidering resistance and incorporation', In G. Dines & J. M. Humez (eds), *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*, Sage, California: 87-98.

Complex 2015, 'Interview: Terrace Martin Talks the Traumas and Close-Knit Collaborations That Inspired Kendrick Lamar's New Album' https://www.complex.com/music/2015/03/interview-terrace-martin-producer-to-pimp-a-butterfly (accessed 28/09/2020).

Consequence of Sound 2019 'Noname may quit music, says she won't perform for mostly white audiences' https://consequenceofsound.net/2019/11/noname-may-quit-music-wont-perform-for-mostly-white-audiences (accessed 5/10/2020).

Du Bois, W.E.B. 2007 *The Souls of Black Folk*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Eddo-Lodge, R. 2017 *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, Great Britain, Bloomsbury.

Gann, K. 2006, *Music Downtown: Writings from the Village Voice*, University of California, California.

Gordon, J. 2015 Kendrick Lamar's 'Alright' Chanted by Protesters During Cleveland Police Altercation, *Pitchfork* https://pitchfork.com/news/60568-kendrick-lamars-alright-chanted-by-protesters-during-cleveland-police-altercation/ (accessed 29/07/2020).

Kwak, L.J. 2019 ' "New Canadians are new conservatives": race, incorporation and achieving electoral success in multicultural Canada', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42, 10: 1708-1726.

Love, N.S. 2016, *Trendy Fascism: White Power Music and the Future of Democracy*, State University of New York, New York.

Nielsen Music 2018, '2017 Year-End Music Report: U.S.' https://www.nielsen.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/04/2017-year-end-music-report-us.pdf (accessed 10/04/2021).

Rose, T. 1994 *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Wesleyan University, Hanover.

Rux, C.H. 2003 'Eminem: the new white negro', In Tate G (ed), *Everything But The Burden: What White People are Taking from Black Culture*, Broadway Books, New York : 1-38.

Siebler, K. 2015, 'Transgender transitions: sex/gender binaries in the digital age', In G. Dines & J. M. Humez (eds), *Gender, Race, and Class in Media*, Sage, California: 132-142.

Filmography

Unruly 2015 *Geraldo Rivera rips Kendrick Lamar's BET Award set,* video recording, <https://youtu.be/U3_hi8eWdbY> (accessed 03/07/2020).

Beats 1 2017 *Kendrick Lamar: 'DAMN' Behind the Album [FULL INTERVIEW] | Beats 1 | Apple Musi*c, video recording, <https://youtu.be/zwNhoyDjAPg> (accessed 3/08/2020).

MTV 2015 *Kendrick Lamar Breaks Down Tracks From 'To Pimp A Butterfly' (Pt. 1) | MTV New*s, video recording, <https://youtu.be/AUEI_ep9iDs> (accessed 03/08/2020).

Theneedledrop 2017 *Kendrick Lamar – DAMN. ALBUM REVIEW*, video recording, <https://youtu.be/RIGINiBYxis> (accessed 10/04/2021).

ThisIs50 2013 *Uncle Snoop Speaks On Kendrick Lamar's 'Control' Verse*, video recording, <https://youtube/8nvZWC0HLE0> (accessed 20/07/2020).

Discography

Kendrick Lamar, 2015, *To Pimp A Butterfly*, Apple Music, Top Dawg Entertainment.

Kendrick Lamar, 2017, *DAMN*., Apple Music, Top Dawg Entertainment.

Author

Krishan Meepe is a Naarm based academic, musician, and producer with a background in sound engineering. He possesses a decade of experience performing and recording with artists across the musical spectrum and has worked as an assistant engineer to renowned producers Tristan Hoogland and Magoo. Krishan holds a BMus (First Class Honours) from the University of Melbourne where he is currently working as a research assistant in the field of ethnomusicology. His research interests focus on issues of race, identity, and hip-hop.

End Notes

1. I use uppercase B Black as opposed to lowercase b black to make an ideological distinction between political agency and skin colour. While black denotes a racial category that reduces a person to the colour of their skin, Black represents a framework of Black liberation politics that is not necessarily exclusive to African Americans.
2. The Fox News broadcast in question was a live broadcast that could not be found in a more reliable location. The source quoted (Unruly 2015) is a YouTube video of the broadcast on TV, filmed by a member of the public. See filmography for source.

Mumbai Shuffle

In a famous Mumbai slum, Kevin McCloud
gravely ponders a million souls in a square mile
producing millions' worth of goods
apparently from nothing

women in doorways lean in towards each other
not everyone smiles at Kevin, or, beyond him, at us
in our odourless dwellings, with no more rats than we can handle
toilets to shit in rather than the open drains their kids dangle over

on a hot night in Adelaide
one dead rat is making its olfactory mark nearby
a lone cockroach crosses the floor
it's the season when the eye catches sideways scuttles

the lizard brain hisses "arachnid"
before the front elaborates: 'huntsman'

I may be alone in all this space
but absent family clusters round

we slept five to a room when small
sharp edges ground down by proximity, rubbing along

in the slum, the streets are safe at night
at parties, ten or more pairs of hands touch your food
before your plate reaches you

the schoolgirls leaving these warrens each new day
are crisp as banknotes
clean as whistles
which do not follow their shining progress

Cath Kenneally