



## Review of Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Jonathan Walker



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[1] By the end of the 1960s, the coalition of forces involved in civil rights campaigning had dissolved: white liberals who were happy to call for voting rights and an end to *de jure* segregation blanched when Malcolm X and eventually Martin Luther King condemned government and business interests in northern cities for their maintenance of economic inequality and *de facto* segregation; SNCC and CORE expelled their white members and came under increasing police surveillance and provocation; the Black Panthers seized the moment by putting into practice the kind of self defense Malcolm X had called for, but even they collapsed under sustained and violent FBI suppression. At the same time Nixon encouraged the suppression of radical black movements, he finessed the Black Power movement, turning it into a mechanism for generating black entrepreneurs and professionals to be co-opted by the system under the cloak of radical rhetoric.<sup>(1)</sup>

[2] Black musical culture may have become big business in the 60s, but it was still responsive to changes in the black community. The non-violence of the early-60s campaigns had been dependent on its appeal to the conscience of the Washington political establishment, or on its threat to their international image (it certainly wasn't going to pull on the heartstrings of the southern police and Citizens' Councils); when this strategy had evidently run its course, black musical culture also underwent a shift: the assiduously non-threatening Tamla Motown began to give way to music which was much less concerned about its appeal to white audiences, and leading this trend was James Brown, the "father of funk." Brown was considered so influential within black America that he was courted by both the Black Panthers and Nixon: the Panthers demanded that he use his influence more constructively ("Say it loud, 'I'm black and I'm proud!!,'" was the immediate result), while Nixon succeeded in gaining Brown's endorsement for his re-election campaign. Funk was recognized as the expression of the black ghettos, until its adoption by major recording companies pressured even such highly respected funk bands as Kool & The Gang to dilute their music into the more marketable and non-threatening disco.<sup>(2)</sup> The economic downturn that began in the early 70s led to the ravaging of black neighborhoods, as big business sought to maintain its profit margins by squeezing those least able to fight back.<sup>(3)</sup> Not only was the standing of funk damaged by its association with disco, but the expense involved in creating funk was now beyond the means of so many in the ghettos.

[3] Hip-hop emerged from one of the worst ghettos: the South Bronx, to which many black and Latino residents were forcibly relocated—out of sight and out of mind—when their Manhattan neighborhoods caught the eye of property developers.<sup>(4)</sup> Through the expanding repertoire of techniques employed by DJs such as Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash, and the refinement of rapping (MC-ing), often in competition between gangs, the basis for hip-hop was created in extreme adversity (to the wealthy policy-makers who propagate the "cultural pathology" thesis of "black under-achievement": whose is the pathology that created the ghettos, and whose the cultural achievement in the face of this?). In time, cassette

recordings began to circulate, and then in 1979 two commercial recordings were issued, using MCs alongside live musicians (rather than a DJ).<sup>(5)</sup> This provoked better established hip-hop crews into seeking commercial contracts themselves, with various small, specialist labels. By the end of the 80s, however, hip-hop music had become big business, and the existing hip-hop labels were offered lucrative distribution deals by major recording companies.<sup>(6)</sup> By this stage, as a by-product of the Reagan administration's covert funding of the Nicaraguan Contras, black and Latino neighborhoods of Los Angeles were flooded with cocaine, which in the form of crack transformed the economy of the ghetto, and produced the way of life reported, celebrated, and sometimes lamented in gangsta rap. In reaction to these developments, other hip-hop artists attempted to provide more edifying alternatives, with various combinations of political critique (of police *and* gangsters), Afrocentrism, religious black nationalism (the Nation of Islam and the 5% Nation) and the invocation of jazz as a black cultural model.

[4] During the 80s, the white, high-art world had already assimilated (or so it thought) a one-time inhabitant of hip-hop culture, the former graffiti artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.<sup>(7)</sup> Now, at the beginning of the 90s, it was time for academia to acknowledge hip-hop music (all but one of the sources on hip-hop cited in the volume under review date from after 1990).<sup>(8)</sup> In 1991, Richard Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics* included a thoughtful study of Stetsasonic's celebrated "Talkin' All That Jazz," although the semantic content of the lyrics greatly overshadowed musical aspects of the song.<sup>(9)</sup> Tricia Rose made one of the most important contributions to the literature in 1994, in *Black Noise*, which included one of the earlier feminist accounts of hip-hop misogyny and female rappers.<sup>(10)</sup> bell hooks also provided some subtle feminist critiques, but tellingly had her interview with Ice Cube "sliced to ribbons" by the commissioning magazine when the hoped-for battle royal turned out to be a respectful dialogue (with Ice Cube condemning male violence against women).<sup>(11)</sup> In 1995, Russell Potter considered hip-hop in the context of postmodernism, and provided an eclectic series of lyrics-based analyses in *Spectacular Vernaculars*.<sup>(12)</sup> In the same year, a wide ranging collection of essays, many on topics which had received little attention before, appeared as *Droppin' Science*, edited by William Perkins.<sup>(13)</sup> In 1998, Robin D. G. Kelley contributed the most memorable title in the literature—"Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!"—and provided a pointed and often witty critique of how the maintenance of black stereotypes meshes with reactionary social policy.<sup>(14)</sup> In the year following the publication of Krims's volume there has been an interesting exploration of his central topic: the construction of identities through hip-hop, in *Performing Identity/Performing Culture*, by Greg Dimitriadis,<sup>(15)</sup> and one of Krims's other major concerns—the internationalization of hip-hop—has been addressed in the forthcoming *Global Noise*, edited by Tony Mitchell.<sup>(16)</sup>

[5] Krims notes in his Introduction that the validation of rap "via expositions of some of its poetics turns out to be a project of a surprisingly high percentage of scholarship, occurring far more frequently than in any other genre I know of" (p. 13). This should probably be no surprise: considering the vilification of urban ghetto inhabitants in the national press, through selective statistics and manipulations *a la* "Willie" Horton, the cultural products of those communities need more defending in the academy than any other artifacts. Let us grant that hip-hop has been in existence for a quarter of a century, and compare the status of hip-hop today with the status of bebop in the mid 60s, about a quarter century after its inception; one might wonder whether say, Rakim, or DJ Premier will ever enjoy the kind of iconic status long ago accorded to Charlie Parker (which is certainly not to say that hip-hop should ever strive to be "America's Classical Music"). But after a decade of hip-hop scholarship, Krims is fortunately able to "assume the importance of the subject matter and continue from there" (p. 13). Instead of having to engage in any lengthy validation of hip-hop as a legitimate field of study, he must instead justify his own book-length addition to a body of scholarship that is already substantial. And his justification is that the relation of "musical design to cultural workings in detail is what may prove to separate this book from the other fine collections and monographs on the topic of rap music and/or hip-hop culture" (p. 14).

[6] Krims painstakingly qualifies and defends his commitment to musical "close reading." This approach is, after all, viewed with deep suspicion by popular-music scholars from a non-musicological/music-theoretical background: "The argument asserts that such analyses treat the music as if it were some self-existent object whose meaning can be determined outside creative and diverse responses of communities" (p. 20). But as Krims argues, close reading need not imply reification and mystification, and he cites in his favor the very different status that close reading enjoys in film studies; the suspicion musical close reading draws upon itself arises specifically from the role it has performed within music scholarship in the past (see pp. 17–24). And this takes us to the heart of Krims's present project: "I aim here at nothing less than asserting that studying musical poetics can be a task of the greatest social relevance, even in some cases an indispensable (though never sufficient) part of the cultural study of music" (p. 14).

[7] Krims intends his monograph to fulfill three functions within and across disciplinary boundaries. First, this is a music-theoretical project that is meant to broaden music theorists' conception of their discipline. Second, this is also a

musicological work designed to reinforce the various tendencies that used to be identified as “the new musicology.” Third, Krims’s ultimate ambition is that the present volume should serve as a stepping-stone towards the day when both music theory and musicology can take their place as specialized regions within the broader field of cultural studies. But this is not to suggest that Krims adopts hip-hop as an arbitrary tool to reshape or break down disciplinary boundaries. On the contrary, he argues that hip-hop and cultural identities are among the social practices and constructions that eventually bring about such changes within scholarly activity (see p. 4). Krims himself is not only a member of the international audience for commercial hip-hop recordings, but has also been an occasional contributor to the culture, as instrumentalist and producer. It is hardly surprising, then, that Adorno receives only a passing mention; Krims cannot endorse the Adornian critique of mass culture, and therefore feels no compulsion to justify his work by attributing “resistant readings” to hip-hop’s audiences. While admitting that the hip-hop featured in his book has been filtered through the needs and marketing strategies of the recording industry, he recognizes that hip-hop is nevertheless capable of constructing identities which, though often not genuinely oppositional, nevertheless stand outside the limits of the dominant ideology.<sup>(17)</sup> This approach is better able to face the ability of present-day capital to absorb almost anything (even anti-capitalist literature is becoming a highly marketable commodity) without sinking back into the pessimism of Adorno, or the complacency of the post-modernist tendency to celebrate what is supposedly undefeatable. Hip-hop reception in the last decade has featured a number of moral panics, usually with a racist subtext;<sup>(18)</sup> notoriously, even Bill Clinton entered the fray, attacking Sista Souljah for a comment made after the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion.<sup>(19)</sup> But the moralizing rhetoric has never done anything more than shuffle the deck of hip-hop artists, labels and distributors; moralizing (against black communities) serves moneyed interests, but if it conflicts with those interests it can always be kept in check. If hip-hop were perceived as a real threat to capital, it would certainly not be the largest sector of the recording industry today.

[8] After a substantial and useful introduction, Krims lays out his case in five chapters, none of which draw substantially on previously published material, although each could be read independently of the others without serious detriment. Chapters 1 and 2 are general, while Chapters 3–5 are more concrete, featuring case studies of particular hip-hop artists and “songs.” Chapter 1 attempts to show how music analysis can fit within cultural-studies scholarship, answering the standard objections to analysis while granting their partial validity (in general, that they pass fair comment only on the bulk of past practice). Krims recommends that the scope of music theory should be extended to all “theory about music,” while within this, “musical poetics” is that part of music theory which deals with the organization of sound in music. With regard to hip-hop, musical poetics is required in order to demonstrate how cultural identities are encoded in songs. Chapter 2 moves squarely onto hip-hop territory, discussing the system of generic categories recognized by hip-hop artists and their audience, and showing how these categories can be defined to a large extent through musical poetics; Krims is careful not to take this too far, and avoids de-historicizing or essentializing hip-hop genres.

[9] Chapter 3 takes a single song as a case study, namely Ice Cube’s “The Nigga Ya Love to Hate,” produced by the Bomb Squad (Public Enemy’s producers). Krims now presents the full technical apparatus of his hip-hop analyses: avoiding staff notation, he uses a grid system to convey rhythms, which widens his potential readership to all those familiar with sequencer programs; pitch is covered by letter names for notes and chords. While the small-scale analyses using this apparatus provide accurate transcriptions of the Bomb Squad’s dense, multi-layered music, perhaps most impressive is the large-scale formal-textural diagram of the song, packed with detail that requires several listenings to appreciate. Krims discusses how this song exemplifies the “hardcore” style and constructs a “black revolutionary subject” (I find the latter problematic, as I discuss below). Chapter 4 explains how geographically defined identities are formed in hip-hop, with special attention to the work of the Atlanta-based Goodie MoB. Geography was already a matter of dispute by the mid-80s even within the confines of NYC (Bronx-based KRS-One repudiated MC Shan’s rival claims for Queensbridge),<sup>(20)</sup> but as hip-hop spread to other urban centers across the U.S., different styles were formed in the effort to assert independence from New York. Some of the more rudimentary analytical apparatus is used to this end, but there is nothing approaching the detail or scope of the Ice Cube analysis of the previous chapter (perhaps this was not needed, but one might suspect from the sophistication of Chapter 3 that it was the last to be written). Chapter 5 traces the spread of hip-hop beyond the U.S., with case studies in the Netherlands—the Amsterdam-based Spookrijders—and Canada—the Cree MC Bannock, based in Edmonton, Alberta (whose image appears on the book’s front cover). Krims has worked with Bannock, and is therefore able, owing to his insider’s knowledge, to provide a more intimate account. Indeed, the Bannock item in the book’s discography has not even been commercially released. International communities of hip-hop artists are shown to interact dialectically with U.S. hip-hop; the art of the DJ, for example, had its origins in Jamaica, and after waning in the U.S. during the early 90s, it was revitalized partly under the influence of outsiders, such as DJ Honda of Japan, and DJ Dave of Germany.<sup>(21)</sup>

[10] Krims has devised an efficient terminological framework for the technical discussion of style and genre. Because the

implied conceptual divisions play a foundational role here, Krims is at pains to justify his choices by tracing them back to the discursive practices of hip-hop artists, journalists, and fans. The MC's flow, that is, the non-semantic aspects of rap delivery (principally rhythm and rhyme schemes), can follow one of three styles according to Krims: "sung," "percussion-effusive," and "speech-effusive." The first corresponds roughly to "old school" flow: "rhythmic repetition, on-beat accents, regular on-beat pauses, and strict couplet groupings" ("sung" because the spoken delivery resembles song except in respect to pitch) (p. 50). The two "effusive" styles are both characteristically "new school" (late 80s onwards), and are marked by "a tendency to spill over the rhythmic boundaries of the meter [and] the couplet, staggering the syntax and/or the rhymes, [and] creating polyrhythms with four-measure groupings of 4/4 time" (p. 50). The opposition between the two effusive styles is then a percussive approach with clear articulation and staccato delivery, generally with recurring rhythmic patterns, versus an approach closer to normal speech with more vaguely defined rhythmic location and articulation and highly irregular rhythms (p. 51). While Krims has had to coin his own terms, he has not imposed an alien structure on hip-hop practices, but only teased out the basis for the old-school/new-school distinction universally understood among hip-hop's audiences.

[11] On the level of genre, Krims presents four categories: "party," "mack," "jazz/bohemian" and "reality" rap, discussing the characteristics of musical style, flow and (discursive) topics for each one; all four terms have some currency in familiar hip-hop discourse. Party rap is the oldest of the genres (or strictly, the pre-generic default), typified by relatively fast and danceable funk or disco samples, sung flow and lyrics marked by "celebration, pleasure and humour." Krims offers a telling example of party-rap being treated as a musical topic by KRS-One at the opening of "MCs Act Like They Don't Know," before he reverts to the speech-effusive flow that was his default by the time this song was recorded (1995) (pp. 58–62).<sup>(22)</sup> Mack rap is typified by uncomplicated R&B-style music, and, of course, by lyrics featuring "boasts of sexual prowess, attempts at seduction" and "images of wealth" (p. 64). Jazz/bohemian rap, the most artistically self-conscious genre, is eclectic in its musical styles, often referential or humorous in its use of samples, and sometimes turning (non-ironically) to jazz. Topics are equally wide-ranging, from the opacity of some De La Soul lyrics to the rejection of mack or gangsta values, to the advocacy of Afrocentricity (see pp. 65–70). Finally, reality rap cultivates a "hardcore" style, which on the East Coast generally meant dense, multi-layered and often clashing samples (established by Public Enemy's producers, the Bomb Squad),<sup>(23)</sup> while on the West Coast, the preference for George Clinton samples or live funk backing (the G-Funk style) meant that the burden of establishing "hardness" fell on the lyrics (an example of geographic marking). The speech-effusive flow style has predominated in reality rap from the early 90s onwards. Topics are diverse, but "ghetto authenticity" provides a common denominator: lyrics may celebrate or lament the various aspects of gang life, they may call for political engagement and/or present the values and ideas of the NOI or 5% Nation (see pp. 70–80). Krims rightly regards all these genres as mutually permeable, but this does not undermine the provisional usefulness of the distinctions.

[12] Anyone who has read this far will be in no doubt that the present reviewer holds Krims's volume in high regard. There are, however, some problems to address. First, and most superficially, there are occasional baroque flourishes—concessions to fashion—that may, for a moment, undermine some readers' confidence in Krims's seriousness (they should persevere). The cultivation of pseudo-paradoxes is one fashionable habit that makes an appearance in this volume:

[O]ne might try to retain a picture of a vernacular culture and a mass culture. Such a thing is simultaneously impossible and necessary; impossible, because at any given moment any representation will emphasize one aspect over another, but necessary, because both are indispensable truths. (p. 6)

But what is possible "at any given moment" is an irrelevance: there are over two hundred pages in the present volume—plenty of room for giving both aspects a good airing. Readers will not be surprised to hear that Krims succeeds in fulfilling his "impossible" but necessary task. And then, a little later, Lacan appears:

If my presence in the rest of the book can be charted, then I am assuming (indeed, not-so-secretly hoping), that it may be charted in the way that I describe Lacan's view of the Subject—that the Subject is signaled by that which "perturbs the smooth engine of symbolization and throws it off balance, an anamorphic entity that gains its consistency only in retrospect, viewed from within the symbolic horizon." (p. 7)

Some readers will doubtless take delight in such pretty word patterns, but they might do well to ask themselves whether the present volume could generate much interest if it were written in this manner throughout. Krims's achievement is clear, and does not need the adornment of such tinsel.

[13] A more serious problem emerges in the methodology of Chapter 3 (the analysis of Ice Cube's "The Nigga Ya Love to Hate") when Krims moves from the formal/textual analysis to the consideration of interpretations that can be attached to

(putatively) significant details emerging from that analysis. The source of the problem seems to be that Krims required only a modest analysis in order to make the points he raises elsewhere about style and genre. To the mind of this reader, the grand analysis of Chapter 3 is of great interest in itself (although I wouldn't want to see the same approach repeated endlessly in graduate dissertations as a hip-hop equivalent to Schenker or Forte). But Krims seems convinced that these analytical efforts stand in need of interpretative justification, as if his leaving any part of the analysis to stand alone would constitute an aestheticization of the song, an imposition of art-work ideology (and as if all he had said to the contrary suddenly counted for nothing). In fact Krims's interpretative imperative eventually leads him (paradoxically, if you must) to treat the song as if it were a text lending itself to limitless scrutiny outside of its real-time playback. And this also causes him to write as if he were working within the resistant-reading faction of cultural studies, clutching at any tiny detail that might, if poked and prodded for a while, yield up a tiny squeak of opposition to the dominant ideology. This accounts for the long and tortuous comparison of two phrases: "Tom, Dick and Hank" and "build, mold and fold"; Krims tries to argue that the *lack* of a cymbal attack together with the first "and," and the *presence* of a synthesizer attack together with the second "and" is highly significant. Without rehearsing Krims's entire argument, the former indicates resistance to a "white" identity, the latter support for Ice Cube's "revolutionary" identity (pp. 112–16; I'm not sure that Krims has even convinced himself by the end of the discussion). I simply cannot believe that Ice Cube or the Bomb Squad had the leisure time to consider any of this in the studio—and the two events, note, are quite distant from each other in the song. Even less could I believe that this minute difference had prompted any other listener to draw the same conclusions. If we assign some kind of agency to texts themselves, then there is, of course no problem, but this is crass mystification of a kind I do not believe Krims would want to endorse. The problem is perhaps symptomatic of the tendency to treat all artifacts as texts, marginalizing the peculiarities of different media; some artifacts are experienced as they unfold in real time, which severely discourages the kind of contemplative examination that texts—in the standard, written sense—allow.<sup>(24)</sup>

[14] Some aspects of Krims's political analysis are also questionable. Krims attributes the major shift in the humanities to the new economic environment of "post-Fordism," while music theory remains a relic of Fordism and Cold War imperatives.<sup>(25)</sup> But the notion that we live in a post-Fordist world today, although prominent in cultural-studies discourse, is, I would argue, delusory, and if so, Krims would need to find a new basis for the shift. First, post-Fordist theorists mischaracterize Fordist mass production: the Model T case—a single product, unchanging over a long period—was more exception than rule. Second, much industrial plant during the period in question (from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century up to about 1970) was adaptable to new lines. Third, mass production was applicable only to complex consumer durables (electrical goods, cars, etc.), and not to other large sectors of the economy: capital-intensive processing (steel, chemicals) or labor-intensive manufacture (clothing, furniture). Fourth, the post-Fordist thesis that standardized production is receding due to the loss of mass markets is contradicted by all the evidence: cars, washing machines, and other consumer durables of long standing are still required in larger numbers than ever, while new generations of such goods have also found mass markets (microwave ovens, CD players, etc.). Fifth, post-Fordist theory exaggerates the internationalization of trade: most large corporations are still based in their country of origin, and a large proportion of their output is still sold in those countries. Sixth, the post-Fordist analysis of an international labor market consisting of privileged core and oppressed periphery is exaggerated: job insecurity, low pay, and rising hours are characteristic of all labor markets today. I could go on, but this should suffice to make the point.<sup>(26)</sup>

[15] There is, it seems to me, a further problem over the notion of a "revolutionary identity" (here, the identity Ice Cube supposedly constructs for himself). That Ice Cube's artistic stance is in various ways oppositional can hardly be in doubt, but whether it is revolutionary is quite another matter. Since his 1991 album *Death Certificate*, Ice Cube has identified with the Nation of Islam in his lyrics; the NOI, although its rhetoric may strike a radical chord, is conservative in its social and moral outlook, and explicitly capitalist in its program for the advancement of Black Americans (but like Marcus Garvey before them, they oppose the ingratiation of white capitalists in the manner of Booker T. Washington). Today there are some black bankers and CEOs, but this is no revolutionary development; indeed, regardless of the racist jibes and police harassment they suffer in common, such persons have placed themselves in class conflict with Black American workers (and unemployed). Let us not equivocate: class is not merely another identity to be thrown into the mix; one can be proud to be Irish, say, or even—help us—proud to be a music theorist, but not proud to be an exploiter, or proud to be exploited. The very coupling of "revolutionary" and "identity" is also questionable. Identity politics has served in various ways to undermine more radical demands. Ethnic-minority politicians have relied upon ethnic-solidarity voting while they are progressively co-opted by the racist system they were expected to oppose; thus Wilson Goode, Philadelphia's first black mayor, was supported by black voters in the hope that he might curtail the brutal racism of the city's police force, but in May 1985, within months of his election, he planned and authorized the notorious Osage Avenue bombing of MOVE, a black counter-cultural community;<sup>(27)</sup> likewise, Tom Bradley, the black mayor of Los Angeles, found himself in stark opposition to much of the black community during the rebellion of 1992 (this can hardly be called a "race riot," since even the police

figures prove the multi-ethnic character of the rising).<sup>(28)</sup> Identity politics has also served to divide ethnic-minority workers against each other, encouraging them to compete over limited funds instead of questioning why there is not enough to provide for the needs of all. Finally, identity politics, and the fascination with identity in the humanities over the last two decades, can allow structural racism to be sidelined whenever different identities are taken as equals—hence the struggle over white studies, which soon became a celebration of “white culture” (although “whiteness” is, of course, neither biological nor cultural, but an ideological construction entrenching the economic privilege of some and encouraging others to imagine that they partake in that privilege, even though they do not reap the material benefits).<sup>(29)</sup> Krims need not disagree with any of this, but the centrality of “identity” to his project suggests that he attaches an importance to it that I would wish to question. Noel Ignatiev memorably described the banal endpoint of identity politics—the promotion of “diversity”:

The “diversity” industry does not depend on small groups of well-intentioned people meeting in church basements, but on lucrative contracts with corporations to conduct seminars for executives on how to manage a “diverse” labor force. It is fortunate that in the nineteenth century they had abolitionists instead of diversity consultants; if not, slavery would still exist, and representatives of slaves and slaveholders would be meeting together—to promote mutual understanding and good feeling.<sup>(30)</sup>

[16] While these matters are worthy of vigorous debate, my criticisms are not meant to detract from Krims’s substantial achievement. Krims has by no means provided a general introductory text on hip-hop (this was clearly not his intention), but for anyone teaching a course unit that explores hip-hop in greater depth, or which is devoted entirely to hip-hop, Krims’s work constitutes a valuable addition to the existing literature, and ought to be added immediately to the bibliography list of any such course. For hip-hop research, Krims’s work is simply indispensable, and will doubtless serve as a benchmark for years to come among all researchers who engage directly with the musical aspects of hip-hop. Whether music theorists will take up Krims’s proposals on subsuming their discipline within cultural studies remains to be seen, but at the very least he has initiated a rapprochement between the two.

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Jonathan Walker  
Cambridge University  
27 Chapel St.  
Ely  
CB6 1AD  
United Kingdom  
[kollos@cavehill.dnet.co.uk](mailto:kollos@cavehill.dnet.co.uk)

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## Footnotes

1. For a discussion of the malleability of Black Power, see Kevin Ovenden, *Malcolm X: Socialism and Black Nationalism* (London: Bookmarks, 1992), 51–56.

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2. See Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm & Blues* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), chapter 6; Rickey Vincent, *Funk: The Music, the People, and the Rhythm of the One* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1996), chapter 15; Craig Werner, *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), sections 37–38.

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3. See Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America* (Boston: South End Press, 2000).

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4. See Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 27–34.

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5. The Sugar Hill Gang’s *Rapper’s Delight* (Sugar Hill Records, 1979) is generally remembered as the first recording to bring hip-hop music before a wider public; it was preceded, however, by the release one week earlier of the Fatback Band’s *King Tim III (Personality Jock)*.

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6. For an account of hip-hop with special attention to its business aspect, see Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998).

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7. Basquiat was the New York graffiti artist “SAMO”; his canvases, however, are not graffiti art. For a sensitive and insightful discussion of Basquiat’s complex relations with the white art world, see bell hooks, “Altars of Sacrifice: Re-membering Basquiat,” in *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

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8. Krims, Bibliography. The exception is David Toop, *The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip-Hop* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

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9. Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), chapter 8.

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10. Rose, *Black Noise*.

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11. See hooks, 118. The expurgated interview was published in *SPIN* (April 1993). The complete interview was eventually published as “Ice Cube Culture: A Shared Passion for Speaking Truth” in hooks, 125–43.

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12. Russell A. Potter, *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995). The analyses included songs by radical black nationalists, Paris, socialists, The Coup, and (by way of contrast) the more commercial b-girl crew, Salt ‘n’ Pepa.

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13. William E. Perkins, *Droppin’ Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996).

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14. Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo’ Mama’s Disfunktional: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998).

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15. Greg Dimitriadis, *Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip Hop as Text, Pedagogy and Lived Practice* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

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16. Tony Mitchell, *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, forthcoming).

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17. Raymond Williams, in *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), offers a useful framework here: cultural practices can be emergent or residual, and in either case can function to reinforce the dominant culture, provide an alternative to it, or oppose it. Different communities may, of course, assign different functions to the emergent culture of hip-hop: gangsta rap may be seen as alternative and sometimes oppositional by its direct producers; as oppositional by white conservative fomenters of moral panic over rap; but the CEOs of the record companies that distribute it may see it ultimately as reinforcing the dominant culture by confirming stereotypes of criminality and entrenching misogyny.

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18. See bell hooks’s incisive analysis, “Gangsta Culture—Sexism and Misogyny,” in hooks, 115–23.

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19. The comment, “If black people kill black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people?,” was taken out of context, and the fact that it was a common joke in black communities passed over. Clinton’s immediate concern was to avoid being Hortonized by George Bush Sr., and Sistah Souljah’s comment merely a convenient pretext.

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20. KRS-One in Boogie Down Productions' "The Bridge is Over" from the celebrated and influential album, *Criminal Minded* (B-Boy Records, 1987).

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21. Record companies' desire for star vocalists had led to the demotion of DJs, and a series of law suits in the early 90s led to restrictions on the use of samples—fees now had to be paid to copyright holders in advance of a recording's release.

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22. KRS-One, "MCs Act Like They Don't Know," *KRS-One* (Jive, 1995).

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23. Krims discusses the particular predilection of reality rap for dissonant combinations of samples, or indeed combinations that are not in tune with each other, calling such textures the "hip-hop sublime" (in the original Burkean sense of inspiring fear and pleasure simultaneously). See pp. 73–74.

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24. Aside from all these considerations, Ice Cube's oppositional stance is blatantly obvious; this is not like the classic post-colonial studies task of putting one's ear to a Kipling text until the faint whimper of a resistant, Indian voice is heard.

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25. See pp. 25–27. Fordism is a system of industrial mass production of standardized products involving Taylorism ("scientific management" of labor), assembly lines, and machinery specific to the production of one type of product. The high investment required to sustain this kind of production demands guaranteed markets—hence state intervention, including protectionist measures, and heavy expenditure on advertising.

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26. For further analysis of Post-Fordism's misconceptions, see Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1989), chapter 5, especially 132–44. The above arguments (and others) all appear in this analysis; lest readers imagine that this is another conservative diatribe, Callinicos is a revolutionary socialist (anti-Stalinist), who traces much of the motivation behind post-modernism to the crisis in Stalinist (i.e., Moscow-dominated) Communist parties in the West, beginning with the undermining of May 1968 by the French Communist party through to the 1989–91 transfer of power in the Soviet Union and its former satellites.

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27. See Ovenden, 63–65, and Greg Applegate, *25 Years on the MOVE*, Part 5, <http://www.angelfire.com/ga/dregeye/move5.html> and Part 6 <http://www.angelfire.com/ga/dregeye/move6.html>.

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28. Of the first 5000 to be arrested, 52% were Latino, 38% Black and 10% White. See Alex Callinicos, *Race and Class* (London: Bookmarks, 1993), chapter 8.

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29. See Noel Ignatiev, "Abolitionism and White Studies," *Race Traitor*, <http://www.postfun.com/racetractor/features/whitestudies.html> and "The Point is not to Interpret Whiteness but to Abolish It," *Race Traitor*, <http://www.postfun.com/racetractor/features/thepoint.html>.

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30. Ignatiev, "Abolitionism and White Studies." For an excellent (left) critique of identity politics, see Sharon Smith, "Mistaken Identity—Or Can Identity Politics Liberate the Oppressed?," *International Socialism* 62 (Spring 1994), 3–50.

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Prepared by Jonathan Walker, Eric Isaacson, Brent Yorgason, and Tahirih Motazedian, Editorial Assistant