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Résumé de l'article

Dans les années 1980 et 1990, les rappeurs canadiens noirs, dont bon nombre étaient enfants d'immigrants caribéens au Canada, se sont servis de la Cool Pose, une attitude d'opposition politique hyperracialisée et hypergenrée, afin d'intervenir dans la discussion entourant les questions de citoyenneté, d'espace et de racisme envers les Noirs. S'inspirant de l'imaginaire et des pratiques de nature locale et translocale, les rappeurs canadiens noirs ont créé des contre-récits visant à confronter leur propre sentiment d'exclusion d'une nation qui s'est constamment imaginée comme « blanche » et qui a rendu la présence noire hyper(in)visible. S'opposant à la politique nationale d'uniformité identitaire qu'est le multiculturalisme, les musiciens canadiens noirs se sont servis du rap comme espace discursif et dialogique pour perturber le projet d'effacement des Canadiens noirs de l'imaginaire national. Ces efforts ont procuré à la jeunesse noire une plateforme d'une importance cruciale pour critiquer les limites du multiculturalisme, rédiger des histoires canadiennes noires dans le cadre plus large de l'État-nation et rappeler à divers publics la nature profondément masculinisée et racialisée de l'iconographie canadienne. En s'engageant dans ces politiques d'opposition, les rappeurs se sont invariablement confrontés à des pratiques d'exclusion de la part de l'État et de ses organes, pratiques qui ont rendu de plus en plus difficiles le maintien d'une infrastructure musicale noire et la mise en lumière de l'intervention politique et culturelle des rappeurs canadiens.

"The Mic Is My Piece": Canadian Rap, the Gendered "Cool Pose," and Music Industry Racialization and Regulation

FRANCESCA D'AMICO*

Abstract

Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, Black Canadian Rap artists, many of whom are the children of Caribbean-born immigrants to Canada, employed the hyper-racialized and hyper-gendered "Cool Pose" as oppositional politics to intervene in a conversation about citizenship, space, and anti-blackness. Drawing from local and trans-local imaginings and practices, Black Canadian rappers created counter-narratives intended to confront their own sense of exclusion from a nation that has consistently imagined itself as White and rendered the Black presence hyper-(in)visible. Despite a nationwide policy of sameness (multiculturalism), Black Canadian musicians have used Rap as a discursive and dialogical space to disrupt the project of Black Canadian erasure from the national imagination. These efforts provided Black youth with the critically important platform to critique the limitations of multiculturalism, write Black Canadian stories into the larger framework of the nation state, and remind audiences of the deeply masculinized and racialized nature of Canadian iconography. And yet, even as they engaged in these oppositional politics, rappers have consistently encountered exclusionary practices at the hands of the state that have made it increasingly difficult to sustain a Black music infrastructure and spotlight Canadian Rap's political and cultural intervention.

Résumé

Dans les années 1980 et 1990, les rappeurs canadiens noirs, dont bon nombre étaient enfants d'immigrants caribéens au Canada, se sont servis de la Cool Pose, une attitude d'opposition politique hyperracialisée et hypergenrée, afin d'intervenir dans la discussion entourant les questions de citoyenneté, d'espace et de racisme envers les Noirs. S'inspirant de l'imaginaire et des pratiques de nature locale et translocale, les rappeurs canadiens noirs ont créé des contre-récits visant à confronter leur propre sentiment d'exclusion d'une nation qui s'est constamment imaginée comme « blanche » et qui a rendu la présence noire hyper(in)visible. S'opposant à la politique nationale d'uniformité identitaire qu'est le multiculturalisme, les musiciens canadiens noirs se sont servis du rap comme espace discursif et dialogique pour perturber le projet d'effacement des Canadiens noirs de l'imaginaire national. Ces efforts ont procuré à la jeunesse noire une plateforme d'une importance cruciale pour critiquer les limites du multiculturalisme, rédiger des histoires canadiennes noires dans le cadre plus large de l'État-nation et rappeler à divers publics la nature profondément masculinisée et racialisée de l'iconographie canadienne. En s'engageant dans ces politiques d'opposition, les rappeurs se sont invariablement confrontés à des pratiques d'exclusion de la part de l'État et de ses organes, pratiques qui ont rendu de plus en plus difficiles le maintien d'une infrastructure musicale noire et la mise en lumière de l'intervention politique et culturelle des rappeurs canadiens.

In 2011, rapper Drake was hired to be the host of the 40th edition of the Juno Awards, an annual celebration of Canadian musical achievement. The event marked the first time that a Canadian rapper was granted the opportunity to host the televised ceremony. Though Drake had taken home two Junos the year prior, of his six nominations in 2011, Drake did not win a single award. When Shad was awarded 2011's coveted Best Rap Award instead, the nation let out a collective gasp of shock. Drake, the Juno Awards ceremony host, had been shutout; it was the first time in the ceremony's forty-year history that a nominated musician who had agreed to host did not win at least one award. To make matters worse, among the evening's presentations, neither

Rap nor R&B was granted an opportunity to grace the stage in a live performance.[1]

What was most troubling about Drake's shutout was that it was part of a much longer history of regulation and erasure of Black cultural contributions to Canadian music. Journalist Dalton Higgins argues that rappers have long been denied mainstream recognition and accolades as a result of slow-moving bureaucracy and a history of bad relations between Black music practitioners and the Canadian music industry. Among the most notable examples was the 1998 boycott by Vancouver Rap trio the Rascalz (explored in a later section) and Toronto rapper Kardinal Offishall's 2002 loss to Swollen Members, a mixed race Vancouver trio, for what has been cited as "political reasons." When Kardinal was asked to comment nine years later about Drake's shutout, he told the press, "unfortunately, this is the good ol'{d} Canadian system that we have here, where they think somehow that's possibly acceptable" to deny an award to an artist who has given Canadian music indisputable international recognition. Toronto rapper Mindbender also weighed in on his 2011 recording "Utterly Disrespectable" by contending that it was a new low for the industry to exploit a Rap artist and then publicly rebuff his role as a global ambassador for Canadian content.[2]

Canadian Rap music, the product of an African American and Latino American cultural invention, has its origins in the history of the marginalized addressing challenges, regulation, and erasure. American Rap music first found its source of creativity in the outcomes of the United States' post-industrial urban crisis, the War on Drugs, the emergence of the New Right, and inner city youths' intent to amplify their voices when many cultural elites advocated for their silencing.[3] In the 1970s, as New York City encountered bankruptcy and middle-to-working class white and African American flight, underclass adults and youth were left to deal with rapid economic deterioration, under-employment, dislocation, high rates of homeless, and a lack of access to mainstream leisure.[4] Amid these changes Hip Hop culture[5] reformulated existent American notions of race, class, gender,

and sexuality to foster genre codes that reinforced a masculinist ethos and reproduced racialized, class-based gender and sexual scripts as *the* performance of the underclass. This performance, labelled the "Cool Pose," has powerfully shaped Rap storytelling, performance, and identity within and beyond American borders.

While American practitioners employed the "Cool Pose" to affirm and render visible an identity long compromised by the terror of a white supremacist patriarchal capitalist system, Black Canadians appropriated it to respond to a similar context of disempowerment. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, Canadian Rap artefacts and oral histories indicate that Black Canadian rappers appropriated the "Cool Pose" for three reasons. First, by employing a hyper-racialized and hyper-gendered performance, musicians hoped to confront their own sense of exclusion from the nation by intervening to disrupt constructions of race. Second, rappers intended to render their presence visible in a nation that regularly discounted their existence and contribution, and consistently imagined itself as White. Third, rappers attempted to use Rap to create a narrative of belonging to the Canadian state using the subjugated knowledge of Black Canadians, as well as the techniques of hybridization already familiar to their Caribbean communities. By drawing from local and trans-local imaginings, Black Canadian rappers created counter-narratives intended to question notions of Canadian citizenship, multiculturalism, and the normalized narrative of a 'White' Canada. While engaging in these oppositional politics, rappers have consistently encountered exclusionary practices at the hands of the state in an effort to render Blackness hyper-(in)visible by simultaneously including and purging it from the national memory. These practices have made building and sustaining a Black music infrastructure and spotlighting Canadian Rap music's counter-narrative exceedingly difficult.

This article contributes to the fields of Canadian cultural history and the racialized history of the Canadian nation state by examining the relationship between 'Urban music'[6] designations and Can/Con broadcasting policy; the association between black musicians and Black Canadian identities; the role of transnation-

alism, trans-localism, and hybridity in the identity politics of Blackness; and the connection between musical performance and the real and imagined politics of multiculturalism. By drawing together the cultural histories of Black Canadian Rap with literature on diaspora, migration, masculinity, critical race theory, and the racialized nation state, this article explores the ways in which Black Canadian musicians appropriated race and gender performance to render their presence visible, overcome exclusion, and form a basis for belonging rooted in and routed through Black Canadian cultural expression and the Black diaspora.

This article will begin by detailing the genre's early growth. Though this article will periodically highlight the nature of artistry across Canada's five major music scenes (Edmonton, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver), much of the focus will be on Toronto for two reasons. First, Toronto holds the unique title of the birthplace of Canadian Rap music, and consequently is responsible for setting much of the tone for genre codes and performances as they are understood in the mainstream. Second, for much of Canadian Rap's history, Toronto has been its epicenter, generating the largest cohort of visible mainstream acts. Although Rap has developed in many centres across Canada, unlike Toronto, these scenes have remained largely local and outside of the purview of mainstream Canadian popular culture until very recently.

What follows is a description of nationwide policy and a nuanced discussion of artistic and industry practices. First, this article describes the effect of multiculturalism and Can Con policy on black artistic expression. Second, it examines Canadian Rap's performance roots in American gendered and racialized practices. Third, it highlights the explicit and implicit ways that black artists have used popular culture artefacts as oppositional politics to intervene in a conversation about citizenship and space. This paper concludes with an examination of state-sanctioned practices of exclusionary (in)visibility to demonstrate how the artistic intentions of rappers to confront, respond to, and problematize the Canadian master narrative of belonging have been made difficult, and in some cases impossible.

Sources and Methodology

Despite Canadian Rap music's thirty-plus-year history, very little academic literature documents the intricate details of its beginnings and pioneers. The little that has been written has largely been authored by local journalists (such as Dalton Higgins, Errol Nazareth, and Del Cowie) in long- and short-form newspaper and magazine articles and a few popular press biographies. Many of these pieces have yet to be properly archived in a collection, reviewed, and included in a comprehensive scholarly study. The slim body of academic work has been conducted by scholars from disciplines outside of History; the most noteworthy are Dr. Rinaldo Walcott (doctorate in Education), Dr. Mark V. Campbell (doctorate in Education), and Dr. Remi Warner (doctorate in Anthropology). Much of the existing research takes the form of case study articles and chapters, and feature discourse analysis of notable artists and pivotal moments in the genre's history. No one has undertaken a full-length account of the genre's foundational beginnings, or an exhaustive exploration of the genre's development across Canada's other notable scenes. Moreover, though much of the documentation has focussed on Rap and Black communities, extensive attention has yet to be paid to the art form's adaptation beyond Black Canada. Consequently, Hip Hop studies in Canada remains a burgeoning field at its start. This article builds from and expands on the existent research in anticipation of adding to the growing conversation on the place of Rap music in Canadian society, and the indispensible contribution of Black Canadians to Canadian history through culture as politics.

To explore the historical nature of gender, race, citizenship, space, and industry regulation, this article draws on a variety of primary sources that can be divided into two major categories. The first includes sources that spotlight the voices and experiences of Black artists in Canada. Among these sources are oral histories that have been assembled from one-on-one interviews, as well as two 1.5-hour oral history roundtable discussions consisting of seven practitioners (rappers, deejays, and music

producers) and three music industry professionals. These round-tables were recorded and curated as part of the in-house archive at the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on Africa and its Diasporas at Toronto's York University. The second set of sources includes cultural artefacts such as song lyrics and visual texts in the form of album covers and music videos. Each source, from artists who have made significant and highly visible mainstream contributions to Canadian music history, has been examined via a close textual reading, discourse analysis, and through the lens of critical race theory and masculinities theory. The third source, the *Northside Research Project*, was born when Canadian rapper Wendy "Motion" Brathwaite and journalist Saada Branker were approached by then-Equity Coordinator at the Canada Council for Arts Anthony "Nth Dgri" Bansfield to explore the nature of Hip Hop recognition and support throughout Canada. The outcome was a cross-Canada study presented to the Canada Council for the Arts (a national public arts funder) on the struggles of artists across Canada's major performance regions, and the inequitable nature of existing industry infrastructure, mentorship models, and grant resources.

The second category of primary sources shifts the focus to the state and its various arms (namely the CRTC, the Canadian music industry, the Juno Awards, and media[7]) to examine how these institutions have interacted, hesitantly included, and explicitly policed Black Canadian cultural expression. First, this article examines tradespaper publications to determine media reaction to significant moments of black cultural protest. Second, this article details industry (the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission's Maple Leaf System) and governmental strategies (nationwide multiculturalism) to determine the nature of Can-Con definitions, the national sense of 'Canadianess,' and how each influenced Black artistic intervention. By combining this second category of sources alongside the voices of black artists, this article allows scholars to better comprehend the relationship between the state and black musicians, as well as the impact of state-sanctioned policy on identity mapped outside of the national imaginary.

By examining traditional and novel sources, this article provides an innovative presentation of Black voices, experiences, and oppositional politics in Canada. Insisting on Canadian Rap music as a critical discursive space is important; it reminds scholars that culture must be acknowledged as a dialogical space where Black political thought comes alive and actively disrupts the project of African Canadian erasure from the national imaginary. By underscoring the voices of practitioners, this article renders visible and audible the experiences of Black first generation Canadian youth who actively employed art as a tool to negotiate citizenship and space between their local realities and transnational and diasporic histories. In doing so, black musicians have created a platform to critique the limitations of multiculturalism, write Black Canadian stories into the larger framework of the nation state, and remind audiences of the deeply masculinized, racialized, and narrow nature of Canadian iconography.

The History of Rap Music in Canada

Though Rap music has only been a mainstream phenomenon since 1979 with the American release of Sugarhill Gang's "Rappers Delight," the genre has had a presence in Canada on radio, stage, and in Canadian homes as early as the first half of the 1980s. Practitioners and fans recall that the earliest way they were able to access Rap was through travel. Rappers Michie Mee and Motion and DJ Mel Boogie contend that family members travelling to the United States (New York City in particular) would bring back Hip Hop tools like DJ'ing turntables and musical artefacts like cassettes and vinyl to share with their families. In terms of live performance, rappers like Mindbender remember that as early as 1982, American breakdance group Rock Steady Crew could be found on stages in Alberta, a province that some might think did not have access to Hip Hop culture. Rapper Motion recalls that in the absence of media institutions like Much Music (Canada's music television station, first launched in 1984) and a dearth of Black music on mainstream radio, she and her friends relied on three avenues to access Black

cultural expression. First, 'house parties' played an important role as communal institutions where family and friends would share rare, novel, or inaccessible musical artefacts. Second, Black neighbourhoods and the liminal space of 'the streets' were places where Black youth could hear a variety of sounds seeping out from homes and businesses. Third, community and college radio filled a gap that mainstream radio did not meet. Canadians, particularly Torontonians, first heard Rap music via Buffalo, New York's 93.7 WBLK FM radio. Motion contends that like many young people, she and her brother would create makeshift tools to access WBLK, which was often subject to a lot of static given its distance from Toronto. She recounts that to counter the static, she and her brother, like many of their friends, would combine an antenna and coat hanger and adjust both until they could clear the WBLK signal to record snippets of American Rap on their cassette tapes.[8]

By the mid-to-late 1980s, Toronto's contribution to the genre positioned the city as the birthplace and epicenter of Canadian Rap. In the genre's earliest days, much of the city's role in the development of Canadian Hip Hop was due to the work of radio personality Ron Nelson. As early as 1982, Nelson could be heard on the "Fantastic Voyage," a college radio show hosted by Ryerson University's 88.1 CKLN FM. Rapper Motion and DJ Mel Boogie argue that Nelson created a space on radio where Torontonians could finally access local content and hometown rappers could garner a platform to present their artistry.[9] Nelson was also responsible for promoting and nurturing the growth of a local Rap scene (artists, crews, and music showcases). Among the most notable of his events were a series of Rap competitions ("battles") or what fans called "Monster Jams." The most famous was "New York Invades Toronto," an infamous battle where Nelson pit local talent against established American rappers like Biz Markie and Roxanne Shanté, both of whom had already garnered mainstream acclaim in the United States. By creating the infrastructure that first offered Toronto artists a launching pad, Nelson was able to (in)formally nurture a groundswell of local talent like Rumble and Strong, the Get Loose Crew, Maestro

(Fresh Wes), and Michie Mee. In addition, by creating a meeting ground of Canada's burgeoning scene and New York City's established culture, Nelson launched Canadian Rap identity while drawing American attention to a Hip Hop culture beyond its national borders.[10]

Unlike America's Rap scene however, Canada's pioneering artist was female. Despite Toronto's predominantly male Rap scene, Michie Mee managed to become the first Canadian rapper to sign a record deal with First Priority/Atlantic Records (a major American label) in 1988. According to Michie, "when we [Toronto rappers] started, there was limited females. It was her [Motion] and I, looking at eachother. […] I was over at the CKLN [FM] team, and she was over at CIUT [University of Toronto's college radio station]. […] we were trying be different, and yet be the same. And yet we had the common denominator of the Canadian stories we wanted to tell internationally."[11] Michie recalls that although there were few Rap communities in the city, they were each associated with a college radio station: York University's CHRY, Ryerson University's CKLN, and the University of Toronto's CIUT. Despite gender differences, each camp was committed to telling local stories to demonstrate the distinct realities that mapped Canadian Rap music and the Black Canadian experience.[12]

According to some Canadian pioneers, industry executives have often asked rappers to refrain from voicing the true nature of the Black experience in Canadian society. Michie Mee contends that she was often asked not to articulate her experiences growing up in Toronto's tough Jane/Finch neighbourhood. Industry executives often told her that Americans "don't know anything about Canada," and what they did know was informed by the perception that Canada was a polite society where oppression did not exist. Moreover, executives questioned whether these struggles were reflective of an authentically Canadian experience. Michie Mee reports that executives would say, "there [are] not ghettoes here. There's nothing that is hardcore here. There's no suffering here. What are you talking about? You live in Canada. There's welfare here, there's some sort of social assistance."[13] Not

only did these strategies deny Michie Mee the ability to tell her stories, but the suggestion that there was not a parity of oppression between the United States and Canada frustrated the rapper.

Central to the stories first-generation rappers told was the pronunciation of their Caribbean heritage. Early Canadian Rap pioneers Michie Mee, Butch Lee, Lady P, and Maestro, all of whom were from Toronto, shared an important biographical note: they were children of Caribbean-born immigrants to Canada. According to social scientist Joseph Mensah, by 1996 (Canadian Rap music's golden era), the Black presence in Canada was an urban phenomenon. Statistics indicate that by the 1990s 48 percent of Black Canadians were demographically concentrated in Toronto, largely the result of important amendments in Canada's immigration policy in the early 1960s. Prior to the 1962 reform, the 1966 White Paper and the 1976 Points System, immigrants were granted access to Canada by filling a labour market need, as in the case of the domestic scheme. However, by the late 1960s Canada experienced a substantial increase in Black migration from two principal sources: Africa and the Caribbean. By 1996, the largest contingent of Caribbean migrants arrived from Jamaica (44 percent), Trinidad & Tobago (22 percent), Haiti (17 percent), and Barbados (5 percent). Mensah contends that these four groups accounted for more than 85 percent of all Caribbean-born immigrants in Canada.[14]

According to Hip Hop scholar Mark V. Campbell, the first generation of Toronto-based Rap artists (which he labels the 'pre-1993' generation) prominently articulated their Caribbean roots to creolize their locales. Campbell argues that among post-1960s children of migrants there existed a cultural expressivity that immersed them in diasporic conversations and connections that reached beyond the Canadian border to the places of their family's origin. As a result, musicians would either lyrically reference the Caribbean, as in the case of Michie Mee's iconic 1991 recording "Jamaican Funk (Canadian Style)," or via sampling popular baselines like the Sleng Teng riddum used by Rumble and Strong in their 1989 recording "Crazy Jam." Artists would pidginize music by combining the sounds and posturing of Black North

American youth (Rap) and the culture of their places of origin vis-à-vis languages like patois and the echoes of Reggae, Dancehall, Soca, and Calypso. Campbell claims that artists employed these tactics to open a wider field of political play and engage in transgressive acts that critiqued Canada's dominant national narrative, contested the closed systems of Canadian identity that produce forms of unbelonging, and challenged the knowledge that national borders were impermeable.[15]

Articulations of home and belonging transformed among the Canadian Rap generation that Campbell refers to as 'post-1993.' Though rappers such as Kardinal Offishall, Choclair, Saukrates, and Red1 continued to use established 'pre-1993' techniques, such as creolizing their locals through patois language, this generation also ethnographically and lyrically claimed the hybridized spaces they called home. Campbell insists that between the mid-1990s and early 2000s, rappers focused on the local, rather than the Caribbean, by actively claiming Canadian space. For instance, cities like Toronto became affectionately renamed as T-Dot-O-Dot in an attempt to assert ownership of the city. In doing so, Rap artists explored the fluidity of their hybridized identities as Canadian and "other," and they invoked the place they lived in differently than it had been historically imagined. This concern over space and the social construction of belonging allowed rappers to revise the narrative of their locales to realistically reflect its diversity. Such an example is Kardinal Offishall's 2001 recording "Bakardi Slang," which integrates Jamaican patois and Rap speech to imagine Toronto as a Hip Hop landscape with distinct turns of phrase, inflections, practices, events, spaces, fashion, audiences, diasporic experiences, and geographic temperatures.[16]

State-Sanctioned Multiculturalism and 'Canadian Content' Policy

Given that popular culture is central to a nation's ability to tell stories about itself, Canadian popular culture must be regarded as an extension of nation-building exercises and attempts to strengthen the master narrative. While Canadian immigration

policy has long indicated approaches to belonging and nationhood, it was multicultural policy (codified into law across the 1970s and 1980s) that framed who and how one officially belonged to the nation. According to critics, Canadian multiculturalism has long endeavoured to produce inside/outside binaries by textually etching in those who are not French or English (considered the founding cultures of Canada) as Canadians, while simultaneously carving them out by constructing them as static in their cultural practices and tangential to the nation.[17] Central to this policy is the notion that by incorporating 'others' the nation encourages inclusion and sameness. However, critics argue that by creating a fiction that the modern nation-state is constituted from a so-called natural sameness, the policy conceals the true nature of the social relations of domination at play. And so, while all migrant groups have found themselves placed differently in Canada's narrative, sameness has actually been constituted through the inequitable processes of forgetfulness, coercion, erasure, and various forms of privilege and subordination.[18] According to sociologist Himani Bannerji, multiculturalism has always been a site for struggle in which the state's formation depends upon the conquering imagination of white supremacy, and a legacy of survival anxieties and aggressions in the form of colonialism, conquest, and exclusionary tactics.[19]

According to Walcott, Canadian fictions of sameness have especially affected racialized Canadians by concealing and denying otherness within the nation, while rendering acceptable the continued disenfranchisement of non-white citizens. So much so says Bannerji that racism has become so naturalized and pervasive in the national imaginary that it is invisible to those who are not adversely impacted by state-sanctioned practices.[20] For Black Canadians, multiculturalism has often treated their presence with ambivalence; efforts to affirm Black Canadian belonging has ranged from reluctant recognition to their complete, and in some cases deliberate, erasure from the master narrative. Within this anti-Black discourse, Black Canadians are often framed as either 'newcomers' or a 'social problem.' Such a narrative problematizes their presence and places them as adjunct to the nation

rather than at the center of the national imaginary.[21] Many of the state's problematic strategies to deal with race, identity, and inclusion are acted out with sophistication in the popular culture terrain and become particularly apparent when examining industry practices where pervasive fictions of sameness conceal and deny otherness within the industry and nation.[22]

In the post-WWII era, Canadian popular culture gatekeepers created a platform upon which notions of Canadian identity, belonging, and sameness could be strengthened and prominently profiled. In 1971, following a lengthy public hearing process, the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)[23] initiated an elaborate series of broadcasting policies including a 30 percent radio quota[24] intended to maintain Canadian cultural integrity amid American popular culture hegemony. These decisions highlighted an attempt to deflect the critique that the Canadian marketplace reflected a lack of access to revenue streams and mainstream platforms for artists, an absence of diversity in popular cultural offerings, and a tendency to isolate Canadian artists to niche-genre markets. One of the key outcomes of this critique was the Maple Leaf System/ MAPL, a campaign intent on encouraging the development, promotion, and exposure of Canadian content and talent. The MAPL required that two of the four points be met for a song to be considered Canadian Content (Can-Con). These requirements included: 1) M (music) – the music is composed entirely by a Canadian; 2) A (artist) – the music is, or the lyrics are, performed principally by a Canadian; 3) P (production) – the musical selection consists of a live performance that is (i) recorded wholly in Canada, or (ii) performed wholly in Canada and broadcast live in Canada; and 4) L (lyrics) – the lyrics are written entirely by a Canadian.[25]

The introduction of these broadcasting policies led to a transformation of how the music industry functions and the problematic collapse of all 'Black music' into one genre.[26] Practitioners point to the adoption of the term 'Urban music' as evidence. The term, they claim, established a niche market where an array of music genres created by and for Black people could

be collapsed into a single category. Anthropologist Remi Warner contends that once the music industry created this genre and format radio, defined largely by perceived audiences in segmented markets, these cultural gatekeepers engaged in the practice of "narrowcasting." This technique, which Warner claims sub-textually evidences the ongoing history of white hegemony, unequal power relations, and managed visibility, conveniently satisfied the political concerns of employing culture as a nation-building tool intent on reflecting the same diversity of choice and access that multiculturalism prided itself on.[27]

These attempts to regulate the Black presence within Canadian popular culture highlight the contradictory and problematic nexus between identifying and servicing specialty markets, while attempting to incorporate bodies identified as 'other.' Rap practitioners contend that this 'Urban music' designation permits the surveillance and hyper-visibility of Black bodies while also authorizing their hyper-invisibility by ambiguously ghettoizing all forms of Black artistry under the umbrella of a single term. Higgins argues that, "the 'Urban' designation [is intended] to describe away [the intricacies of] Rap music, RnB, Soul… [it] is a euphemism for black." Such a designation masks and rebuffs the diversity of Black music within one mega-genre, and codes music created by Afro-diasporic people with terms that describe away the race of its artists. According to Higgins, the term and radio format was first introduced by African American radio broadcaster Frankie Crocker as a corporate strategy to elicit advertising revenues and partnerships. Crocker found that if he coded Black music by using a far more palatable and ambiguous term, he could generate more industry support by way of financial incentives. Like Black Canadians DJ Mel Boogie and Tony 'Master T' Young, host of Much Music's "Rap City" and "Da Mix," Higgins argues that the term is problematic because it is ambiguous, the Black community did not create it, and it continues to be used by gatekeepers who are intent on rendering Black contributions more palatable.[28]

This theme of palatability within Canadian popular culture reflects the contradictory negotiation that undergirds Canada's

goals of inclusiveness: the desire to purge while simultaneously incorporating Blackness. Take the examples of radio and Juno Award recognition. In 1990, Milestone Radio first petitioned the CRTC for an 'Urban' format radio station.[29] The 1990 decision, a controversial one that ended when Milestone lost their bid to Country music radio, was greeted with antagonism in the form of a 1991 protest record titled "Can't Repress the Cause (CRTC)" (a take on the CRTC acronym). The recording, which featured African Canadian reggae artist Messenjah, R&B singer Devon, and rappers Maestro and Michie Mee, cited the contradictory phenomenon of receiving industry accolades even as they were denied regular or any radio rotation and popular culture visibility. In the track Maestro rapped, "it's a trend that keeps us trapped, we pumpin' out LPs [records] of gold, still local radio ain't got no soul."[30] In his critique, Maestro suggested that this denial was callous, and the consistency of these challenges, namely the barring of Black musical expression from the mainstream, left artists in the difficult position of chasing excellence while rarely, if ever, being recognized for it.

The second example, Juno (non) recognition of Black artistry, gained scrutiny in 1998, when Rap trio the Rascalz refused to accept the Juno Award for Best Rap Recording at the 27th annual awards following the organizers' decision not to include the Rap, Reggae, or Dance awards (each of which are genres popularly imagined as 'urban' formats) in the telecast. In a prepared statement, the Rascalz stated, "in view of the lack of real inclusion of black music in this ceremony, this feels like a token gesture towards honoring the real impact of Urban music in Canada." The group's co-manager Sol Guy claimed that their decision to decline the award was part of drawing attention to the reality that the Junos are a celebration of Canadian pride, and Urban music should genuinely be a part of that commemoration.[31]

In both cases, Black artists were deeply aware of the contradictory behaviour of industry gatekeepers. Though the mainstream market appeared to be accessible to all artists who were imagined as 'Canadian,' actual practices suggested

that Black artists were hesitantly celebrated, if not shutout all together. In this dialogue, artists appeared to be involved in a complex discussion about the nature of belonging to the nation, particularly when the popular cultural terrain was incredibly central to imagining and strengthening the notion of Canada and citizenship. Campbell argues that Rap music has been one of the key sites where Black artists have amplified and contested these closed systems of Canadian identity that have long worked to produce narratives of unbelonging to the nation.[32]

The Development of the "Cool Pose" and Its Uses in Canadian Popular Culture

A number of Canadian Rap practitioners argue that they first became attracted to American Rap for its ability to challenge "naturalized" narratives, re-imagine history, and positively artic-ulate Blackness. Canadian rapper Maestro and DJ Chris 'Gel' Jackson contend that until the late 1980s, they had never been exposed to the Black Canadian history through schooling or oth-erwise. It was through the work of American male rappers like Chuck D and KRS-One that they learned about the African dias-pora and themselves as Black men. Maestro claims that these rappers shaped his conceptualization of personal responsibility and encouraged what in Rap music is referred to "knowledge of (a black) self."[33] In a 2012 interview, Maestro argued that given the nation's successful attempts at distorting Canadian history, rappers have a particular responsibility to reinforce knowledge of self. He claims that doing so will enable Black Canadians to fight the process by which their narratives of identity and belonging are represented and regulated.[34]

One of the ways that Canadian rappers have engaged in knowledge of self and responded to this exclusion is by adopt-ing American Rap's "Cool Pose." This posturing first developed within the context of America's post-industrial urban crisis where black men experienced a heightened degree of political disfranchisement, economic exploitation, social discrimination and dislocation that deprived them of their patriarchal "right"

to exert hegemonic masculinity.[35] And yet, Black men, clung to this brand of masculinity because they believed that it would help them restore a sense of value in American society. According to Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson, in the absence of a real avenue to secure hegemonic masculinity, Rap music became a tool by which Black men could confront their economic, political, and social exclusion by affirming, rendering visible, and incorporating their marginalized (urban underclass) masculinities into American capitalism, and therefore profiting from a symbolic and ritualized consumer-based identity. Though Black men understood hegemonic masculinity as white men did (the provider, breadwinner, procreator, and protector), their inability to gain access to the same political and economic power, accessible largely through white privilege, meant that they needed to create a ritualized masculinity to align themselves with hegemonic masculinity.[36]

In the American context, the "Cool Pose" allowed Black men to create a "functional myth" intended to restore a gendered identity that had been compromised by the terror of a white supremacist patriarchal capitalist system.[37] Given that the form of masculinity articulated by an overwhelming number of rappers was informed by poverty and public spaces where Black bodies were often contained and controlled, the "Cool Pose" was often exploited for the sake of creating counter-hegemonic space and acknowledging an alternative authority in the face of white supremacy and the panoptic surveillance of Black bodies.[38]

However, this did not mean that the "Cool Pose" was simply taken up by male rappers. Rather, female rappers also used this posturing as part of a long popular culture tradition of coding themselves as male. Women did this for two reasons: first, to strengthen their insider status within practitioner circles and genre framework coded as masculinist, and second, to render visible the subjugated knowledge of Black women. Consequently, this act of subversive tricksterism and interloping allowed women to gender bend in their performance, as well as use Rap as a framework to critique the logic of patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, and other additional personal politics.[39]

In Canada, the "Cool Pose" was informed by acutely different economic and social realities. Though Canada has been popularly imagined as a racial haven, scholars such as Robin Winks, David Austin, and Afua Cooper remind us that Canada has its own legacy of slavery, colonialism, defacto segregation, and state surveillance. For Black Canadians, anti-blackness has equally impacted spatial organization, economic opportunities, and access to education, though not exactly in the same ways as the United States.[40] By the mid-1990s, as Canadian Rap was gaining increased visibility, Canada's legacy of subtle and sophisticated racism highlighted a history of continuity. Mensah demonstrates that while Canadian Blacks tended to be less spatially segregated than the United States, their "social acceptability" remained relatively low. Mensah attributes this difference to housing distribution and allocation; while the U.S. had created massive and concentrated housing projects, Canadian versions were smaller in scale and spatially dispersed throughout suburban communities.[41] Economically, Black Canadians have experienced higher rates of unemployment, relatively lower annual incomes, and acute under-representation in high-status occupations. Once employed, Black Canadians have reported facing subtle forms of discrimination such as scapegoating, excessive monitoring, segregation from co-workers, and targeting by managers at higher rates than white peers.[42] In terms of the justice system, Black youth in the 1990s routinely reported incidents of harassment, verbal abuse, strip searches, and physical assault at the hands of the police for being stereotypically assumed to be criminals.[43]

To address these inequities, Canadian rappers followed their American counterparts in efforts to integrate earlier paradigms of the "badman" trope as part of their "Cool Pose" to deliver a critical message about Black identity. During Rap's early formation, the "badman" trope, iconography that promoted outlawry, was re-articulated in the stock characters of 1970s blaxploitation films. These popular culture images which re-constructed Stagolee folklore[44] were authenticated in the iconography of the inner city drug dealer, hustler, and gangster, and were intended

to represent black men as anti-heroes who flouted authority, capitalizing notions of Black male marginality, hyper-masculinity, criminality, violence, and invulnerability.[45] The "badman" was therefore imagined as non-conformist and living on the margins of a Black community that understood him to be both heroic and threatening.[46] In the aftermath of the Black Power Movement, a static version of Black radical masculinity arose alongside this iconography. According to bell hooks, by the Hip Hop era, Black Power militants became commodified as one-dimensional patriarchal, rage-filled, and predatory inner city icons that engaged in concomitant violence and sexually aggressive manhood to be emulated.[47] Given that the "Cool Pose" was an attempt to counter cultural articulations of Black male inferiority, the attraction to this iconography is obvious.[48] As a result, the "Cool Pose" came to be encoded with physical posturing and carefully crafted performances that consisted of specific patterns of speech, walk, and demeanor that highlighted the physicality and supposed aggression of black masculinity in hopes of delivering a critical message of pride, strength, and control.[49]

While Canadian rappers were influenced by these re-imaginings, there were additional inspirations in their articulation of outlawry. Given the demographic shifts brought about by Caribbean migration, the identity politics of pioneering Canadian Rap acts fused their already existent understanding of America's "Cool Pose" with the countercultural Caribbean performances of the "rudebwoy" and "badjohn."[50] Like the "Cool Pose," the "rudebwoy," which has its origins in Jamaica, was associated with street subculture, rooted in experiences of poverty and youth discontent, and highly influenced by outlaw iconography and the fashion of cool as articulated by American Jazz and Soul musicians.[51] The "badjohn" on the other hand mirrored the American Stagolee paradigm in that it was based on John Archer, a notorious police court character at the turn of the 20th century Trinidad. His crimes portrayed him as a violent ruffian who liked to drink, even while his biography indicated that he was a military man with loyalty for Britain and a sense of dignity and obedience for authority.[52]

Each of these transnational paradigms collided in ways that helped Canadian rappers differentiate their socio-cultural and socio-political acts of Rap transgression. Critics of multiculturalism have long argued that to re-imagine Canada it is necessary to highlight the presence of "others" who can create counter-hegemonic discourses to expose Canada's real social relations and the racialized code that produces Canada as "White."[53] By the 1980s, Black Canadian youth recognized that Rap music could be employed as counter-narrative to do just that. Though rappers understood their act of voicing subjugated knowledge from the bottom up and speaking the marginalized into existence was a similar undertaking to their American counterparts, they also recognized that their articulation had the supplementary job of problematizing the meaning of national citizenship and belonging while exposing the exclusion of Black bodies from Canada and Canadian popular culture. In expanding upon the American "Cool Pose" by incorporating influences from the Caribbean, Canadian rappers commemorated their family histories and transplanted cultural values, traditions, and folklore; articulated their distinct generational experiences as black youth with roots in and routes through the Caribbean; and actively negotiated their place in a North American context where Blackness was devalued, feared, and monitored at virtually every turn. By using Canada's brand of "Cool Pose," Black Canadian rappers were able to explore the fluid nature of their own identities as Canadians and as an 'Other,' refuse the marginalizing narrative of Canadian history, redraw the boundaries of belonging by placing themselves firmly within that story and landscape, and imagine and invoke new conceptualizations of 'Canada'.[54]

The Canadian "Cool Pose" as Confrontational Politics: Case Studies

In the Canadian context, African Canadian rappers appropriated these transnational performances of "Cool," "rudebwoy," and "badjohn" to deliberately suggest and situate Blackness physically belonging within nation. Take the examples of Toronto rappers Choclair and Kardinal Offishall. In Choclair's 1999

debut album cover art he is pictured as lounging in an ice arm-chair.[55] The album title, "Ice Cold,"[56] while on the one hand a boasting technique intended to reference his superior skills as a rapper, was also a denotative reference to Canadian weather.[57] Kardinal does the same in his 2001 single "BaKardi Slang" when he claims, "my style's off the thermostat, plus I'm coming from the cold."[58] Here, Kardinal is not only literally referencing the geographical space as chilly, but he is metaphorically insisting that his skills as an artist are unsurpassed, so much so that they have exceeded measurement. In each case, rather than simply reiterating the dominant national narratives of Canada as sea-sonally ice cold, Choclair and Kardinal recast the tropes of a cold landscape coded literally and metaphorically as 'White' to articulate a sense of self that mandated a rethinking of national boundaries, local contexts, and citizenship. It could also be the case that Choclair and Kardinal were responding to the cold atti-tudes of white Canadians towards non-white citizens. In either case, by locating themselves within the physical iconography of Canada, these rappers negated the claim that Black bodies could not withstand the harsh Canadian climate, a discourse that had long been used by mainstream immigration policy makers to deny Black Canadians access into Canadian geographic space.

Canadian Rap has also employed these strategies of rethink-ing Canadian tropes and iconography by sonically interrupting and interrogating the representation(s) of Canada. Canadian rappers and deejays argue that by stating the influence of and incorporating Canadian Rock music through the practice of sam-pling, they have intentionally encouraged a reconsideration of Canada. Though Rock in Canada has largely been understood as a white and masculinist genre (both in relation to audience and practitioners), Toronto pioneers Chris "DJ Jel" Jackson and Maestro have each referenced the influence of Rock in their early consumption of Canadian music. Maestro in particular has con-tinually made use of Canadian Rock samples to insist upon his Canadianess; this music has included the work of Billy Squier, Haywire, Lawrence Gowan, The Guess Who, and Blue Rodeo. In a 2012 interview, he claimed, "[when] you asked me what type

of music influenced me…I told you Rock, now that might have shocked you. We {Hip Hop practitioners} love Rock. We're just being honest. I'm from Canada; beer, hockey, and rock. That's how we grew up." Though Maestro has cited the diasporic forms of reggae, calypso, and jazz as central to his musical upbringing in the home, he claims that his exposure to Rock was the result of attending Canadian elementary and high schools.[59] By referencing Canadian Rock as central to his musical vocabulary, Maestro, like Choclair and Kardinall, used Black Canadian popular culture to destabilize the trope of "beer, hockey, and rock" by suggesting that this trinity is central to Black Canadianess as well. In doing so, he has revised a Canadian iconography designated as white, male and perhaps even heteronormative by intentionally associating it with Black heteronomative masculinity, and therefore sonically destabilizing its racialized and gendered associations.

Canadian rappers have also engaged in confrontational politics by re-imagining the power of their "otherness" (within the context of multiculturalism) in service of valuing difference. In 1990, Michie Mee asserted her otherness in "Jamaican Funk (Canadian Style)" when she declaratively stated, "I am a Jamaican." The single, a sonic compilation of Rap and Dancehall stylings, included moments where the rapper used Jamaican patois to linguistically interrupt and destabilize what the conflation of "Jamaican" and "Canadian" identities might mean, sound and look like. By combining these elements of her identity, at once imagined as distant, Michie Mee deliberately insisted that "Canadian Style" referenced the possibility of creating a space within the Canadian landscape where hybridization was positive, valuable, and dignified. Through her lyrics, Michie used hybridization to affirm and recognize her Jamaican-ness as central to her notion of self as a Canadian citizen and a woman. The recording's music video visuals also promoted a series of positive articulations of Blackness. Interspersed throughout the video set were the colours red, black, green, and yellow (references to pan-Africanism), numerous Jamaican flags, and graffiti representations of ancient Egyptian icons, all of which were gendered as female.

Canadian rappers have also employed the genre practice of boasting to insist on their Canadianess and prize their distinctiveness in a popular music market that struggles to remain relevant amid American cultural hegemony. Boasting, which was briefly alluded to in the Choclair and Kardinal examples, is a stylistic convention whereby the performer brags about their personal attributes, possessions, and/or technical skills. This technique is intended to reinforce an ethos of competitiveness that is understood as fundamentally masculinist in nature. The convention also requires that rappers, male and female, engage in aggressive and often antagonistic lyricism that serves to publicly articulate characteristics of dominance. Finally, the technique also renders visible and reclaims the presence of the powerless in a physical and metaphysical place that denies their value. Consequently, boasting becomes a way by which racialized youth can articulate their visibility, claim the space and ability to speak, and privilege their voices as valuable. [60] Within the context of Canadian Rap then, it is obvious why rappers have chosen to use boasting to render natural their Blackness as part of the definition of what it means to be a Canadian.

For example, in "The Mic's My Piece," a recording from Maestro's 1989 debut album, he used boasting as a tool to create a redemptive narrative of belonging to Canada. First, Maestro employed the image of the microphone as a phallic symbol to reassert a sense of power, dominance, and masculinity, an image that has a commanding discursive power in a Canadian society that subtly and sophisticatedly denies Black men access to hegemonic masculinity. In the song, Maestro rapped, "the mind is a magnum, the rhyme is a bullet, the mic[rophone] that's a trigger, BANG, and I pull it." In the lyric, each element conjoins to create a metaphorical gun by which Maestro can lay a verbal assault on other rappers who he imagines as skilfully weak. He then used this assertive language to establish his distinctiveness in style as a Canadian. Maestro claimed, "I'm not American, my hundred dollar bill ain't green. I'm from North of the border, keep it in order. I'm from T-Dot-O-Dot [Toronto]. That's why you dun heard of me."[61] In a 2012 interview, Maestro claimed

that his intention as an artist in the 1980s was two fold. First, he intended to insist on his Canadianess in a genre that envisioned everyone as American, which was, in part, why he chose to market himself as dressed in a tuxedo: it was distinctly different that the American Rap fashion aesthetic. He claims that he was not trying to assimilate aesthetically and was instead distancing himself from stereotypical perceptions of rappers. Second, he intended to promote Toronto as central to his identity given the dominant Rap convention that necessitated that artists promote neighbourhoodism and the geography from which they hailed. Notice that Maestro affectionately referred to Toronto as T-Dot-O-Dot, a space-claiming move intent on hybridizing the city.[62] And so, through boasting, Maestro employed Canada's re-formulated Rap identity as a tool to re-imagine a gendered form of Blackness as central to Canadian identity.

Rap has also been used as lyrical exposé to explicitly speak back to the hypocrisy of Canada's policy of inclusiveness by naming it a myth. For example, in the 1991 recording "Nothing At All," Maestro's critique named Canada a violent social and psychological landscape for non-white people. He cited as examples Canadian psychologist John Phillippe Rushton's 1980s and 1990s scientific racism,[63] contemporary incidences of Canadian Ku Klux Klan violence, and the 1990 Oka Crisis, a land dispute between the town of Oka, Quebec and the Mohawk community of Kanesatake. In this third example, Maestro argued, "we live in this place with racism called C-A-N-A-D-A. I'm watching it decay everyday. We got to hurdle the system, cause hate penetrates multiculturalism." Here, Maestro claimed that Canada's language of tolerance was hypocritical and reflected an unequal treatment of racialized people. Linking Indigenous and Black Canadian experiences together, Maestro rapped, "the native man of the land is who you killing, and then you got the nerve to celebrate Thanksgiving. Framing every man as equal, I hate to see what you have planned for my people."[64] By connecting their struggles, Maestro fundamentally called to mind the white supremacist logic that undergirds Canada's national narrative and memory, as well as the country's history of racialized oppres-

sion and colonization. This artistic act created a space whereby Maestro could de-segregate systemic and social disempowerment and as a result, suggest that these acts may affect different communities, even as they flow from a similar rationale.

Maestro's critique of multiculturalism extended beyond a discussion of inequitable treatment by critically reflecting upon the ways in which Canada's national memory recalled and hesitantly incorporated Black bodies. In an effort to prove his theory, Maestro offered two examples. The first described an instance in which he was offered a movie role following the success of his debut album. He argued that given that the character, a prisoner, was consistent with the ways in which the racist white mind imagined Black masculinity, he decided to decline the role. The second example was of Black Canadian athletes: Eggerton Marcus, a 1988 middle-weight champion, and Ben Johnson, an Olympic sprinter who was disqualified for doping following two bronze medal wins. In each case, Maestro critiqued the media's attention to Black male athlete failures, and their lack of attention to instances of success. He claimed that these examples signalled racism and white privilege in action, when he rapped, "to keep it short and simple and plain, if Eggerton was white he'd be a household name with commercials and endorsements." Highlighting the power of racist stereotypes, Maestro claimed that no matter the level of success he had attained by the early 1990s, "[he was] still viewed as a S-L-A-V-E."[65] Though Maestro is but one example, his ability to use Rap counter-narratives to challenge notions of national belonging made it possible to affirm Black Canadian citizenship, expose a history and contemporary reality of anti-blackness, and tackle Canada's efforts to treat the Black experience and contribution to Canada with ambivalence, reluctant recognition, and in some cases deliberate erasure and amnesia.

Blackness Management in the Canadian Music Industry

Though it is apparent vis-à-vis Canadian Rap case studies that the genre offers numerous opportunities to contest, negoti-

ate, and expose the shortcomings and falsehoods of Canada's dominant narrative, like many other spaces that Black Canadians occupy, Rap has a history of coming under the threat of management, surveillance, and invisibility. As Higgins argues, Canadian rappers have not had the proper support structures in terms of radio and record label promotion.[66] Maestro echoes this critique: "there's not really a {Hip Hop} industry here, there never really was." Even in instances of international success, as in the case of Drake and K'Naan, Maestro maintains that, "those {artists} are all anomalies, {and} that's not the norm."[67] The smoke-screen celebration of Canadian Rap success in the mainstream then masks the true reality that Black Canadian music has long been subjected to uneven industry support. Even in cases where it does exist, black cultural expression tends to be marginalized and managed within a nondescript music-ghetto (the 'Urban' designation). This industry practice problematically reflects a long tradition of state surveillance; the result was a concerted initiative to silence, exclude and ultimately render invisible the contributions and presence of Black Canadians.

This historical state practice of Blackness management,[68] eventually adopted by cultural gatekeepers, has had a number of debilitating popular culture consequences. According to Higgins, Blackness management has been a historical reality for Black artists, particularly those who identify as Rap.[69] According to Brathwaite and Branker of *The Northside Research Project,* across Canada's five major music markets (Edmonton, Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver) research participants highlighted five particular consequences of Blackness management: the inability to receive adequate video and radio exposure, geographical inaccessibility across regionalized markets, an inability to access venues as a consequence of stereotyping, a lack of funding support/inaccessible knowledge regarding funding, and a deficit of effective business training to create a genre-specific strata of industry professionals.[70] All of these outcomes, practitioners claim, have made it virtually impossible to sustain an Urban music infrastructure.

The sampled *Northside Research Project* participants argued that these inequities are grounded in racist perceptions and practices. Practitioners contended that the Canadian mainstream media has continually reified a myopic portrayal of Rap music by pigeonholing the genre as inherently criminal, rooted in poor Black communities, and supported by the disenfranchised black urban media.[71] These perceptions have resulted in a series of racial, cultural, and economic disparities and barriers to mainstream exposure.[72] Participants argued that in their experience, the institutional apparatus for the arts has provided far greater support to Canadian alternative rock as a result. That was perhaps most evident in national funding opportunities and models, where non-white grant applicants were immediately at a disadvantage because they suffered from being negatively impacted by the Urban music stereotype. In addition, they lacked industry support as well as access to grant knowledge by way of mentorship.[73]

According to practitioners, the challenges for Canadian Rap music have been and continue to be a lack of infrastructure and access to resources, racism within the industry and broader Canadian platforms, and challenges to rappers when attempting to speak their truth to power. Rappers Dan-e-o and Michie Mee argue that it has been difficult to be compensated for their art form and to be accepted in both Canadian and American commercial markets as economically viable. In terms of gender, while Black men have been faced with having to actively resist typecasts rooted in race, Black women have had to combat stereotypes rooted in sexist beliefs about their artistic capabilities. Michie Mee contends that she and her female peers are continually questioned about their song-writing abilities and encouraged not to write their lyrics but sing instead, which is also a commonly cited experience among American female rappers. According to Maestro, for many male rappers, being envisioned as 'Black' and a 'rapper' has meant that they have encountered explicit and implicit references to their intelligence or lack thereof. Maestro claims that these challenges have driven him to be as articulate and eloquent as possible in the lyrics he writes, the ways that he performs his Rap identity, and the manner in which he conducts

himself as a businessperson. Ethnicity has also played an interesting role in the ways race has historically been interpreted. Michie Mee contends that having been marked as 'Jamaican' has meant that she is continually read through the racist stereotype that Jamaicans are difficult, brash, and criminal. As a result, she has often been met with industry attitudes insisting that her identity performance and storytelling must be tempered to appeal to Canada's 'polite' sense of multiculturalism.[74]

Conclusion

Even as rappers have engaged in counter-narrative strategies, it is clear from their experiences with Canadian popular culture infrastructure that much remains to be done in terms of creating and maintaining an equal playing field. Yet, while Canadian Rap has encountered challenges, rappers have powerfully contributed to the sonic landscape by implicitly and explicitly challenging the marginalizing narrative of Canadian history and redrawing the boundaries of national citizenship and belonging. By questioning the supposed natural logic that defines Canada as 'White,' a logic that discounts their place within the national imaginary, Black Canadian rappers have placed themselves squarely within the Canadian narrative, even as it continually excludes the bodies and experiences of its Black citizenry.

In the very act of exposing, questioning, and challenging how Canada includes and remembers the place and contribution of Black Canada, Black rappers have been able to productively use their subjugated knowledge. The outcome has been a space of hybridity where their transgressive artistry can re-claim space, as well as imagine and invoke new conceptualizations of 'Canada' that incorporate and celebrate those understood and deemed 'other.' By challenging the practice of rendering the Black Canadian body and voice hyper-(in)visible, Black Canadian rappers have made it possible to draw attention to and privilege their voices and experiences, even as their form of confrontation and contestation is continually wrestled with, and in some cases, openly denied.

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Endnotes

1   Dalton Higgins, *Far From Over: The Music and Life of Drake* (Toronto, ON: ECW Press, 2012), 149–151.

2   Higgins, *Far From Over,* 152–156.

3   Kristine Wright, "Rise Up Hip Hop Nation: From Deconstructing Racial Politics to Building Positive Solutions," in *That's The Joint: The Hip Hop Reader 2nd Edition*, ed. Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal, (New York City, NY Routeledge, 2012), 520; Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 7–19,41–55; Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 255.

4   Wright, "Rise Up Hip Hop Nation," 520; Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop,* 7–19,41–55; Wiese, *Places of Their Own,* 255.

5   Hip Hop culture is the umbrella that houses four art forms: Rap (music), Turntablism (deejay culture), Grafitti art (visual arts) and Breakdancing (dance).

6   The 'Urban' music designation, which is used in the United States and Canada, refers to all forms of black popular music in the mainstream.

7   Although the media is not an entity or an organization created by the state, given that it does operate with relative autonomy from state regulation, it can be subject to state management and censorship, and often does the work of the state by reinscribing the nation's core narratives and ideological values. Moreover, in Canada, as in the case of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) for example, media entities do receive financing from the Canadian government.

8   "Roundtable 1: Toronto Hip Hop Practitioners," *Performing Diaspora 2013: The History of Urban Music in Toronto,* June 1 2013, http://tubman.info.yorku.ca/activities/performing-diaspora/performing-diaspora-2013/performing-diaspora-2013-videos/.

9   "Roundtable 1: Toronto Hip Hop Practitioners," *Performing Diaspora 2013,* http://tubman.info.yorku.ca/activities/performing-diaspora/performing-diaspora-2013/performing-diaspora-2013-videos/.

10 Mark V. Campbell, "The Politics of Making Home: Opening Up the Work of Richard Iton in Canadian Hip Hop Context," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society*, 16: 3–4 (2014), 272.

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14 Joseph Mensah, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2002) 80, 85, 94–96, 98–99.

15 Campbell, "The Politics of Making Home," 271–273.

16 Campbell, "The Politics of Making Home," 273–275.

17 Rinaldo Walcott, *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (Toronto, ON: Insomniac Press, 2003), 117.

18 Walcott, *Black Like Who?,* 115–116.

19 Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation*: Essays on Multicultural-ism, Nationalism and Gender (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000), 89–90, 92–97, 107–109.

20 Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation,* 114.

21 Walcott, *Black Like Who?,* 118–120, 125.

22 Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation,* 114.

23 Unlike the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), its closest American equivalent, the CRTC is not an independent agency of the federal government. Rather it is a public organization that regulates national broadcasting and telecommunications only, and does the work of reinforcing state sanctioned ideas of 'Canada.'

24 Ryan Edwardson, *Canuck Rock: A History of Canadian Popular Music* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press), 147, 155; Remi Warner, "Hiphop with a Northern Touch!? Diasporic Wanderings/ Wonderings on Canadian Blackness" *Topia* 15 (Spring 2006): 49.

25 Edwardson, *Canuck Rock,* 139–142, 147–149; Warner, "Hiphop with a Northern Touch!?," 49.

26 This genre has retained many designations over time and is currently referred to as 'Urban' music.

27 Warner, "Hiphop with a Northern Touch!?," 49, 59–60.

28 "Roundtable 2: Toronto Music Industry Insiders," *Performing Dias-pora 2013: The History of Urban Music in Toronto,* June 1 2013, http://tubman.info.yorku.ca/activities/performing-diaspora/performing-dias-pora-2013/performing-diaspora-2013-videos/.

29 Errol Nazareth and Francesca D'Amico, "Urban Music," *The Canadian Encyclopaedia*, May 2 2012, http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/en/article/urban-music-emc/; For more information on the CRTC's Milestone Radio decisions, please see the archived decisions CRTC 90-693 and CRTC 2000-203 available at: http://www.crtc.gc.ca/.

30 Dance Appeal, "Can't Repress the Cause (CRTC)," 1991, *Can't Repress The Cause (CRTC)* Single, (FLIP – SOM 1235, 1991).

31 Larry LeBlanc, "Rascalz Refuse Award To Protest Junos," *Billboard*, April 4 1998 (national edition), Volume 110, Issue 14, 54.

32 Campbell, "The Politics of Making Home," 271.

33 Oral interview with Wes "Maestro" Williams, interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, February 1 2012.

34 Oral interview with Wes "Maestro" Williams, interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, February 1 2012; Oral interview with Chris Jackson, interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, January 21 2012.

35 According to sociologist R.W. Connell, masculinity exists as two configurations of practice: 'hegemonic' and 'marginalized.' Hegemonic masculinity is fundamentally linked to power and organized for domination (as in the case of white, rich, heterosexual masculinity). Conversely, marginalized masculinities do not yield social authority and are relative to the authorization of hegemonic masculinity that has sustained the institutional oppression and physical terror that has framed the making of their marginalization. For more on Connell's theory, see R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 35–42, 74–84.

36 Matthew Oware, "Brotherly Love: Homosociality and Black Masculinity in Gangsta Rap Music," *Journal of African American Studies* 15:1 (March 2011), 24.

37 Oware, "Brotherly Love," 23; Jordanna Matlon, "Creating Public Fictions: The Black Man as Producer & Consumer," *The Black Scholar*, 40:3 (Fall 2010), 37.

38 Imani Perry, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 104, 121; bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 1992), 35.

39 For more on the long history of black female performers coding themselves as male, see Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1998).

40 For more about the long history of blacks in Canada see: Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd edition (Montreal & Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997); David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Security in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 2013); Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007).

41 Mensah, *Black Canadians,* 83–85.

42 Mensah, *Black Canadians,* 162–166.

43 Mensah, *Black Canadians,* 144–146.

44 The badman trope was first articulated in the Stagolee tradition that originated with the American folk ballad of Stagolee in 1895 about the murder of Billy Lyons by "Stag" Lee Shelton, a Missouri pimp. In the ballad, Shelton is represented as a shadowy and uncertain figure associated with the subcultures of bordellos and prostitution; his identity

is closely linked with sex, class, criminality, and a defiant revolutionary way of life. Over the course of the 20th century the Stagolee paradigm represented a black male ethos of the enduring struggle against white oppression and racism. This folk hero was conceived of as dangerous, impulsive, vulgar and daring in his displays of resistance. By the 1970s, the Stagolee character was taken up in the Blaxploitation film characters of Sweetback of *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (1971) and Youngblood Priest of *Super Fly* (1972), as well as by Black revolutionaries. Bobby Seale, a member of the Black Panther Party, modeled his political persona on the folk hero and would also use the narrative as a recruiting device to get young Black men to join the organization. For more information on Stagolee see, Cecil Brown, *Stagolee Shot Billy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

45 Davarian L. Baldwin, "Black Empires, White Desires: The Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip Hop," in *That's The Joint!: The Hip Hop Studies Reader,* eds. Murray Forman & Mark Anthony Neal, 236 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012); Perry, *Prophets of the Hood,* 103–104; Oware, "Brotherly Love," 22.

46 Oware, "Brotherly Love," 25–26.

47 Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Verso, 1999), 15–19, 25–26.

48 Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman,* 34–36.

49 Oware, "Brotherly Love," 23; William Oliver, "'The Streets': An Alternative Black Male Socialization Institution," *Journal of Black Studies* 36:6 (July 2006): 923.

50 For more information on Canadian migration patterns see, Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2008).

51 For more information on the rudebwoy see, Deborah A. Thomas, *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization and the Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

52 Lise Winer, *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago: On Historical Principles* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 37.

53 Walcott, *Black Like Who?,* 116; Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation,* 120.

54 Campbell, "The Politics of Making Home," 274.

55 Walcott, *Black Like Who?,* 35, 134–135, 143–144.

56 In Rap music, the phrase 'ice cold' meant that a rapper's skills on the microphone were not only remarkable but unrivalled.

57 Walcott, *Black Like Who?,* 143–144; Cover Art, Choclair, *Ice Cold,* Released on Virgin/Priority on November 2 1999.

58 Kardinal Offishall, "BaKardi Slang," on *Quest for Fire: Firestarter, Vol. 1.* Original LP released May 22 2001. Track 2. Length 66:40. Recorded by MCA Records.

59 Oral interview with Wes "Maestro" Williams, interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, February 1 2012; Oral interview with Chris Jackson, interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, January 21 2012.

60 Paul Edwards, *How to Rap: The Art & Science of the Hip-Hop MC*, (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 26.

61 Maestro Fresh Wes, "The Mic's My Piece," on *Symphony in Effect.* Original LP released in 1989. Track 3. Length 5:58. Recorded by Attic/LMR Records. Produced by Peter & Anthony Davis, Maximum 60 and Stanley McCook.

62 Oral interview with Wes "Maestro" Williams, interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, February 1 2012.

63 In the 1980s and 1990s, Rushton, a proponent of the notion that racial differences in IQ are partially related to genetic inheritance, produced controversial research on r/K selection theory in relation to race and intelligence, race and crime and racial variation.

64 Maestro Fresh Wes, "Nothing At All," on *The Black Tie Affair.* Original LP released in 1991. Track 11. Length 5:01. Recorded by Attic/LMR Records. Produced by Maestro Fresh Wes, Peter & Anthony Davis, K-Cut and Sir Scratch.

65 Maestro Fresh Wes, "Nothing At All."

66 Oral interview with Dalton Higgins, "An Evening With Dalton Higgins," interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, December 8 2012.

67 Oral interview with Wes "Maestro" Williams, interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, February 1 2012.

68 The concept of Blackness management refers to the state practice of racial profiling and surveillance of the Black body and its movements through the operational {white} gaze. This gaze endeavours to police, contain and control Black people through punitive aggression and micro-aggression with the larger intent of casting the Black body as foreign within the nation state. The end result is: the maintenance of social stratification in which Black people are oppressed and white people privileged, and a constant state of anxiety and trauma for Black people whereby there is no safe space in which they can be free to exist and function. According to Stuart Hall "managerialism" is not only the hallmark of neoliberalism but the motor that drives the set of values, ideas and practices that enables white supremacist capitalist patriarchy to function. For more on the concept of managerialism, see Stuart Hall, "Universities, Intellectuals, and Multitudes: An Interview with Stuart Hall," in Mark Coté, Richard J. F. Day, and Greg de Peuter, eds., *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments against Neoliberal Globalization* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

69 Oral interview with Dalton Higgins, "An Evening With Dalton Higgins," interview by Francesca D'Amico, Toronto, ON, December 8 2012.

70 Wendy Brathwaite and Saada Branker, *The Northside Research Project: Profiling Hip Hop Artistry In Canada, Presented to The Canada Council for the Arts* (Ottawa, ON: Canada Council for the Arts, 2006), 5, 22.

71 Brathwaite and Branker, *The Northside Research Project*, 21–23, 26.

72 Brathwaite and Branker, *The Northside Research Project,* 5–6, 21.

73 Brathwaite and Branker, *The Northside Research Project,* 21, 25.

74 "Roundtable 1: Toronto Hip Hop Practitioners," *Performing Diaspora 2013,* http://tubman.info.yorku.ca/activities/performing-diaspora/performing-diaspora-2013/performing-diaspora-2013-videos/.