



Eminem's Construction of Authenticity

Edward G. Armstrong Senior Fellow

To cite this article: Edward G. Armstrong Senior Fellow (2004) Eminem's Construction of Authenticity , Popular Music and Society, 27:3, 335-355, DOI: [10.1080/03007760410001733170](https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760410001733170)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03007760410001733170>



Published online: 17 May 2010.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 5614



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 18 View citing articles [↗](#)

Eminem's Construction of Authenticity

Edward G. Armstrong

Introduction

Rap is arguably the most dominant force in popular culture (Farley, "Hip-Hop"). American teenagers rate rap their favorite musical genre ("Tunes"), and rap has reached ascendancy globally (Bennett, *Cultures*). Nearly every country in the world features some form or mutation of rap music (Krimms). Gangsta rap is the music's dominant subgenre such that artists offering other kinds of rap are categorized as either "alternative" (Bennett, "Rap") or part of the "non-gangsta wing of hip-hop" (Pareles, "Uncommon" E6). Eminem, a gangsta rapper, is the music's biggest star.

Eminem is the "professionally known as" name of Marshall Mathers III. The name is a metonym derived from the sound of his initials, "M&M." Eminem also uses the nickname Slim Shady. Other artists and music commentators employ the sobriquet "Em." By 2002, Eminem had become a franchise and the hope of the music industry (Pareles, "Eminem"). He is world's biggest selling rap artist (Hilburn) and the most popular living gangsta rap artist.¹ His film debut in the semi-autobiographical *8 Mile* won him critical acclaim ("Critics"). *8 Mile* had the eighth highest opening week gross of the 296 movies released during 2002 ("Movie"). Eminem has won consecutive Grammy awards for best rap album. In 1999, *The Slim Shady LP* earned the honor, followed by his 2000 release *The Marshall Mathers LP*. The latter became the fastest selling rap album of all time, the fastest selling album by a solo artist, and the second fastest selling album ever (Violanti).² In 2000, Eminem joined luminary gangsta artists (e.g., Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, and Ice Cube) as part of the "Up in Smoke" tour, the most successful rap tour in history. At the time, Gary Bongiovanni, editor-in-chief of *Pollstar*, a concert industry trade publication, correctly predicted the tour's outcome: "The timing absolutely could not have been better ... Eminem brings a huge cross-cultural appeal" (Boucher, "Cover"). Eminem's fame is such that the *New York Times* reported a rumor that *Time* magazine would name Eminem its "Man of the Year" for 2000 (Strauss, "Pop"). In Summer 2001, Eminem's group, D-12, saw its *Devil's Night* move to number 1 in the charts upon its release.³ A year later *The Eminem Show* and the *8 Mile* soundtrack did likewise. The former was the biggest selling album of the year. *Billboard's* Hot 100 chart ranked "Lose Yourself," a song from *8 Mile*, number 1 for the last nine weeks of 2002 ("Charts"). Journalists have proclaimed 2002 "the Year of Eminem" (McCollum, "Pop"; Strauss, "2002"). Given these items of popular culture prominence, it is surprising that scholars have ignored Eminem.⁴

This study is an initial attempt to explore, albeit in a preliminary manner, the distinctive elements of Eminem's gangsta rap. A way to proceed is by detailing the

dimensions of Eminem's annunciations of authenticity through his words. Procedurally, I scrutinize not only his lyric content but also his responses to interview queries and his autobiographical statements. The constant touchstone for my endeavor is Eminem's commercial concerns. Popular music is inextricably bound to the capitalist interests that produce it—it is commercial in its very essence (Garofalo). Upon analysis, it appears to me that Eminem's lyric content—both the spoken and the unspoken—is predicated upon his unique place in the history of rap. Dr. Dre signed him to a recording contract because of his race. Dre sought a white artist to appeal to rap's largest consumer base—white middle-class suburban teenagers. As Bayles adduces, this audience increases its purchases of rap the more the lyrics become “obscene [and] violent” (342). It would seem reasonable that Eminem and Dre, his producer, would design his lyrics to appeal to his projected audience.

Eminem acts as if he never expected to become an object of black scorn and feminist abhorrence. For example, he complains that: “Every interview I do is like, your lyrics are deadly, man, they're violent and misogynistic; or black this, white that” (Weiner 61). Although his avowed surprise is possibly contrived, it portends Eminem's construction of authenticity through a critical appraisal of race and violent misogyny as thematic features. His constant announcements that he's white and his graphic portrayals of violence against women appear overtly directed to this dominant white hip-hop audience. His heightened misogyny further proves that he is an authentic gangsta, even more vicious than his predecessors. Understated, this criterion of authenticity means showing irreverence and crudeness (Cross). I will demonstrate that Eminem takes stands on the two modes of authenticity construction. He legitimizes himself in terms of both the white-black and violent misogynist axes while rejecting a key element of gangsta rap's oppositional nature—i.e., the underclass, evocative use of the “N-word.” The lynchpin of my analysis is what goes “unspoken” in Eminem's lyrics—his refusal to say “nigga” in any of his songs.

Authenticity

Since the beginning of the modern age, the central issue in folklore studies has been the question of authenticity (Bendix). The notion of authenticity permeated every point in the history of popular music (Leach). In the literature of musicology, the authenticity question focuses on the relation between performer and composition (Rudinow). In rock, the term “authentic” designates artists and music that are direct and honest and uncorrupted by commerce, trends, and derivativeness (Keightley). But different kinds of popular music have “different authenticities” (Davison 263). In addition, they assign differing importance to the process of establishing authenticity. Alan Light, editor of *Spin* magazine, believes that authenticity is deeply important in rap, more so than any other musical genre (Boucher, “Will”). Three kinds of authenticity are initially evident. First, there's a concern with being true to oneself. Rap illustrates self-creation and individuality as a value. Next, there's the question of location or place. Rap prioritizes artists' local allegiances and territorial identities. Finally, the question becomes whether a performer has the requisite relation and proximity to an original source of rap. Eminem is firmly grounded in these three kinds of authenticity.

According to Moore (214), “first person authenticity” arises when artists succeed in conveying the impression that their utterances are ones of integrity. Many rappers believe that “the subject matter isn’t as important as being true to yourself” (Snyder). For Busta Rhymes, all is well “as long as I can represent what I am, which is hip-hop” (Watson 67). Xzibit’s number one rule of conduct is “Stay true to yourself” (“Xzibit” 162). One of the members of Cypress Hill has even adopted the name “B-Real.” In 2000, Sprite, a soft drink brand of the Coca-Cola Company, launched a \$20 million ad campaign featuring rappers with the theme of “being true to yourself” (MacArthur 4). Not surprisingly, therefore, a *Vibe* interviewer found Eminem obsessed with being real: “Words matter to him. ‘The truth of the matter.’ This is his favorite phrase” (Smith 92). Eminem separates himself from other rappers for whom image takes precedence over words, and laments “nobody cares about the words” (Smith 94). So, for Eminem, lyrics are the vehicle for expressing self-identity and revealing personal truths. But this raises a crucial question: “How real is real?” (Smith 92). After all, Eminem isn’t in the business of committing the crimes detailed in his lyrics. In fact, neither are any other gangsta rappers. The lack of correspondence between words and deeds is fundamental to standard rap discourse. It’s Eminem’s affirmation of “being real” that is a normative rap validation code. Eminem’s “first person authenticity” is essentially grounded in the rap world, “a world where ‘keeping it real’ has become an empty boast” (Raftery).

Chronologically, geography was the first “crucial index of authenticity in rap” (Krimms 178). Spatiality remains central to the organizing principles of value, meaning, and practice within hip-hop culture (Forman). To consider geographical authenticity, I must briefly go “back in the day” to New York, to what Krimms calls “the mythical cradle of hip-hop culture” (77). A good place to start is with the life of promoter/producer/executive Russell Simmons, the “godfather of hip hop” (Lee B7). In his autobiography, Queens native Simmons recalls the time he promoted a show in Queens that featured Harlem rapper Kurtis Blow. Simmons duplicitously billed him as “Queens’ #1 rapper” because the 1977 audience would have rejected an outsider. Likewise, consider how Simmons and associates reacted the first time they heard Sugarhill Gang’s “Rapper’s Delight,” the first rap record to enter the top 40 charts. In Simmons’s words: “Someone had taken our rhymes, our attitude and our culture and made a record” (51). He further details his animosity toward this heretofore unknown group: “They sure weren’t known where the real MCs hung out” (52). Queens rappers had allies in the Bronx. Because the Sugarhill Gang came from Brooklyn, many Bronx residents flouted them as derivative (Bennett, “Rap”). After all, the Bronx was the true home of authentic rap. According to KRS-One, it was not just the Bronx, it was a particular park in the South Bronx. Grandmaster Caz recounts the origins of rap in greater detail: Kool Herc invented rap in the park near the Riverside 1600 apartment building in the South Bronx (*Rhyme & Reason*). Almost immediately, however, different parts of the Bronx made competing claims as locales of authentic rap (Bennett, “Rap”). A decade later, gangsta rap originated in Compton, California. Thus began the East Coast–West Coast antagonism regarding the venue of rap authenticity. Dr. Dre was one of the founders of gangsta rap, and, as noted, he discovered Eminem and produced Eminem’s most popular albums. Therefore, although Eminem grew up in Detroit he is intrinsically linked to the West Coast style of rap.

Assertions of authenticity also rest on claims that a person is “natural” and without “artifice,” a process Peterson calls “naturalization” (211). A way to accomplish naturalization, for artists to legitimize themselves, is to demonstrate the historic links between the artists and others already acknowledged as prime figures in the field. In this regard, Eminem’s link to Dre gives Eminem unequivocal authenticity. Eminem’s work is called “The Rap That Dre Built” (Kot 1) and he became the first artist who signed with Dre’s Aftermath Records (Thigpen). Dre coined the term “gangsta rap” to characterize the albums he produced (Gold). He and the late Eazy-E founded N.W.A (Niggaz with Attitude) and in 1991 he produced N.W.A’s *Efil4zaggin* (Niggaz4life spelled backwards), which became the first gangsta album to reach number 1 in the *Billboard* charts. In 1992, Dre’s *The Chronic* became the most popular gangsta album. One year later, another Dre production, Snoop Doggy Dogg’s *Doggystyle*, surpassed *The Chronic*. Snoop’s album reached number 1 prior to its release, a first for a solo artist (Pareles, “Rappers”). Besides Dre producing Eminem, Dre testified on his behalf: “I wasn’t worried that people would react against him because he’s white. The hardest thugs I know think this white boy is tight” (Kenyatta 57). As Andy Cowan, editor of *Hip-Hop Connection*, surmises, the endorsement from Dre was key (Delingpole). But Dre was not the only seminal figure in the gangsta hierarchy to vouch for Eminem. Ice-T originated the gangsta style (McAdams; Rose). His song “6 ‘N the Morning” laid the foundation and served as the blueprint for future acts such as N.W.A. This progenitor of the genre also extolled Eminem: “He’s got a lot of skill, he knows what he’s doing, he’s paid his dues” (Kenyatta 101).

But authenticity is more complex than where you’re from and whom you know. Sociologically understood, authenticity is not inherent in the object designated as authentic. Instead, an audience confers authenticity on the object—it is a socially agreed-upon construct (Peterson). Rap’s key cultural symbols function as invocations of authenticity discursively understood as semantic dimensions of meaning (McLeod). Three of these central semantic dimensions of rap authenticity are the racial, the gender/sexual, and social location. First, rap is black cultural expression, not co-opted whiteness. White rappers immediately generate questions of cultural property and appropriation. Next, rap is male dominated, misogynist, and homophobic, not the music of hoes, punks, faggots, and bitches of both genders.⁵ Violence toward women is often an egregious effect of what George calls rappers’ personification of “hypermasculinity” (*Hip* 110). Finally, rap is from the streets, the music of the underclass essentially opposed to those enjoying a bourgeois suburban life. Use of the “N-word” is a key element in rap’s portrayals of the underclass (Kelley, “Kickin”). Among gangsta rappers, in particular, the “N-word” has become a “badge of honor” denoting underclass membership (Ice T 105).

Eminem: a white person

White involvement in black art forms is immediately problematic.⁶ A common viewpoint is that “the history of black music has been a continuous one of whites’ lucrative expropriation of black cultural forms” (Kelley, “Rhythm” 9). Eminem’s authenticity is disputable because he is white and rap is usually considered a black art form.⁷ The prevailing wisdom envisages rap as part of an oral heritage, one that preserves the cultural past of West African slaves, whose flowery language signified the speaker’s verbal skill and the social code shared by the oral

community (Edwards and Sienkewicz; Perkins; Smitherman; Stephens). Attention to rap as verbal art leads to deliberations on the production of the object, explorations of the art form as socially contingent. As Walser points out, "analyses of rap music must be grounded in the African American context of its creation" (210). Often rap is seen as an articulation of contemporary black culture (Pressley; West) and Black Nationalism (Muwakkil; Decker; Henderson). Or, in Baker's words: "Rap is black life" ("Handling" 184).

The rap-color issue is so pervasive that it reaches people whom no one ever sees, such as the black manager of the Beastie Boys and the white founder of Priority Records. On the one hand, critics needed to clarify the circumstances when the Beastie Boys, a white group, had the first rap album (*License to Ill*) to cross over to number 1 on the *Billboard* charts (Strauss "Hip-Hop").⁸ Initially, commentators conceived of the Beasties as part of a broader pattern attempting to make rap safe for white suburban youth and an inevitable outcome of marketing forces. But, apparently, the Beasties gained legitimacy because Russell Simmons, "a black man," managed them (George "Death" 194). In Simmons's historical account, black audiences accepted the Beasties because they exemplified artistic honesty. On the other hand, there's the impact and influence of Bryan Turner. Turner founded Priority Records, N. W. A's first distributor and the distributor of Suge Knight's Death Row Records. Turner, "rap music's most powerful mogul," is white (Strauss "Secret" E1). As Snoop Dogg observed: "People think he's [Turner's] black automatically because he's in so much business with black folk" (Strauss "Secret" E1).

Whites buy 75 percent of the rap music sold (Farley, "Hip-Hop").⁹ According to *Source* magazine, marketing experts sought a white leader for rap's largest consumer base, white suburban kids (Morales). As Queen Latifah commented: "All of us black label owners know we'd sign [a white kid] because white kids want their own hero more than they want ours" (White, "Poet" 198). Specifically, Dre decided "to make a white rapper the next heir to [his] gangsta legacy" (Morales 186). Dre picked Eminem. Eminem acknowledges his indebtedness: "Dre basically saved my life; my shit was going nowhere. Dre took me in" (Weiner 93). What eventually transpires is a situation in which an artist selected because he is white is preliminarily problematic, because he is white. For example, in one of the first nationwide discussions of Eminem, *Time* magazine concerned itself with the problems Eminem faces as "a white rapper" (Thigpen 70). The article depicted the idea pictorially by captioning an accompanying picture of Eminem "White Man With Attitude," an obviously facetious play on the name N. W. A. Eminem's key problem is "credibility" because the discredited image of Vanilla Ice still looms in the background.¹⁰ Another initial reviewer compared Eminem's "white rap" to comedian Rodney ("I don't get no respect") Dangerfield's humorous hit "Rappin' Rodney" (Sheffield). Then a disparager professed that Eminem's handicraft isn't "real" rap because it lacks a heavy dose of "rhythm and rhyme" (Kogan). The more general principle was that "whites can't cut it vocally in hip-hop" (White, "Who" 107), that "whiteboys can't rap" (Pryce 22). The titles of numerous newspaper and magazine articles underscore Eminem's whiteness, as if the reading public did not know that Eminem is Caucasian. By doing so, the press helps Eminem use his ethnicity as a marketing tool. Many of the headlines fit nicely under the rubric of what Frith calls "the weirdly racist idea of the White Negro" (180). Table 1 proffers a classification and catalogue of these headlines in terms of their indexical and

Table 1. Headlines about Eminem.

Classification	Headline	Source
Indexical		
Color	"Chocolate on the Inside"	Aaron in <i>Spin</i>
	"White-Boy Rap"	Wilson-Smith in <i>Maclean's</i>
	"White Hot"	Mitchell in <i>New York Times</i>
Trait	"Wisecracking, Blue-eyed Rapper ..."	Sheffield in <i>Rolling Stone</i>
Criticism	"From White Trash to White Hot"	Warren in <i>Chicago Tribune</i>
	"Shut Up ...Wigger"	Neill in <i>The Australian</i>
	"White Flight"	Walsh in <i>Saint Paul Pioneer Press</i>
	"White Punk with that Black Cred"	Delingpole in <i>The Australian</i>
Symbolic		
Cinematic	"The Great White Hip-Hop"	Boyd in <i>The Irish Times</i>
	"The Great White Rapper Hope"	Leeds in <i>Chicago Tribune</i>
	"The White-Boy Shuffle"	Bynoe in <i>Doula</i>
Literary	"Visible Man"	Udovitch in <i>New York Times Magazine</i>
	"The White Negro Revisited"	Ozersky in <i>Tikkun</i>
Musical	"Ebony and Ivory Come Together..."	Sartwell in <i>Los Angeles Times</i>
	"Pretty Fly"	Diehl in <i>Rolling Stone</i>
	"A White Shade of Pale"	C. J. Farley in <i>Time</i>

symbolic representative character. Seven of the headlines indicate that Eminem is white by simply saying so, by focusing on a Caucasian trait, or by using whiteness in a derogatory manner. Readers must interpret the seven other headlines by calling upon their basic knowledge of cinematic, literary, and musical texts.¹¹

Allegedly, black rappers have repeatedly told Eminem that he should stop rapping because he is white (Bozza). They and their media allies have forced Eminem to address the issue time and again. Eminem complains that "I still cannot get past the white factor" (Murphy E2) and that "some people only see that I'm white" (Thigpen 70). Eminem's first album, *Infinite* (1996), with only 1,000 tapes pressed, failed, and Eminem attributed this lack of success to his "white boy" status (Weiner 43). Eminem expressed this viewpoint in greater detail:

I don't put myself in the white-rapper category. Anybody who puts me in that category—fuck 'em! Every white rapper that's come out, people have tried to play on it like a gimmick. I'm like, "Yo, when you put me out, put me out as a rapper, strictly based on the talent." (Diehl)

In his song "Who Knew" (*The Marshall Mathers LP*), Eminem deals with the issue lyrically: "I don't make black music, I don't make white music, I make fight music." In "The Way I Am" (*The Marshall Mathers LP*), he verbally attacks those who see him as a "wigger who just tries to be black." In "Role Model" (*The Slim Shady LP*), Eminem reveals the arbitrariness of race in his fragmented self:

Some people only see that I'm white,
 Ignorin' skill
 Cause I stand out like a green hat

With a orange bell
 But I don't get pissed,
 Y'all don't even see through the mist
 How the fuck can I be white,
 I don't even exist

Eminem's discourse is manifestly intended to impugn the "Eminem is white" indictments. But, in every case, he too easily slips into implicit postulations of what he seeks to contest. This, undoubtedly, is how Eminem makes himself conspicuously "white." Table 2 summarizes and categorizes the different ways in

Table 2. Eminem's affirmations of racial identity.

Classification	Example	Source	
Indexical	Color	Announces he's white "Bitch Please II" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "Criminal" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "I'm Back" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "The Real Slim Shady" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "Role Model" in <i>The Slim Shady LP</i> "Say What You Say" in <i>The Eminem Show</i> "White America" in <i>The Eminem Show</i>	
	Trait	Snoop calls him "The Great White American Hope" Announces he has blond hair Announces he has blue eyes Mentions his white ass	"Bitch Please II" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "Business" in <i>The Eminem Show</i> "Criminal" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "Marshall Mathers" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "White America" in <i>The Eminem Show</i> "Criminal" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i> "Marshall Mathers" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i>
Criticism	Kuniva calls him "a honky"	"Ain't Nuttin' But Music" in <i>Devil's Night</i>	
	Referred to as a honky Referred to as a wigger	"Brain Damage" in <i>The Slim Shady LP</i> "The Way I Am" in <i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i>	
Symbolic	White artists	Alleges he's a Beastie Boy Compares himself to Elvis Criticizes Vanilla Ice	"Cum On Everybody" in <i>The Slim Shady LP</i> "Without Me" in <i>The Eminem Show</i> "Role Model" in <i>The Slim Shady LP</i> "Purple Pills" in <i>Devil's Night</i> "My Dad's Gone Crazy" in <i>The Eminem Show</i>
	Black artists	Wants to date Lauryn Hill Bought Hill's tape so her kids would starve	"Role Model" in <i>The Slim Shady LP</i> "Cum On Everybody" in <i>The Slim Shady LP</i>

which Eminem affirms his racial identity through his lyrics. The words of seventeen songs announce he is white, attend to a Caucasian trait, or supply a denotative slur. In seven other songs, listeners must connect the names of recording artists with what they represent—either white usurpation of black music or alleged black anti-white sentiment.¹²

Before Eminem garners too much sympathy for his victimization through racial categorization, there is another side to the issue. Eminem appears to identify with his whiteness to an extraordinary degree. In the award-winning *The Real Slim Shady* (from *The Marshall Mathers LP*), MTV's "Best Video" of 2000, he begins by saying "ya'll act like you never seen a white person before." At his first appearance in New York City, his introduction went as follows: "Are y'all ready for the white boy" (Poston 138). Eminem even entitled his autobiography *Angry Blond*. In addition, white rappers influenced him the most—whether he is affirming their achievements or denouncing their ignominy. This is indeed strange—after all, at the time, albums by black rappers outnumbered those by their white counterparts by approximately 38 to one ("Discographies"). On the one hand, Eminem's first positive rapping role models were the Beastie Boys:

When I first heard the Beasties, I didn't know they were white. I just thought it was the craziest shit I had ever heard. I was probably 12. Then I saw the video and saw that they were white, and I went, "Wow." I thought, "Hey, I can do this." The Beastie Boys were what really did it for me. I was like, "This shit is so dope!" That's when I decided I wanted to rap. (Weiner 67)

On the other hand, Vanilla Ice negatively influenced him, particularly when he first heard "Ice Ice Baby." Eminem vented his feelings: "That crushed me. At first, I felt like I didn't want to rap anymore. I was so mad because he was making it really [hard] for me . . . Vanilla Ice was just a fake" (Hilburn 8). Unfortunately, Vanilla Ice manufactured a life history that contained false statements about his close ties to poor black neighborhoods, thereby making the ghetto a source of fabricated white authenticity (Rose). Eminem saw Vanilla Ice's lies as potentially ruining the careers of other white MCs, himself included. In response, Eminem presented this platitude: "No one can help their color and no one can help where they grew up . . . that's your parents' doing. . . . If you grew up in the suburbs be proud and don't pretend you came from somewhere else" (Eminem, "Eminem").

Recall Eminem's lyrical exclamations that he doesn't do black music or white music, that he does fight music. But he certainly considered the artists' race when picking his likes and dislikes. Nevertheless, Eminem maintains that, while growing up in a black neighborhood in Detroit, he didn't see skin color (Aaron). A more important issue, however, is exactly what's going on when he promulgates his racial identity through reiterations of "white" this and that.

In one sense, Eminem ironically follows the dictates of certain black scholars by employing a reverse evaluation of a concept. If white scholars find the debilitation of the black family structure, black scholars accept the counter-assumption—that the alleged problematic family structure is actually the *sine qua non* of black survival (Armstrong, "Black"). So, instead of deemphasizing his whiteness, Eminem makes it the cutting edge that defines his essence as a rapper. His race becomes the taken-for-granted source and marker of his rap identity. But there is another consideration concerning his "white" anaphora. Basically, he's simply affirming something that everyone already knows. His lyrics, therefore, are perfectly self-referential. This reflexive perspective immunizes him against the

compromising racial charges often leveled against him. Eminem cannot be inauthentic because he acknowledges the truth about himself. He accomplishes a self-conscious parody of rap's racially based authenticity. For example, Boehlert claims that because Eminem is white, MTV embraced him like no rap act in its history. So in "I'm Back" (*The Marshall Mathers LP*), Eminem raps: "Cause I'm W-H-I-T-E, ... MTV was so friendly to me." Numerous critics complain that Eminem is doing exactly what Elvis Presley did—making black music acceptable for a white audience. Darryl James, editor of *RapSheet*, presents Eminem with this antonomasia: "the Elvis of Rap" ("Between" 5). In "Without Me" (*The Eminem Show*), Eminem agrees:

I'm the worst thing since Elvis Presley
To do black music so selfishly
And used it to get myself wealthy
There's a concept that works
Twenty million other white rappers emerge

In "White America" (*The Eminem Show*), he infers: "Let's do the math, if I was black, I would not have sold half." It's pointless to impugn Eminem's motivations as a rapper because Eminem wittily exults in his own selfish and lucrative expropriation of black music.

Eminem's violent misogyny

Initially, whites favored the "politically nonthreatening" rap of artists such as Fresh Prince/Will Smith (Danaher and Blackwelder 5). Soon, however, analysts recognized that the more record producers packaged rappers as violent black criminals, the bigger their white audiences became (Samuels). Market researchers found a demand for harsher lyrics (Watts). Consequently, rap's vulgarity increased to appeal to the tastes of the genre's white audience (Chideya). Current critiques of American music find that lyrics have a "misogynistic trend" (Mendelsohn 12) and are "more explicit than ever" (Powers). Kurt Loder, MTV's prime commentator, says that Eminem's success represents "the decline of the whole p.c. regime" (Norris, "Artist"). Eminem stands alone in his prominence and in his pervasive purveying of violent misogyny. Critics call Eminem's lyrics "viloporn" (Norris, "Artist"). The National Congress of Black Women continues to fight against lyrics that glorify violence and denigrate women. The organization notes "today's even worse lyrics [are] typified by gangsta/porno rapper Eminem" (NCBW2001). In September 2000, Lynne Cheney, wife of the then vice presidential candidate, Richard Cheney, recited some of Eminem's lyrics before a Senate hearing (Norris, "Artist"). In 2001, Cheney told CNN that Eminem's music is "the most extreme example of rock lyrics used to demean women and advocate violence against women" (Haynes 4B). During June 2001, for the first time ever, the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) fined a radio station for playing a "clean" version of a song, Eminem's "The Real Slim Shady" ("Editorial"). In the FCC's opinion, "The edited version of the song contains unmistakable offensive sexual references in conjunction with sexual expletives that appear intended to pander and shock" (Travis 3). In January 2002, the FCC reversed its opinion and decided that the material broadcast was not patently offensive, and thus not actionably indecent (McCullagh).¹³

MTV and gangsta rap through MTV succeeded partially by means of the “equation of pathological behavior with black ‘authenticity’” (Goldblatt 11A). Eminem does the same thing—he authenticates his self-presentations by outdoing other gangsta rappers in terms of his violent misogyny. In *The Slim Shady LP*, women are killed by guns and knives and by an innovative means, poisoning. Moreover, Eminem enhances the violent misogyny by committing an act of infanticide. In *The Marshall Mathers LP*, eleven of the fourteen songs contain violent misogynist lyrics. Worse still, nine of the eleven songs depict killing women, with drowning becoming a new modus operandi. His means of murder (in the order they appear on the album) are:

- Choking, stabbing, use of a machete and a chainsaw (with the sound of a chainsaw) (in “Kill You”);
- Drowning (with the sound of splashing) (in “Stan”);
- Stabbing (in “Who Knew”);
- Head split (in “Remember Me”);
- Throat slit (in “Amityville”);
- Shootings (in “Bitch Please II”);
- Cutting a throat (with the sound of a throat being cut) (in “Kim”);
- Stabbing (with dismemberment) (in “Under the Influence”);
- Shooting (with the sound of a gun) (in “Criminal”).

D-12’s *Devil’s Night* is, according to one reviewer, “*The Marshall Mathers LP, Pt. 2*,” Eminem’s “next album” (CrazieCabbie). But D-12 supposedly trades in a rougher, rawer brand of hip hop (McCollum, “Rappers”). Proof, a member of the group, says that D-12’s politics are a little more incorrect than Eminem’s (“Music”). Proof adds that the direction of D-12 “was to be disgusting” (Norris, “Shady”). Eminem promised that *Devil’s Night* would be “worse” than his other albums because “each time I do an album, I’ll just keep taking it further” (Weiner 81). He guaranteed that *Devil’s Night* would make his other albums “seem tame” (Browne 37). But most of the murderous methods mentioned therein have already taken place in *The Marshall Mathers LP* (see the above list). The two exceptions are “squashing a bitch” and “stomping her kids” (in “Purple Pills”) and beating a hoe to death (in “Pimp Like Me”). *The Eminem Show* adds two more fatal techniques: breaking a woman’s neck (in “Drips”) and putting “anthrax on a Tampax” (in “Superman”). Up to this 2002 release, Eminem’s incidences of lyrical violent misogyny continually increased.¹⁴ Table 3 presents the results of a content analysis that documents the number and kind of violent misogynist acts portrayed in Eminem’s four albums.

Table 3. Eminem’s violent misogyny.

Title	N	Violent misogyny	Assault	Rape	Murder	Rape/murder
<i>The Slim Shady LP</i>	14	8	0	1	4	3
<i>The Marshall Mathers LP</i>	14	11	2	0	4	5
<i>Devil’s Night</i>	14	13	5	1	5	2
<i>The Eminem Show</i>	15	4	1	0	3	0
Totals	57	36 (63%)	8 (22%)	2 (5%)	16 (44%)	10 (28%)

Here I want to use Armstrong's statistical summary of the violent misogyny found in the lyrics of the artists in gangsta rap's foundational period ("Gangsta").¹⁵ Comparing Eminem's lyrics to that of these artists shows the following: In terms of violent misogyny, gangsta rap scores 22 percent while Eminem reaches 63 percent. Concerning the percentage of violent misogynist lyrics dealing with women's murder and rape/murder: gangsta rap = 38 percent; Eminem = 72 percent. According to Armstrong, Too Much Trouble (the Baby Geto Boys) is the titleholder in terms of violent misogyny—scoring 48 percent. This most violent group is "far less commercially successful than other representatives of the genre" ("Gangsta" 104). Eminem surpasses this group's violent misogynist score and is, alternatively, quite commercially successful.

The underclass and the N-word

In rock, the authentic–inauthentic distinction depends on a performer's ability "to articulate private but common desires, feelings and experiences into a shared public language" (Grossberg 207). But these desires, feelings, and experiences are framed by the Romantic myth of the primitive (Pattison). The irreducible dogmatic minimum that defines rock orthodoxy is the myth of black underclass origins. In its canonical version, black folks' music "combined the sensuous ecstasies of their uncontaminated spirits with the stifled pains of their brutal opposition" (Pattison 31). Rap shares this canon—it is considered a product of the underclass (Baker, *Black*; Berry; Kelley, "Kickin'"; Keyes; McCall). Specifically, its "genre elements have emerged from a distinct background of inner-city life that is characterized by extreme poverty, violence, heavy drug use, and other crime" (Ryan, Calhoun, and Wentworth 121). Eminem should have no trouble with this authenticity criterion. This is exactly what Plotz meant when he wrote that Eminem has "no authenticity problems." Eminem spent a considerable portion of his childhood in an almost all-black housing project in Detroit. His mother, a welfare recipient, gave birth to him when she was fifteen years old. Eminem never knew his father. And, if Eminem is telling the truth, his mother used drugs. In school, bullies often assaulted him. He dropped out of school after the ninth grade. But something stopped Eminem from fully exploiting his underclass background. The problem for Eminem concerns how his brand of rap is implicated in the debate concerning rap's racial essentialism versus its class-based heterogeneity.

Complaints about rap emanate from the black middle class (Baldwin; Delaney; Neal). Unfavorable versus favorable opinions on rap mirror the gap between middle-class and poor blacks (George, *Death*). The buppies (black urban professionals) generally condemn the B-boys (break boys, the rappers), individuals molded by the tragedies of underclass life (George, *Buppies*). Middle-class blacks decry rap as a mistaken depiction of black life, one that is premised on notions of blackness as intensely deviant (Neal). Black commentators offer the most intensive critiques of gangsta rap. C. DeLores Tucker, chair of the National Political Congress of Black Women (NPCBW) and the most famous opponent of gangsta rap, considers the genre a profane and obscene glorification of murder and rape (Waldron). Tucker holds that gangsta rap is "filthy music" that teaches children "it's cool to murder, it's cool to rape" (Marks 1). Long before the NPCBW applied the term to Eminem's lyrics, Tucker renamed gangsta rap "gangsta porno rap" (Kramer C9). Tucker wants the gangsta message quashed.

Responding to black middle-class opposition to rap, Ice-T uses the word “nigger” as a point of demarcation. For him, the black underclass, whom he refers to as the “field niggers,” are “his niggers.” Ice proclaims: “I’m proud to be a nigger” (144). This once disparaging word is, for Ice-T, a “badge of honor” (105). Subsequent gangsta rappers agree (Baldwin; Begley). “Nigga” is one of the key elements in rap portrayals of the underclass because it reflects a new identity “in which the specific class, race, and gendered experiences in late-capitalist urban centers coalesce” (Kelley, “Kickin’” 136). The word is linked to the positive aspects of the ‘hood, not to negative stereotypes. Rappers commonly use “nigga” to describe “a condition rather than skin color or culture” (137). The condition is shaped by class-consciousness, inner-city life, poverty, and violence. “Nigga” is a synonym not only for oppressed but also for the strong, streetwise men that fight to overcome oppression. Writing in *Essence*, Farley summarized an everyday life differentiation: “African-Americans are safe, respectable, upwardly mobile and professional Black men. Niggaz are strong, streetwise, hard black men” (“Players” 142). Rap, of course, is “all about” strong, streetwise, hard black men. *Rolling Stone*, in fact, lists 758 songs with “nigga” or “niggaz” in their titles (“Search”). A book reviewer for BET (Black Entertainment Television) seriously suggests that one can find a manifestation of the word “nigger” in “virtually any hip-hop song made in the last five years” (Kellogg). It has reached the point that the word “nigga” is ubiquitous in daily life as a synonym for “person,” regardless of skin color (Williams G9). Against this backdrop, Eminem offers an awkward, disingenuous act of obeisance to a version of the “N-word” that has lost its meaning.

In a *Rolling Stone* interview, Eminem answered a query concerning use of the “N-word” as follows: “That word is not even in my vocabulary. . . . And I do black music, so out of respect, why would I put that word in my vocabulary?” (DeCurtis 18). But the “N-word” is used throughout *The Marshall Mathers LP*. Sticky Fingaz recites the word in “Remember Me.” In “Bitch Please II,” Dre, Snoop, Nate Dogg, and Xzibit repeat it as if it were a shibboleth. Eminem has members of D-12 use the “N-word” in “Under the Influence.” It found its way into twelve of the fourteen songs on *Devil’s Night*. There, in one of the skits (“Obie Trice”), an unnamed speaker calls Eminem a “nigga.” Elsewhere, Kon Artist (of D-12) had this to say about Eminem: “That nigga ain’t white. He got white in him, but he ain’t white” (Toure 70). In *The Eminem Show*, black rappers accompany Eminem in only three songs. But in two of these songs (“Drips” and “When the Music Stops”), his black helpers repeat the “N-word” a total of ten times. Therefore, it’s OK to have his minions use the word but it’s not OK for Eminem to do likewise. In *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, Kennedy contends that by refusing to use the “N-word” Eminem is “following a prudent course” (51). But this conclusion seems unwarranted given two of Kennedy’s other points. First, Kennedy says that to condemn whites for using the word “without regard to context” makes the word a fetish (52). Second, he writes that many whites yearn to use the word like their black rapper heroes who have given the term “nigger” a “new currency and enhanced cachet” (45). Eminem’s context is gangsta rap and Eminem’s hero is Dre. Prudence does not enter into either qualification.

Would Eminem have been criticized for using the “N-word”? I don’t think so. Another white rapper, Kid Rock, whom Eminem followed around as a youth, recites “nigger” in “Black Chick, White Guy,” a song on his 10-million selling *Devil Without a Cause*.¹⁶ Criticisms of Rock for doing so are nonexistent.¹⁷ Eminem

certainly noticed Kid Rock's use of the word—he is featured on Rock's "Fuck Off," which appears on the same album. Ice-T would rally to Eminem's defense because Ice has no difficulty hearing white artists say "nigger." Ice rhetorically asks: "If Axl Rose says 'nigger' on a record, does that make him a racist?" (141).¹⁸ Ice finds that Rose "is a cool dude." Ice is happy that white folks are reaching out to black culture and, in his opinion, "WASPs who like black people are niggers" (145). Recall Kennedy's contention that by refusing to use the "N-word" Eminem is being "prudent." My guess is that Eminem's "prudence" was a product of marketing advisors who felt that his audience, the white youth Dre wanted to focus on, might neither understand nor appreciate and might feel uncomfortable hearing him mention a standard rap and underclass self-descriptor.

Conclusion

I contend that commercial concerns motivated Eminem to promote his white identity, to foster his violent misogyny, and to steer clear of the "N-word." Further, I want to present a brief circumstantial case that possibly overemphasizes the significance of Dre in the creation and maintenance of the Eminem phenomenon. At present, Eminem has resigned himself to always having "to be the front man." But he has future plans: "Eventually I want to branch off into being a producer and be able to one day sit back like Dre and kind of be behind the scenes" (Rich 57). Clearly, Eminem is aware that he is not the catalyst of the concinnity of his career.

A harbinger of Dre's presence in Eminem's marketing-motivated malleability and objectification is found in the master stroke that rejected the "M&M" metonymy in favor of the spelled out appellation, "Eminem." Naming is important in rap and in Afrocentric music in general, where it is an act of invocation that captures the essence of one's being (Roberts). Ice-T (Tracy Marrow) named himself after the notorious pimp and successful author Iceberg Slim, whose words about the "jungle creed" impressed him: "the strong must feed on any prey at hand" (9). Now the name Marshall Mathers III is charged with emotional overtones and possesses connotations that would profoundly affect acceptance as a rapper. Eminem, therefore, used his initials early in his career. But it remained for Marc Kempf, then his manager, to convince him to change "M&M" to Eminem (Elrick). At least Elvis Presley's handlers let him keep his real name.

My speculations concerning the importance of Dre are neither original nor uncommon. Variants of the following quotation abound: "Eminem . . . veritably drips authenticity as long as his producer, rap wiz Dr. Dre, hovers nearby" (Tribby 310). Evidence supporting this contention is equally commonplace. For example, during the production of the film *8 Mile*, Dre's responsibility was "to vet *everything*" (Fierman 24, emphasis in original). According to Eminem's manager, Paul Rosenberg, Dre provided "the ultimate reality check." Rosenberg continues: "[Dre] may not have gotten a producer credit [on the movie], but Dre would sit there at almost every step and go yea or nay" (Fierman 24). On the face of it, the argument that Dre proceeded in a similar manner throughout Eminem's career makes sense.

Unquestionably, Eminem's race is the necessary cause of his success. Sam Phillips sought an Elvis and Dre sought an Eminem to appeal to the heretofore untapped white consumer base. When black rhythm and blues artists performed a song, critics considered it an example of "race music" and a reflection of

black society. When Elvis performed the same song, no one suggested that it was a product of the white working-class Memphis subculture. Black gangsta rappers are seen as lyrical ethnographers of the violent criminal lives of black men in the ghetto. No one, to my knowledge, has characterized Eminem's violent lyrics as typifications of his race, class, or neighborhood. According to Fuchs, the immediate and discomfoting reason is precisely this: "he is white [and] white boys don't have to represent." A racial frame is correctly considered a taken-for-granted part of American society. But I think the title of a recent piece in a sales and marketing journal specifies a more powerful existential basis for the scope of Eminem's success. The article is titled: "'Em' is for Marketing" (Strout 13).

Marketing is the sufficient cause of Eminem's success, the condition that guaranteed his prominence. Since coining the term "gangsta rap" and producing the canonical gangsta albums, Dre and his posse have become rap royalty. His marketing acumen is a product of, and evidence supporting, his position of dominance in the rap hierarchy. As Darryl James summarizes: "[Eminem] is supported by a huge machine" ("Eminem"). Included therein are Dre's beats and reputation and Interscope's marketing and promotion. And it's "the machine" that took Eminem to "the top of the charts" (James, "Eminem"). Of course, neither Sam Phillips nor Dre picked just any white boy to filter black music for a white audience. The point is, however, Elvis could not have "done it" without Phillips and later Colonel Tom Parker; without Dre, Eminem would still have his day job in Detroit. Elvis's career depended on two people: Phillips, who sought a white artist and selected him; and Parker, who guided Elvis's career. Eminem's career depends completely on Dre. To answer the question why Eminem's lyrics highlight his racial identity, viciously attack women, and refuse to utter the "N-word," we must ask if Eminem is merely a compliant conspirator in his own continual commodification.

Acknowledgments

I thank Megan Lucy and Paul Mostrom for their comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

Notes

1. In late December 2002, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certified Eminem's 18 million in US sales. Only the late Tupac Shakur (2Pac) has sold more albums.
2. At the time, only 'N Sync's *No Strings Attached* had sold faster. But in 2001, 'N Sync's *Celebrity* sold even faster, pushing Eminem to third place (Gardner).
3. D-12 stands for "Dirty Dozen." Each of the group's six members have alter egos: Bizarre (Rufus Johnson); Kon Artis (Denaun Porter); Kuniva (Von Carlisle); Proof (Deshaun Holton); Slim Shady (Eminem); and Swifty McVay (Ondre Moore). Rappers often join other rappers in offshoot projects (Baker, "Pop"). This is known as "the power of the posse." Rappers stress the importance of assembling a team and linking themselves to a cult-like worldview (Norris, "Shady").
4. An EBSCOhost search (24 Dec. 2002) employing the "scholarly (peer review) journals" limiter showed only five articles mentioning his name. All of these articles appeared during 2001 in the same issue (Volume 8, Issue 3) of the *Gay and Lesbian Review*.
5. The present analysis does not build upon Hirschfield's examination of Eminem's gay-bashing lyrics. That critical overview of Eminem's homophobia includes a

- specification of the lyrical contexts in which Eminem employs terms such as faggot, punk, queer, "homosex," "hermaph," and "trans-a-vest." Tyler presents a much shorter and more emotional challenge to Eminem's so-called "neo-Nazi lyrics."
6. The question of authenticity has not gone unnoticed by an audience of logicians. The *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* has published articles concerning the problem of authentic participation with regard to the blues (Rudinow) and jazz (Brown). The conclusions therein will not affect the reception of artists. Nevertheless, the scholars answer "no" to the question of whether one must be black to play and understand a musical form. Upon analysis, production and reception of an art form are not restricted to specific folks in possession of relevantly unique experience.
 7. Bennett mentions that histories of rap overlook the contributions of white youth (*Cultures* 92). Others attest that Latino rap developed simultaneously with black rap in New York (Flores). Noting the Latino roots of rap "dispels the common notion that rap is 'a black thing'" (del Barco 86). For Flores: "To speak of Puerto Ricans in rap means to defy the sense of instant amnesia that engulfs popular cultural expression once it is caught up in the logic of commercial representation" (87).
 8. The Beastie Boys are still popular—the group won a Grammy award for the best "rap duo or group" of 1998.
 9. In a point seldom mentioned, this figure also shows that "a higher percentage of black youth, as compared to white youth, listen to rap" (Ryan, Calhoun, and Wentworth 126).
 10. Vanilla Ice had the second most popular rap album of the 1990s. His *To The Extreme* placed at number 20, second only to MC Hammer's *Please Hammer, Don't Hurt 'Em*, ranked number 9. Snoop's *DoggyStyle*, the highest ranked gangsta album, came in at number 64 (Mayfield and Caulfield).
 11. The only headline that needs explanation is "Pretty Fly," a title that connotes a harsh accusation. The rock group the Offspring had a major hit with a song entitled "Pretty Fly (For a White Guy)." The lyrics discuss and the accompanying video shows a stereotypically nerdy suburban white youth attempting, but embarrassingly failing, to fit in with a stereotypical group of black representatives of hip-hop culture.
 12. The only self-reference that needs explanation is the symbolism of Eminem's lyrics concerning Lauryn Hill. Obviously, Eminem believes that Hill made this comment during an MTV interview: "I would rather have my children starve than have white people buy my albums." She didn't say anything of the kind. The idea that she did is considered an urban legend (Mikkelson).
 13. The FCC thought the word "Jergens," a brand of lotion, was actually "jerkin'," a reference to masturbation. The FCC also considered the line "my bum is on your lips" indecent. KKMG-FM, the radio station in question, convinced the agency that the reference is "oblique" (McCullagh).
 14. Eminem states that with *The Eminem Show* "I toned it down a bit as far as shock value. I wanted to show that I'm a solid artist and I'm here to stay" (Light). Light, in fact, found that with the release of *The Eminem Show* "Eminem started to become socially acceptable."
 15. According to Armstrong, the foundational period of gangsta rap is 1987–1993 and members of this music domain include: Bushwick Bill, Dr. Dre, Eazy-E, Geto Boys, Ice Cube, Ice-T, MC Ren, N.W.A., Scarface, Snoop Doggy Dogg, Too Much Trouble (Baby Geto Boys), Too \$hort, and Willie D ("Gangsta").
 16. Kid Rock's words: "Black chick with a real white accent/ Pretty girl in the ghetto go figure/ Yeah she got macked/ By some dope dealin' nigger."
 17. Two searches (*Ebsco* and *Infotrac*) without limiters found not one article mentioning that Kid Rock said "nigger" (29 June 2002).
 18. Ice-T has in mind Rose's vocal performance on Guns N' Roses' "One in a Million." Rose's words: "Police and niggers, that's right/ Get out of my way/ Don't need to buy/ None of your gold chains today."

Works cited

- Aaron, Charles. "Chocolate on the Inside." *Spin* May 1999: 102.
- Armstrong, Edward G. "Black Sociology and Phenomenological Sociology." *Sociological Quarterly* 20.3 (1979): 387-97.
- . "Gangsta Misogyny." *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture* 8:2 (2001): 96-126.
- Baker, Houston A., Jr. *Black Studies, Rap and the Academy*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993.
- . "Handling 'Crisis': Great Books, Rap Music, and the End of Western Homogeneity (Reflections on the Humanities in America)." *Callaloo* 13.2 (1990): 173-94.
- Baker, Soren. "Pop Music." *Los Angeles Times* 21 Jan. 2001: F1. EBSCOhost: Newspaper Source. Murray State University Libraries. Article 000005828149002001. 29 July 2001 <<http://ehostvlgw19.epnet.com>>.
- Baldwin, Davarian L. "Black Empires, White Desires: The Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip Hop." *Black Renaissance* 31 July 1999: 138-51.
- Bayles, Martha. *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music*. New York: Free P, 1994.
- Begley, Adam. "The Filthiest, Nastiest Word Gets a Cool, Lawyerly Airing." *New York Observer* 14 Jan. 2002: 8.
- Bendix, Regina. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1997.
- Bennett, Andy. *Cultures of Popular Music*. Philadelphia: Open UP, 2001.
- Bennett, Eric. "Rap." *Africana*. Harvard Square Netcasting, 1999. 30 June 2000 <http://africana.com/tt_153.htm>.
- Berry, Venise. "Redeeming the Rap Music Experience." *Adolescents and Their Music*. Ed. Jonathon S. Epstein. New York: Garland, 1994. 165-87.
- Boehlert, Eric. "Invisible Man." *salon.com* 7 June 2000. 22 June 2001 <<http://dir.salon.com/ent/music/feature/200/06/07/eminem/index.html>>.
- Boucher, Geoff. "Cover Story: This Rap Tour Is Really Smokin'." *Los Angeles Times* 15 June 2000: F6. EBSCOhost: Newspaper Source. Murray State University Libraries. Article 000056552410022000. 13 June 2002 <<http://ehostvlgw7.epnet.com>>.
- . "Will White Rappers Take Over the Hip-Hop Genre?" *Los Angeles Times* 15 May 2000: F8. EBSCOhost: Newspaper Source. Murray State University Libraries. Article 000045817302052000. 8 June 2002 <<http://ehostvlgw18.epnet.com>>.
- Boyd, Brian. "The Great White Hip-Hop." *The Irish Times* 3 June 2000: 63.
- Bozza, Anthony. "Eminem Blows Up." *Rolling Stone* 29 Apr. 1999: 42-48.
- Brown, Lee B. "Postmodernist Jazz Theory: Afrocentrism, Old and New." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57.2 (1999): 235-46.
- Browne, David. "Deep CD Diving." *Entertainment Weekly* 19 May 2001: 37.
- Bynoe, Yvonne. "The White Boy Shuffle." *Doula: The Journal of Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture* 2 (2000). 2 June 2002 <<http://www.urbanthinktank.org/whiteboy.cfm>>.
- "Charts: The Billboard Hot 100." *Billboard* 2 Nov. 2002-28 Dec. 2002. 25 Dec. 2002 <<http://www.billboard.com/billboard/charts/hot100.jsp>>.
- Chideya, Farai. "Hip-Hop Lyrics Hide Real Issues." *USA Today* 6 July 2001: 13A.
- CrazieCabbie. "Popular Music: D12 Reviews." *amazon.com* 19 June 2001. 30 June 2002 <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/stores/details/-/music/B00005A7WX/customer-reviews/21/ref=cm_rev_next/002-2339339-553600?show=submittime>.
- "Critics From Around the Country Weigh In." *Detroit Free Press* 8 Nov. 2002. 23 Dec. 2002 <http://www.freep.com/entertainment/movies/critics8_20021108.htm>.
- Cross, Brian. *It's Not About a Salary ... Rap, Race and Resistance in Los Angeles*. New York: Verso, 1993.
- Danaher, William F., and Stephen P. Blackwelder. "The Emergence of Blues and Rap: A Comparison and Assessment of the Context, Meaning, and Message." *Popular Music and Society* 17 (1993): 1-12.

- Davison, Annette. "Critical Musicology Study Day on 'Authenticity.'" *Popular Music* 20.2 (2001): 263–264.
- Decker, Jeffery Louis. "The State of Rap: Time and Place in Hip Hop Nationalism." *Social Text* 34 (1993): 53–84.
- DeCurtis, Anthony. "Eminem's Hate Rhymes." *Rolling Stone* 3 Aug. 2000: 17–21.
- Delaney, Paul. "Gangsta Rappers vs. the Mainstream Black Community." *USA Today Magazine* Jan. 1995: 68–69.
- del Barco, Mandalit. "Rap's Latino Sabor." *Droppin' Science*. Ed. William Eric Perkins. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996. 63–84.
- Delingpole, James. "White Punk with that Black Cred." *The Australian* 16 Jan. 2001: 9.
- Diehl, Matt. "Pretty Fly." *Rolling Stone* 18 Feb. 1999: 31. EBSCOhost: MasterFILE Premier. Murray State University Libraries. Article 1509134. 1 July 2002 <<http://ehostvgw10.epnet.com>>.
- "Discographies." *The Krib: On-Line Hip Hop Magazine*. 5 Dec. 1998 <<http://www.krib.com/discographies/1987.html>> <<http://www.krib.com/discographies/1988.html>>.
- "Editorial: FCC Censors Turn Up Volume, Drown Out Free Speech." *USA Today* 10 July 2001: 11A.
- Edwards, Viv, and Thomas J. Sienkewicz. *Oral Cultures Past and Present: Rappin' and Homer*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991.
- Elrick, M. L. "The Hometown: Eminem's World Driven on the Hard Streets." *Detroit Free Press* 30 June 2000. 13 July 2002 <http://www.freep.com/entertainment/music/eminem30_20000630.htm>.
- Eminem. *Angry Blond*. New York: ReganBooks, 2000.
- . "Eminem Speaks His Mind." *Eminem World* (1999). 12 June 2002 <<http://www.eminemworld.com/article1.shtml>>.
- Farley, Christopher John. "A Whiter Shade of Pale." *Time* 29 May 2000: 73.
- Farley, Jonathan D. "Players and Professors." *Essence* Nov. 2000: 142+.
- Farley, Maggie. "Hip-Hop Artists Seek to Beat a Bum Rap." *Los Angeles Times* 15 June 2001: F1.
- Fierman, Daniel. "Acting His Rage." *Entertainment Weekly* 8 Nov. 2002: 21–28.
- Flores, Juan. "Puerto Rocks: New York Ricans Stake Their Claim." *Droppin' Science*. Ed. William Eric Perkins. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996. 85–105.
- Forman, Murray. "'Represent': Race, Space and Place in Rap Music." *Popular Music* 19.1 (2000): 65–90.
- Frith, Simon. "The Cultural Study of Popular Music." *Cultural Studies*. Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992. 174–86.
- Fuchs, Cynthia. "Murdering Rhymes." *PopMatters*. 30 July 2000 <<http://PopMatters.com/music/reviews/e/eminem-marshall.html>>.
- Gardner, Elysa. "Huge Sales Assure 'N Sync's 'Celebrity' Status." *USA Today*, 2 Aug. 2001: 1D.
- Garofalo, Reebee. "From Music Publishing to MP3: Music and Industry in the Twentieth Century." *American Music* 17.3 (1999): 318–52.
- George, Nelson. *Buppies, B-boys, Baps, and Bohos: Notes on Post-Soul Black Culture*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.
- . *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*. New York: Pantheon, 1988.
- . *Hip Hop America*. New York: Penguin, 1999.
- "Gold & Platinum." Recording Industry Association of America. 25 Dec. 2002. 25 Dec. 2002 <http://www.riaa.org/Gold-Search_Results.cfm?start=1>.
- Gold, Jonathan. "The Day of Dre." *Rolling Stone* 30 Sep. 1993: 38–42.
- Goldblatt, Mark. "MTV's 20-Year Downhill Slide." *USA Today* 1 Aug. 2001: 11A.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Haynes, Charles. "Opinion." *The Tennessean* (Nashville) 4 Mar. 2001: 4B.

- Henderson, Errol A. "Black Nationalism and Rap Music." *Journal of Black Studies* 26 (1996): 308–338.
- Hilburn, Robert. "Cover Story: Has He No Shame?" *Los Angeles Times* 14 May 2000: F8. *Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe*. University of Wisconsin-Stout Library. 13 June 2000 <<http://web.lexis-nexis.com/univers...5+c6c07cf0b4dae968361f9b9136ad7fa5>>.
- Hirschfield, Scott. *Do Words Hurt? A Guide for Discussing Eminem and the Grammy's with Students*. New York: The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 2001. 6 July 2002 <<http://www.glsen.org/templates/resourses/record.html?section=16&record=555>>.
- Ice-T. *The Ice Opinion: Who Gives a Fuck?* New York: St. Martin's P, 1994.
- James, Darryl. "Between the Sheets." *RapSheet* July 1999: 15.
- . "Eminem is Elvis." *rapsheet.com*. 12 June 2002 <<http://www.rapsheet.com/newsheets-n-view.mv?9>>.
- Keightley, Keir. "Reconsidering Rock." *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, Ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 109–42.
- Kelley, Norman. "Rhythm Nation: The Political Economy of Black Music." *Black Renaissance* 31 July 1999: 8–15.
- Kelley, Robin D.G. "Kickin' Reality, Kickin' Ballistics: Gangsta Rap and Postindustrial Los Angeles." *Droppin' Science*. Ed. by William Eric Perkins. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996. 117–58.
- Kellogg, Alex P. "Review: Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word." *Black Entertainment Television* 12 Feb. 2002. 6 July 2002 <<http://www.bet.com/articles/1,,c4gb1717-2383-1,00.html>>.
- Kennedy, Randall. *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*. New York: Pantheon, 2002.
- Kenyatta, Kelly, *You Forgot About Dre! The Unauthorized Biography of Dr. Dre and Eminem*. Los Angeles: Busta Books, 2000.
- Keyes, Cheryl L. "At the Crossroads: Rap Music and Its African Nexus." *Ethnomusicology* 40 (1996): 223–49.
- Kogan, Frank. "Death Rock 2000." *Village Voice* 18 Jan. 2000: 71. 23 Dec. 2002 <<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0002/kogan.php>>.
- Kot, Greg. "The Rap that Dre Built." *Chicago Tribune* 2 July 2000: 7:1.
- Kramer, Fred. "Rap Flap Revived at Time Warner Meeting." *Lexington Herald Leader* [Associated Press] 16 May 1997: C9.
- Krims, Adam. *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Leach, Elizabeth Eva. "Vicars of 'Wannabe': Authenticity and the Spice Girls." *Popular Music* 20.2 (2001): 143–67.
- Lee, Felicia R. "Hip-Hop is Enlisted in Social Causes." *New York Times* 22 June 2002: B7.
- Leeds, Jeff. "The Great White Rapper Hope." *Chicago Tribune* 17 Nov. 2002: 7:14.
- Light, Alan. "Eminem." *Spin* Dec. 2002. 28 Nov. 2002 <<http://launch.yahoo.com/spin/content.asp?id=122>>.
- MacArthur, Kate. "Sprite's \$20 Mil Ad Series Tackles Race, Class Issues." *Advertising Age* 19 June 2000: 4.
- McAdams, Janine. "The Sounds of Violence are No Surprise to Rap Acts." *Billboard* 16 May 1992: 25.
- McCall, Nathan. *What's Going On? Personal Essays*. New York: Random House, 1997.
- McCullum, Brian. "Pop Music." *Detroit Free Press* 22 Dec. 2002. 23 Dec. 2002 <http://www.freep.com/entertainment/music/ypop22_20021222.htm>.
- . "Rappers Set to Release Debut Album with Some Help from Eminem." *Detroit Free Press* 8 June 2001. 23 Dec. 2002 <http://www.freep.com/entertainment/music/rap8_20010608.htm>.
- McCullagh, Declan. "FCC Reversal: Eminem Not Obscene." *Wired* 12 Jan. 2002. 10 June 2002 <<http://www.wired.com/news/print/0,1294,49682,00.html>>.

- McLeod, Kembrew. "Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation." *Journal of Communication* 49.4 (1999): 134–50.
- Marks, Alexandria. "Turning Up the Volume on 'Gangsta Rap' Debate." *Christian Science Monitor* 18 Aug. 1995: 1.
- Mayfield, Geoff, and Keith Caulfield. "Totally '90s: Diary of a Decade." *Billboard* 25 Dec. 1999: YE-16.
- Mendelson, Jennifer. "Smoother than Smooth." *USA Weekend* 29 June/1 July 2001: 12.
- Mikkelsen, Barbara. "The Miselucidation of Lauryn Hill." *Urban Legends Reference Page* 3 Nov. 2000. 24 June 2002 <<http://www.snopes2.com/quotes/lauryn.htm>>.
- Mitchell, Elvis. "White Hot: From Rap to Riches." *New York Times* 8 Nov. 2002: B1+.
- Moore, Allan. "Authenticity as Authentication." *Popular Music* 21.2 (2002): 209–23.
- Morales, Riggs. "Eminem Psycho 2000." *Source* July 2000: 180–87.
- "The Movie Times: Movies of 2002 Box Office Chart." *The Movie Times* 17 Dec. 2002. 24 Dec. 2002 <<http://www.the-movie-times.com/thrsdir/moviesofyear.mv?moviesof2002+ByOGross>>.
- Murphy, Kevin. "A Stranger to Success, Eminem Says He Enjoys It." *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis) [Arizona Republic] 14 May 1999: E2.
- "Music." *Entertainment Weekly* 26 Jan./2 Feb. 2001: 58–63.
- Muwakkil, Salim. "Hip-Hop Racism, or Another Bum Rap?" *In These Times* 5 Feb. 1992: 18+.
- NCBW2001. "Crusading Against Gangsta/Porno Rap." *The National Congress of Black Women* (2001). 4 July 2002 <<http://www.npcbw.org/>>.
- Neal, Mark Anthony. "Sold Out on Soul: The Corporate Annexation of Black Popular Music." *Popular Music and Society* 21 (1997): 117–35.
- Neill, Rosemary. "Shut Up Yourself, You Pathetic Misogynist Wigger." *The Australian* 9 Feb. 2001: 13.
- Norris, Chris. "Artist of the Year." *Spin* Jan. 2001. 14 July 2002 <<http://www.spin.com/new/magazine/jan2001eminem2.html>>.
- . "The Shady Bunch." *Spin* Aug. 2001. 14 July 2002 <<http://www.spin.com/new/features/videofeatures/powerposse-slideshow.html>>.
- Ozersky, Josh. "The White Negro Revisited." *Tikkun* 15 (2000): 61–68.
- Pareles, Jon. "Eminem Becomes a Franchise." *New York Times* 2 June 2002: 2: 1. 8 June 2002 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/02/arts/music/02PARE.html?>>.
- . "Rappers Making Notoriety Pay Off." *New York Times* 31 Oct. 1995: B1+.
- . "The Uncommon Concerns of Rappers." *New York Times* 27 June 2000: E6.
- Pattison, Robert. *The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Perkins, William Eric. "The Rap Attack: An Introduction." *Droppin' Science*. Ed. William Eric Perkins. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996. 1–45.
- Peterson, Richard A. *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997.
- Plotz, David. "Eminem: The Rapper is Sadistic, Misogynist, and Fantastic." *Slate* 9 June 2000. 22 June 2002 <<http://slate.msn.com/?id=83974>>.
- Poston, Kem. "Revenge of the Nerd." *Village Voice* 19 Jan. 1999: 138.
- Powers, Ann. "Bumping and Grinding, But Who's Singing About Love?" *New York Times* 18 Feb. 2001: 2: 1. 23 Dec. 2002 <<http://query.nytimes.com/search/article-page.html?res=9403EFD81F3F93BA25751COA9679C8863>>.
- Pressley, Arthur. "Rap Music by Black Male Artists: A Psychotheological Interpretation." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 16.2 (1992): 92–97.
- Pryce, Vinette K. "'Whiteboys' Can't Rap." *New York Amsterdam News* 20 Oct. 1999: 22.
- Raftery, Brian M. "King of the Ill." *Entertainment Weekly* 15 Nov. 2002: 17.
- Rhyme & Reason*. New York: Miramax Film Corporation, 1997.
- Rich, Frank. "Mr. Ambassador." *New York Times Magazine* 3 Nov. 2002: 52–57.

- Roberts, Robin. "'Ladies First': Queen Latifah's Afrocentric Feminist Music Video." *African American Review* 28.2 (1994): 245-57.
- Rose, Tricia. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover, NH: UP of New England/Wesleyan UP, 1994.
- Rudinow, Joel. "Race, Ethnicity, Expressive Authenticity: Can White People Sing the Blues?" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52:1 (1994): 127-37.
- Ryan, John, Legare H. Calhoun III, and William M. Wentworth. "Gender or Genre? Emotion Models in Commercial Rap and Country Music." *Popular Music and Society* 20 (1996): 121-54.
- Samuels, David. "The Rap on Rap." *The New Republic* 11 Nov. 1991: 24-29.
- Sartwell, Crispin. "Commentary: Ebony and Ivory Come Together in Eminem." *Los Angeles Times* 7 June 2002: B15.
- "Search Results: Nigga." *rollingstone.com*. 30 June 2002 <http://search.rollingstone.com/bin/search/?st=music§ion=song_rs&query=nigga>.
- Sheffield, Rob. "Wisecracking, Blue-eyed Rapper at Large." *Rolling Stone* 1 Apr. 1999: 93-94. EBSCOhost: Academic Search Premier. Murray State University Libraries. Article 1650220. 23 Dec. 2002 <<http://search.epnet.com>>.
- Simmons, Russell. *Life and Def: Sex, Drugs, Money, and God*. New York: Crown, 2001.
- Smith, Zadie. "The Zen of Eminem." *Vibe* Nov. 2002: 91-98.
- Smitherman, Geneva. 1997. "'The Chair Remains the Same': Communicative Practices in the Hip-Hop Nation." *Journal of Black Studies* 28.1 (1997): 3-25.
- Snyder, Marilynn. "Is Rap Anything But a G-Thing?" *Billboard* 3 Dec. 1994: 23. Infotrac: College Edition. Gale Group and Thomson Learning. Article A16498278. 28 Dec. 2002 <<http://infotrac.thomsonlearning.com>>.
- Stephens, Gregory. "Rap Music's Double-Voiced Discourse: A Crossroads for Interracial Communication." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 15.2 (1991): 70-91.
- Strauss, Neil. "2002: The Year That Pop Lost Popularity." *New York Times* 26 Dec. 2002: E1. 29 Dec. 2002 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/26/arts/music/26HITS.html>>
- . "The Hip-Hop Nation: Whose Is It?" *New York Times* 22 Aug. 1999: 2: 1.
- . "The Pop Life: Seeking the Truth About Eminem." *New York Times* 21 Dec. 2000: E3.
- . "The Secret Power in Big Rap." *New York Times* 3 Sep. 1998: E1.
- Strout, Erin. "'Em' is for Marketing." *Sales and Marketing Management* 153.5 (2001): 13.
- Thigpen, David E. "Raps, in Blue." *Time* 5 Apr. 1999: 70.
- Toure. [sic] "D-12." *Rolling Stone* 15 Feb. 2001: 70.
- Travis, Neal. "FCC Turns Eminem Song into 'Fine' Art." *New York Post* 6 June 2001: 3.
- Tribby, Mike. "Eminem: Crossing the Line." *Booklist* 1 Oct. 2000: 310.
- "Tunes & Tudes." *USA Weekend*. 5 May 2002. 7 May 2002 <http://www.usaweekend.com/02_issuses/020505/020505teenmusic.html>.
- Tyler, Robin. "Eminem: Pied Piper of Hate." *Gay and Lesbian Review* 8.3 (2001): 12-14.
- Udovitch, Mim. "Visible Man." *New York Times Magazine* 18 Feb. 2001: 9-10.
- Violanti, Anthony. "The Rap on Eminem." *Buffalo News* 7 June 2000: 1D.
- Waldron, Clarence. "Effects of Rap Music on Today's Young Black Men." *Ebony Man* June 1996: 50-54.
- Walser, Robert. "Rhythm, Rhyme, and Rhetoric in the Music of Public Enemy." *Ethnomusicology* 39.2 (1995): 193-217.
- Walsh, Jim. "White Flight: Eminem the Latest Example of Bizarre 'Crossover'." *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* 5 Nov. 2000: 1E.
- Warren, James. "From White Trash to White Hot." *Chicago Tribune* 23 Apr. 1999: 2: 2.
- Watson, Margeaux. "Busta Rhymes." *Essence* Nov. 2000: 67.
- Watts, Eric K. "An Exploration of Spectacular Consumption: Gangsta Rap as Cultural Commodity." *Communication Studies* 48.1 (1997): 42-58.
- Weiner, Chuck. *Eminem: In His Own Words*. London: Omnibus, 2001.

- West, Cornel. "On Afro-American Popular Music." *Speech and Power*. Ed. Gerald Early. Hopewell, NJ: Ecco, 1993. 63–72.
- White, Armond. "Who Wants To See Ten Niggers Play Basketball?" *Droppin' Science*. Ed. William Eric Perkins. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1996. 182–208.
- White, Evelyn C. "The Poet and the Rapper." *Essence* 1 May 1999: 122–124, 194–200.
- Williams, Joe. "Pushing the Limits on Acceptable Names." *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* 9 Dec. 2001: G1+.
- Wilson-Smith, Anthony. "White-Boy Rap." *Maclean's* 6 Nov. 2000: 10.
- "Xzibit." *Thrasher* Sep. 2001: 162.

Discography

- 8 Mile. Various artists. Shady/Interscope 493508, 2002.
- Beastie Boys. *License to Ill*. Def Jam 4500621, 1986.
- D-12. *Devil's Night*. Interscope 490897, 2001.
- Dangerfield, Rodney. "Rappin' Rodney." *Rappin' Rodney*. RCA 7188, 1983.
- Dr. Dre. *The Chronic*. Interscope/Priority P4 57189, 1992.
- Eminem. *The Eminem Show*. Web/Aftermath/Interscope 493290, 2002.
- . *Infinite*. FPB Productions/Web Entertainment, 1996.
- . *The Marshall Mathers LP*. Aftermath/Interscope 490629, 2000.
- . *The Slim Shady LP*. Aftermath/Interscope 90287, 1999.
- Guns N' Roses. "One in a Million." *G N' R Lies*. Geffen 24198, 1988.
- Ice-T. "6 'N the Morning." *Rhyme Pays*. Sire/Warner Brothers 9 25602-4, 1987.
- Kid Rock. "Black Chick, White Guy." *Devil Without a Cause*. Lava/Atlantic 83119, 1998.
- Kid Rock (featuring Eminem). "Fuck Off." *Devil Without a Cause*. Lava/Atlantic 83119, 1998.
- MC Hammer. *Please Hammer, Don't Hurt 'Em*. Capitol C2-92857, 1990.
- 'N Sync. *Celebrity*. Jive 41758, 2001.
- . *No Strings Attached*. Jive 41702, 2000.
- N.W.A. *Efil4zaggin*. Ruthless/Priority CDL 57126, 1991.
- Offspring. "Pretty Fly (For a White Guy)." *Americana*. Columbia 69661, 1998.
- Snoop Doggy Dogg. *DoggyStyle*. Death Row/Interscope/Atlantic 7-92279-4, 1993.
- Sugarhill Gang. "Rapper's Delight." *The Sugarhill Gang*. Sugar Hill SH-245-A, 1980.
- Vanilla Ice. "Ice Ice Baby." *To The Extreme*. SKB K2-95325, 1990.

Edward G. Armstrong received his Ph.D. in sociology from Temple University. He is currently a senior fellow at the Institute for Information Studies, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His articles on rap music are published in Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia, Arkansas Review, Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture, and Sociological Inquiry.