
SIMONE C. DRAKE AND DWAN K. HENDERSON
EDITORS
ARE YOU ENTER-TAINED?
BLACK POPULAR CULTURE
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

SIMONE C. DRAKE &
DWAN K. HENDERSON
EDITORS

DUKE
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

ARE YOU ENTERTAINED?

BLACK POPULAR CULTURE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS *Durham and London* 2020

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞
Designed by Matthew Tauch
Typeset in Portrait by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Drake, Simone C., [date] editor. | Henderson, Dwan K., [date] editor.
Title: Are you entertained? : Black popular culture in the twenty-first century / edited by Simone C. Drake and Dwan K. Henderson.
Other titles: Black popular culture in the twenty-first century
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2019016289 (print)
LCCN 2019981471 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478005179 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478006787 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478009009 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: African Americans in popular culture. | Racism in popular culture—United States. | African American arts. | Popular culture—United States. | Politics and culture—United States. | United States—Civilization—African American influences.
Classification: LCC E185.625 .A74 2020 (print)
LCC E185.625 (ebook)
DDC 305.896/073—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019016289
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019981471

Cover art: Still from Beyoncé, *The Formation World Tour.* Photo by Matthew Tauch.

Duke University Press gratefully acknowledges The Ohio State University, which provided funds toward the publication of this book.

FOR JESSE . . .

CONTENTS

II POLITICIZING BLACKNESS

III OWNING BLACKNESS

IV LOVING BLACKNESS

INTRO **MORE THAN ENTERTAINMENT** / BLACK CULTURE AND SUBJECT MAKING

In an August 2016 interview for *Vulture*, Rembert Browne asked musician, writer, actor, director, producer, and creator Donald Glover to "[explain] the genesis of [his soon-to-be television phenomenon] *Atlanta*." Glover replied, "I wanted to show white people, you don't know everything about black culture. I know it's very easy to feel that way. Like I get it, you can hear about the Nae Nae the day it comes out. You follow Hood Vines, and you have your one Black friend and you think they teach you everything." But they do not, and Glover's reproof is fitting. Perhaps more than at any time in history and more visibly because lives are so technologically intertwined in real time, the "popular" in Black popular cultural productions is commodified, consumed, appropriated, and then, often, mass-produced with startling simultaneity through the very lens that Glover references, as if "white people . . . know everything about black culture."

Tellingly, Glover's words recall Stuart Hall's seminal question about Black popular culture and bring it into the twenty-first century: "What is this 'black' in black popular culture?" In his provocative and widely anthologized 1992 essay, Hall asserts that the answer to the question he poses is never

the same; similarities and continuities surely exist over time, yet we can always identify Leroi Jones's (a.k.a. Amiri Baraka) "changing same." Far more so now than when Hall composed his essay, Black popular culture occupies a central space in mainstream popular culture and the public sphere. As we approach the twilight of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we are twenty-five years removed from the first edited collection attending to the place, space, and weight of Black popular culture in 1992. When a three-day conference at the Studio Museum in Harlem spurred the production of Michele Wallace's project *Black Popular Culture*, co-edited by Gina Dent, Black cultural productions were only beginning their crossover into the mainstream. When those crossovers yielded corporate wins, Black cultural producers rode the waves of a particular type of progress—one that simultaneously illustrated Black culture's marketability and the price of commodification. Take, for example, Berry Gordy's refashioning of soul music and Black artists for a crossover audience during the 1960s and 1970s. Or, consider Motown wunderkind-turned-pop-icon Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean" becoming the first music video by a Black artist to air on MTV IN 1983. In fact, according to Rob Tannenbaum, if not for the commercial success of Jackson's videos in the 1980s, MTV would have been shut down by its parent company due to a $50 million loss when only a $10 million loss prior to profit had been expected.[1] As the *Root.com* conjectures, and justifiably so, Jackson's musical genius resulted in MTV experiencing their first ever quarterly profit during the first three months of 1984. The move away from whitewashed rock and roll saved the network, and that lesson was not taken lightly. Five years later, though not without reservation, MTV executives aired *Yo! MTV Raps* as an "experiment," and "the ratings were phenomenal and resulted in a significant programming change."[2] Notably, Jackson's integration of MTV occurred just one year before *The Cosby Show* would hit primetime television in 1984, introducing many to a positive visual representation of an upper-middle-class and highly educated professional Black family and becoming one of the world's most beloved sitcoms. Just two years later, in 1986, Spike Lee premiered his first feature-length film, *She's Gotta Have It*, launching a career of politicized filmmaking that would extend through the 1990s and begin to carve out a space for Black directors and writers in Hollywood.

As increased representation met the increased visibility of the Information Age, the 1990s brought expansion of Black representation and influence; but, it also generated a burgeoning insistence on multiplicity as well as historicity in portraying Black identity. For example, Michael Jordan's preeminence on the basketball court presented an image of blackness that

was perhaps a historically comfortable one for those who could objectify his Black body, marvel in its athleticism, and understand his celebrity. Yet, the corporate branding of Jordan and his subsequent shoe and apparel game renegotiated the reach and power of athletes, particularly Black athletes, in the popular sphere. Simultaneously, televisions around the nation previously privy to the visual, if not societal, normalization of the Huxtables in *The Cosby Show* had also "seen inside" a Huxtable child's journey from suburban space to a fictional historically Black college in the spinoff *A Different World*. This world, for Denise Huxtable and the viewer, was one in which singular definitions of blackness were necessarily consistently defied. On the stage in 1990, August Wilson won a Pulitzer for *The Piano Lesson*, the fourth play in his "Pittsburgh Cycle," which began with a seminal question about identity: "Can one acquire a sense of self-worth by denying one's past?" In 1993, Toni Morrison would win a Pulitzer for *Beloved*, a novel that also delves into the effects of denial and, in Angela Davis's words, makes it "possible to humanize slavery, to remember that the system of slavery did not destroy the humanity of those whom it enslaved."[3] Evoking gendered realities of slavery and the potentially disabling weight of the past's ghosts, Morrison allows readers room to lay claim to the strength of ancestors in newly imagined ways. Each of these texts would necessarily speak differently to Black audiences seeing or revisioning themselves than to white audiences who might engage blackness superficially but not *feel* the impacts of representation.

In 2020, it is likely safe to say that discourse on Black popular culture in the academy has less investment in debates of high versus low culture or of justifications for allotting critical, academic attention to Black popular cultural forms than it once did. But, the proliferation of Black culture in the age of the internet lends credence to Ellis Cashmore's insistence that Black culture has been subsumed by white corporations and converted into an exceptionally profitable commodity.[4] And it is this truth that makes Hall's articulation of Black popular culture as an "area that is profoundly mythic" all the more relevant. "It is where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented," Hall argues, "not only to the audiences out there who do not get the message, but to ourselves for the first time."[5] As a result, the steroidal commodification of Black popular culture has long raised a different set of concerns about value, consumption, and incorporation into the U.S. body politic for contemporary Black cultural producers, as accompanying mass consumption is a phenomenon of deracination that has sometimes shifted the meaning of "Black" in Black popular culture. For example, in 2013 the American Music

Award for Best R&B album was presented to Justin Timberlake, which, pundits quipped, infuriated Robin Thicke, another white R&B artist. That same year, the Best Hip-Hop album was awarded to Macklemore and Ryan Lewis. To add insult to injury, just a few months later, the 2014 Grammy for Best Rap Album, Best Rap Song, Best Rap Performance, and Best New Artist were also awarded to Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, creating dismay among many Kendrick Lamar fans—dismay that Macklemore's "shout-out" to Lamar did little to console. And Jay-Z only won in the Best Rap/Sung Collaboration category for "Holy Grail," a collaboration with Justin Timberlake.

What does the "Black" in Black popular culture mean when white male artists not only win but dominate music awards in categories that are historically Black genres? What does the "Black" in Black popular culture constitute when the newly elected mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, performs a choreographed "smackdown" dance on stage with his Black wife and two biracial children? And how have the politics of Black popular culture metamorphosed when the hip-hop mogul Jay-Z launches an exorbitantly priced clothing and accessory line at an establishment (Barney's) notorious for racial profiling (a.k.a. shop-and-frisk), around the same time Macklemore chooses to forgo a traditional acceptance speech at the AMA and instead speak bluntly to the murder of Trayvon Martin?[6] A baseline response to all of these questions is that the stakes have shifted in Black popular cultural production. Propaganda remains alive and well, but the development of new models for engaging Black art and its relationship to power, capitalism, and consumption demands critical dialogue on how white corporations have hijacked Black culture for their own profit. Where that is normalized, Miley Cyrus is twerking and employing Black identity tropes to give herself street cred, and Kylie Jenner seemingly "discovered" cornrows in 2013. These examples demonstrate the "changing same" of white corporate ownership of Black culture and artistic production. Whether it was during slavery or after emancipation, through minstrelsy and blackface, that legacy repeatedly manifests in the Black culture industry, as Black people and their cultural productions are locations of "entertainment" that dominant culture has strategically manipulated to represent Black pathology and a presumed knowledge of Black identity.

The renewed national activism spurred by white violence and, particularly, police violence has shaped many Black cultural productions in the space between the police shooting of Michael Brown in 2014 and the 2017 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The twenty-four-hour news cycle, social media, and other technologies have changed forms of

Black protest within popular culture and made them more visible. In fact, technology is integral to the Movement for Black Lives. Perhaps the most prominent indicator of the phenomenon occurred at the 2015 Super Bowl and Grammy Awards; both illustrated the potential for dominating social media, news cycles, and cultural conversations to influence culture broadly. One day prior to her scheduled Super Bowl halftime performance with Coldplay, Beyoncé released the "Formation" music video on Tidal, the subscription-based music streaming platform that she and her husband, Shawn Carter (a.k.a. Jay-Z), founded and, in large part, own. The music video, with its critique of the devaluation of Black lives through conjoining images of police violence and Hurricane Katrina, was simultaneously an instant success and the subject of negative scrutiny both in conversation and online. Her live performance of "Formation" the next day at the fiftieth Super Bowl added insult to injury for haters as she and her crew of Afro-coiffed sistahs rocked black leather leotards and berets, paying homage to the fiftieth anniversary of the Black Panther Party. At the conclusion of her performance, she announced her Formation World Tour, and just two months later released her equally earthshaking *Lemonade* studio album—an album that she somehow kept under wraps until its release. In spite of All Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter protests and boycotts in response to both the music video and Super Bowl performance, her tour sold over two million tickets and grossed over $250 million between April 27, 2016, and October 7, 2016.[7]

Before all had settled around the Super Bowl controversy, Kendrick Lamar performed "The Blacker the Berry" and "Alright" at the 2016 Grammys clad in "prison blues" and chains on a stage set with a literal prison cage, pyrotechnics, and African dancers. Although *Rolling Stone* declared Lamar "stole the show" in their headline, it was not a national sentiment. His performance, combined with Beyoncé's just weeks earlier and Colin Kaepernick's protests against police brutality in fall 2016, reinserted a disruptive trope of fiercely resistant blackness into the popular realm.[8] Their performances came at a moment in which resistance was increasingly swift, loud, and furious. With the election of the forty-fifth president of the United States in November 2016, fear and anger as a result of his administration's support for racist, sexist, anti-LGBT, xenophobic, and otherwise bigoted action and policy reached a fever pitch. Lin-Manuel Miranda, who had taken the nation by storm one year earlier with his revolutionary marriage of hip hop and musical theater in *Hamilton*, used his platform to combat discrimination. With a predominantly nonwhite cast, Miranda reframed U.S. national history visually and aurally, penning a reclamation story of founding father Alexander

Hamilton, "a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and Scotsman, dropped in a forgotten spot in the Caribbean," "another immigrant comin' up from the bottom" whose "enemies destroyed his rep [while] America forgot him."[9] His reiteration of Hamilton's occupation of such socioeconomically and sociopolitically beleaguered identity spaces, the melding of genres long perceived both artistically and culturally incongruous, and his race-blind casting are symbolic and literal manifestations of inclusion and defiance of norms. But, it was a statement collectively prepared by the cast and read to then Vice-President-elect Mike Pence at the November 18, 2016, performance in New York City that went viral, showing the power of cultural productions and cultural producers in the digital age. In a profoundly divided and divisive post-2016 election moment, Miranda and the cast expressed hope that President-elect Trump and Mr. Pence would indeed embrace a diverse America and "work on behalf of all of us."[10]

Stuart Hall's questioning of the "Black" in Black popular culture spoke to his theorizing about the nonlinearity and multiplicity of African diasporic cultural identity. Fred Moten revisits the shifting, changing nature of blackness across time and space that Hall addressed. Thinking about resistance and the history of blackness, Moten defines blackness as "the extended movement of a specific upheaval, an ongoing irruption that anarranges [*sic*] every line—[blackness] is a strain that pressures the assumption of the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity."[11] In this sense, LeVar Burton's chains in the 1977 *Roots* television miniseries reflect an "extended movement of a specific upheaval" or "an ongoing irruption" that manifests again in Lamar's 2016 Grammy performance. Twenty-first-century iterations and productions of blackness are disruptive and repetitive. They are synchronous, and importantly, they increasingly refuse to serve white consumers and interlopers as "purveyors of pleasure" through their own subjection to degradation and violence and the consequential "transubstantiation of abjection into contentment," as Saidiya Hartman theorizes about the sordid "nexus of pleasure and possession" that pervaded chattel slavery.[12]

The disruptive trope of blackness in the twenty-first century often weds resistance to pleasure, not for the white audience but for the Black audience in need of catharsis. Evidence of this resurfaced at the 2017 Grammys. Beyoncé was once again at the forefront, centering an unapologetic blackness. Pregnant with twins, Queen Bey dramatically performed "Love Drought" and "Sandcastles" from *Lemonade*, nominated for Album of the Year. Decked out in a gold bikini, invoking the Yoruba Orisha Oshun, Beyoncé embodied both Black pleasure and resistance—both the pleasure of reproduction and

children heightened by the significance of twins in Yoruba culture and the insertion of an Africanness that traversed the Atlantic during the Middle Passage. After a hiatus, she followed that with #Beychella, her performance as the first African American woman to headline Coachella in 2018. Her midset words perhaps best capture the purposeful resistance and "education in black expression" that she undertook: "Coachella, thank you for allowing me to be the first Black woman to headline. Ain't that 'bout a bitch?"[13] Proceeding to combine couture and elements of Black culture from Nefertiti to the HBCU, as well as a tribute to the artistic journey that led her to become Beyoncé—with all the weight that moniker carries, reinforced by the scope of her production—the artist and performer created a spectacle that played on the largely white audience's consumption of Black expression without background knowledge; it made the set, as Hall argues, the identification, imagination, representation, of ourselves. With sixty-two Grammy nominations, she is the most nominated female artist in history and a music goddess in her own right.[14] Her calculated performances during a two-year period are about much more than Black people occupying prominent spaces in the popular realm. They position Black cultural productions in this epic moment as moving beyond the corporeality of the black flesh and representing and interrogating blackness as embodiment, performance, and resistance.[15]

The 2018 film *Black Panther*, directed by Ryan Coogler, manifests resistance, pleasure, and pain, bringing Black audiences from the United States to Africa to tears. Why? It features not only the first Black Marvel superhero in a lead role on the big screen but also Black women visibly catapulted beyond victimhood to intellectual and physical badassery, a theorized African continent untouched by colonizers' pillaging of the continent, its people, and its varied cultures, and juxtaposition of that theoretical space with the varied seen and lived impacts of colonization in both the Black family and in the United States as a whole. In contrast to *Black Panther*'s creation of imagined space, in 2018, Lamar's *DAMN*, winner of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Music, and the release of Childish Gambino's (a.k.a. Donald Glover) "This Is America" pointedly negotiated the complex and often stark realities of varied Black experiences without effacing them. As critic Matthew Trammell notes and as Lamar's 2016 Grammy performance visually and lyrically testified, where Lamar excels is in his ability "to articulate, in human terms, the intimate specifics of daily self-defense from [his] surroundings."[16] Through his art, he speaks his own truth, the ways in which his blackness and American experiences shape his own life. And that, perhaps, is what links Lamar's text to Childish Gambino's. The lyrics and video for the latter

code and historicize the complex subjectivit(ies) of blackness in a United States of America that simultaneously celebrates and criminalizes melanin, often relishes performances rather than realities of Black lives, and is prone to violence and destruction. Where Lamar's music is heavily downloaded on platforms like Spotify, YouTube made Gambino's video viral with over fifty million views.

In the digital age and beyond, newer avenues by which artists and consumers push back against continued, rampant marginalization and discrimination in the culture industry are cultural productions to be reckoned with in themselves. The significant role once held by Black radio and Black print culture in the Black political sphere has been displaced in many ways by social media and the digital explosion. Even though, according to a 2018 report published by the Pew Research Center, YouTube can claim the highest number of online American adult users (73 percent), Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter usage by demographic reveals the power of social media to activate, politicize, resist, and consume in the contemporary moment. Compared to YouTube's white (71 percent) versus Black (76 percent) usage, separated by only five percentage points, the report noted a significant difference in white versus Black Instagram usage (32 vs. 43 percent) and white versus Black Snapchat usage (24 vs. 36 percent), as well as a shrinking difference in white versus Black Twitter usage (24 vs. 26 percent).[17]

Disproportionate usage is also evident in terms of age, where the eighteen-to-twenty-nine-year-old demographic is the most inclined to use Facebook (81 percent), YouTube (91), Instagram (64), Snapchat (68), and Twitter (40).[18] Social media, then, functions as an important communication platform for Black Americans in the twenty-first century in spite of the "digital divide" in other areas of technology. In a February 2018 report also published by Pew, the fifteen percentage-point difference between Black (57) and white (72) home broadband usage adjusts to only a three-point difference—Black (75) and white (77)—for smartphone usage.[19] These numbers explain the degree to which young Black users have adopted social media as a platform for activism and resistance. The "clapback" christened "Black Twitter" in particular as an entity that the mainstream media and Black cultural critics must acknowledge.

Black Twitter became "a strain"—invoking musical expression or outburst (aesthetics) and excessive exertion or labor (force)—as it vocalized its displeasure with the absence of blackness (and all other racially and ethnically marginalized folk) in the 2016 Academy Awards nominations. The refusal of the Academy to recognize both Black labor and Black genius catalyzed the

hashtag #OscarsSoWhite. A similar discontent was echoed on social media after the 2017 Grammys and the widespread perception that Beyoncé was snubbed, particularly in the coveted category of Record of the Year. Even Adele, who won the category, was confused and contrite, as she proclaimed in her acceptance speech, "The artist of my life is Beyoncé, and this album to me, the 'Lemonade' album, was just so monumental." Off-stage, still dubious of her win, Adele followed up with "I felt like it was her time to win. What the f*** does she have to do to win album of the year?" As Adele left the ceremony with awards in all five of the categories for which she was nominated, Beyoncé, who was nominated in nine categories, won only two, Best Music Video and Best Urban Contemporary. While few would deny that Adele is talented in her own right, discourse on white mediocrity and the limits of recognizing Black genius permeated Black Twitter and even some mainstream media at the conclusion of the award ceremony. Although clearly more incorporated, blackness in the popular realm continues to hit ceilings and obstacles.

In spite of the continued challenges, sometimes blackness is blue. When film director and writer Barry Jenkins (*Medicine for Melancholy*) collaborated with Tarell Alvin McCraney to adapt the latter's play *In Moonlight Black Boys Look Blue*, neither may have imagined that the film adaptation, *Moonlight*, originally showing almost exclusively at art houses, would take home an Oscar for Best Picture, Best Writing Adapted Screenplay, and Best Supporting Actor at the 2017 Academy Awards. *Moonlight* disrupted the whiteness of the Oscars, generally and particularly during the previous year, when it, along with *Hidden Figures*, *Fences,* and *Loving*, inserted Black narratives into the mainstream. This was particularly true given that, in nearly every possible category, *La La Land* was nominated. As the supreme exemplar of revived tropes and nostalgia for Hollywood's Golden Age and thus, perhaps, white artistic mediocrity in 2016, *La La Land* was boldly nominated in fourteen categories and won six (after a bizarre fiasco in which it was wrongly awarded Best Picture). *La La Land*, a musical whose leading actress is neither a singer nor a dancer but won Best Actress, and whose leading actor's claim to singing and dancing fame was *The Mickey Mouse Club* alongside Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears, and Christina Aguilera, was the critics' hands-on favorite to win Best Picture. *Moonlight* was second; its win, then, over a film that checked all of the academy's go-to boxes for success was somewhat shocking.

Moonlight's disruption extends further than its win, however, because it offers a story that challenges the familiar, complicating poverty and masculinity and their intersections with race and gender. Jenkins and McCraney

disallow blackness to be defined in the hegemonic manner Hollywood so often imposes upon Black bodies. Pleasure and pain converge, as the story is both empowering and probes deeply the pain and hate that human beings can inflict upon other human beings. The narrative, sound, and aesthetics embody the beauty and pain of the coming of age of a gay Black boy in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami during the Reagan-Bush era. Jenkins masterfully develops the narrative around three stages of the protagonist Chiron's life through portrayals by three different actors. Growing up with a single, drug-addicted mother in abject poverty, Chiron spends his childhood and youth being bullied and abused by his peers and his mother. Although the film received critical acclaim both before and after its release, in an Academy whose membership is dominated by white men, it would be easy to expect merit would not outweigh whiteness. Appropriately, though, representing Black pain and pleasure during an epoch of hateful rhetoric and opposition to difference outside of white, heterosexual, middle-class manliness, *Moonlight* continues a legacy of Black cultural producers embracing culture and performance as disruptive tools.

What constitutes "Black" in Black popular culture, then, becomes a more complex discussion than ever before in the twenty-first century because nearly 150 years after emancipation, Black cultural production is always already still linked to the affirmation of Black humanity. Whether a Black independent film like Barry Jenkins's *Medicine for Melancholy*, a film franchise like Tyler Perry's *Medea* films, YouTube-producer-turned-HBO-creator Issa Rae's interest in "telling a very specific, authentic story, not trying to answer for all Black people" through *Awkward Black Girl* or *Insecure,* Janelle Monáe's futuristic, cyber-girl, pansexual blackness, the new-money, "ghetto fabulousness" of T.I. and Tiny, the respectability politics resistance of Tiffany Haddish or Cardi B., or the seeming endless spectacle of blackness in the sports arena, Black cultural producers respond to stakes of Black art that continue to be inextricably linked not only to the entertainment of white folk but also to the dependence of dominant culture upon static notions of Blacks as hypersexual, primitive (premodern), violent, lazy, feckless, conniving, childish, and ultimately lacking humanity.[20]

And their responses can be quite complex. What might seem like a simple contrast of positive versus negative cultural producers in pairing a Black indie film with Tyler Perry and Janelle Monáe with T.I. can never be so simplistic when the stakes are so high. As propaganda in the twenty-first century, Black popular cultural products resist static representations through alternative realities. But, there also must be space for articulations

and representations of Black life and culture that embrace the pleasure, joy, and freedom embodied in the production of what some call the "buffoonery" of Perry and the oft-perceived degeneration of contemporary rap and hip-hop music. Such appellations create quite the paradox—the Black masses, including professional Black women who seem to never escape being objects of punishment in Perry's storylines, support the "low-down folk" culture represented in Perry's theatrical and filmic productions. Perry, then, emerges as a controversial figure, and the controversy is rooted in the high stakes of Black representation in a nation that readily accepts blackness as synonymous with pathology. Plenty of white directors traffic in buffoonery and misogyny, but their art does not suffer from the same high stakes of representation. Perry epitomizes the challenges of producing Black art in a space and time in which the stakes of representation are high precisely because the rules of the game change depending upon who is producing the images.

The same can be said for Black athletes and the multiple levels of performance they engage and are subjected to on the playing fields and public stage; their bodies, physical prowess, and voices have permeated popular culture and become propagandistic in their own right. Venus and Serena Williams, for example, have had to negotiate an often ugly dialectic of entertainer and spectacle. In particular, Serena's unapologetic display of her curves and musculature in elaborate, unconventional tennis attire and her vocal declarations of self-confidence and self-love have thwarted the efforts of mass media and many opponents to diminish her. In August 2018, for instance, the French Tennis Federation, through its president Bernard Guidicelli, attempted to make her Black body a site of pathology, banning a high-compression, black catsuit inspired by *Black Panther* and designed to prevent blood clots—a chronic condition that nearly killed her both in 2011 and during childbirth only one year earlier. In words that seemed a metaphor for Serena, herself, Guidicelli told *Tennis* magazine, "It will no longer be accepted. One must respect the game and the place."[21] In short, her body and need for self-care were disrespectful to a game that she has enhanced through her skill, perseverance, presence, and brand. Fittingly, one year later, with multiple August 2019 covers and an accompanying first-person essay for *Harper's Bazaar*, Williams boldly claimed the beauty and grace in her powerful "unretouched" Black body, as well as her space and place in the world that forged her equally powerful spirit. Well aware of the hard-won influence and inspiration that she and her brand represent, both in the game and outside of it, she writes: "As a teenager, I was booed by an entire stadium

(I took the high road and even thanked those who didn't want to see me win). I've been called every name in the book. I've been shamed because of my body shape. I've been paid unequally because of my sex. I've been penalized a game in the final of a major because I expressed my opinion or grunted too loudly. . . . And these are only the things that are seen by the public. In short, it's never been easy. But then I think of the next girl who is going to come along who looks like me, and I hope, 'Maybe, my voice will help her.'"[22]

While perhaps the earliest example of the influential power of Black male athletes on Black popular culture was Allen Iverson's appeal to the hip-hop generation, Lebron James's widespread cultural influence rivals that of any artistic entertainer.[23] For example, his tweet calling the forty-fifth president of the United States "a bum" was one of the "[Nine] Most Retweeted Tweets of 2017."[24] His reach challenges that of Michael Jordan within Black culture, largely because James has gradually grown keenly aware of the cultural, social, and political responsibility that his success and visibility bring in ways that Jordan seemed unwilling to do at the dawn of personal corporate branding. The historic political activism of athletes, like Muhammad Ali's outspoken denunciation of the Vietnam War and Tommie Smith's and John Carlos's Black power salute on the medal stage at the 1968 Olympic games, stands in bleak contrast to Michael Jordan's explaining that he chose to be silent regarding the 1990 North Carolina Senate race between Jesse Helms (R) and Harvey Gantt (D) because "Republicans buy shoes." In contrast, LeBron James's awareness of his immense leverage is increasingly on display as he evolves. For example, in a February 15, 2018, joint interview with fellow NBA star Kevin Durant on YouTube's "UNINTERRUPTED," both men railed against social injustice and the political climate in the United States that continues to disproportionately harm people of color. James, cognizant of how his Black maleness is perceived despite his success and conscious of the reparative work that he can do with his platform, professed, "I'm a black man with a bunch of money and havin' a crib in Brentwood and havin' the word 'nigger' spraypainted over my gate. . . . That lets you know . . . I still have a lot more work to do. And no matter how far, money or access or how high you become in life as an African American man, female, they will always try to figure out a way to let you know that you still beneath them, and it's either one of two things at that point. You either cave in to that notion or chalk it up and say, 'You know what? Imma paint over this goddamn gate and Imma make it taller.'" More pointedly, in the same interview, James publicly censured the forty-fifth president of the United States, arguing that "the No. 1 job in America, the appointed person, is someone who doesn't

understand the people and really don't give a fuck about the people."[25] In response, recalling the tired trope of Black male bodies as mindless physical specimens, the president called James "dumb" in a tweet; similarly, Fox News host Laura Ingraham suggested that James was "ignorant" and should "shut up and dribble." James's reply was two-fold and fully rejected the labels and directive: an Instagram post with a neon image of the words, "I am more than just an Athlete" and artful taunting of his detractors in a subsequent interview during 2018 NBA All-Star Week. In that interview, he both reiterated his own journey and fully claimed the powerful impact of his celebrity at Ingraham's expense: "You know, to be an African American kid and grow up in the inner city with a single parent, mother, and not being financially stable and to make it where I've made it today, I think I've defeated the odds. I want every kid to know that . . . all these other kids that look up to me for inspiration who are trying to find a way out, finding some leeway on how they can become as great as they can be and how those dreams can become a reality. [Ingraham] did the best thing to help me create more awareness. So I appreciate her for giving me even more awareness."[26] His words reify the truth that in the twenty-first century, sports function as a critical space for negotiating Black culture and the high stakes of representation. Thus, the disruption of static notions that Toni Morrison positions as necessary to substantiate white supremacy in *Playing in the Dark* are part of the challenge Black popular culture must negotiate as it contends with white consumerism—as it is subjected to the white gaze that depends upon not seeing the full humanity and complexity of Black folks.

Endlessly, concertedly, meticulously, Black cultural producers have had to combat historical efforts to diminish their experiences and their identities; current explorations of Black popular culture cannot be divorced from that history. Significant effort was made by European Enlightenment pseudo-science and white supremacist ideologies to prove African-descended people lacked culture and civilization, and many of those arguments were intricately linked to artistic production. Thomas Jefferson, for example, in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, denigrates Phillis Wheatley and Black artists generally when he insists that religion enabled Wheatley to produce something that "kindles the senses" but lacks imagination. Jefferson insisted on an inherent inferiority in Black thought and creativity: "But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never see even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture. In music they are more generally gifted than the whites with accurate ears fortune and time, and they have been found capable of imagining a small

catch."[27] Sentiments like Jefferson's made it impossible for discourse on the social uplift of African Americans to be divorced from culture, since culture was deeply entwined with racist ideologies of what constitutes civilization and humanness.

The reality of art and culture being inextricably linked to white supremacist rhetoric and violence is precisely why African American cultural movements have coincided with African American social movements. There are, in fact, three distinct cultural movements in which such critical discourse has not only been closely linked to social and political change, but the critical discourse has also informed the production of the art: the New Negro Movement, the Black Arts Movement, and the Post-Soul Aesthetic. Historicizing these movements is critical for understanding Black popular culture as not simply entertainment but an integral space for Black intellectual debate around Black subject making.

The publication of Alain LeRoy Locke's anthology *The New Negro* in 1925 functioned as the definitive text of the cultural revolution popularly referred to as the Harlem Renaissance and known by academics as the New Negro Movement. Locke served as a mentor to Black artists and ultimately as dean of black letters and art during the New Negro Movement. Coining the term "New Negro" as a way of recognizing the production of Black art *by* Black artists as opposed to previous work *about* Black artists, Locke argues that his anthology concentrates on self-expression and agency. By letting the Negro have her own voice, Locke proposes that a New Negro displaces the Old Negro, who is "more a myth than man," and humanizes Black people who had theretofore been represented as a formula. He also suggests that urban migration from the South to northern and midwestern industrial centers accounts for the shift from discourse on the "Negro problem" to the recognition of class differentiation among U.S. Blacks.

Ethnic diversity, then, also informs the metamorphosis from Old to New Negro, as Harlem itself represented an African diasporic population of African, Caribbean, and both southern and northern African Americans. While, on one hand, Locke calls for race cooperation, on the other, he offers an Afrocentric manifesto calling for Black artists to appreciate and incorporate "African representation of form." According to Locke, "A more highly stylized art does not exist than the African," and he uses that assertion for his ultimate mandate: a "racial school of art" to be composed of the younger Black artists of the era. "It is not meant to dictate a style to the young Negro artists," Locke concedes, "but to point the lesson that contemporary European art has already learned—that any vital artistic expression of the Negro

theme and subject in art must break through the stereotypes to a new style, a distinctive fresh technique, and some sort of characteristic idiom."[28] The Eurocentric, middle-class dictates how Locke is engaging Black art. Like many of his contemporaries—most notably Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Aaron Douglas—Locke was largely dependent upon financial support from his white benefactor; in both Hughes's and Locke's cases, the benefactor was Charlotte Osgood Mason. The ideology of pursuing "social or racial uplift" by embracing middle-class values and decorum was, however, a vexed pursuit. The mimicry of European modernism and its infatuation with primitivism helped to distinguish Black art and artists as capable of full citizenship and incorporation into the body politic. But the formalist approach to Black production of primitivism-influenced art reified racial stereotypes and worked against Locke's cultural and national agenda. Arguably, the central paradox of patron-based artistic production during the New Negro era continues to hold true for many Black cultural producers today.

A year after the publication of *The New Negro* anthology, George Schuyler published his essay "The Negro Art Hokum" in the June 16, 1926, edition of *The Nation*. His essay takes to task the very notion of a "racial school of art." Though not stated explicitly, Schuyler's essay responds to the cultural agenda laid out in Locke's *The New Negro*. He offers an anti-essentialist argument that resonates more with post–civil rights rhetoric than the rhetoric of his time period. Schuyler insists that geography and the influence of (European) educational institutions is what determines the content and style of Black art, rather than some shared ancestral essence. He declares, "This, of course, is easily understood if one stops to realize that the Aframerican is merely a lampblacked Anglo-Saxon," and he points to the assimilation of European immigrants as evidence that the "American Negro is just plain American." Arguing that Black and white Americans of the same socioeconomic class invest in the same material culture and ideologies, Schuyler asks, "How, then, can the black American be expected to produce art and literature dissimilar to that of the white-American?" Failing to account for class disparities along racial lines, he concludes that when considering the cultural production of a conglomerate of esteemed international Black artists, one finds the influence of nation—not race.[29] In many ways, the goals of Schuyler intersect with those of Locke. Both seek to debunk racial stereotypes of the Old Negro, yet Schuyler's advocacy for assimilation directly contradicts Locke's espousal of Afrocentrism and primitivism. Moreover, where Locke turns to ancestral heritage to prove humanness, Schuyler proposes that national identity, region, and social class debunk stereotypes.

Just one week after Schuyler's article appeared, Langston Hughes's "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" was also published in the *Nation*. Departing from the theorizations of both Locke and Schuyler, Hughes privileges Black folk culture in a way that suggests an artistic freedom surely informed by his break from his patron. Hughes repudiates racial assimilation, mourning the urge by certain Black artists to understand *real* art as American art and therefore devoid of any Black aesthetics. He locates the privileging of white culture and aesthetics within the realm of the Black middle class, claiming that within it, "there will perhaps be more aping of things white than in a less cultured or less wealthy home." This broad generalization sets up his argument in praise of the "low-down folks" who, to use the contemporary vernacular, "keep it real." He praises a Black folk culture that, unlike the Philadelphia clubwoman, is not ashamed of jazz and Negro spirituals. Painting Schuyler's argument as mere "race shame," he unequivocally rejects the proposition that there is such a thing as de-raced American art. His manifesto for younger Black artists, then, is to embrace their blackness, recognize its beauty, *and* do so without fear or shame.[30]

A couple of months later, the preeminent W. E. B. Du Bois offered his own Black art manifesto in the October 1926 edition of the *Crisis*. In what would later be published as an essay at the annual NAACP conference in Chicago celebrating the twelfth recipient of the Spingarn Medal, Carter G. Woodson, Du Bois makes clear that, in his mind, Black politics and art are inextricably linked. He implies that white U.S. materialism results in the inability to appreciate Beauty, and he proposes Black youth might help stir "the beginning of a new appreciation of joy" by tapping into the usable past Woodson emphasized in his work. By accentuating a history that elicits racial pride, Du Bois is not echoing Locke's Afrocentric rootedness for Black art. Instead, he suggests that if Black America accepts its "duty" to create, preserve, and realize Beauty, those artists "become the apostle of Truth and Right." Art, therefore, is and always must be propaganda, according to Du Bois: "I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used always for propaganda for gaining the right of Black folk to love and enjoy." Du Bois ultimately calls for an unbound Black artist who is free to debunk white stereotypes, as well as to ignore the conservative politics of a Black public that wishes to distort "Truth."[31]

The political manifestos of the Black Arts Movement, the sister movement of the Black Power Movement, register Hughes's embrace of Black as beautiful and his rooting of Black artistic production in the "low-down folk"; in it, however, there is also a healthy dose of Du Bois's insistence that

Black art be produced as truth-telling propaganda and not simply art for art's sake. Amiri Baraka's 1969 poem "Black Art" defines a Black aesthetic that goes beyond functioning as a material object or cultural product, demanding revolutionary art:

> *We want "poems that kill"*
> *Assassin poems, Poems that shoot*
> *guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys*
> *and take their weapons leaving them dead*
> *with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland.*[32]

Similarly, Nikki Giovanni's 1967 poem "For Saundra" demands a violent militancy, questioning the possibility of producing any art that is not political:

> *so i thought again*
> *and it occurred to me*
> *maybe i shouldn't write*
> *at all*
> *but clean my gun*
> *and check my kerosene supply*
> *perhaps these are not poetic*
> *times*
> *at all.*[33]

Poems by artists like Baraka and Giovanni dictated the Black aesthetic, serving as mini manifestos that, in 1970, found a voice in Gil Scott-Heron's spoken-word performance "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." Insisting that the revolution will not be something you watch—something co-opted by the white media and white values even when featuring Black people—but something that happens in your mind, Heron offered a truncated version of treatises on the Black aesthetic by Hoyt Fuller in "Toward a Black Aesthetic" (1968) and Addison Gayle Jr. in *The Black Aesthetic* (1971). Fuller, like Baraka and Heron, locates the streets as a central space for revolt and observes, "The serious black artist of today is at war with the American society as few have been throughout American history." He declares in earnest:

> Few, I believe, would argue with my assertion that the black artist, due to his historical position in America at the present time, is engaged in a war with this nation that will determine the future of black art. Likewise, there are few among them—and here again this is only conjecture—who would disagree with the idea that unique experiences produce unique

> cultural artifacts, and that art is a product of such cultural experiences. To push this thesis to its logical conclusion, unique art derived from unique cultural experiences mandates unique critical tools for evaluation.[34]

Hughes's assertion that a particular experience produces a particular type of art resonates loudly.

After the civil rights era, discourse on the Black aesthetic became grounded in anti-essentialist critiques. These critiques also began to be more cognizant of "Black popular culture" as a space in which the Black aesthetic is produced. The controversial yet seminal essay by Trey Ellis, "The New Black Aesthetic," lays the groundwork for a significant shift in how the Black aesthetic is defined. Playing on the concept of a racial mulatto, Ellis conceives of the "cultural mulatto," Black people like himself whose socioeconomic privilege troubles notions of both Black aesthetics and Black authenticity. His argument, rooted in class and gender privilege, has been the recipient of much critique, but his intervention in the discourse has been foundational for millennial discourse on race and cultural production.

Take, for example, Harlem's Studio Museum director and chief curator Thelma Golden and visual artist Glenn Ligon coining the expression "post-black." Describing the Studio Museum's *Freestyle* (2001) exhibition, the museum's website explains how this exhibition of work by a young group of artists "brought into the public consciousness the concept of 'post-black.' . . . It identified a generation of Black artists who felt free to abandon or confront the label of 'Black artist,' preferring to be understood as individuals with complex investigations of blackness in their work. Post-black art became a transitional stance in the quest to define ongoing changes in African-American art; it ultimately became part of the perpetual redefinition of blackness in contemporary culture."[35]

Golden and Ligon's application of "post-black" to a particular type of Black art and its subsequent application to Black popular culture is similar to the use of "post-soul aesthetic" by the popular culture scholar Mark Anthony Neal in *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (2001). Focusing on film, television, music, and cultural criticism, Neal explains how he struggled to find a language to address the postmodern realities of African American communities. He selects the concept of "post-soul aesthetic" (borrowing from the cultural critic Nelson George) to do that work, explaining, "In the post-soul aesthetic, I am surmising that there is an aesthetic center within contemporary Black popular culture that at various moments considers issues like deindustrialization, desegregation, the corporate

annexation of black popular expression, cyberization in the workforce, the globalization of finance and communication, the general commodification of black life and culture, and the proliferation of black 'meta-identities,' while continuously collapsing on modern concepts of blackness and reanimating 'premodern' (African?) concepts of blackness."[36] Both concepts—post-black and post-soul aesthetic—are rooted in a rethinking of modernity and the *production* of the concept of blackness.

Stuart Hall's essay wrestles with the challenges of defining postmodern blackness and cultural production at the close of the twentieth century. He concedes that the signifier "Black" in the term "Black popular culture" denotes the Black community—a space he describes as the locus for archiving Black struggle, the Black aesthetic, and Black counternarratives. However, he warns that attention must be turned to the diversity of the Black experience, not its supposed homogeneity.[37] Post–civil rights discourse on Black popular culture privileges heterogeneous experiences, ideas, and resistant practices; therefore, it diverges from the preceding cultural movements. A common framework among all three movements, however, is either an explicit assertion that Black artists produce Black cultural products (the New Negro and the Black Arts Movement) or an implied understanding that it is Black people who produce Black popular culture (post-Black and post-soul aesthetics).

The notion that art is propaganda was and continues to be real, if history is any indicator. It affects how Black people move through the world. For this reason, it is imperative to develop new models for engaging Black popular culture and its relationship to power, capitalism, gender identity, presidential politics, and countless other forces that work to marginalize, dehumanize, and strip Black people of full citizenship—especially in a nation that struggles, visibly and vocally, to see them as complex and human. In many ways, the "'Black' in Black popular culture" that this volume addresses is authentic representation of the lived experience of blackness in an always increasingly politicized and commodified U.S. space.

For that reason, *Are You Entertained*? offers a dynamic, interdisciplinary analysis of contemporary shifts, trends, and debates in Black popular culture. The volume is divided into five thematic sections, each composed of analytical and creative essays and an interview with a scholar who has been influential in public dialogues on Black popular culture. Part I, "Performing Blackness," explores the creative spaces of cabaret, television, and radio as theories of performance and performativity have become central to the theaters of Black popular culture. Ralina Joseph proposes that the Obama era created a

space to position mixed-race blackness as comedic fodder. She considers how this trope, intended to be humorous, is reflective of how audiences understand mixed-race African Americans and the idea of the post-racial. Emily Lordi uses the metaphor of "Black radio" to explore the reason and function of a recent trend in Black musicians releasing albums that thematize Black radio and position the diverse range of voices, styles, and sometimes experimentation as odes to free(r) airwaves. Vincent Stephens considers how racializing cabaret as white, or "campy," excludes African American cabaret singers from studies of Black popular music. Drawing on the dichotomies of Black/white and straight/queer, Stephens reads the careers of key Black cabaret singers as constituting Black popular musical production. H. Ike Okafor-Newsum presents an analysis of the visual art selected for this volume. Varied in media as well as historicity and focus, the pieces capture not only links to a Black cultural past but elements that complicate that culture presently. This section concludes with an interview with Lisa B. Thompson on theorizing and writing performance.

Because Black popular culture is, as Hall aptly states, always a space of contestation and politicizing, part II, "Politicizing Blackness," explores ways in which blackness and popular culture have been deliberately politicized, for varied public arenas have long served as opportune spaces for disseminating political ideologies. Kelly Jo Fulkerson-Dikuaa turns to the journalism and cartoons of Jackie Ormes to question how media images of Black women and girls operate in fights for racial equality. Moving the Black woman from foil to subject, Fulkerson-Dikuaa demonstrates how Ormes's cartoons were about more than protest and political commentary; they also provided an avenue for a Black woman to harness a form of Black womanhood often left unexamined in dominant discourses surrounding Black women of the 1940s and 1950s. Delving into digital literacies and platforms, Eric Darnell Pritchard explores video blogs (vlogs) and web series as spaces where Black queer people create, represent, and potentially alter realities. He demonstrates the limitations and possibilities of these specific texts and the digital sphere to story, witness, and archive diverse representations of Black queerness. David J. Leonard considers the phenomenon of "blerd ballers" and the intersection of race and masculinity as Black NBA players use off-court spaces for sartorial protests against racialized dress codes. An interview with Tracy Sharpley-Whiting ends this segment and offers insight on how diasporic blackness outside of the United States is consumed.

Part III, "Owning Blackness," explores the problem of ownership that has plagued Black life in slavery and freedom. Once physical property during

slavery, upon emancipation, Black people found not only their personhood and labor production exploited and consumed but also their creative and intellectual production. To begin the section, Sheneese Thompson demonstrates how Black Twitter teeters between humor and pleasure and outrage and pain, avowing the blackness that hegemonic society hates. A foray into the evolution of signifying practices, Thompson's essay offers Twitter as a space of ownership and identity proclamation. Richard Schur undertakes a legal-cultural analysis of trademark law to map a debate about trademark and authenticity in Black popular culture productions. Schur explores the question of who profits from racial trademarks by bringing hip-hop studies, critical race theory, and contemporary African American art into dialogue. Turning to dance, Imani Kai Johnson continues the interrogation of ownership and hip hop. She pushes for a movement beyond the language of appropriation and minstrelsy to examine the experiences of Africanist aesthetic sensibilities in the absence of Black bodies in breaking (breakdancing) culture worldwide. What better way of owning blackness than to produce your own cultural productions. Breaking from the traditional academic essay, Nina Angela Mercer offers a meditation on Black cultural production that, with creativity and sharp insight, defines Black ritual theater. Through prose and poetry tapping out a polyrhythmic beat, Mercer explores how ritual theater practitioners build community and define theater as every day and everywhere there are lives touching other lives. This section closes with an interview with Mark Anthony Neal, a formidable scholar who laid much of the groundwork for Black popular culture being a serious field of academic study.

Part IV, "Loving Blackness," pays homage to cultural productions that catalyze a genre of Black love and romance in print and visual culture: self-love, the proliferation of Black heterosexual love narratives, and the stylized emergence of the Black queer love narrative. Takiyah Nur Amin examines how popular dances that emerge from Black cultural contexts function as a site for pleasure, agency, and resistance. She posits Black popular dance as a site for meaning-making and self-love and considers the contours of embodied epistemology in twerking, the Harlem shake, j-setting, and similar movement practices. Simone Drake explores soundscapes, queer interiority, and Black boyhood in the film *Moonlight*. She considers how attention to the nuances distinguishing silence and quiet troubles heteromasculinist coming-of-age narratives and how the film's musical score transports viewers deep into the interior life of a queer Black boy who says very little. Kinohi Nishikawa studies urban fiction's disturbance of traditional literary

traditions. Studying both the contradiction of urban fiction emerging after culture wars brought African American literature into the American literature canon and the divergent responses to it, Nishikawa considers the topics and roles of African American women in the urban fiction arena. This section concludes with an extended interview with Patricia Hill Collins, a trailblazer in interdisciplinary scholarship in Black women's studies.

As a whole, *Are You Entertained*? addresses social and cultural shifts and changes, considering what "culture" means in the context of a capitalist, consumer economy. Hall's question "What is this 'Black' in Black popular culture?" still has relevance, but the culture wars and neonationalist identity politics that framed *Black Popular Culture* have given way to postnational identity formations, individualism, and new avenues for expression. Ultimately, Black popular culture is uniquely different now. We hope that this volume fulfills our aims: to bring together essays that engage the politics that created the shifts, as well as the products that have emerged as highly influential in the construction of a national identity for all U.S. citizens both at home and around the globe.

Notes

1 Palmer, "How the 'Billie Jean' Video Changed MTV."
2 Palmer, "How the 'Billie Jean' Video Changed MTV."
3 Quoted in White, "'Beloved' Author Speaks about Writing."
4 Cashmore, *The Black Culture Industry*.
5 Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?," 113.
6 See Jacob Bernstein, "Jay-Z and Barneys Announce Substantial Changes in Their Partnership, *New York Times*, November 18, 2013; and K. C. Orcutt, "Each One, Teach One: How JAY-Z Continues to Evolve His Philanthropic Blueprint," *REVOLT*, February 20, 2019. Under fire to respond publicly to Barney's racial profiling in 2012, Jay-Z reconfigured his agreement with the clothier, mandating leadership input, a seat on a council designed to address racial profiling, and proceeds from sales benefitting the Shawn Carter Foundation. While the Barney's episode does highlight absences in Black popular cultural politics, Jay-Z cannot be fully dismissed as an agent of change. His propensity for activist and philanthropist anonymity puts him at odds with an older generation of activists who believe that the struggle should be lived out loud, often at great risk to oneself—most notably icon Harry Belafonte, who claimed in the August 7, 2012, *Hollywood Reporter* that Jay-Z, "like other high-profile artists . . . had turned his back] on social responsibility." The perceived egotism in Jay-Z's response, "my presence is charity," was both acknowledged and

regrettable. But, it seems integral in this twenty-first-century cultural space to allow that his "presence" as newly minted billionaire, corporate entity, and brand is often reformative. His behind-the-scenes work and fundraising is well documented: for criminal justice reform, college and study abroad scholarships for disadvantaged youth, bail for BLM protesters in Baltimore, and supplies of "millions of pounds of aid" during Hurricane Maria. While he must negotiate the power of his voice beyond just spitting rhymes, his positioning underscores the complex relationship between Black culture makers, money, and cultural change—particularly when previously unheard of levels of success and power in the capitalist machine are in play, and blackness is not monolithic.

7 Palmer, "How the 'Billie Jean' Video Changed MTV."

8 Although it is not addressed fully in this introduction, quarterback Colin Kaepernick's protest of police brutality by kneeling for the anthem and his ongoing efforts to use his brand (which only increased in value, visibility, and influence post-NFL blackballing and public callout by the president and others) has been a catalyst in the fight for social justice since 2016.

9 Miranda, "Alexander Hamilton."

10 Quoted in Politi, "The Slatest."

11 Moten, *In the Break*, 1.

12 Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 23.

13 St. Félix, "Beyoncé's Triumphant Homecoming."

14 Minsker, "Grammys 2017."

15 Kendrick Lamar also offers another provocative performance that reshapes the popular cultural landscape, opening the 2018 Grammy Awards by performing "XXX" and other songs from his LP *DAMN,* along with the very outspoken and sociopolitically conscious Bono and The Edge of U2. As Dave Chapelle, who served as a sort of "Greek chorus" in Lamar's performance argues, "the only thing more frightening than watching a black man be honest in America is being an honest black man in America. Rumble young man, rumble." See Madison Vain, "Kendrick Lamar, Bono, the Edge Open the Grammys with a Fiery 'XXX' Performance," *Entertainment Weekly*, January 28, 2018, https://ew.com/grammys/2018/01/28/grammys-2018-u2-kendrick-performance/

16 "The 2018 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Music," https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/kendrick-lamar. Note that Lamar also composed and cultivated the soundtrack for Coogler's *Black Panther*.

17 Smith and Anderson, "Appendix A."

18 Smith and Anderson, "Appendix A."

19 "Mobile Fact Sheet"; "Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet."

20 Nadeska, "Issa Rae Talks."

21 See Laurel Wamsley, "'One Must Respect the Game': French Open Bans Serena Williams's Catsuit," *NPR.org,* August 24, 2018. During the French Open, Bernard Giudicelli, president of the French Tennis Association, targeted Serena Williams's attire in an interview with *Tennis* magazine, although she had given birth in 2017

and wore a high-compression, black catsuit inspired by *Black Panther* to prevent blood clots.

22 Harpersbazaarus, "August Cover Reveal." Instagram photo, July 9, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/BzssfHDFnFM/.

23 During his NBA career (with the Philadelphia 76ers), Iverson was notorious for rule breaking (i.e., practicing while hungover, missing team events, disobeying the league's dress code) and an unwillingness to follow societal rules. His tattoos, cornrows, and single-arm sleeve combined with a rule-shirking attitude produced a public persona that many urban youth—both male and female—embraced.

24 Twitter (@Twitter), "Top 9 Most Retweeted Tweets of 2017," Twitter, December 5, 2017. https://twitter.com/i/moments/937834305920700416. James was responding to the president's rescinding of the Golden State Warriors' invitation to the White House after they won the 2017 NBA Championship (via Twitter). Although Steph Curry previously indicated that most of the Warriors would not be going as a result of the president's policies and behavior, the president's tweet was a means of "saving face" for his rabid base. LeBron James threw shade in response.

25 UNITERRUPTED, "Kevin Durant x LeBron James x Cari Champion: Rolling with the Champion." Uploaded on February 15, 2018. YouTube video, 16:44 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtNWc1AIU20&feature=youtu.be.

26 "LeBron James fires back at Laura Ingraham." *The Boston Globe*, February 17, 2018, https://www.boston.com/sports/nba/2018/02/17/lebron-james-fox-news-laura-ingraham. And as if her words lit an activist fire in James, in August 2018, Akron public schools opened the I Promise School with significant funding from James's foundation—a school that aids at-risk youth, largely children of color, guarantees free college tuition to graduates, and embraces the lived reality that without family education to accompany child education, many at-risk youth and their families will not break the cycles they traverse. Later in November of that same year, James co-executive produced a three-part documentary exploring the history of intersections between the NBA and civic responsibility, titled appropriately *Shut Up and Dribble* (Showtime).

27 Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, chapter 15.

28 Locke, *The New Negro*, 259, 256, 266–67.

29 Schuyler, "The Negro Art Hokum," 1172–73.

30 Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," 1268.

31 Du Bois, "Criteria of Negro Art," 296.

32 Baraka, "Black Art," *Transbluency*, 142–43.

33 Giovanni, "For Saundra," *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni,* 80.

34 Fuller, "Journey toward a Black Aesthetic," 1872, 1876.

35 "Frequency."

36 Neal, *Soul Babies*, 2–3.

37 Hall, "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?," 28, 29.

References

Baraka, Amiri. "Black Art" (1965). *Transbluency: The Selected Poetry of Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones (1961–1995)*. New York: Marsilio, 1995, 142–43.

Bernstein, Jacob. "Jay-Z and Barneys Announce Substantial Changes in Their Partnership." *New York Times*, November 18, 2013. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/18/fashion/jay-z-and-barneys-announce-substantial-changes-in-their-partnership.html.

Browne, Rembert. "Donald Glover's Community: The Comic Turns His Eye to His Hometown—and Black America—in *Atlanta*." *Vulture*, August 23, 2016. http://www.vulture.com/2016/08/donald-glover-atlanta.html.

Cashmore, Ellis. *The Black Culture Industry*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Demby, Gene. "Harry Belafonte, Jay Z, and Intergenerational Beef." NPR, July 30, 2013. http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/07/30/207068455/harry-belafonte-jay-z-and-inter-generational-beef.

Du Bois, W. E. B. "Criteria of Negro Art." *The Crisis*, 32 (October 1926): 290–97.

Duggan, Maeve. "The Demographics of Social Media Users." *Pew Research Center*, August 19, 2015. http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/19/the-demographics-of-social-media-users/.

"Frequency." Studio Museum Harlem. N.d. http://www.studiomuseum.org/exhibition/frequency.

Fuller, Hoyt. "Journey toward a Black Aesthetic." PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2011.

Giovanni, Nikki. "For Saundra" (1966). *The Collected Poetry of Nikki Giovanni: 1968–1998*. New York: William Morrow, 2003, 80.

Hall, Stuart. "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" *Social Justice*, 20, no. 1–2 (spring 1993): 104–15.

Harpersbazaarus. "August Cover Reveal." Instagram photo, July 9, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/BzssfHDFnFM/

Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Hughes, Langston. "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain." *The Nation*, 122 (June 23, 1926): 692–94.

"Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet." Pew Research Center, February 5, 2018. http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/internet-broadband/.

LeBron James Fires Back at Laura Ingraham." *The Boston Globe*, February 17, 2018. https://www.boston.com/sports/nba/2018/02/17/lebron-james-fox-news-laura-ingraham.

Locke, Alain, ed. *The New Negro* (1925). New York: Atheneum, 1992.

Minsker, Evan. "Grammys 2017: Beyoncé's 'Daddy Lessons' Rejected by Country Committee." *Pitchfork,* December 8, 2016. https://pitchfork.com/news/70299-grammys-2017-beyonces-daddy-lessons-rejected-by-country-committee/.

Miranda, Lin-Manuel. "Alexander Hamilton." *Hamilton: An American Musical*. New York: Atlantic, 2015.

"Mobile Fact Sheet." Pew Research Center, February 5, 2018. http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/.

Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Nadeska, Alexis. "Issa Rae Talks 'Insecure' Season 2, Old TV Execs Dying Off, and Life Goals." *Complex*, July 23, 2017. http://www.complex.com/pop-culture/issa-rae-interview-2017-cover-story.

Neal, Mark Anthony. *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic.* New York: Routledge, 2001.

Palmer, Tamara. "How the 'Billie Jean' Video Changed MTV." *The Root*, March 10, 2013. http://www.theroot.com/how-the-billie-jean-video-changed-mtv-1790895543.

Politi, Daniel. "The Slatest: Watch *Hamilton* Cast Deliver Message to Mike Pence: 'Uphold Our American Values.'" *Slate*, November 19, 2016. http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2016/11/19/watch_hamilton_cast_deliver_message_to_mike_pence_uphold_our_american_values.html.

Pulitzer Foundation. "The 2018 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Music." https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/kendrick-lamar

Schuyler, George S. "The Negro Art Hokum." *The Nation*, 122 (June 16, 1926): 662–63.

Smith, Aaron. "Detailed Demographic Tables." Pew Research Center, January 6, 2014. http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/01/06/detailed-demographic-tables/.

Smith, Aaron, and Monica Anderson. "Appendix A: Detailed Table." Pew Research Center, March 1, 2018. http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-2018-appendix-a-detailed-table/.

St. Félix, Doreen. "Beyoncé's Triumphant Homecoming at Coachella." *New Yorker*, April 16, 2018. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/beyonces-triumphant-homecoming-at-coachella.

Twitter (@Twitter). "Top 9 Most Retweeted Tweets of 2017." Twitter, December 5, 2017. https://twitter.com/i/moments/937834305920700416.

UNINTERRUPTED. "Kevin Durant x LeBron James x Cari Champion: Rolling with the Champion." Uploaded on February 15, 2018, 16:44 min. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtNWc1AIU20&feature=youtu.be.

Waddell, Ray. "Beyonce's Formation Tour Sold over 2 Million Tickets and Made over $250 Million." *Billboard*, October 14, 2016. http://www.billboard.com/articles/business/7541993/beyonce-formation-tour-2-million-tickets-250-million-dollars.

Wamsley, Laurel. "'One Must Respect the Game': French Open Bans Serena Williams's Catsuit."

Catsuit." *NPR.org*, August 24, 2018. https://www.npr.org/2018/08/24/641549735/one-must-respect-the-game-french-open-bans-serena-williams-catsuit.

White, Dan. "'Beloved' Author Speaks about Writing, Revelations, and Good and Evil." *UC Santa Cruz Newscenter*, October 22, 2014. https://news.ucsc.edu/2014/10/rev-fall-14-beloved-author.html.