Paranoia, Delusion, and Doubt: A Lacanian Analysis of Race, Hip-Hop, and Kendrick Lamar

BLACK, Jack <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1595-5083>

Paranoia, Delusion, and Doubt: A Lacanian Analysis of Race, Hip-Hop, and Kendrick Lamar

Black, J. (2025). Paranoia, Delusion, and Doubt: A Lacanian Analysis of Race, Hip-Hop, and Kendrick Lamar. *Howard Journal of Communications*.

Dr. Jack Black, School of Sport and Physical Activity, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, UK

Paranoia, Delusion, and Doubt: A Lacanian Analysis of Race, Hip-Hop, and Kendrick Lamar

Abstract

This article applies Lacanian psychoanalysis to explore race as a psychotic structure, marked by delusion, paranoia, and symbolic failure. Focusing on the hip-hop genre, and the music of Kendrick Lamar, it examines how Lamar's music exposes and unsettles racial certainties by emphasizing lack and doubt. Through an analysis of "Mortal Man", and Lamar's imagined interview with Tupac Shakur, the article highlights how silence and absence disrupt fixed racial meanings. It argues that dismantling racism requires confronting the libidinal and ideological investments in race, while positioning Lamar's work as a vital for a radical, anti-racist critique grounded in psychoanalytic theory.

Keywords

Rap/hip-hop; Lacan; race/racism; psychosis; representation

Introduction: From Blues to Bars… A Psychoanalytic Reading of Race and Hip-Hop

There is nothing more mongrel than music. The study of any musical form, genre, or style quickly reveals a complex interplay of competing and overlapping identities that resist rigid racial historiographies. Music, rather than confirming fixed boundaries, highlights and amplifies the distinctive hybridity of cultures, races, and identities, transcending narrow national or ethnic classifications (Gilroy, 2000). What is expressed through music is often an emergence of divergent forces that erupt from its very form (Morris, 2013). This underscores not only its political significance but also the ways in which certain genres engage with our

relation to lack, shaping how absence, longing, and desire are articulated through sound. As George (2016) observes, blues music provides a particularly revealing instance of how artistic expression engages with loss. The blues, rather than seeking to conceal or repair loss through notions of wholeness, turns toward absence itself, where, in confronting a sense of incompleteness, the blues musician is able to transform lack into a creative force, generating renewed aesthetic expression. Undoubtedly, the production of this something new does not stand apart from the trauma of race as well as "the reality and absurdity of American slavery that occasioned this racial and cultural regeneration through music and song" (Hills, 2020, p. 230). Instead, what it confers is a *space*—indeed, "a deep engagement with personal lack" (George, 2016, p. 72)—that does not ignore the absurdity of race's traumatic inflictions, but which envisages a creative restructuring of one's experiences and certainties. It is in this sense that the absurdity of race, as well as its impasses and ambivalences, can introduce the opportunity for doubt and a confrontation with one's racialization (Black, 2020; 2023).

Encompassing these ambivalences and paradoxes is the hip-hop genre: an African American cultural product that bears witness to wider Caribbean, and, more recently, transatlantic influences. Though the genre has adeptly traced the paradoxes of racial struggle and discrimination, its critiques of social and political issues have often existed alongside a level of marketization and commercialization that inevitably calls them into question. Here, a melange of resistance, appropriation, political oppression, and capitalist accedence co-align in a musical genre that remains creatively adept at examining the contradictions in contemporary society and the politics of race.

By way of exploring these contradictions, this article will serve to introduce Jacques Lacan's work on psychosis as affording a key psychoanalytic lens for approaching race, racism, and

racialization. Understood as a structural failure in the symbolic order that produces a destabilized relation to reality, Lacan's account of psychosis can highlight how race and racism are not merely social constructs, but psycho-social disturbances structured through fantasy, delusion, and paranoia. This contests that racism operates through psychic investments and libidinal attachments that sustain racial identity, often in ways that exceed rational or discursive critique. Dismantling racism, therefore, requires more than ideological or representational interventions, necessitating, instead, a confrontation with the subjective, affective, and unconscious forces that racialize. In advancing this argument, the article positions Kendrick Lamar's music as a critical site through which such a confrontation is staged, offering a radical, psychoanalytically grounded critique of racial identity and its certainties.

The paper opens by introducing Lacan's theory of psychosis. This theoretical framework is applied to the racialized symbolic order, revealing how hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia operate psychically and socially to stabilize racial meaning. Racism, in this account, is not reducible to false beliefs or social prejudices but functions as a psychic disturbance, underpinned by delusional certainty and paranoid structures of recognition and misrecognition. As aesthetic practices shaped by loss, absence, longing, and desire, the paper turns to the historical and cultural significance of Black musical forms, such as, hip-hop, in order to propose that these genres can be read as expressive modes, but also as symbolic confrontations with the trauma and absurdity of race. Hip-hop, in particular, emerges as a contradictory form: while it has served as a platform for resistance, it has also become deeply implicated in the reproduction of racial fantasy, especially through its commercial entanglement with white audiences. Here, the contradictory operations of hip-hop are considered in relation to its role in sustaining racial fantasy. It is argued that hip-hop's performative excess can open up critical spaces that lay bare these fantasies, confronting listeners with the contradictions of race and identity.

Focusing specifically on the music of Kendrick Lamar, whose work navigates themes of race, conspiracy, paranoia, and personal doubt, the paper then develops upon the aforementioned contradictions in order to read Lamar's lyrics as staging encounters with fantasies of meaning and knowledge. Invocations of civil rights icons, engagement with conspiracy theories, and expressions of disillusionment are, in this critical analysis, understood as forms of counter-knowledge that destabilize the symbolic structure of race. This trajectory culminates in a close reading of Lamar's "Mortal Man" (2015), a song that concludes with an imagined interview with Tupac Shakur. The disjunctive temporality of the conversation, ending in Tupac's silence, is interpreted as a rupture in the symbolic, indeed, a moment where the delusional fantasy of intergenerational continuity collapses. This silence does not resolve the trauma of race but introduces a radical form of doubt, pointing toward the Real as the absent core of racial identity and challenging the very structure that sustains it.

The article concludes by reiterating the argument that race functions as a psychotic structure: a system of delusional certainties that foreclose subjective transformation. To confront racism at this level is to approach it not only politically or ethically, but psychoanalytically. Lamar's work is ultimately positioned as a vital resource for this project: by introducing doubt, avowing fantasy, and confronting lack, his music opens a space in which the delusional certainties of race can be challenged.

The Psychotic Structure of Race: A Lacanian Account

By offering a psychoanalytic perspective on how examples of racism are structured through the anxieties, delusions, and fantasies that subjects have towards race, the work of Jacques Lacan,

and, specifically, his account of psychosis, can provide a crucial framework for understanding the effects of race, racism, and racialization across society and culture (Black, 2023; Lacan, 2006; 1997a). Notably, Lacan's account of psychosis offers a structural and linguistic approach to elucidating severe mental disturbances, where, developing upon the work of Freud, Lacan argued that psychosis arises from a fundamental failure in the symbolic order (the realm of language, law, and social structures) (Vanheule, 2011). It is from this structural deficit in the symbolic order that a breakdown in the subject's relationship to reality, often manifesting in hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia, can occur. Specifically, for Lacan (2018), one experiences a world where meaning collapses, and linguistic signifiers fail to operate in their usual way, leading to a direct and often overwhelming confrontation with the Real, that which resists symbolization.

Drawing on Lacan's theorization of psychosis it becomes possible to examine the ways in which racial violence and race relations are shaped by structural failures in meaning, unconscious fixations, and the destabilizing effects of racial difference. Through this lens, racism is not merely a social or ideological construct but operates as a psychic disturbance, such as when the racial other becomes the site onto which deep-seated anxieties and fantasies are projected, often with violent consequences (Black, 2023; George, 2016; Hook, 2018; McGowan, 2022).

Notably, a Lacanian understanding of psychosis can offer a framework to expose and explore the irrational attachments to race that underpin our racialization. Central to this perspective is the idea that a psychotic structure underlies how race is both seen and conceived, while also framing and shaping our social relations and institutions through a psychic investment in the significance and legitimacy of race (Seshadri-Crooks, 2000). Through acknowledging the

undeniable presence of race in contemporary society (from perceptions of athletic capabilities to medical statistics), race continues to matter insofar as this persistence reveals race as a signifier that produces meaning but which ultimately remains tied to a level of non-sense that is both fixed and intrusive (Black, 2023; Gilroy, 2000).

It is in this regard that examples of paranoia and delusion underwrite our racial perceptions and interactions (Leader, 2012). Indeed, where Lacan (1997b) highlights how "the moving force of paranoia is essentially the rejection of a certain support in the symbolic order" (p. 54), what I wish to emphasize is the very way in which examples of racial paranoia emerge from the confrontation with the Other. In examples of paranoia, there is a clear divide between the psychotic and the Other, so that, in contrast to Schizophrenia, the Other acts upon the psychotic from without (Leader, 2012). For instance, examples of racial paranoia frequently manifest in a conviction that the racial Other poses a threat (McGowan, 2013).[1] Where paranoid thinking is marked by certainty and rigidity, allowing the subject to maintain a coherent but delusional interpretation of reality, in the context of race, racial paranoia fixes meaning to distinct racial classifications. This can take the form of perceiving the racial Other's excessive presence as a threat or misreading their existence as fundamentally outside the rule of Law. At its core, paranoia operates as a misdirected "attempt at recovery" (Freud, 1981, p. 71), a means by which the subject reconstitutes their fractured universe by locating disorder in the figure of the racial other and thereby restoring a sense of coherence to their world. The exaggerated attribution of enjoyment to the racial Other (an insistence that they possess an excessive or illicit "advantage" over others), further fuels paranoid perceptions, reinforcing racial antagonisms and fantasies of persecution.

If racial paranoia functions to restore coherence through the projection of disorder onto the Other, "counter-hegemonic Black paranoia" arises as a critical response to the very real histories of racial oppression that make such projections possible (Jarvis, 2019).[2] Emerging in reaction to the historical and ongoing realities of systemic racism and oppression, it is characterized by a deep-seated skepticism and distrust toward mainstream society, arising from an acute awareness of racial power imbalances and the ever-present potential for discrimination and violence. The historical legacies of slavery, segregation, and institutional racism provide a rational foundation for suspicion toward dominant institutions and official narratives, where a counter-hegemonic Black paranoia reflects an attempt to process how the dominant racial order systematically disregards or erases Black suffering. In fact, while this paranoia can offer a means of survival, it can also operate within the structure of a fixed and certain belief system, reinforcing the necessity of suspicion and vigilance, even as it acknowledges the instability of racial meaning itself (Leader, 2012).

Indeed, by refusing to accept mainstream pronouncements at face value, recognizing that they have often served to uphold white supremacy while dismissing or distorting Black experiences, examples of humour can serve as a vehicle for articulating these truths, as seen in the character of Rod (Lil Rey Howery) in the 2017 Jordan Peele film, *Get Out*. A friend to Chris (Daniel Kaluuya), Rod remains highly suspicious of Chris's trip to visit his white girlfriend, Rose, and her family, warning him about the dangers of interracial relationships and jokingly referencing black people being kidnapped and turned into sex slaves. While Rod's exaggerated warnings towards Chris are framed as comic relief, ultimately, they function to reveal the film's deeper racial anxieties.[3] This exposes how hyperbolic or seemingly absurd statements can serve as a way of acknowledging racial realities, which those in dominant positions refuse to recognize.

Similarly, this form of paranoia also expresses itself through the humorous phrase "white-people shit", which encapsulates the idea that certain actions or beliefs (often seen as naïve or reckless), are shaped by a lack of awareness of the dangers that Black individuals must constantly navigate (Small, 2025). In fact, while "paranoia" can suggest an irrational or delusional mindset, in this context, it represents a survival mechanism, a counter-knowledge developed to make sense of a world structured by racial injustice. Rather than an unfounded fear, it functions as a response to a socio-symbolic order that has historically failed to provide safety and justice for Black subjects.

Equally, whereas delusion is often cited as a key example of psychosis, in Lacanian terms, it is not merely a loss of reality, but, instead, reflects a perceived lack of authority in the Other, so that meaning becomes solidified in ways that offer a seemingly indisputable interpretation of the subject's situation. Consequently, while psychosis, at its core, involves a fundamental difficulty in articulating one's position as a subject, it is within this framework that delusion functions as an attempt to construct meaning where a Symbolic support is absent (Braunstein, 2015; Vanheule, 2011). It is, in effect, a way of positioning the subject in relation to existence when the usual structures of the symbolic order fail.

In the case of race, delusion can involve fixed beliefs about racial difference that persist despite contrary evidence. The deep-seated certainty that race is a meaningful and essential distinction, even in the absence of scientific validation, illustrates this delusional structure. Beliefs in inherent racial essences, or natural racial hierarchies, operate as compensatory mechanisms, offering a stable system of meaning in otherwise unstable socio-symbolic orders. As previously noted, delusional paranoia can serve as an "attempt at recovery" for the subject in psychosis

(Freud, 1981), providing a coherent explanatory framework in response to the perceived breakdown of symbolic meaning.

In effect, delusion can take on a metaphorical form, where, for Lacan, the delusion operates as an attempt at a metaphor, a means of organizing the chaotic flux of "dissociated signifiers" (Braunstein, 2015, p. 92).[4] Delusional metaphors afford a stabilizing role, both internally (by naming the motives of a "mad Other" and thus introducing order into the Symbolic) and externally (by embedding the subject within a social bond) (Vanheule, 2011). What is more, delusion provides an explanatory function that rigidly links racial being to racial identity, resulting in a conflation of the subject's own lack with a projected lack in the racial Other, and, thus, reinforcing racialized structures of meaning (George, 2016). Like naturalized metaphors, delusional metaphors frequently draw on common sense, presenting themselves as self-evident truths that require no further justification.

Taken together, Lacan's account of psychosis offers an interconnected psychic economy that organizes racial meaning and experience. Understanding race through the lens of psychosis can reveal its structuring force. In what follows, specific attention will be given to examining this structural role as it pertains to the hip-hop genre.

The Protest and the Profit: Hip-Hop, Racial Fantasy, and Contradiction

Rooted in African American and Latino communities, Hip-hop emerged in the Bronx, New York, in the 1970s. Combining rhythmic beats, spoken-word lyricism (rap), DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti art, it has functioned as both artistic expression and a platform for social and political commentary. Today, hip-hop has evolved into a global force, shaping music,

fashion, and popular culture, from which such commercial success has often jarred with the genre's role in progressing black culture and the artistic freedom to expound the struggles of the African American experience (Love, 2016). As a result, though "the music is filled with social commentary that exposes and critiques critical issues affecting people of color within a regional, national, and global context" (Love, 2016, p. 322), which has been easily reproduced for mass consumption, as Johnson points out, what remains "at fault is the medium itself" (2023, p. 155). Indeed, "musical recordings which can reflect and convey political ideas, but are a form of profit-driven entertainment that is only additive in the broader and more complex process of political life" (Johnson, 2023, p. 155). Consequently, whereas artists such as "Public Enemy, N.W.A., Ice Cube and others provided powerful protest anthems, capable of expressing the discontent of rap's foundational black urban audience and pricking the conscience of its growing suburban and white consumer base", more often than not, "the solutions they provided in the recording booth and in interviews were rather conservative" (Johnson, 2023, p. 155).

Notably, Johnson's comments chime with wider critiques of regressive forms of conservatism in Black American culture, where the emphasis has been placed on the expansion of a commodified blackness, sold and marketed alongside the genre's wider appeal to mass audiences (Gilroy, 2000). Accordingly, for McGowan (2022), the problem lies not with the genre itself, but with the racist fantasy that it helps to sustain: a fantasy that thrives within the commodification of Black culture and its mass-market appeal. This is particularly the case in examples of psychosis, where fantasy plays a crucial role in structuring the subject's relationship to reality and the Other. Here, in examples of psychosis, fantasy serves as an attempt to patch over a fundamental rupture in the external world's structure, offering a delusional consistency in place of symbolic mediation, and producing a reality where fantasy and paranoia are experienced as real. In effect, where racist fantasy takes shape is through its

specific projections onto the racial Other, who is frequently ascribed as possessing an excessive enjoyment (indeed, such racist fantasies work to obscure the subject's constitutive lack by displacing it onto an external figure).

Focusing on its popularity amongst white suburban teens, McGowan examines how the genre remains predicated on a fantasy of enjoyment that is perpetuated *through* the racial Other. It is through this racial Other that the avid hip-hop fan can indulge in the misogyny, violence, and "gangsta" lifestyle that is vivaciously portrayed across a variety of popular hip-hop songs.[5] Here, the social exclusion of hip-hop artist provides a necessary condition for the admiration that their white audiences feel towards them. It is from a position of nonbelonging that the marginalization of the hip-hop artist affords a level of transgression that allows the listener to subscribe to a fantasy of enjoyment that would otherwise be prohibited. In other words, the racist fantasy succeeds in prescribing the racial Other a level of enjoyment that fixes "blackness" to the "transgressive enjoyment of nonbelonging" (McGowan, 2022, p. 171).

Importantly, this fantasized Black jouissance underpins portrayals of the racial Other, where their perceived excesses provoke both resentment and envy (George, 2016). In this context, it is telling that the most commercially successful rappers and R&B singers often emphasize stereotypical images (such as, the gangsta persona or the hypersexualized woman) because these depictions resonate with dominant cultural fantasies (Andrews, 2023). As Andrews (2023) explains, artists like, Lil Wayne, gained prominence by embodying exaggerated performances of Black hypermasculinity, roles that cater to the desires and expectations of White audiences.

Yet, the appeal of these performances lies not only in their alignment with dominant stereotypes but also in the way they allow White audiences to indulge in racialized fantasies while maintaining a self-image of tolerance and non-racism. That is, by listening to hip-hop one can remain safe in the knowledge that they are not racist: "The fact that the singer is [often] Black enables listeners to experience themselves as utterly nonracist, which is what makes the racist fantasy so much more appealing than open displays of racism" (McGowan, 2022, p. 172). Certainly, whereas hip-hop's political valency remains an important point of contention (a contention that, as argued below, remains integral to the genre's significance), McGowan (2022) does not suggest that we should, in view of the racist fantasy, stop listening to hip-hop. Rather, McGowan's (2022) conclusions confront the important assertion that "the way out of an investment in the racist fantasy requires taking responsibility for one's own enjoyment, seeing this enjoyment as one's own rather than that of the racial other" (p. 173).

Undoubtedly, while one's enjoyment cannot be found both in and through the other, or, as seen in the case of the hip-hop artist, in the unrestrained enjoyment that the subject is denied, it is difficult to determine how such "responsibility" could ever be acknowledged through the act of listening to hip-hop—beyond the fact that one would simply have to stop listening to it. On this basis, we can consider how the political importance of hip-hop may rest in its capacity to expose the very excesses it relies upon as well as the racist fantasies that constrain and delimit the genre's racialization.

To this extent, in his film theory, McGowan (2007) has highlighted how examples of cinematic excess work "not from obedience to the demands of the social order, but from adherence to and embrace of the enjoyment that exceeds that order" (p. 57). Accordingly, in his account of the cinema of fantasy, McGowan emphasises how it is the hidden enjoyment that underscores

society that is emphatically exposed. By revealing "too much", fantasy functions to disclose the hidden underside of Symbolic authority as well as the "dirty secrets" that undergird our private exchanges. Here, films, such as, Spike Lee's, *Do the Right Thing* (1989), and, *Bamboozled* (2000), portray the prevalence of racist fantasies in scenes that effectively bring to light the excessive enjoyment that these racist fantasies rely upon. According to McGowan (2007), the politics of Lee's films work by exposing the racism that such fantasies allow to remain hidden.

Consequently, while both liberal and conservative racial discourses are structured by fantasmatic images of the Other, which serve to defer a genuine engagement with difference, confronting the excess of such fantasies may hold an ethical potential, forcing an encounter with the Real Other beyond its fantasmatic representation. Though Lee's politicization goes amiss in McGowan's analysis of the hip-hop genre, and subsequently overlooks the contradictions in the genre itself—contradictions that frequently underlie, but which remain integral to, the hip-hop musician and their lyrics (Cooke, 2021)—we can conceive how hip-hop offers an opportunity for both the artist and listener to 'grapple with' the constitutive fantasies that underscore our relations to the world, and, more importantly, our perceptions and representations of the other (McGowan, 2007).

This is evident in the extent to which rap can serve as a genre which both relays and, thus, exposes, the contradictions inherent to, amongst other things, capitalism and commodification. Indeed, drawing upon Frederic Jameson's account of how commodification is experienced unevenly between the global centre and periphery, where, in the centre, capital appears fully commodified and stable, while in the periphery it remains marked by visible crisis and contradiction (Jameson, 1992), Rahmat (2025) highlights how these lived contradictions are

crucial to understanding capitalism as a whole. In particular, this dynamic is key to the hip-hope genre, which, in its location on the periphery, evolved as a form of "excluded capital" (Rahmat, 2025, p. 7). As an "abject underside" to capitalist proliferation, constituting the violence and poverty that capitalism requires, "hip-hop's growth through capital is not a simple matter of acquiescence" (Rahmat, 2025, p. 7).

> Tupac's homage to his mother's Black Panther activism, the Malcolm X imagery in Public Enemy, Angela Davis's Rap City dialogue with Ice Cube about the efficacy of rap's messaging—culminating in Kendrick Lamar's Pulitzer Prize—indicate the longer history of struggle that trails the commodification of hip-hop. (Rahmat, 2025, pp. 7-8)

As "a constant negotiation unique to hip-hop's distinct historical situation" (Rahmat, 2025, p. 8), we can observe how, in the 1980s and 1990s, rap music became a prominent voice in denouncing police violence, articulating how Black and Latino urban communities experienced policing as a form of occupation (Johnson, 2023). This era witnessed the emergence of politically driven rap steeped in Black nationalist ideas, with artists frequently confronting police authority and the expanding prison system, thus spotlighting these issues on a national scale more quickly and forcefully than established civil rights organizations. Indeed, what hip-hop expressed was "the materiality of capital's contradictions" (Rahmat, 2025, p. 8), contradictions that, for Johnson (2023), were "always more of a fun-house mirror, reflecting some social conditions and experiences faithfully, while exaggerating and truncating others, and always for the primary purpose of amusement and entertainment" (p. 151). As a result, by "reflect[ing] a contradictory class consciousness … hip-hop playfully engaged, criticized and embraced bourgeois norms, high fashion, and consumer culture" (Johnson, 2023, p. 151).

It is these excesses, however, that can culminate in unique forms of political expression. For example, in the UK, the satirical comic character, Ali G, created and performed by Sacha Baron Cohen, was often depicted as a clueless, tracksuit-wearing wannabe gangster from suburban England. Through parodying white appropriation of Black culture, while also exposing social and political absurdities via his absurd interviews with real-life public figures, Gilroy notes how:

> the central unifying joke underpinning all Ali G's work is supplied by an antipathy toward the stultifying U.S. styles and habits that have all but crushed local forms of the black vernacular and replaced them with the standardized and uniform global products of hip-hop consumer culture. (2004, p. 147)

To this extent, while it is rather easy to denounce Ali G's portrayal as nothing more than a depiction of "racist stereotypes", indeed, "a minstrel act" whose "behaviour mimics a stereotype of young black males, both British and American, whose cultural background is a combination of Rastafarian influences and American (and often global) hip hop consumer, street or gang culture" (Weaver, 2011, p. 255), what this nonetheless ignores is the contradictions that such a depiction exposes, and the excesses prevalent in the commodified hip-hop culture that Ali G seeks to represent (Black, 2019; 2021). Whereas Ali G "makes the commitment to ghetto fabulous tastes and behaviors appear absurd" (Gilroy, 2004, p. 147), it is the contradiction between parody and participation, spectacle and sincerity, which remains central to Ali G's representation of the hip-hop genre, as well as the excesses within hip-hop culture itself, where exaggerated displays of power and bravado often coexist with expressions of vulnerability and despair.

For example, what is often brought to bear in the hip-hop genre's excessive portrayals are the contradictions upon which such excess depends. The Notorious B.I.G. (Biggie), for instance, frequently performed an image of hypermasculine aggression and dominance, as depicted in 'Kick in the Door' (1997), where, through an imagined act of violent intrusion, he raps about forcefully asserting his control and silencing any opposition. Yet, this persona is starkly contradicted in "Suicidal Thoughts" (1994), a track that stages a late-night phone call to a friend, during which Biggie confesses to thoughts of suicide, feelings of worthlessness, and the overwhelming pressure of his circumstances. The bravado and lyrical excess of earlier tracks give way to a raw expression of inner collapse, as he contemplates death and articulates a profound sense of existential exhaustion. These tensions between outward performance and internal disintegration reveal the complex emotional economies underpinning much of Biggie's work and, more broadly, the genre itself.

Certainly, the intention here is not to laud the act of suicide as invigorating a unique insight into the effects of racism in society, or as an exclusive characteristic beholden to the genre and the venerated hip-hop artist. Instead, what these lyrics propose is that it is in such excessive displays (kicking down a door to shoot-up a rival or in confiding to blow one's brain out) that the political contradictions of the genre can be exposed and critiqued. Crucial here is identifying those examples where confrontations with lack can be averred not just in the content of the hip-hop song but also in a formal structure where the exposure to fantasy and excess can be creatively disclosed. With this in mind, the purpose of the following analysis is not to evaluate the relative merits of the hip-hop genre but to draw specifically from the musical significance of one its leading proponents, Kendrick Lamar.[6]

Lack in Lamar: Conspiracy, Race, and the Radical Politics of Doubt

Born Kendrick Lamar Duckworth, Lamar is a rapper and songwriter whose music has received broad critical acclaim for his lyrics, which depict a unique introspective reflection, and a broad musical style that frequently draws from a range of musical influences, such as, jazz, soul, and funk. Over the course of Lamar's discography, his music has tackled issues relating to the political and social circumstances of black Americans, with personal reflection, and critiques of U.S. culture and society providing the bedrock to many of his most acclaimed tracks.

In fact, much of Lamar's later output suggests an emerging paranoia within U.S. politics and society, with his fourth (*DAMN.*, 2017) and fifth (*Mr. Moral & the Big Steppers*, 2022) albums being released post-2016. Discussing Lamar's fourth album, *DAMN.*, Floyd-Thomas (2020) observes that the record emerged amid a profound political shift in U.S. politics. The move from Obama to Trump presented a transition that left many seeking a more candid and emancipatory form of intersectional politics (Floyd-Thomas, 2020). In this context, Lamar's *DAMN.* offered a piercing and authentic response to the disorienting political climate ushered in by Trump's ascendance, one marked by a rise in racism, sexism, xenophobia, and spectacle. Certainly, criticisms of U.S. politics echo throughout Lamar's wider work, with both his lyrics and musical approach drawing heavily from his experiences of growing-up in Compton, California (a city with its own rich musical heritage, such as the influential, N.W.A. ["Niaggaz Wit Attitude"], who formed in the late 1980s). Accordingly, while Lamar's preference for releasing concept albums has allowed him to discuss and dissect his relation to U.S. politics, as well as the historical significance of race relations in contemporary U.S. society, much of his work serves to explore and reflect upon these themes in relation to his Compton-upbringing.

In particular, Lamar's lyrics can be considered for the explicit examples of delusion and paranoia that they express (Key, 2020). Where his lyrics allude to confrontations with members of the civil rights movement, or, as Lamar explains, their "spirits",[7] such artistic licence affords Lamar the opportunity to narrate a series of delusional or hallucinatory encounters with iconic Black leaders, including Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. In "HiiiPoWeR" (2011), he evokes a vision in which King appears to him directly, while Malcolm X is imagined as having cast a curse or negative influence on his future. While these moments reflect the psychological and political weight of Black historical memory, as well as the disorienting pressure of living up to the legacies of those figures within a contemporary context, in the same song, Lamar refers explicitly to conspiracy theories regarding the relationship between the Illuminati and hip-hop musicians (specifically, himself). Key (2020) notes:

> Conspiracy theories have long held a prominent place in hip-hop as forms of counter knowledge. It has elements of what anthropologist John L. Jackson Jr. regards as the racial skepticism that cannot take at face value the pronouncements of mainstream society. He argues that this paranoia informs how hip-hop spirituality creates its own authoritative sources. Counter knowledge or hidden knowledge often is compatible with black religious traditions that suppose themselves to be in possession of the true knowledge and the true identity of African Americans. (p. 307)

Certainly, the relative success of using conspiracy theories as a form of "counter knowledge" works in stark contrast to the psychotic underpinnings that this knowledge relies upon and the paranoia it engenders. Notably, it is the degree to which these conspiracies endow a certainty of knowledge, indeed, a "possession of the *true knowledge* and the *true identity* of African

Americans", that the articulation of race confines the subject to forms of racial delimitation just as much as it seeks to challenge the very authorities who seek to expel such "knowledge".

Moreover, these dynamics of racial knowledge and the containment of doubt find powerful expression when Lamar's personal success becomes entangled with deeper anxieties about identity, loss, and the burden of representation. For example, in songs, such as "U" (2015), Lamar displays an anxiety towards the fame and fortune that his hip-hop career has accumulated. Recited in a confessional mode, Lamar explores how his very successes (sold-out stadiums, significant record sales) are all, beyond that of his own selfishness, ephemeral achievements that only compound his sense of lack and disillusionment. On the edge of suicide, the song expounds a sense of lack deriving from Lamar's sudden confrontation with the death of a close friend that he remembers while on tour. Depression, anxiety, melancholy, and paranoia permeate Lamar's highly charged emotional deliverance as he reflects on his own "failures". Though the song's inherent negativity stands apart from more positive reflections, such as that expressed in the song "I" (2015), it nonetheless echoes the very contradictions that underpin Lamar's pride as well as the sense of empowerment that such a "sin" (his success) can entail.

Undoubtedly, such an assessment may stand opposed to the religious undertones that permeate much of Lamar's work. This is clearly emphasised on the album *To Pimp a Butterfly*, wherein Lamar frequently acknowledges his faith in God, while also imploring his listeners to do the same. Yet, the fact that this remains a reoccurring theme throughout Lamar's music, speaks more to the lack of any clear guarantee. As a result, Lamar is continually, and often distressingly, confronting a learned ignorance within, as well as through, his musical delivery. It is from a position of *docta ignorantia* ("learned ignorance") that Lacan (1991) outlines a

revelation of ignorance forged upon a path of not-knowing.[8] Thus, what Lamar observes is an absence of knowledge and a (re)introducing of lack into the surety of his convictions and experiences, religion included.

It is in view of this lack that songs, such as "Momma" (2015), revolve around Lamar concluding that, despite his assurances, in the end, he knows nothing. This lack of knowledge is derived from Lamar's return from a trip to South Africa in 2014. Lamar refers to meeting a young boy who reminds him of his younger self. Here, it is through the juxtaposition Lamar establishes between South Africa and his home city of Compton that a sense of emotional and political dislocation is conveyed. After describing his experiences abroad, Lamar expresses a yearning for reconnection, urging those from his community, particularly his close peers, to return home. Presenting a broader commentary on the fractures and diasporic tensions that shape Black identity and belonging, Winters highlights that while the notion, "come back home", alludes to a return to some form of Africa as a point of origin (a "home" for Black Americans that offers allusions to the Middle Passage), it is in the formal break which follows "the refrain 'come back home' [… that] a split, or gap, between Compton and South Africa" is registered (2020, 223). Such a "gap" bears witness to an absence at the heart of Lamar's own reflections; an absence transposed onto both the relation between Compton and South Africa and the limits of his own knowledge. While Lamar initially asserts a confident sense of self-understanding, this is undercut with the recognition that his perceived knowledge is, in fact, limited or illusory. The moment of return—a coming home—marks a turning point, where certainty gives way to humility and an awareness of what he does not know.

On the face of it, Lamar's lyrics reveal the tensions and contradictions that shape his reflections on race and the Black diaspora. In fact, throughout "Good Kid, M.A.A.D City" (2012), Lamar

confronts his own flaws by situating them within a larger system marked by racism, exploitation, and the deliberate erosion of Black leadership in already precarious communities of colour (Love, 2016). In such cases, "Lamar is always thinking about the best and worst of life and possibility" (Miller, 2020, p. 169), contradictions for which Lamar's "art conveys general and specific meanings associated with blackness in both a provincial (and providential) sense but also in its mass-mediated reproduction" (Miller, 2020, p. 160).

However, it is precisely this sense of lack and absence in Lamar's lyrical confessions that opens a space for engaging with doubt: one that enables a critical reflection on race that unsettles the certainties imposed by racialization. In Lacanian terms, doubt is intertwined with the capacity to know, and, in particular, can help challenge the certainty inherent in psychotic structures (Lacan, 2004). Following Descartes, Lacan identified a "radical suspension" in knowledge arising from the very uncertainty modern subjects experience (Friedlander, 2022, p. 117 see also Lacan, 2004, p. 224). This form of doubt, directed toward the Law and its ideals, is a defining characteristic of the modern subject and their psychotic divergences (Lacan, 1997a). A shift in the psychotic subject can occur when doubt disrupts their certainty, compelling them to recognize that their knowledge is not absolute. Where doubt dislodges certainty, by revealing a fundamental lack of knowledge, it is by acknowledging one's lack of knowledge, and thus questioning the existence of an omniscient Other, that doubt signifies a shared lack predicated upon one's use of language. For Lacan, it was "The freeing of language from the obsession with wholeness", which, in the case of the Irish novelist, James Joyce, allowed him to develop "a different orientation towards the world" (Rahmat, 2025, p. 10 see also Lacan, 2018). Grounded in his unique handling of language, Lacan (2018) identified in Joyce a distinct and unconventional relationship to language, indeed, a certain "know-how" (*savoir faire*). Where linguistic meaning is contested and negotiated, and where lack is creatively exposed, and

contradiction averred, expressions of doubt can be creatively introduced and explored. Similarly, in its unique relation to language, that is, "through its cultivation of various schemes of rhyming, metre and beat" (Rahmat, 2025, p. 2), hip-hop expounds its distinctly political impetus. Ultimately, whereas Joyce's art allowed him to stave off death through a language style that weaved his creativity within the impossibility of language, Lamar's music both reveals and challenges the fantasies, paranoias, and delusions of one's racial being alongside the structures that support it. In what follows, the lyrical content and formal structure of "Mortal Man" (2015), from Lamar's third album, *To Pimp a Butterfly* (2015), is considered.

"What's next?": Resurrecting the Real in "Mortal Man"

Framed as an intense, reflective, and introspective inner dialogue, and appearing as the final song on Lamar's, *To Pimp a Butterfly*, "Mortal Man", involves Lamar weaving a complex blend of Black historical reflection and awareness, while rapping across several verses, which concludes with an interview with the deceased, Tupac "2Pac" Shakur (Pac). An influential hip-hop artist, killed in 1996, Pac remains a major influence for Lamar, with many of his songs paying homage to the dead musician. Accordingly, what remains unique about "Mortal Man" is how it adapts a 1994 interview with Pac. Through the use of clever editing, Pac's replies are interpellated into the song, with Lamar asking his own questions, to which Pac's original interview responses are then used. The song's technical achievements help establish an intimacy between the two men, with their discussion referencing and commenting upon politics and philosophy as well as the morality of race and the black experience. Listening to the song it is hard not to imagine the interview taking place in the present, with many of the themes they discuss, as well as Pac's responses, maintaining a contemporary relevance. As noted by Miller,

“a technologically resurrected Pac speaks a transhistorical, yet no less contingent, word on ‘what’s next’”(Miller, 2020, 159).

This sense of “what’s next” proves an essential feature of the song. Though Lamar is able to share his experiences with Pac, while also relaying his concerns and frustrations, it is in the song’s temporal disunity which provides a delusional encounter for Lamar: a discussion with a dead hip-hop artist, who he is able to question as a source of knowledge, indeed, as a subject supposed to know (Black, 2023). Where this delusion is disrupted, however, is in the temporal disunity that it presents. This disunity is not simply obscured via the song’s technical sampling but is reproduced in Lamar’s final question and Pac’s silence.

After reading a poem, Lamar poses a reflective question to Pac, asking his perspective. What follows is a haunting silence, with Pac offering no response. Lamar, increasingly unsettled, calls out repeatedly in an attempt to re-establish contact, but the silence persists. Whereas the unresolved ending foregrounds the impossibility of dialogue across time and death, underscoring the weight of generational absence, we are, in accordance with Pac’s silence, suddenly reminded that, in Pac’s case, “the dead can’t speak” (Miller, 2020, p. 171). Here, the formal significance of Pac’s silence helps to afford Lamar’s question an atemporal permanence, introducing a level of doubt upon the exchange. Was the artistry that was employed merely a delusional experience, another ghost, another dead homie, haunting Lamar?

The significance of the silence is emphasised by Wert (2017), who “read[s] the song as raising a question, not resolving it” (p. 118). In particular, the lingering minute of jazz that follows the song’s conclusion functions not merely as an aesthetic coda but as a deliberate temporal and affective space, indeed, a moment of suspension that invites reflection on what has just been

heard (Wert, 2017). In this sense, the post-lyrical composition operates as an afterthought within the work itself, transforming silence and sound into a site of contemplation through which the song's critical and emotional resonance continues to unfold. Both Lamar and the listener are left without the transcription of Pac's response; a representation, it seems, of what is left missing or ignored (Rodman, 2006). Left with the Jazz outro, we experience a space from which the lack of any Symbolic transcription bears a relation to "the empty place of the Real" (Žižek, 2008, p. 195). Here, there is no attempt to give meaning to the past nor is the past afforded any direction or cause towards progress. In effect, it seems as if the lack of resolution at the end of the interview serves only to draw attention to Pac's previous responses. Much like the analytic session, Pac's position of "learned ignorance" avers the lack of any guarantee: in effect, Pac's posthumous presence in the song is one that embodies a confrontation with lack. It is from this position that Pac's silence introduces an absence as well as the lack of any solution or experience that could answer Lamar's question. Instead, the only answer that can be given to this "empty place of the Real" is the subject itself: "we can inscribe, encircle the void place of the subject through the failure of his symbolization, because the subject is nothing but the failure of the process of his symbolic representation" (Žižek, 2008, p. 195). In this regard, Pac's silence, compounded by the "empty place" that the song's outro provides, "succeeds" through its very failure to offer any "symbolic representation" (i.e., a final answer to Lamar's question), leaving only a space for the subject.

Moreover, Pac's silence avers the gap that belies any act of remembrance. The task here is not to avail such forms of remembrance in narratives of progress and overcoming. This can serve just as much to forget and ignore the very systems that result in such acts of remembrance being required (Goldstein, 2015). Referring to the murder of George Perry Floyd Jr., Gray (2022) emphasises how Floyd's death was made a "cause", indeed, an "event", for political and

national “progress”. For Gray, “Floyd’s ‘death’ matters *to the extent that it can be overcome, that it can be made into a symbol of progress*” (2022, 8), and, thus, forgotten. What we see in “Mortal Man” (2015), however, is a detour from such re-symbolisation towards the very lack which abounds one’s Symbolic inscription. There may not necessarily be an answer in confronting such lack, but there is the space through which to “think” what has been lost.

What “Mortal Man” formally emphasises, therefore, is a confrontation with lack, one underscored by Pac’s lack of reply. Indeed, it is through a sense of insecurity and incompleteness that the certainties afforded to the process of racialization become challenged. While “Mortal Man” proposes a future without answer, the doubt that Lamar registers and the lack of any answer, as evident in the answers he seeks in his discussion with Pac, provide the creative possibility of introducing both a “cut” and a relation to lack in psychosis. This opening toward doubt and incompleteness not only disrupts the certainties of racialization but also sets the stage for Lamar’s experimentation with temporality, through which a more radical engagement with the psychotic structure of race and its relation to language becomes possible. It is in experimenting with temporality that Lamar is able to develop a certain space within his lyrics and music that can allow us to confront the psychotic underpinnings of race, not from some external position of understanding or higher knowledge (an anti-racism driven by ensuring that one can be educated out of the racism they expel), but through “the energies of the Real” (Ruti, 2012, p. 1). Through a re-structuring of the psychotic’s relation to language new forms of mediation can be achieved. It is for this reason that Joyce’s writing proves invaluable to Lacan, offering the means through which Joyce was able to challenge the rigidities of the Symbolic order and the lack of mediation afforded to the psychotic (Lacan, 2018). This highlights the transformative potential of language, which resists closure and conventionality (Ruti, 2012). By unsettling fixed meanings and disturbing the stability of the symbolic order,

language can perform a creative act of renewal. In this sense, language becomes "singularizing" insofar as it refuses assimilation into established structures of meaning, allowing the vitality of the Real to animate discourse and open possibilities for invention, affect, and critical reorientation (Ruti, 2012, p. 126). The above analysis of Lamar has sought to uncover a temporal dimension to this originality, one that can challenge the rigid confines of psychosis and the fixity of our racialization.

Final Reflections

Far more than a simple construction, race functions as a psychotic structure that defines, determines, and prescribes what one is, thus, confining the human subject both psychically and socially. Therefore, while departing from conventional sociological or political accounts, the significance of this article emphasises how race functions as a psychotic structure. In particular, by foregrounding the irrational, libidinal, and fantasmatic investments that sustain racial identity, the article challenges prevailing anti-racist frameworks, which remain confined to the level of ideology or representation. Instead, the conceptual reframing, which this article affords, is one that positions race as a system of delusional certainties, which define, prescribe, and confine the human subject, both psychically and socially. Moreover, drawing from Lacan's theory of psychosis, the article identifies how we can elucidate on the paranoia, delusion, and symbolic failure that structures our racial perceptions, interactions, and violence. Turning to the hip-hop genre, specifically the work of Kendrick Lamar, as a vital site for exploring these psychic dynamics, Lamar's lyrical engagement with themes of paranoia, absence, and conspiracy are shown to destabilize the fixity of racial identity by exposing moments of doubt, rupture, and lack. Indeed, to explore race through Lacan's account of psychosis is to suggest that it remains anchored in delusional certainties, which foreclose contradiction, contingency,

and the possibility of subjective transformation. It is not merely that individuals are categorized by race, rather, race colonizes how the subject comes to know itself and others, blocking access to alternative relations to identity and difference.

On this basis, it is important to recognize that racism remains an enduring structural condition, underwritten by ongoing material, political, and psychical crisis. Historically, the afterlife of slavery, the codification of racial segregation through Jim Crow laws, and the state-sanctioned violence against Black political dissent, have all inscribed race into the symbolic and institutional order of American life. The civil rights gains of the mid-twentieth century, while significant, have not dismantled the structural conditions of racial inequality, as evidenced by the enduring racial wealth gap, disproportionate rates of incarceration, housing discrimination, and inequities in healthcare and education. Further still, while the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor (as well as others) at the hands of police have reignited a national reckoning with systemic racism, the rise of white supremacist mobilizations, encouraging the mainstreaming of conspiratorial and racialized ideologies in political discourse, point to a resurgent racial paranoia in the public sphere (Black et al., 2024). This context reveals that racism is not merely a matter of individual prejudice or policy failure, but a deeply entrenched mode of social organization sustained by affective, ideological, and libidinal investments. To confront this crisis requires not only political and institutional transformation, but a psychoanalytic reckoning with the delusional certainties and paranoid structures that anchor racial identity and disavow contradiction. By framing race as a psychotic structure, this article has thus emphasized the ethical and subjective stakes of anti-racism as a psycho-ethical project that necessitates a structural disidentification from race itself.

Consequently, if we are to be serious about challenging racism and dismantling the racial determinants that manage and structure our relations to the world, then eroding our very belief in race must remain a central tenet of anti-racism. This does not mean denying the material and historical violence that race enacts, but instead requires us to interrogate the libidinal, ideological, and fantasmatic investments that sustain our attachments to race—even as we seek to oppose it. Anti-racism, in this sense, becomes not merely a social or political intervention, but a psycho-ethical project of structural disidentification: we must determine what it is about race that we wish to overcome.

For this reason, the hip-hop genre provides a compelling site of investigation, exposing the contradictions, commodifications, and racist fantasies that underlie contemporary culture, as well as the subject. Specifically, Lamar's engagements with paranoia, delusion, and absence, most notably in the aforementioned "Mortal Man", trouble the fixity of racial identity by introducing moments of doubt and subjective rupture. In doing so, Lamar's music not only reflects the psychotic logic of race but also gestures toward its unravelling. It is precisely here, within the structure of psychosis, that the registering of doubt and the capacity to know offer a critical praxis. In a structure that prescribes fixity and totality, doubt becomes radical. It introduces the possibility of lack: the constitutive absence at the heart of identity that race disavows (George, 2016). To acknowledge and explore the psychosis of race is therefore to allow this lack to be felt, to be registered, and, crucially, to be worked through. From this recognition, an ethical praxis can emerge: one that does not seek to manage race fairly, but which confronts and undoes the delusional certainties on which it relies.

Notes

[1] In what follows, I deliberately capitalise my references to the "racial Other" in order to draw a specific link between Lacanian psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory. Specifically, by capitalizing the Other, I draw attention to the structural, symbolic, and ideological mechanisms that produce racial difference. Where, for Lacan, the capitalised big Other refers to some authority, or external Other, to whom we unconsciously appeal to, I underwrite how, in psychosis, this relation to the Other is re-adapted to describe an "Other" who is conceived as outside, or different from, the normative (and, thus, oneself). This emphasizes a structured process of alterity, where identity is not simply produced through opposition and exclusion, but where both subject and the Other are systematically positioned within regimes of representation, language, and power.

[2] Unlike clinical paranoia, which may be detached from reality, counter-hegemonic Black paranoia is rooted in lived experiences of racial marginalization, state violence, and exclusion.

[3] As the film progresses, Rod's apprehensions grow when Chris describes the strange behaviour of the family's Black housekeeper and groundskeeper. This only escalates when Chris goes missing, prompting Rod to investigate. He pieces together clues, theorizing (correctly, though exaggeratedly) that a sinister plot is at play involving the abduction of Black people. His fears, initially dismissed as conspiracy theories, prove justified when it is revealed that Rose's family perform brain transplants to place white consciousness into Black bodies.

[4] Delusions work to remedy the failure of the paternal metaphor, imposing a structure of meaning upon the lack in the Other.

[5] The "reality" of such fantasy is not lost on McGowan (2022), but it is the "demands" levelled by an audience that remain readily open to the "graphic enactment of prohibited enjoyment" that maintains the racist fantasy (p. 170). Here, "The toll that it takes on the artists themselves—many are gunned down at an incredibly young age—bespeaks the role of the racist fantasy in doling out life and death" (McGowan, 2022, p. 170).

[6] It is important to note that this article proceeds from within a humanities and critical theory framework rather than from a formalized methodological design. Its mode of inquiry is, therefore, theoretical and interpretive, engaging Lacanian psychoanalysis as a conceptual lens through which to reframe understandings of race, racism, and racialization. For this reason, the following analysis of Kendrick Lamar's music is not presented as empirical data but as a site of theoretical elaboration and cultural interpretation. This approach aligns with established practices in psychoanalytic and cultural studies.

[7] Incidentally, Lamar's "Alright" (*To Pimp a Butterfly*, 2015) has become an important protest song for the Black Lives Matter movement.

[8] The key to Lacan's account is not to mistake this not-knowing for a celebration of obvious stupidity—one grounded in a kind of laissez-faire futility that indulges in banal absurdity—but rather to understand ignorance as a precondition for the fundamental negation that not-knowing entails.

References

Andrews, K. (2023). *The Psychosis of Whiteness*. Penguin.

Black, J. (2019). Conviviality and Parallax in David Olusoga's Black and British: A Forgotten History. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 22*(5-6), 979—996.

Black, J. (2020). On Reflexive Racism: Disavowal, Deferment and the Lacanian Subject. *Diacritics, 48*(4), 76—101.

Black, J. (2021). Race, Racism and Political Correctness in Comedy – A Psychoanalytic Exploration. Routledge.
Black, J. (2023). The Psychosis of Race: A Lacanian Approach to Racism and Racialization. Routledge.
Black, J., Fletcher, T., Doidge, M., Kearns, C., Kilvington, D., Liston, K., Lynn, T., Rosati, P., and Sinclair G. (2024). 'Let the tournament for the Woke begin!': Euro 2020 and the Reproduction of Cultural Marxist Conspiracies in Online Criticisms of the 'Take the Knee' Protest. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 47*(10), 2036—2059.
Braunstein, N. (2015). You Cannot Choose To Go Crazy. In P. Gherovici & M. Steinkoler (Eds.), *Lacan on Madness: Madness, Yes You Can't* (pp. 85—98). Routledge.
Cooke, S. (2021). *Hip-Hop Architecture*. Bloomsbury.
Floyd-Thomas, J.M. (2020). The Good, the m.A.A.d, and the Holy: Kendrick Lamar's Meditations on Sin and Moral Agency in the Post-Gangsta Era. In C.M. Driscoll, A.B. Pinn, & M.R. Miller (Eds.), *Kendrick Lamar and the Making of Black Meaning* (pp. 69—98). Routledge.
Freud, S. (1981). The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique, and Other Works. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII, 1911–1913* (J. Strachey, Ed.). The Hogarth Press.
Friedlander, J. (2022). In Medium Race: Traversing the Fantasy of Post-Race Discourse. In S. George & D. Hook (Eds.), *Lacan and Race: Racism, Identity, and Psychoanalytic Theory* (pp. 105—120). Routledge.
George, S. (2016). *Trauma and Race: A Lacanian Study of African American Racial Identity*. Baylor University Press.
Gilroy, P. (2000). *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
Gilroy, P. (2004). *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* Routledge.
Goldstein, E. (2015). Performing Redemption: Metzian Theology in the Art of Kendrick Lamar. *Elements*, *11*(2), 72–81.
Gray, B.M. (2022). Now it is always now. *Political Theology*. doi:10.1080/1462317X.2022.2093693.
Hills, D.D. (2022). 'We gon' be alright': Kendrick Lamar and the theology of affirmation. In E. Gault & T. Harris (Eds.), *Beyond Christian Hip Hop: A Move Towards Christians and Hip Hop* (pp. 228—248). Routledge.
Hook, D. (2018). Racism and jouissance: evaluating the 'racism as (the theft of) enjoyment' hypothesis. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*, *23*, 244—266.
Jameson, F. (1992). *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System*. Indiana University Press.
Jarvis, M. (2019). Anger translator: Jordan Peele's Get Out. *Science Fiction Film and Television*, *11*(1), 97–109.
Johnson, C.G. (2023). *After Black Lives Matter*. Verso.
Key, A.E. (2020). Damnation, Identity, and Truth: Vocabularies of Suffering in Kendrick Lamar's DAMN. In C.M. Driscoll, A.B. Pinn, & M.R. Miller (Eds.), *Kendrick Lamar and the Making of Black Meaning* (pp. 300—320). Routledge.
Lacan, J. (2006). On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis. In *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English* (B. Fink, H. Fink, & R. Grigg, Trans.). (pp. 445—488). W. W. Norton & Company. (Original work published 1966).
Lacan, J. (2004). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (J-A. Miller, Ed. & A. Sheridan, Trans.). Karnac. (Original work published 1973).

Lacan, J. (1991). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I, 1953–1954: Freud's Papers on Technique* (J-A. Miller, Ed. & J. Forrester, Trans.). W.W. Norton & Company. (Original work published 1975).
Lacan, J. (1997a). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III, 1955–56: The Psychoses* (J-A. Miller, Ed.). Routledge. (Original work published 1981).
Lacan, J. (1997b). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII, 1959–1960: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (J-A. Miller, Ed. & D. Porter, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Company. (Original work published 1986).
Lacan, J. (2018). *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII: The Sinthome* (J-A. Miller, Ed.). Polity. (Original work published 2005).
Leader, D. (2012). *What is Madness?* Penguin.
Love, B.L. (2016). Good Kids, Mad Cities: Kendrick Lamar and Finding Inner Resistance in Response to Ferguson, USA. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, *16*(3), 320—323.
McGowan, T. (2007). *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*. State University of New York Press.
McGowan, T. (2013). *Enjoying What We Don't Have: The Political Project of Psychoanalysis*. University of Nebraska Press.
McGowan, T. (2022). *The Racist Fantasy: Unconscious Roots of Hatred*. Bloomsbury.
Miller, M.R. (2020). Can Dead Homies Speak? The Spirit and Flesh of Black Meaning. In C.M. Driscoll, A.B. Pinn, & M.R. Miller (Eds.), *Kendrick Lamar and the Making of Black Meaning* (pp. 159—174). Routledge.
Morris, D.Z. (2013). The Sakura of Madness: Japan's nationalist Hip Hop and the Parallax of Globalized Identity Politics. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *6*(3), 459—480.
Rahmat, A.F. (2025). Straight Outta the Symptom: Hip-Hop as a Peripheral Psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41282- 024-00486-w.
Rodman, G.B. (2006). Race… and Other Four Letter Words: Eminem and the Cultural Politics of Authenticity. *Popular Communication*, *4*(2), 95—121.
Ruti, M. (2012). *The Singularity of Being: Lacan and the Immortal Within*. Fordham University Press.
Seshadri-Crooks, K. (2000). *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*. Routledge.
Small, A. (2025, February 16). *'That's Some White People Shit'*. *The Michigan Daily*. https://www.michigandaily.com/michigan-in-color/thats-some-whitepeople-shit/
Vanheule, S. (2011). *The Subject of Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective*. Palgrave Macmillan.
Weaver, S. (2011). Liquid Racism and the Ambiguity of Ali G. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, *14*(3),249—264.
Wert, A. (2017). Tensions and Ambiguity: Paul Tillich and Kendrick Lamar on Courage and Faith. *Toronto Journal of Theology*, *33*(1), 113—121.
Winters, J. (2020). Beyond Flight and Containment: Kendrick Lamar, Black Study, and an Ethics of the Wound. In C.M. Driscoll, A.B. Pinn, & M.R. Miller (Eds.), *Kendrick Lamar and the Making of Black Meaning* (pp. 212—228). Routledge.
Žižek, S. (2008). *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Verso.