**On Intersectionality and Cultural Appropriation: The Case of Postmillennial Black Hipness**

**Abstract**

Feminist, critical race, and postcolonial theories have established that social identities such as race and gender are mutually constitutive—i.e., that they “intersect.” I argue that “cultural appropriation” is never merelythe appropriation of culture, but also of gender, sexuality, class, etc. For example, “white hipness” is the appropriation of stereotypical black masculinity by white males. Looking at recent videos from black male hip-hop artists, I develop an account of “postmillennial black hipness.” The inverse of white hipness, this practice involves the appropriation, by black men, of stereotypical white gay masculinity and/or non-American, non-white femininity. I also argue that Shephard Fairey’s recent images of (mainly militant) non-Western women of color can be read as a new form of white hipness that revises the traditional logic in two ways: (1) by appropriating non-white femininity rather than masculinity, and (2) by adopting the practice of postmillennial black hipness itself.

**Introduction**

Power is a focal point for many—if not most—contemporary discussions of cultural appropriation. We have an established body of literature that examines scenarios wherein privileged individuals or imperial societies adopt and incorporate elements of subaltern cultures: white musicians have a centuries-long relationship of “love and theft” with Afrodiasporic musics, just as mainstream dance music continually draws inspiration from the gay club scene.[[1]](#endnote-1) There is now a growing body of literature that focuses on the ways that subaltern subjects work with and against dominant cultural forms, norms, and discourses. The best works of this type do not isolate cultural appropriation from other power relations, but posit “culture” as intersecting with gender, sexuality, class, and race (among other markers of social identity).[[2]](#endnote-2) In other words, “cultural appropriation” is never *merely* the appropriation of culture, but also of gender, sexuality, class, and the like.

This paper contributes to this latter body of literature. Through a reading of contemporary mainstream hip-hop (primarily the work of Kanye West), I develop an intersectional account of black male rappers’ appropriation of white and (white) gay cultures. I call this form racial, sexual, and gender appropriation “postmillennial black hipness.”[[3]](#endnote-3) Postmillenial black hipness is a reworking of the more established appropriative practices of aesthetic receptivity and white hipness (itself an appropriation of mid-century black hipness), so I will briefly review these discourses before developing a detailed account of postmillennial black hipness. Though postmillennial black hipness inverts the racial logic and politics of these source practices, it does not, in theory or as practiced, tend to rework their sexual politics: what remains constant through all these variations is the privileging of heteromasculinity. Finally, I examine two instances in which postmillennial black hipness is itself re-appropriated. While Shepherd Fairey’s recent works featuring images of militant non-Western women of color can be read as a white appropriation of postmillennial black hipness (in the same way that white hipness is an appropriation of mid-century black hipness), Janell Monae (an African-American female musician) appropriates Fairey’s “militant non-Western woman of color” aesthetic in a way that, unlike Fairey’s or West’s deployments of hipness (which merely reaffirm it or instantiate it in a new way), actually *critiques* its logic and its politics.

1. **Appropriation, Identity, Intersectionality**

First, though, I need to identify and argue for two assumptions that set the stage for the analysis below: (1) that (at least in the West) social identities are the object or content of all appropriation, even when the focus of the appropriation is an object or a style, and (2) that social identities are intersectional. Regarding (1): In my work, both here and in other venues, I address the appropriation of identities and identity markers—for example, white hipsters appropriate racially- and class-marked identities when they wear “native”-themed clothes or trucker hats. I think there is a strong case to be made that social identity is the content or object of *all* appropriation, cultural or otherwise. Marx argues that in a commodity economy, social relations are transacted through and in terms of relations among exchangeable objects (i.e., commodities)—this is what he terms “commodity fetishism.”[[4]](#endnote-4) These sorts of fetishistic interactions happen all the time: people bond or argue based on their allegiances to professional sports franchises, clothing brands, or musicians. These objects serve as vehicles for the performance of various aspects of one’s social identity (this is more or less Dick Hebdige’s point about style).[[5]](#endnote-5) In this sense, then, commodities have not only a monetary “exchange value,” but also a social “exchange value.” Separate from their “use value” (i.e., material function)[[6]](#endnote-6), cultural artifacts and practices are valued for the social work that they accomplish—they are, in Marx’s terms, “a social hieroglyphic” (Marx, 322). So, for example, it is not uncommon for Westerners to get gibberish Kanji tattoos; if the Kanji was being chosen for its use value—communication—and not its “social exchange value”—various stereotypes about Asians, Asian culture, or an attempt to dis-identify with mainstream Western culture—it is likely that more care and attention would be given to the tattoos’ grammar and syntax. What gets appropriated, then, is not so much the use value of an artifact or a practice, but its social exchange value—i.e., the social identities it symbolizes.

Next, regarding (2): It is widely accepted in contemporary feminist theory that social identities are “intersectional,” i.e., that they have “multiple grounds” (Crenshaw, 328).[[7]](#endnote-7) Race, gender, class, sexuality, and so on are neither separable nor self-sufficient. They are, rather, mutually constitutive: one’s gender identity conditions and is conditioned by one’s racial identity, just as they are both dependent upon one’s class, sexuality, bodily ability, and other social identities. Thus, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw argues that a robust understanding of misogyny and racism “cannot be captured wholly by looking separately at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences” (Crenshaw, 358). A rigorous and complete account of patriarchy attends to white privilege, heteronormativity, Eurocentrism, capitalism, ableism, and so on. Similarly, gender, sexuality, class consciousness, and other identity categories will be key components in any solid analysis of cultural appropriation.

In what follows, I offer a genealogy of a particular type of hipness that that traces the intersecting identities it subjects to appropriation and dis-identification. To begin, I argue that hipness is a twentieth-century revision of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notions of aesthetic receptivity.

1. **Aesthetic Receptivity and White Hipness**

Because this is a topic that I have discussed extensively in other venues, I will keep this summary brief and narrowly focused.[[8]](#endnote-8) Traditional accounts of both aesthetic receptivity and white hipness focus on white, hetero-male subjects’ appropriation of femininity and blackness as means to achieve heightened creativity and affectivity. They are both practices wherein the white heteromasculine subject’s ability to master the perceived threats posed by femininity and blackness (e.g., passivity, irrationality) is offered as evidence of his superiority over not only women and blacks, but, more importantly, *over other white hetero men*. In both aesthetic receptivity and white hipness, the normatively white hetero-masculine subjects feels alienated, *by his white heteromasculinity* (its rationality, enlightenment, self-mastery, etc.), from bodily and aesthetic affect. As a remedy for this alienation, he appropriates *stereotypical* features of feminized, queer, working-class, and racially subaltern identities, e.g., intuitiveness, closeness to nature, expressivity, authenticity, anti-establishment dissent, etc. Unlike women, queers, the working-class, and non-whites, the white heteromasculine subject is thought to possess the rationality, strength, enlightenment, (i.e., the stereotypical attributes of white heteromasculinity) required to discipline and, indeed, sublimate the very qualities that, when they appear in non-white, non-heteromasculine bodies, are cited as evidence of these subaltern subjects’ inferiority. In this way, the Kantian spectator can experience the sublimity of Alpine peaks; he uses his reason to keep his fear in check. In sum, aesthetic receptivity and white hipness both appropriate non-white, non-heteromasculine identities as means of dis-identifying with mainstream white patriarchy. Moreover, this dis-identification with mainstream white heteromasculinity does not de-center whiteness, heteronormativity, or masculinity; it is meant to refocus privilege on an increasingly elite group.

Aesthetic receptivity and white hipness follow a common logic: to appropriate devalued masculinities and a near infinite variety of femininities in order to dis-identify with mainstream norms and establish one’s elite status among already-privileged groups. In “postmillennial black hipness,” the variables in the equation are changed, but the general structure remains the same. In the next section, I discuss Kanye West’s attempts to dis-identify with stereotypical urban black masculinity and prove his superiority over other rappers by appropriating (often white) gay masculinities and non-American, non-white femininities.

1. **Postmillenial Black Hipness**

The inverse of white hipness, postmillennial black hipness is an identification with stereotypical whiteness (and often “gayness” or femininity) whereby one adopts and re-values the very thing that supposedly inhibits whites’ access to aesthetic receptivity: the body alienated, by technology, from its capacities for expressivity and heterosexual desire. It is a racially progressive, technologically avant-garde, yet reactionarily patriarchial reworking of aesthetic receptivity and white hipness. For example, while Kanye West’s recent work may invert white hipness’s racial logic, he continues to privilege masculinity and instrumentalize both femininity and living women. Thus, while postmillennial black hipness may appear to be more progressive than these latter discourses, all, in the end, instrumentalize and exclude women/femininity as means to reinforce the “propriety” of certain versions of masculinity.

In this section, I define postmillennial black hipness through an examination of West’s appropriation of white male hipness, white femininity, and white bourgeois gay identity. In the second part, I closely read the video for his 2007 track “Stronger” to argue that while postmillennial black hipness may invert the racial politics of traditional discourses of gendered heteronormative cultural appropriation, it continues to privilege heteromasculinity.

1. *“Swagger like Mick Jagger”*

In his most recent album *808s and Heartbreak*, and his ongoing debate with Jay-Z over the relative masculinity of “skinny jeans,” AutoTune, and commercial success, Kanye West has deployed various identifications with normative white heteromasculinity and stereotypical gay masculinity as a way of dis-identifying with the urban black masculinity that rappers usually perform (the very thing that white hipness/receptivity seeks to appropriate). As in white hipness, where the initial dis-identification with whiteness is intended as proof of one’s superiority over other whites, West’s attempts to dis-identify with “ghetto” black masculinity is part of his attempt to prove his superiority over all other (black, male) rappers.

Whereas white hipness is a response to anxieties over technologically-mediated passivization and the consequent tenuousness of hetero-masculine gender identity, West’s black hipness identifies with precisely these things in order to dis-identify with supposedly all-too-“real” (i.e., underclass, ghettocentric, digitally divided) and hypersexual black masculinity.[[9]](#endnote-9) First, West’s fascination with electronic music reached new heights in 2008’s *808s and Heartbreak*, an album that is as much a tribute to the Roland TR 808 synthesizer as it is to his deceased mother. Significantly, West does not rap (much) on this album; his vocal delivery is primarily AutoTuned and otherwise digitally effected singing. Indeed, West cites not rappers as a primary inspiration for his album, but Gary Numan, the British new-wave performer of such songs as “Are ‘Friends’ Electric?”[[10]](#endnote-10) In addition to abandoning the “rap” aesthetic in favor of white/European minimalist electronic music, West’s dis-identification with stereotypical “urban” or “hip-hop” black masculinity has begun to take the form of explicit identifications with white European males.

In his appearance on TI’s 2008 track “Swagger Like Us,”[[11]](#endnote-11) West positively compares himself to Christopher Columbus and Mick Jagger – two white European males whose “fame” notoriously comes at the expense of non-whites.[[12]](#endnote-12) First, in reference to being the first rapper on the track, West claims “I’m Christopher Columbus/Y’all just da pilgrims”; later, he states, “My swagger is Mick Jagger”. West’s white identifications signify innovation and conquest: Columbus “discovered” the Americas, and Jagger’s band initiated the “Second British Invasion”. In appropriating Mick Jagger’s “swagger,” West both references and inverts the traditional logic of white hipness: the Rolling Stones score their first hit single with a song they stole from Bobby Womack, and Jagger’s “swagger” is notoriously modeled on black masculine embodiment. West dis-identifies with stereotypical black masculinity by identifying with a white British man whose musical and corporeal stylings are themselves modeled on stereotypes about black men.[[13]](#endnote-13)

West appropriates not only white heteromasculinity, but also a very stereotypical white gay masculinity. Couture fashion and high-concept design are the means by which West enacts an identification with bourgeois gay identity. While super-baggy jeans are a staple of hip-hop style, West tends to wear tight-fitting pants, which at that time were trendy among black and white hipsters and fashionistas. In an interview promoting *808s*, West’s failure to look like a rapper is tied to his revaluation of “gay” appearance.[[14]](#endnote-14) While the article (and West) seem at pains to assert West’s heterosexuality,[[15]](#endnote-15) West nevertheless espouses a (somewhat ambivalent) thesis on his revaluation of the term “gay”:

‘I like to embody titles, y’know, or words that have negative connotations, and explain why that’s good. Take the word gay – like, in hip-hop, that’s a negative thing, right? But in the past two three years, all the gay people I’ve encountered have been, like, really, really, extremely dope. Y’know, I haven’t like, gone to a gay bar, nor do I ever plan to. But where I would talk to a gay person – the conversation would be mostly around, like, art or design – it’d be really dope. From a design standpoint, kids’ll say, “Dude, those pants are gay.” But if it’s, like, good, good, good fashion-level, design-level stuff, where it’s on a higher level than the average commercial design stuff, it’s, like, gay people that do that. I think that should be said as a compliment. Like, “Dude, that’s so good it’s almost…gay”’ (West, cited in Bastian).

Simultaneously playing on stereotypes about gay males’ ingenuity in art and design and emphatically denying his own proclivity for any other part of gay culture or gay identity, West (thinks he) is revaluing the term “gay”.[[16]](#endnote-16) The “Louis Vuitton Don” expresses his musical innovation and cultural impact by appropriating the sexuality of Louis Vuitton’s head designer, Marc Jacobs.[[17]](#endnote-17) West appropriates gay identity in order to demonstrate his superiority over other black male rappers: his product is more “high-end” and “culturally impacting”.[[18]](#endnote-18)

This “cultural impact” is emphasized in the LMFAO remix of *808*’s “Paranoid,”[[19]](#endnote-19) in which West’s “cultural impact” is cited as evidence against those who would question his sexuality and his musical choices. Because the first verse concludes with the claim “don’t blame it on the AutoTune,” the track is likely a response to Jay-Z’s “Death of AutoTune”.[[20]](#endnote-20) I want to briefly discuss the Jay-Z track because it contextualizes West’s claims about technology, commercial success, and social identity.

DOA’s lyrics are structured by a hierarchial gender binary that opposes devalued feminized phenomena (AutoTune, melody, tight pants) to desirable masculinized ones (violence, male anatomy, "hardness" as bodily comportment and "hardness" as in un-melodic difficult listening). Arguing somewhat by analogy, Jay-Z claims that AutoTune is bad because it is feminine—the unstated assumption being, of course, that femininity is bad. His aesthetic claims about AutoTune rely on patriarchial gender norms, offering them as supposedly sufficient evidence of his aesthetic claims’ validity. This logic is used to argue against the value of both AutoTune, and mainstream success. First, Jay-Z characterizes users of AutoTune as both dressing and sounding like women. They do so because they lack balls (thus, no need to tuck, and no deep voice). In a not-too-thinly veiled dig at West, Jay states: "You boys jeans too tight, your colors too bright, your voice too light". This line calls on Jay's opening line in "Swagger Like Us," where he also contrasts himself to a feminized (indeed, gonad-less), tight-jeans wearing Kanye: unlike Kanye, Jay "can't wear skinny jeans 'cause my knots don't fit". The use of Autotune is evidence of, as Jay argues, "your lack of aggression/Pull your skirt back down/ grow a set, man". Jay equates Autotune with the lack of "balls" in both the literal and metaphorical sense. To use Autotune is to be soft, easy, light, and trendy; it is the opposite of masculine aggression, toughness, difficulty, virtuosity, and expertise. Similarly, Jay feminizes commercially successful pop music by opposing it to "hard" masculine/macho corporeal styles. His new track "ain't a number one record/It's practically assault with a deadly weapon". So we can infer from this claim that chart-topping popular music is "easy" in a number of senses: easy to digest, easy to listen to, easy to make, etc. As such, these number one records aren't properly masculine - they need to "grow a set" and become a little more cantankerous and more difficult to make and digest. This valuing of difficulty informs Jay's stated rejection of melody. Jay claims that "My raps don't have melodies" (even though the soprano sax in the background is melodic, as is the guitar riff, and the hook from Steam/Bananarama's "Na Na Hey Hey").[[21]](#endnote-21) So, having catchy hooks (i.e., melodies) is feminized (b/c it's popular, easy to listen to, not tough or violent) in the same way that the users of Autotune are feminized -- they lack literal and metaphoric "balls".

The "Paranoid" remix takes up DOA's equation of "skinny jeans" and commercial success, and argues as follows:

They said that drum machines ain't got no soul

They said rap was a fad, but it surpassed rock ‘n roll

Yeah my jeans is tight, and my hos is white

and they play my song in the club every night...

West and LMFAO articulate a masculinity that views technology as neither alienating (soulless) nor feminizing (tight jeans do not prevent one from snagging what might - albeit in a totally racist way - be seen as the most desirable women), but as a source of power and success…mainly over other rappers. Technology—specifically AutoTune, but also Roland's lineup of synthesizers—is nothing to be "paranoid" about. It is as though West poses the refrain's question "Why are you so paranoid?" directly to Jay-Z: Why are you so paranoid about AutoTune, anyway? West would like us to know that he is Mr. Mainstream And Ubiquitous.[[22]](#endnote-22) While DOA decries market success as a symptom of feminized inauthenticity, West dominates the marketplace, and he wants us to know it. As any "necktie" technocrat knows, computers and market share/appeal are quite compatible with heteromasculinity and even machismo. In addition to his realignment of technology and commodification with masculinity, West also plays around with and attempts to disarm other traditionally “hip” (what one might even call “rockist”) attitudes Jay-Z espouses in DOA.[[23]](#endnote-23) On the one hand, the claim "drum machines ain't got no soul" could be a version of the standard and clichéd notion that the use of synthesizers indicates (a) an inability to play 'real' instruments and/or (b) lack of "real" emotional or intellectual depth. On the other, and perhaps more interesting, hand, the claim could be positing that drum machines aren't "black," or at least not part of the African-American musical tradition. This seems like a really odd claim to make, given the role of the 808 in the origin of hip-hop, and the 303 and the 909 in house and techno (which were also invented by black men). Although his music might not sound like stereotypically "black" music, just as his black masculinity might not fit the gangsta-thug “warlord” image all too common in mainstream hip hop, West represents a newer, decidedly middle-class black masculinity who fetishizes a different category of commodities as a means to articulate this identity. I have hinted at the “necktie vs. warlord” schema Cynthia Enloe uses to analyze the role of competing masculinities in U.S.-occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, and I would follow Enloe further and ask “Where are the women here?”[[24]](#endnote-24) Postmillennial black hipness may offer new visions of black masculinity, but, in the end, it’s all about masculinity. While “Paranoid’s” misogyny is not as direct or vehement as “DOA’s,” women and femininity appear in West’s track as something appropriated by or accessorizing West’s masculinity. Moreover, the centering of hetero-masculinity in postmillennial black hipness not only proceeds, in West’s case, through a circuitous homophobia veiled as homophilia, it is ultimately detrimental to the work of black female artists, because it could prevent their work from being seen as genuinely avant-garde.[[25]](#endnote-25) I discuss this implication below, primarily in the section on Janelle Monae.

West uses the same logic as white hipness, but the contents of its investments are different: white hipness invests stereotypical hetero-black masculinity as a cure to anxieties over inadequately masculine whiteness, while postmillennial black hipness invests stereotypical gay white masculinity as a cure to various anxieties about ghetto hetero black masculinity (i.e., its status as a white construct, its general inaccuracy, its commercial exploitation, its low socioeconomic status, etc.). Insofar as postmillennial black hipness remains obsessed with hetero masculinity, artistic virtuosity/virility, and relies on stereotypes about marginalized groups (i.e., gays), it “flips” the script of white hipness without ever questioning the appropriateness or implications of the script. The terms may be different, but the structure of hipness (and all its problems) remains constant.

1. *“Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger,” or, “Where are the Women?”*

In the discourse of aesthetic receptivity and hipness, black masculinity and music is seen as a means to resist “standardization, mechanization, automation, enervation, inhibition, radiation! Trad rock’s drive comes from repelling such vampiric processes of capital” (Eshun 06[086]). White bourgeois patriarchy tries to resist “automation” because it refuses the marginalized, commodified, objectified status occupied by women, non-whites, and the working classes.[[26]](#endnote-26) The video for West’s Daft-Punk sampling “Stronger” appropriates the “automation” attributed to white European technocratic masculinity as a means to dis-identify with precisely the “authenticity” stereotypically attributed to black masculinity and music.

The song is based on a looped sample of the vocoded refrain from French house artist Daft Punk’s “Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger,” and West’s vocals begin with a nod to Nietzsche:. “Tha-tha-tha-that that don’t kill me, can only make me stronger.” In the video, what nearly kills West’s character is white European capitalist technocracy, represented by Daft Punk themselves, dressed, as always, in their robot costumes. We first see West laid out on a gigantic medical machine (like an MRI on steroids) run by the robots. Scanning and/or operating on him, Daft Punk transform West’s character into some sort of mutant with superhuman powers.[[27]](#endnote-27) In the course of the video, West escapes his captors, is chased by police in riot gear and biohazard suits, causes an explosion, and radiates or glows with some kind of superhero energy. To the extent that technology is, in this video, dehumanizing, it is pointedly *not* disempowering; even if West’s character is open to abuse (by institutions, by the police state), he is, with all his superpowers, anything but vulnerable. In fact, it is precisely his cyborg identity that makes him “stronger”—than all other men, white, Asian, or black. [[28]](#endnote-28)

As the first line’s Nietzsche reference asserts, the ways in which slavery, European colonialism, and continued racism have mutated black bodies and situated black identity outside the norms of humanity have *undeniably* harmed blacks, but they have not thereby rendered them completely incapable of agency and resistance.[[29]](#endnote-29) Just as West takes Daft Punk’s song and reworks it into a bigger hit than their original, blacks have used technology (like the sampler) towards empowering and libratory ends. Since pop music’s classic colonialism was supposed to “rehabilitate” white culture from the alienating effects of technology, West’s inversion of this narrative revalues technology and “alienation” as a means of affirming black identity.

However, West’s superhuman powers come in the form of a supermasculinity: strength, rebellion, and heterosexual appeal. Indeed, the video’s portrayal of West’s flirtation with Asian women, and the song’s references to the couples Prince and Apollonia and OJ Simpson and Nicole Brown-Simpson suggest that this it is a specifically cross-racial heterosexual appeal that is at work here.[[30]](#endnote-30) Insofar as these latter two relationships are generally characterized by the man’s power over the woman, we might worry that it is precisely power *over* women that West values.[[31]](#endnote-31) In this sense, then, West’s video might be read as positing a masculinized challenge to white colonial technocratic patriarchy. So, while West is certainly inverting the racial logic of aesthetic receptivity and white hipness, his postmillennial black hipness continues to privilege (hetero) masculinity. In other words, he merely inverts gendered colonial power hierarchies along the same patriarchal axis, placing this elite form of black masculinity at the top.[[32]](#endnote-32)

It is this interest in shoring up hetero-masculinity that unites traditional European notions of aesthetic receptivity, their 20th century reworkings in the discourse of white hipness, and finally in postmillennial black hipness. It is with this in mind that I turn to Shephard Fairey’s prints of militant non-Western women of color. Identifying with non-white, non-Western femininity as a means to dis-identify with *both normative white and black masculinity*, Fairey’s work can be seen as a white appropriation of postmillennial black hipness.

1. **Muslimahs and Mujeres**

Much of the work that made Shephard Fairey famous relies up on traditional logics of white hipness. From images of professional wrestler Andre the Giant, Angela Davis, hip hop artists, and white rockers, Fairey’s work follows white hipness’s logic of class- and race-based appropriation.[[33]](#endnote-33) Here, however, I am interested in his mid-to-late 2000s works depicting radicalized non-Western women of color. In his *New York Times* review of Fairey’s 2009 show at the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, Ken Johnson describes these women as “nameless, alluring female warriors.”[[34]](#endnote-34) Stereotyped and exoticized, these women, Johnson suggests, are the products of Fairey’s orientialist imagination. In what follows, I argue that Fairey’s depiction of these radicalized non-Western women of color is not so much the product of traditional orientalism, but white appropriation of postmillennial black hipness.

So, for example, 2005’s “Revolution Woman Offset” (Image 1) and “Muslim Woman Offset” (Image 2) depict a Latina and a Muslimah, respectively, each wearing “traditional” attire and armed with a flower-topped machine gun.[[35]](#endnote-35) These women come from regions where, in Fairey’s lifetime, there have been anti-American guerrilla or “insurgent” conflicts. Similar works include “Mujer Fatal” Mural (Image 3), “Commandata” on Wood (Image 4), and “Revolutionary Woman with Brush” (Image 5). This latter piece combines the machine gun theme with a “writing” utensil (a brush), suggesting perhaps that the “brush” is mightier than the sword. Mightiest of all in Obey Industries is the spraypaint can, which is wielded by the Commandata. The peace images in each of these works (the hand in Image 3, the flower in the gun barrels in 1, 2, and 5) suggest that Fairey is ultimately more interested in graffiti bombing than IEDs. Or, perhaps, that the threat supposedly posed by this radical non-Western femininity, when in the hands of a white American man, is nothing that some paint and sandblasters can’t fix. Alternatively, putting the spray can in the Commandata’s hand could be read as an attempt to appropriate her outsider, revolutionary “cred” to revitalize or re-radicalize Fairey’s now co-opted street art practice.

This “cred” comes from her intersecting identities as female and non-White/non-Western. Identifying with femininity is more “radical” than identifying with masculinity, b/ecause it is a greater deviance from white Western patriarchy and normative masculinity. *Times* art critic Ken Johnson suggests that these images are an identification with gynocentric second-wave feminism:

Among his most compelling works are those revolving around images of beautiful, rifle- toting women and children from third world countries. Flowers in their gun barrels suggest a revolution of loving maternity over the Big Brotherly patriarchy represented in other images by the face of Andre the Giant, who usually appears above the caption ‘Obey’” (Johnson, 2009).

Johnson reads Fairey’s appropriation of femininity as a pointed attempt to dis-identify with dominant (patriarchial) society. In an interview, Fairey says he “choose[s] to use Arab women as symbols of peace and humanity because people might be able to relate to them emotionally” (Sacirbey, 2009).[[36]](#endnote-36) So, Fairey’s primary interest here is in these stereotypically feminine attributes of increased emotional availability, greater relatability, and general “niceness’ (peace and humanity). As models of or impetus for “peace and humanity,” Fairey’s images of non-Western women of color participate in the tradition Cora Kaplan identifies, in nineteenth-century English literature, of “proto-feminist writing that initially emphasized the female child’s likeness to and/or identifications with racial, hybrid, or deformed others en route to presenting her adult self as the ethical model of national subjectivity” (Kaplan, 181).[[37]](#endnote-37) According to this logic, [white] women and non-whites are moral paragons because they remain “primitive” and “unspoiled” by the (implicitly patriarchial and European) civilization that, as Freud argues, makes discontents of all its citizens.[[38]](#endnote-38) Thus, Fairey’s appropriation of non-white, non-Western femininity is an attempt to dis-identify with mainstream American culture.

Like postmillennial black hipness, Fairey finds stereotypical urban black masculinity insufficiently “radical,” and frames his critique of dominant culture in terms of gender and/or sexual minorities.[[39]](#endnote-39) As blacks and black culture become increasingly mainstreamed, identification with black masculinity and music is no longer the assertive disidentification with hegemony that it once was. Similarly, as white women have become increasingly successful and influential in mainstream politics, business, and culture, bourgeois white femininity—the traditional object of aesthetic receptivity—becomes less immediately oppositional. As the icons of white hipness—and Fairey’s work itself—become co-opted by capital and by cultural institutions, where does the white hipster turn? To identities even more marginal than African-American (hetero) masculinity and white bourgeois (hetero) femininity. Indeed, as Latin@s and “Muslims” become targets of increasingly exacerbated racism, Fairey’s identification with Latinas and Muslimahs can be seen as an attempt to dis-identify with, and prove his superiority over, the mainstream media’s and political culture’s anti-Hispanic, anti-Muslim racism.[[40]](#endnote-40) In an era where black masculinity is effectively mainstreamed in the popular media (chart-topping hip hop albums, a black president), it is no longer considered a sufficiently “radical” or “oppositional” ground for hipness. Like West, who turns to stereotypical gay identity as a means to dis-identify with hip hop black masculinity, Fairey’s newer prints appropriate ever-more-marginal identities in the race to stay ahead of co-optation. In so doing, Fairey appropriates postmillennial black hipness, creating a sort of white hipness v2.0.

But what about the women themselves? As in postmillennial black hipness, women and “femininity” have only instrumental value as intermediaries in the transaction of relationships between and among white Western and non-white, non-Western men. Reflecting on Fairey’s images, Diana from Muslima Media Watch suggests as much: “When I think of Muslim women being placed in conflict, I think of them as pawns, much like those in the game of chess, with the two players being the (male) opposing sides. They are used to symbolize culture, fuel savior campaigns from the “West” that justify invasions, and break down a country’s men” (Diana, 2010). While dudes may be boosting their street/radical cred by appropriating femininities of color, the end result is the erasure of women of color themselves. It is this elision of women of color in postmillennial black hipness and white hipness v. 2.0 that makes musician Janelle Monae’s appropriation of Fairey’s iconography so interesting. In the next section, I argue that the cover art for two of Monae’s 2010 singles is a direct critique of Fairey’s use of women of color.

1. **“Some People Talk Aboutcha/Like They Know All Aboutcha”[[41]](#endnote-41)**

The cover art for Janelle Monáe’s 2010 singles “Tightrope” (Image 7) and “Cold War” (Image 6) appropriate the aesthetic of Fairey’s images of radicalized non-Western women of color in a way that critiques rather than reinforces or reworks the logic of hipness. While Fairey presents *others/Others* in *his own* style, Monáe presents *herself* in the style of Fairey’s *works*. Monáe’s covers break with the logic of hipness because they adopt Fairey’s *aesthetic* choices, not his (or other white male hipsters’) perceived *personal* attributes or social identity. In so doing, Monáe reveals the racist and sexist assumptions behind his appropriations of exoticized, orientalized non-Western femininities of color.

Both covers share the street-art aesthetic and red, black, and white color scheme of much of Fairey’s work. Stencil- and spraypaint-like effects are used on both covers, and both appear to have been “distressed” (i.e., perceived “wear-and-tear” is built into the composition). “Cold War,” for obvious reasons, also makes use of his communist/constructivist styles (the red star, the sunburst as in “Revolutionary Woman with Brush”). Like the “Mujer Fatal” mural, the “Tightrope” single uses a background of repeated images of women. Visually, the Monae covers are quite similar to Faiery’s images of radicalized non-Western women of color. The main difference between Monáe’s covers and Fairey’s works is the power dynamics of their production and representation: Monáe’s works are a *self*-representation of an aesthetically and politically oppositional African-American woman, whereas Fairey’s pieces are the representation, by a multiply-privileged subject, of a multiply-marginalized object. In Monáe’s covers, she is *both subject and object*, while the radicalized non-Western women of color in Fairey’s works are just objects—or rather, *instruments* in *Fairey’s* self-representation. The “Cold War” cover addresses Fairey’s instrumentalization of women of color. Here, the horizontal red streak covering Monáe’s mouth suggests that the Commandata’s spray paint has put a gag on the singer. Fairey’s images of non-Western women of color silence and erase actual women of color, be they artists and/or activists. Thus, *Fairey’s supposedly “peaceful” graffiti bombing is in fact a sort of “cold war.”* The track’s lyrics suggest that, in a supposedly post-feminist and post-racial society where women and POC have “political” emancipation but lack “real, human” emancipation, the feminist, anti-racist struggle is now a cold war—i.e., a struggle fought indirectly, e.g., through coded language and/or the politics of representation. Cold wars proceed paradoxically: just as Americans and Soviets kept the peace by building stockpiles of weapons, white heteropatriarchy perpetuates misogyny, Eurocentrism, and normative whiteness by romanticizing and instrumentalizing non-Western femininities of color.

Monáe presents herself in the style of Fairey in a way that reveals his works’ silencing of women of color, and subsequent inclusion within, rather than opposition to, white heteropatriarchy. His works’ cultural capital (i.e., hipness) is the surplus value derived from the symbolic “work” performed by these images of non-Western women of color; thus, like all forms of hipness, Fairey’s appropriation of postmillennial black hipness does not break with, but participate in, hegemonic economies (of identity, of cultural value, etc.).

1. **Conclusion**

Hipness, in all its permutations, is a dis-identificaiton with mainstream indices of privilege for the purpose of establishing an even more elite echelon of privilege. In its traditional forms, hipness involves white straight men appropriating white femininities and/or black masculinities in order to demonstrate their superiority over other white men. Postmillenial black hipness inverts the traditional racial logic while maintaining the normativity of heteromasculinity; postmillennial black hipsters identify with whiteness, femininity, and/or queerness in order to dis-identify with mainstream notions of black masculinity. In appropriating postmillennial black hipness, whites identify with subcultural black masculinities in order to distinguish themselves from the white mainstream that has thoroughly co-opted traditional representations of black masculinity. What is consistent throughout all these revisions of hipness is the silencing of women and queers and the instrumentalization of femininity and queerness (or, pretty much anyone and anything that is not normatively masculine). Thus, it is particularly important for women and queer artists to address and critique the logic of hipness.

Robin James is an Assistant Professor in the Philosophy Department and Women’s and Gender Studies Program at UNC Charlotte. She blogs about pop culture and philosophy from a critical-race feminist perspective at its-her-factory.blogspot.com.

1. Revolution Woman Offset[[42]](#endnote-42): 
2. Muslim Woman Offset[[43]](#endnote-43): 
3. “Mujer Fatal” Mural:[[44]](#endnote-44)
4. “Commanda” on Wood:[[45]](#endnote-45) 
5. “Revolutionary Woman With Brush”[[46]](#endnote-46) 
6. “Cold War” cover art[[47]](#endnote-47): 
7. “Tightrope” cover art[[48]](#endnote-48): 

:

1. On white appropriations of black music, see Lott, Eric. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995. On dance music and gay culture, see Shapiro, Peter. *Turn the Beat Around*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2007. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. For an account of way working-class black women work “with and against” white/European/bourgeois/patriarchal aesthetic and political norms, see: Davis, Angela. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*. New York: Vintage, 1998. For an account of the ways queer performers of color both identify with and rework dominant cultural scripts, see Munoz, Jose Esteban. *Disidentifications*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. I call it “postmillennial” black hipness to distinguish it from the emergence of the term “hip” or “hep” among black bebop/jazz musicians in the mid twentieth century. For more on white hipness, see Monson 2005, and Author, “In but not of, of but not in: on taste, hipness, and white embodiment” in *Contemporary Aesthetics, Special Volume II, Aesthetics and Race*. Ed. Monique Roelofs, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. “A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing…because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour…There it is a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things” (Marx, 320-1). Marx, Karl. *Capital*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Hebdidge quote [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. “The utility of a thing makes it a use-value…A commodity, such as iron, corn, or adiamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use-value, something useful” (Marx, 303). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color” in *Critical Race Theory*, Ed. Crenshaw et al. New York: The New Press, 1995. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. For more on white hipness, see Monson, Ingrid. “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse,” in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 48, No. 3, Music Anthropologies and Music Histories (Autumn, 1995), pp. 396-422, and Author, “In but not of, of but not in: on taste, hipness, and white embodiment” in *Contemporary Aesthetics, Special Volume II, Aesthetics and Race*. Ed. Monique Roelofs, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. It should not be forgotten that the prominence of this stereotype about black male rappers’ masculinity is due in large part to white hipness, i.e., to whites’ over-investment, both literal and figurative, in rappers who perform this particular version of black masculinity. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Jon Caramanica, “Kanye West, Flaunting Pain Instead of Flash” in *The New York Times*, (24 November 2008): http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/25/arts/music/25kany.html [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. T.I. featuring Kanye West, Jay-Z, and Lil Wayne. “Swagger Like Us” on *Paper Trail*. 2008. http://www.artistdirect.com/nad/window/media/page/listen/0,,4759027,00.html [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. T.I. featuring Kanye West, Jay-Z, and Lil Wayne. “Swagger Like Us” on *Paper Trail*. 2008. http://www.artistdirect.com/nad/window/media/page/listen/0,,4759027,00.html [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. This circularity evinces the hegemonic construction of this image of black masculinity by whites in the first place. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. In response to the interviewer’s statement, “You look like a rapper,” West states, “Then I failed”. Michael Bastian,“The Unraveling of Kanye West” [www.men.style.com/details/features/ful?id=content\_8117](http://www.men.style.com/details/features/ful?id=content_8117), accessed February 8, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. As evidence of West’s precociousness, Bastian cites West’s claim that the first beat he produced was for “the video games I used to try to make. My game was very sexual. The main character was, like, a giant penis. It was like Mario Brothers, but the ghosts were, like, vaginas” (Bastian, quoting West). Now, if the protagonist penis is being chased by enemy vaginas, this suggests that the vaginas are something the penis-protagonist would like to avoid. The ghost-like absence or threatening presence of “vaginas” is also noted by Ann Powers in her LATimes blog, where she remarks “There's only one female backing vocal on the whole album, provided by the electronica queen Esthero; the absence of R&B guest divas and sampled giggles and squeals is notable. Throughout the album, women appear as phantasms, supervillains or voices on the phone, as hard to fathom as the feelings of the puppet boy they torment.” However, Bastian posits this vagina-fearing game as evidence of West’s heterosexuality: he makes it clear that there’s a “female presence” lingering in West’s bedroom, and Bastian closes the article with the following exchange: “I start to remind him what the main character and the point of his game were, but Kanye West is way ahead of me. ‘Oh, that happened,’ he says, flashing a smile, ‘but after the shows’”. Ann Powers, “[Kanye West examines real vs. fake, puppet vs. human on '808s and Heartbreak'](http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/music_blog/2008/11/kanye-west-exam.html)” in “Pop and Hiss” music blog hosted by the LA Times**,** 12:48 PM PT, Nov 21 2008 **<** http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/music\_blog/2008/11/kanye-west-exam.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Perhaps the “gayness” to which he is referring is also related to the “art fag”. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=art+fag>. A slang term, “art fag” tends to refer to “sensitive” creative types who are not interested in performing their normative gender roles. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Bastian notes that a note with Marc Jacobs’ phone number is prominently displayed next to the phone in West’s apartment. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Just as “gay design” is “on a higher level than the average commercial rap,” West’s “gay”-inspired music is on a higher level than average commercial rap: comparing himself to his competition, West claims that “‘Someone could be a better rapper, dance better. But culturally impacting?’” (cited in Bastian). [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Kanye West feat. LMFAO. “Paranoid” on *LVs and AutoTune 3* (mixtape)http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJ\_pjjt4wh0 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Jay-Z, “D.O.A. (Death of Autotune)” on *The Blueprint 3*. New York: Roc Nation, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EWruiIjBmo [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. In his interview with Hot97 on the day of the track’s premier, Jay equates the use of melody with the use of Autotune. Interview here: <http://www.missinfo.tv/index.php/jay-z-calls-funk-flex-and-mr-cee-to-talk-about-doa-hot97-audio/>. Accessed 8 June 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Insofar as whiteness is the ubiquitious norm in the West, this line could be heard as linked to West's identifications with whiteness in "Swagga Like Us"? [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. For more on rockism, see Sanneh, Kelefa. “The Rap Against Rockism” in *The New York Times*, October 31, 2004. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/31/arts/music/31sann.html> Accessed 25 March 2011. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Enloe, Cynthia. “Updating the Gendered Empire: Where Are the Women in Occupied Afghanistan and Iraq?” in *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, pp. 268-308. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. For example, the popular press devotes little attention to Rihanna’s and Beyoncé’s well-developed Afrofuturisms, and Janelle Monáe’s decidedly Afrofuturist manifesto “Metropolis” has yet to see release as a full-length album. However, since I have not really addressed the work of female/explicitly feminist artists at length in this paper, I have left out instances in which, as I have argued in other projects, binary gender and masculinized aesthetic norms are called into question (See James, “Robo-Diva R&B). Rihanna’s 2008 single “Disturbia”, which I do not discuss in the JPMS article, is a particularly rich site for investigating how black popular musicians critique traditional notions of aesthetic receptivity by using technology to posit themselves as de-gendered or monstrously gendered. In “Disturbia,” technology is used to positively portray female sexuality – something that neither Minelli’s film, nor West’s nor Timbaland/Timberlake/50 Cent’s songs do. Distrubia’s positive portrayal of femininity and female sexuality seems to be more the exception than the rule. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. In her essay “Women on the Market,” Luce Irigaray posits that women are, in patriarchal capitalism, commodities. See Luce Irigaray, “An Ethics of Sexual Difference” trans. Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993). [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Just as slavery and European colonialism have (re)constructed black bodies as a mutation from “genuine” humanity whose supposedly super-human physical strength and sexuality threaten white civilization. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. West clearly incorporates Daft Punk and all that they represent into his own lyrics. In the latter half of the song, the counterpoint between West’s vocals (“Don’t act like I never told ya”) and the Daft Punk sample (“Never over”) intersect on the “nevers.” For this one word, at least, West speaks as Daft Punk, literally in their “voice”: West is silent on all of the “nevers” in “Don’t act like I never told ya,” thus incorporating Daft Punk into his own delivery. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. As bell hooks said, even though American culture discounts the “black gaze,” African Americans have always, even under the most extreme conditions of domination, looked back. bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze” in *Black Looks:Race and Representation*. (Boston: South End Press, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. West, Prince, and Simpson are African-American; Apollonia is Hispanic, and Nicole Brown-Simpson was white. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Prince was Apollonia’s manager/svengali, and OJ Simpson was acquitted of, but still encourages the perception that he killed Brown-Simpson. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Even work by female artists perpetuates the patriarchal norms of the original colonial narrative. Rihanna’s “S.O.S.” samples Soft Cell’s 1981 new-wave cover of the Northern Soul song “Tainted Love”. Since Northern Soul was a British genre (called “Northern” because it was generally based out of Manchester) inspired by/aping Motown, “S.O.S” is inverting the colonial logic of a track based on the original colonial narrative. Rihanna’s version is titled “S.O.S.” because it is about the singer’s plea to be “rescued” from her overwhelming and debilitating libido: “This time please someone come rescue me/Cause you on my mind, cause me to lose it”. So, if we follow Spillers’s claim that white Euro-American patriarchy constructs posits the black body as so radically non-human that it is incapable of gender and/or sexuality, then West’s and Rihanna’s claims to sexual desire/desirability can be seen as positive reclamations of what colonization denies them. However, if this paradigm constructs black gender and sexuality as so abnormal that it cannot even be considered human, Rihanna’s claim to “unhealthy” libido only reinforces this colonial stereotype – she’s just another “Carmen”. Like “Girl Hunt’s” Carmen character, Rihanna’s sexuality is not safe in her own hands, and it is precisely the volatility of black female sexuality that renders pop music both pleasurable and dangerous…something safe only when controlled by masculinity. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. See, for example: Angela Davis stencil: <http://obeygiant.com/shows/duality-of-humanity/angela-davis-stencil> ; Public Enemy print: <http://obeygiant.com/prints/public-enemy>. Fairey even has licensed a streetwear line, “Obey,” aimed primarily at hipsters. As Diana of *Muslima Media Watch* notes, “Since Fairey’s clothing line is mainly worn by [skater boys and girls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skater), my first thought was, “How many of them would look twice at this shirt before buying it and realize here is a hijabi woman on it? Do they even care about the image, or is this just a brand loyalty thing?” Diana, “The Ladies in Red: Shephard Fairey’s Propagand-art” in Muslima Media Watch, April 29, 2010. <http://muslimahmediawatch.org/2010/04/the-ladies-in-red-shepard-faireys-propangand-art/>. Accessed 3 September 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Johnson, Ken, “Can a Rebel Stay a Rebel Without the Claws?” in *The New York Times*, Arts & Design, March 13, 2009. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Diana of Muslima Media Watch notes, “With other subjects, like the Zapatista National Liberation Army, Fairey shows men and women as foot soldiers. Conversely, almost all the prints having to do with the Israeli-Palestine conflict or the Iraq war feature only women.” (Diana, 2010). [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Sacirbey, Omar, “10 minutes with…Shephard Fairey”, <http://www.religionnews.com/index/php?/tenmuniutes/10_minutes_with_shephard_fairey/>, November 18, 2009. Accessed 1 September 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Kaplan, Cora, “ ‘A Heterogeneous Thing’: Female Childhood and the Rise of Racial Thinking in Victorial Britain.” In *Human, All Too Human*. Ed. Diana Fuss. New York: Routledge, 1996: 169-202). [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. As Rey Chow has argued, the aesthetically avant-garde re-valuation of femininity often turns on the racist and imperialist de-valuation of non-white, non-Western men and women. According to Chow, “feminization in its avant-garde form becomes racial power (155) to the extent that “whether hierarchically organized (in which case it is disparaged as mere realism and referentiality) or disavowed (in which case it should be forgotten in favor of a modern, internationalist humanism), cultural difference is there simply in order for the subjectivity—the existential survival, the attainment of individual being—of the [white, European] woman to be performed” (158). Chow, Rey, “When Whiteness Feminizes…” Some Consequences of a Supplementary Logic” in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 11.3 (199/2000): 137-168. In other words, when white women’s agency is taken seriously, people of color move into the devalued position previously occupied by white femininity. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. It is interesting that Fairey never seems to make an explicit identification with gay masculinity. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Fairey’s interview with Sacirbey suggests as much: “Some people have said, ‘Why are you putting terrorists in your work?’ which obviously is the ignoramus transitive property of equality—a Muslim did something that could be considered terrorism, so all Muslims are terrorists. That logic is so convoluted, but I think a lot of Americans have that logic. Not all, but a lot. I’ve also gotten comments from people in Lebanon and Israel, who have responded very positively” (Sacirbey, 2009). [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Monae, Janel. “Tightrope” on *Archandroid*. New York: Bad Boy Records, 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Fairey, Shephard, 2005: <http://obeygiant.com/prints/revolution-woman-offset> [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Fairey, Shephard, 2005: <http://obeygiant.com/prints/revolution-woman-offset> [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Fairey, Shephard: <http://obeygiant.com/shows/duality-of-humanity/mujer-fatal-mural> [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Fairey, Shephard: <http://obeygiant.com/shows/duality-of-humanity/commanda-on-wood-hpm-2> [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Fairey, Shephard: <http://obeygiant.com/shows/duality-of-humanity/revolutionary-woman-with-brush-2> [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. http://idolator.com/5564082/janelle-monae-cold-war-single-cover [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. http://www.badboyblog.com/item/2010/2/11/listen-now-tightrope-by-janelle-monae-featuring-big-boi-first-single-from-new-album-the-archandroid [↑](#endnote-ref-48)