”GOOD WITCHES” AND “BAD BITCHES”

INTERSECTIONAL RHETORIC OF RESISTANCE IN PRINCESS NOKIA’S 1992 DELUXE

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores intersectional rhetoric of resistance in hip-hop lyrics of Princess Nokia’s *1992 Deluxe* album. Interrogating lyrical disruptions and subversions through the critical lens of intersectionality and new rhetorical analysis, the study is further located in the cultural context of hip-hop. The analysis suggested that resistance was indeed expressed in multiple, often co-constructive manners when considered aspects of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class.

Various forms of intersectional resistances became evident in the process of the analysis. Princess Nokia challenged white middle-class morality and respectability by expressing direct rejection and further providing the audience with a subverted alternative. Nokia expressed resistance towards the notions of desirability and respectability in her gendered doings and sexual self-expression. She captivates hip-hop aesthetics as a form of subversive style, a visual expression of resistance. Ultimately, Princess Nokia expresses anticolonial resistance by raising awareness and centering the plural histories and multiplicity of experiences of the African diaspora, and indigenous people of Americas.

Nokia expressed her resistance effectively to the audience by challenging notions on ethics and morality. She further appeals to various emotions in her audience, further facilitating the reception of her messages. These strategies mirror those used by other transgressive contemporary hip-hop artists before her.

Key concepts: intersectionality, hip-hop, resistance, gender, race, class, queer

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämä pro gradu -tutkielma tarkastelee intersektionaalisen vastarinnan retoriikkaa hip-hop artisti Princess Nokian *1992 Deluxe* albumin lyriikoissa. Tutkin häiritseviä ja kumouksellisia ilmaisuja kriittisen intersektionaalisen viitekehyksen ja uuden retoriikan välineiden avulla. Tutkimus sijoittuu hip-hopin kulttuuriseen kontekstiin. Analyysi osoitti, että vastustusta ilmaistiin monipuolisesti sukupuolen, seksuaalisuuden, rodun, etnisyyden ja luokan risteymissä.

Tutkielman analyysi osoitti, että intersektionaalista vastarintaa ilmaistiin monin eri keinoin. Princess Nokia haastoi valkoisen keskiluokan käsityksiä moraalista ja kunnollisuudesta sekä suoraan torjumalla, että tarjoamalla kumouksellisia vaihtoehtoja. Nokia ilmaisi lisäksi vastustusta haluttavuuden ja kunnollisuuden normeja kohtaan sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden saralla. Hän hyödyntää hip-hop estetiikkaa kumouksellisena tyylinä ja visuaalisena vastarintana. Lopuksi, Princess Nokia ilmaisee antikolonialistista vastarintaa lisäämällä tietoisuutta ja keskittämällä alkuperäisväestöjen ja afrikkalaisten diasporan monimuotoisia kokemuksia Amerikoissa.

Nokia ilmaisee vastarintaa tehokkaasti haastamalla yleisön käsityksen moraalista ja etiikasta. Lisäksi Nokia vetoaa yleisön tunteisiin, pehmentääkseen transgressiivisten viestiensä vastaanottoa. Nämä strategiat ovat olleet suosittuja myös Nokiaa edeltäneiden rajoja rikkovien hip-hop artistien joukossa.

Avainsanat: intersektionaalisuus, hip-hop, vastarinta, sukupuoli, rotu, luokka, queer

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1 INTRODUCTION

”I'm that Black Native American, I vanquish all evil” – Princess Nokia, Brujas

Ever since its inception under unstable conditions in the South Bronx during the 1970s, hip-hop music and culture has broken down societal barriers, as it has transcended our understanding on categories such as class and race (Rose 1994, 27-31; Chang 2005, 11-12; Ogbar 2007, 3). In doing this, hip-hop has proved a central platform for marginalized black Americans to express critical thought and resistance to oppression (Collins 2000). Although not often recognized, this resistance is still present in contemporary hip-hop’s cultural products, especially in the sites of music and fashion.

Hip-hop is a highly creative cultural form with its aesthetics and expression constantly evolving (Driscoll 2009, 12-19). A prominent Black feminist bell hooks (1992, 51) argues that black popular culture forms a location from where “critical dialogues can and should emerge”. Indeed, in its political context, hip-hop ought to be viewed as a site of cultural resistance. Constructed through cultural recycling, the cultural relevance of hip-hop is inseparably linked with the history, lived experiences, and the politics of black lives in the United States. As an artistic form, it both articulates and opposes some of the most severe inequalities in the realm of the historic and contemporary United States of America. (Asante 2008, 3-4; Rabaka 2011, 19-24.) This highlights the oppositional nature of political hip-hop music, as it resists hegemonic forces by “producing alternative knowledge” (Beighey & Unnithan 2006, 135). To Wright (2012) hip-hop is beyond simply an expressive Black cultural phenomenon: it is resistance in the form of discourse.

Some feminist hip-hop scholars (e.g. Pough 2007, Rabaka 2011) have suggested that hip-hop feminism might be the most socially visible and politically polyvocal feminist movement in

contemporary society of the United States. The terrain of popular culture, dominated by hip-hop's influence, reaches a wider audience than the gender studies lectures of the universities. For its potential "to be adapted to wide range of ideas, theories and praxes", hip-hop forms platform for many people outside the academia to be exposed to feminist ideas (Rabaka 2011, 150.) Hip-hop thus forms "a set of communicative practices" in textual form, resisting "white America's racism" (Wright 2012, 518). It is thus of importance to further investigate these forms of resistance and how they are expressed by popular hip-hop artists to their global audiences.

However, mainstream hip-hop is also criticized for its heavy use of materialist, sexist, and homophobic lyrics. This contradictory spirit of hip-hop positions it both as a "dynamic force with potential for social change (Ogbar 2007, 175) and a regressive one maintaining the status quo. Historically, hip-hop has provided bottom-up critiques of dominant societal structures (McCune 2008, 298-302), but its popularization has seen it pick up oppressive and marginalizing elements (Pough 2004, 19). These elements (e.g. sexism, hypermaterialism) existing within the genre are not only visible and aggressive - but also extremely popular (Rose 2008, 114). These problematic elements have in a way become conceptually intertwined with the credibility, thus authenticity within popular hip-hop culture, which is still primarily attributed to black, traditionally masculine, heterosexual working-class identities (Ogbar 2007, 5-7).

Lauron Kehrer (2017) argues that emcees falling outside these normative identity notions are constantly defined and redefined in comparison with hip-hop's prevalent heteronormative standards. For example, the realm of mainstream hip-hop has, until recently, denied queer emcees legitimacy and viability. Queer identities have been silenced and pushed to the margins by popular homophobic and heterosexist discourses. The small number of of openly queer artists in the realm of mainstream hip-hop functions perhaps as the most evident indicator of the phenomena. Indeed, until very recently, the realm of mainstream hip-hop culture was defined by "a code of compulsory heterosexuality", where queerness and hip-hop were considered nearly contradictory (Hill 2009, 31-32, 48).

Despite this problematic streak, hip-hop has increasingly provided those falling outside the norms of gender and sexuality a forum for expression. This increase in representation partially reflects social progress and justice occurring in general. Importantly, the global reach of

contemporary hip-hop has amplified some of these previously marginalized voices and brought them to the forefront of popular culture. For example, an openly queer popstar/rapper Lil Nas X has been dominating charts, breaking numerous records worldwide in the past few years. (Chow 2019; Haas 2019). It is important to acknowledge that without the contributions of openly queer and otherwise transgressive artists before him, Lil Nas X would not be enjoying the astronomical success he does today. These artists were able to assert their individual subjectivity and further create space within hip-hop, shifting authenticity within hip-hop away from its often heterosexist, masculine standards. In this understanding, these forms of resistance within hip-hop culture have the potential to transcend normative notions of racial, sexual and class identity.

Rose (2008, 5) has argued that public critiques of hip-hop have provided “a powerful vehicle” for public discussions on race, class, and even further, the value of black culture in American society. Connected with intersectionality, discussions on hip-hop become more complex than they may first appear. The significance of intersectionality when hip-hop is discussed, often appears to be lost to many hip-hop’s critics. Discussions of intersectionality and identity are gaining more traction in contemporary hip-hop, a causality of growing body of artists actively challenge sexual, racial, and gender norms. According to Rabaka (2011), hip-hop reflects society’s general mental landscape, thus the studies examining hip-hop through an intersectional lens are of significance. They allow one to look deeper into the story of hip-hop and recenter it on the topics of class struggle, racial relations, gender, and sexual minorities in the United States. (Rabaka 2011, 19-20.)

Rabaka (ibid., 50) has urged shifting the future focus of discussions on hip-hop on the radical politics, cultural criticism and connecting critical theory to the discussion. Being “outlaw music” as Imani Perry (2004, 123-114) defines hip-hop, what would be a better forum to discuss radical (identity) politics and express cultural criticism than hip-hop.

This study considers afro-indigenous queer woman rapper Princess Nokia and her rhetoric of intersectional resistance in the lyrics of *1992 Deluxe* album. Based on the idea of unjust power distribution on identity-based categories (Collins & Bilge 2016, 1-4, 31-32), intersectionality forms a critical tool in mapping the rhetoric of resistance in contemporary hip-hop. The central questions I aim at answering with this thesis are: 1.) How is intersectional resistance expressed in the lyrics of *1992 Deluxe*? 2.) What rhetorical strategies are used to communicate this to the

audience? 3.) How can contemporary hip-hop effectively amplify and center marginalized voices? Hip-hop culture, critical intersectional lens, and (new) rhetorical analysis together work as the methodological framework through which the analysis is conducted.

The emphasis of my rhetorical reading is in the categories of gender, race, sexuality, and ethnicity. It is my belief that this album represents an important contribution to the conversation of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class as they are connected to contemporary hip-hop culture and American society. I chose to consider hip-hop lyrics, as Hill (2012, 32) points out, lyrics are the most accessible and prominent site for transmitting heteronormative and homophobic ideas to the audience. In this understanding, lyrics also operate as the most effective way of resisting these very same ideas. My approach to this study of resistance is informed by the tradition of critical intersectional feminist analysis. The study considers various intersections, specifically gender, sexuality, class, and race.

Now I shall recount the construction of this thesis. Chapter two "Hip-hop – Past, present and beyond" provides contextual background on the history of hip-hop culture, hip-hop's relation to rhetoric and resistance, as well as the previously invisible participants of the culture. Chapter three contemplates the critical framework of intersectionality in the context of this study, followed by brief definitions of the central analytical concepts of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class. I will move on to discuss the research design of the study: the research questions and aims, the method of rhetorical analysis and new rhetoric, data selection and collection, the artist Princess Nokia, the concrete steps taken and ultimately my position as the conductor of this thesis. In chapter five, I will contemplate Princess Nokia's central messages and rhetoric of intersectional resistance throughout *1992 Deluxe.* Then, I will provide in-depth reading on the key text of the album, *Brujas* as an effective form of colonial critique. Finally, in chapter seven I will contemplate on Princess Nokia's rhetoric of intersectional resistance in more detail. I will provide answers to my research questions, as well as further contemplate on Nokia's intersectional rhetoric of resistance. To conclude, I will present the central findings of the study connected with previous research.

2 HIP-HOP: PAST, PRESENT & BEYOND

In this chapter I will present some of the most prominent features of hip-hop music and culture. To understand hip-hop's influence and potential for creating social change, and further provide culturally relevant analysis of it, it is significant to consider its history and the socio-political background it rose from (Chang 2005; Rabaka 2011, 18-22). The core function of this chapter is to contextualize the topic to a) audience unfamiliar or with little knowledge on hip-hop and b) highlight the most significant conversations about hip-hop in the context of this thesis. Due to both timely and spatial restrictions, the focus lies strictly on the most relevant discussions regarding the study.

After offering a brief insight to the socio-cultural context of hip-hop music and culture's background, I will offer brief insight to discussions on hip-hop's inner conflict and apparent contradiction as a form of resistance and neoliberal cultural product. Then I will discuss hip-hop's rhetoric and more specifically, the rhetoric of authenticity significant in the culture. Then I will briefly discuss hip-hop's invisible participants: women and queer. Finally, this chapter showcases previous academic contributions on hip-hop, intersectionality, resistance, and rhetoric. Needless to say the interpretation presented is not by any means a comprehensive one.

2.1 Hip-hop's origins

At its cultural origins, hip-hop is an African American, Afro-Caribbean and Puerto Rican youth culture, that started in New York City during the 1970s. What later became known as a global cultural phenomenon, it initially sparked from the increasingly unstable conditions of the South Bronx. At the time, post-industrial New York went under significant social, cultural, and economic restructuring. Various political decisions made at the time intensified the already existing inequalities between people from different social backgrounds. For example, the "urban renewal" project, especially the creation of Cross-Bronx Expressway in late 60s and early 70s, forced many minority families to flee their homes and move to economically and socially disadvantaged neighborhoods, such as South Bronx and East Brooklyn. These areas offered affordable public housing, yet no actual possibilities to secure living for the people already in a fragile position. (Chang 2005, 11-12; Rose 1994, 27-31; Pough 2004, 3-7.)

At the time, significant budget cuts on public education, health and social services were implemented. Consequently, these decisions aggravated socio-economic despair and further reduced possibilities for social mobility (Chang 2005, 11-12; Rose 1994, 27-31; Pough 2004, 3-7.) Declined budget on public education resulted in termination of various art programs in public schools' curriculums. Hence, the youth took their creative energy outside traditional institutions, to the streets. Initially created out of nothing, hip-hop started as an alternative way of expressing creativity for the local black and brown adolescents (Pough 2004, 3-7). The alienated youth needed something to believe in, and in the beginning hip-hop was equally inspired by both the problems and delights of their daily lived experiences. (Chang 2005, 99; Rose 1994, 2.)

An oppositional youth culture, hip-hop came to existence following certain sociopolitical movements of the time, namely Black Power, Civil Rights, Puerto Rican nationalist activism and Women's Liberation movement. Various racial attacks of the time further politically mobilized and expanded many gangs and nationalist groups such as Black Panther Party, Young Lords, Nation of Islam, and Revolutionary Action Movement. (Ogbar 2007, 3-5, 38; Rabaka 2011, 167.) Chang (2014) argues that initially, hip-hop offered an alternative lifestyle for the local youth by shifting their lives from "gang-centric to party-centric", providing a vibrant cultural alternative filled with music, dance, art, language, and style.

Hip-hop culture consists of four elements: b-boy (breakdance), graffiti, DJ and emcee (Chang 2005, 11-12, 90, 107; Rose 1994, 2). Before there was hip-hop culture as we know it today, these elements co-existed in the realm of local parties. The parties provided an accessible cultural space for the local youth to get together, dance, improvise, do graffiti, and have a good time. These parties are often considered the birthplace of hip-hop culture. (Chang 2005, 67-91; Ogbar 2007, 3-5.) Growing rapidly in popularity, DJs performing at the parties began to need lyrical assistance. The lyrical DJs thus began calling themselves emcees, master of ceremonies. (Ogbar 2007, 4.) Hip-hop, or rap, music then started to spread outside of Bronx through cassette tapes (Chang 2005, 127.)

At its core, rapping can be defined as highly rhythmic way of delivering vocals that incorporates rhymes and rhythmic speech, often accompanied by rhythmic electro music (Rose 1994, 2). Sampling, beats, boasting, signifying and emphasizing one's "realness" or authenticity are some of the most central features of hip-hop music (Potter 1995, 71-73, 108-

109). Whilst rap music is the most visible, influential, and popular embodiment of hip-hop, as a culture hip-hop is much more than (Rose 1994, 2; Pough 2004, 4). From 1979 onwards, hip-hop was "discovered" by the music, fashion, and film industries. By the turn of the new millennia, it had outsold every other genre of music not just in America, but on a global scale. (Chang 2005, 131-132, Ogbar 2007, 5, 38, 105; Rabaka 2011, 23.)

2.2 Hip-hop rhetoric

Although gradually shifting, the white supremacist hegemonic discourse has for centuries marginalized non-white voices. Further, the very foundations of the Western rhetorical tradition have been manuscript by the privileged white male with access to power. (Tinajero 2020, 14). Roberto Tinajero (ibid.) emphasizes counter-hegemonic rhetoric's significance in hip-hop. Historically connected with struggle and marginalization, lyrical attempts to disrupt the cultural norms with counter-hegemonic rhetoric forms a part of hip-hop's cultural tradition. In his attempt to define the term *hip-hop rhetoric* Tinajero asserts that "rhetoricians interested in Hip Hop Rhetoric engage in the critical analysis of the rhetorical output and/or culture of Hip Hop through the lens of rhetorical studies, and vice versa. More generally, Hip Hop Rhetoric is also the rhetorical output of Hip Hop culture. The output may be in the form of lyrics (written and performed), musical beats, websites, magazines, interviews, and the visual rhetoric of music videos, dress, and even vehicular alterations." In addition to commonly acknowledged voices of hurt, pain, and hatred, Tinajero situates themes such as hope, healing, struggle, race, religion, and family among hip-hop's rhetorical tactics. Reconsideration of the normative and dominant privileged white male subject in the context of rhetorical studies, hip-hop rhetoric centralizes themes such as race, gender, power, and sexuality. Illustrating counter-hegemonic constructions of textual and visual form, it further sheds light on processes of "hegemony at work" in forms such as appropriation, consent, and dominance. (Tinajero 2020, 12-18.)

Tinajero (ibid) asserts that the common association of strong connections between misogyny, violence, and hip-hop, hip-hop rhetoric is often critically misunderstood by a large percentage of scholars of both conservative and liberal background. Further, the centrality of AAVE, frequent use of explicit expressions, and hip-hop as unconventional form of rhetorical text have marginalized hip-hop rhetoric in the field of academia. Ultimately, Tinajero concludes that

augmenting new sets of rhetoricians, rhetorical acts, experiences, and voices to the extremely traditional field of rhetoric is “both important and arduous”. (ibid., 16-17.)

2.2.1 A channel of resistance or a profitable product?

Rose (2008) argues that conversations about hip-hop have never been just about hip-hop. Especially in the context of the United States, these discussions have formed “a powerful vehicle” for expanding public discussion on race, and class. She notes that often polarized and hyperbolic, these conversations lack socio-political contextualization. The discussions generally appear oblivious about issues of sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, and gender inequality in contemporary America, issues that often become extensively reflected in hip-hop. She further points out that the rhetoric of gender, sexuality, race, and economy are highly visible, yet often in “veiled forms” in modern popular media. However, the conversations have led to the wider acknowledgement of the impact of black cultural forms in the modern society. Rose encourages considering contemporary commercial hip-hop as a critical catalyst in rethinking “the terms of cross-racial exchanges and the role of black culture in the mass-mediated world”. (Rose 2008, 4-13.)

Initially, hip-hop culture started as North American Black, Puerto Rican and Caribbean people with roots in postcolonial context began to reshape their cultural identities (Rose 1994, 33-34; Ogbar 2007, 3-5). In addition to Black nationalist tradition, many authors connect hip-hop’s roots to the long lineage of other black American artistic traditions (Rose 1994, 2, 85; Perry 2004, 10; Ogbar 2007, 8). Some of the most central of these oral and musical predecessors were The Last Poets, James Brown, Muhammed Ali and skipping rope rhymes (Chang 2005, 76-77; Ogbar 2007, 12-13). The political rhetoric of rap is often considered a form of cultural heritage of the Black Power movement, Malcolm X, and the Black Panthers (Mitchell 2001, 4). On wider historical level, the roots of hip-hop music reach all the way to the era of slavery in North America (Davis 2014, 201; Pough 2004, 6). Hip-hop music therefore forms a contemporary artistic form “in the long line of historic soundtracks” created by African Americans to express their lived experiences (Rabaka 2011, 19).

In this understanding, identity and hip-hop have a special connection. Initially established by individuals in a structurally disadvantaged position (Jeffries 2007, 2012-2013), hip-hop is in many ways a “post-Black Power articulation of black identity – and agency” (Ogbar 2007, 95).

This view is reinforced by Rose (1994, 21), who traces hip-hop's cultural logic to attempts to "negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppression within the imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity, and community". However, Ogbar (2007) argues that viewing hip-hop simply as oppositional artform inherently resisting oppression would be an oversimplification. Whilst on the other hand resisting discrimination, in many ways, it also affirms the current status quo. (Ogbar 2007, 39), evident in its heternormative, sexist, and materialist tendencies.

Loved by its fans for the expressive power, endless possibilities for creativity, creating anti-racist communities, and expressing resistance (Pough 2004, 6-8; Rose 2008, ix), hip-hop is not viewed so fondly by all. Echoing the response to jazz and rock and roll at their time, hip-hop has been pathologized and vilified as the cause for various social and cultural issues (Ogbar 2007, 176). It has been criticized for nearly everything considered (morally) wrong with contemporary popular culture, and the American society in more general. It has been deemed sexist, hyper-masculine, homophobic, violent, dangerous, one-dimensional, and destructive, among other many other "toxic" traits. During the 1980s, "socially conscious" groups like Public Enemy, encouraged people to resist racism "by any means necessary". At the time, these groups were viewed as politically radical in their apparent encouragement towards violence. (Rose 2008, 2-5, 15, 25, 34.) By the latter part of the 1990s, popular West Coast gangsta rap acts such as N.W.A popularized themes of gang violence, drugs, and misogyny in their lyrical content (Price 2006, 58-59).

To Ogbar (2007, 56) with two different styles, the aforementioned groups were protesting against the current existing political and cultural conditions, presenting as "models for new, urban youthful representation of blackness". In this understanding, they served as counter-hegemonic acts. At the time, images of poor working-class black American begun to emerge in the realm of global popular culture, seemingly glamorizing poverty, drugs, violence, and explicit sexual imagery. This provided unforeseen visibility for the black American youth. The visible expressions of violence and resistance in the realm of popular culture provoked fear in the minds of many (white) American consumers. (Hall 2011; Mitchell 2014, 72) Peaking in popularity in the early 2000s, this substyle has since been the source of highest market status and numbers of sales in hip-hop and popular music in general (Rose 2008, 3).

The commercial success of N.W.A was so extensive it became clear that the black inner-city kids were not its sole audience. Though initially produced for black inner-city youth, it quickly became clear that counter-hegemony is attractive to white suburban youth. New algorithms suggested that the mainstream audience, white middle-class youth, wished to hear gangsta-oriented hip-hop music. This fueled record companies' production, distribution, and promotion of commercial gangsta rap (to the detriment of more socially conscious artists). At the time, the media also began focusing on the more extremist tendencies of rap, offering a platform for the critics to attack hip-hop. (Rose 2008, 13-15; Potter 1995, 111; Chang 2007, 112.) Commercial hip-hop specifically has produced visible representations of hyper-masculinity and expressions of misogyny and homophobia (Driscoll 2009, 30). As Collins (2006, 4) points out, these were central themes in the construction of the multi-billion dollar industry of hip-hop.

With its undeniable success, major record companies actively pursued to sign this type of act, as it has proven a major source of income. The emphasis of connecting hyper-masculinity and misogyny with authenticity in hip-hop has been re-enforced and reshaped by the hegemony, to serve their interests. (Mitchell 2014, 90.) Potter (1995, 5) points out the extensive history of white appropriation of black traditions, in which (black) forms of art have been retailed to suit popular (white) taste. The realm of mainstream hip-hop can be considered a site partaking in this tradition. Rose (2008, 2-3, 15) argues that to many people the "apolitical and simple-minded stereotypes" have transformed into powerful and authentic representations of the brown and black youth.

Rose (2008) argues that corporate incorporation of the musical markets together with America's post-civil rights lust for racially stereotyping entertainment and valuation of violence and sexually explicit misogyny as cultural products are working together in production of immensely popular contemporary hip-hop. Rose argues that to dismantle certain popular and profitable imagery within hip-hop, one cannot ignore the broader context of the culture of violence, racism, and sexism. She argues that many traditional hip-hop tropes have been truncated of complexity and ambivalence by the corporate disruption. (Rose 2008, 2-3; 13-28.) Due to the immense popularity of this era, the imagery, tropes, and themes popular during this era of hip-hop are still persistently popular. In this understanding, many of the neoliberal pro-hegemonic values inscribed in modern hip-hop are not inherent to the culture. Rather, they have been carefully selected and curated to serve capitalist interest.

2.2.2 Rhetoric of authenticity

In this chapter, I will discuss the construction and significance of authenticity and identity in the field of hip-hop. One focus is on normative and therefore highly valued identities in hip-hop. I will further contemplate on the common identity expressions and constructions on the field. This chapter further considers reasons certain manners of representing oneself have become more popular than others. I shall focus on the most common traits through which gender and sexuality, especially when interconnecting with race and class, are commonly articulated in rap lyrics to gain authenticity, and hence legitimacy and success in the field.

Hip-hop's relationship to authenticity or "realness" is often compared to an "obsession" (Ogbar 2007, 38; Hill 2009, 48). Hill (2009, 48) defines authenticity as "the belief in a one-to-one relationship between what one says and what one does". An omnipresent artistic quality in hip-hop music (Ogbar 2007, 42), authenticity hence is a framework demanding analogy between lived experience and artistic expression, as it further prioritizes sets of experiences considered appropriate in the culture (Hill 2009, 48). Despite being wildly famous and wealthy, authenticity demands that even popular hip-hop artists never lose touch with the "streets", the black working class considered perhaps the most valued part of their audience.

The construct of authenticity in hip-hop has been central to the culture since its conception and thus is a constellation of racial, cultural, and socioeconomic signifiers. In other words, authenticity in hip-hop has its roots in black, working-class values. Despite the fact that the most popular and widely distributed hip-hip music today is mass-marketed and produced, there still exists a strong rhetorical demand for such authenticity (Brummett 2008, 31). Fundamentally, authenticity implies close proximity, or familiarity, with the black, working-class, urban landscapes of hip-hop's 1970s origin. Further, especially popular in the turn of the millennium, affiliation with criminal activity has been connected to hip-hop authenticity. The "thug ethos" has dominated the notions of hip-hop authenticity since the early 1990s. However, competing viewpoints for hip-hop authenticity have always co-existed. Rooted in the conscious black nationalist tradition of "the golden age" of hip-hop, "black-conscious rebel authenticity" rose to the mainstream during the administration of George W. Bush (Ogbar 2007, 38-43.)

A case can be made, that certain types of identities have historically been more valued as more authentic than others. As Ogbar (2007) points out, one's race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality are central to this process. Indeed, emcees considered authentic and as "the art's central representatives" have historically inhabited black, masculinist, working-class identities. (Ogbar 2007, 5-7, 39.) Arguably, heteronormativity has provided central guidelines to the construction of authenticity, constructed together with gender and sexuality. Ogbar (ibid.) notes that other identity groups become peripheral to the standards of realness established by the aforementioned demography. He suggests that, both stylistically and lyrically, all emcees are expected to position themselves "within this contextual framework and to varying degrees appropriate young African American male styles and cultural markers". (Ogbar 2007, 43.) In this understanding, identities in hip-hop intersect tangibly with the construction of authenticity, and vice versa. Many scholars (e.g. Rose 1994; Perry 2004; Hill 2009) have suggested that various traits indicate hip-hop as being a predominantly masculine music and culture.

Indeed, in many ways, hip-hop does not seem to be able to completely break away from the traits and logic of the way masculinity is popularly constructed (Rose 2008, 119). This is no wonder as ultimately, as Collins (2006, 4) points out, these were the themes according to which the multi-billion industry of hip-hop was created. Or as Smalls (2011, 90) puts, the emcees willingness to express their queer gender or sexual identities has been "erased, dismissed, pathologized, and gossiped about viciously". That said, artists failing to fit into hip-hop's "hypermasculine standards" have become overlooked and pushed to the margins of the culture (Hill 2009). As Eguchi et al. (2018, 182) have argued, as an industry, hip-hop may be considered an aesthetic site guided by heteronormative politics and expectations for black authenticity.

Hip-hop has, however, always had dissident voices challenging and expanding these aforementioned notions of authenticity. These include women rappers challenging the idea of hip-hop as a sexist and masculinist culture, and emcees resisting heterosexism and creating space for queer identities to flourish within the culture. Contemporary hip-hop has come a long way, as it appears to increasingly providing a critical platform for identities previously deemed inauthentic or lacking value. This is evident in the increasing number of women and queer artists gaining a spotlight. Furthermore, explicitly homophobic lyrical content is no longer as prevalent as it once was, an indication of changing attitudes within hip-hop culture and society at large.

2.3 Hip-hop's invisible participants

Although often disregarded as unimportant, women and queer people have always existed as important contributors in the art of hip-hop (Rose 1994; Perry 2004, 156; Pough 2004; Hill 2009). However, their contributions have generally been ignored, silenced, and erased. The next chapters will address some of the struggles hip-hop's invisible participants face, but also acknowledge contemporary and future possibilities. Whilst" woman" is considered as socially constructed identity position, this study understands queerness as a future-oriented paradigm of communication rejecting the order of contemporary, further reimagining and demanding possibility for "another world" (Muñoz 2009, 1).

2.3.1 Herstory

Women in hip-hop are highly visible, yet often lacking agency. Rose (1994) points out that the lack of successful women rappers is anything but coincidental. She contemplates that women are actively denied access to spaces and discouraged from participating in the process knowledge is shared, and the skills enhanced. Rose calls this phenomenon "the culture of male bonding", where women are neglected the access to certain spaces and places due to social, cultural, and sexual reasons. (Rose 1994, 57-58.) In this sense, hip-hop aligns with the long tradition of western (art) histories, dismissing "feminine" perspectives as trivial and secondary of importance (Hall 2002a, 83; Pollock 2014, 1).

Mark Anthony Neal (2007, iv) calls for a shift in approach from "what hip-hop does to women" to "how are women using hip-hop". This shift in perspective reconceptualized hip-hop as a powerful tool for empowering women and other people marginalized due to their gender/sexuality.

Historically, women's artistic contributions have hardly been positioned a a part of hip-hop's historic canon. Pre 2020s, it appeared that only one woman could successfully exist in the realm of mainstream hip-hop. However, woman rappers have been able to break through to mainstream success. This has been possible by the artists employing certain popular strategies. Imani Perry (2004, 156) points out that for creative women in hip-hop, occupying masculine

coded roles, styles, and aesthetics have functioned as one of the earliest strategies in gaining notoriety and respect on the field.

Even though the expressions of one's sexuality can be considered a feminist act, Rose (2008) notes that a particular type of sexed-up image relying on heteronormative ideas of sexual fantasy is almost expected of woman rappers in the field of mainstream hip-hop. Due to the narrow possibilities for self-expression, rather than emancipatory, these expressions of sexuality appear to serve capitalist interest. (Rose 2008, 123-126.) In this understanding, the question whether sexual expressions appealing to the male-gaze are authentic acts of empowered sexual expressions, or simply profitable form of exploitation.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000), defines the core of Black feminism in challenging the gender, race and class-based oppression by taking action in everyday life and by offering a channel of expression to those whose voices have been silenced in the course of the history. She concludes that, at its core, black feminism aims at providing comprehensive, antisexist, antiracist and anti-elitist perspectives on social change. (Collins 2000, 4-6.) These core ideas of black feminism are also very central to hip-hop feminism.

Wilson (2007, 117-119) argues that hip-hop and feminism are often considered almost as inherently contradictory. This view is not only supported by hip-hop's white middle-class critics, but by many participating in hip-hop culture. Indeed, in the course of the history many women in hip-hop have been resistant towards calling themselves "feminist" or to challenge some of hip-hop's toxic traits. This phenomenon mirrors a similar response to the inequalities women face in their daily working lives compared to their male colleagues. (Neal 2012, 345.) Hip-hop's apparent resistance towards feminism can be traced to the historic consideration of it as white middle-class social movement. Especially during the 1960s and 1970s, black women were often forced to choose their loyalty between gender (via white feminism) or race (via black nationalism). White feminism was considered elitist and racist in the worst case, and at its best still neglecting questions on race and class in their feminism. (Collins 2006, 167-174; Rabaka 2011, 125-129.)

The phrase "personal is political" can be considered in the core of hip-hop feminism. (Collins 2006, 162; Rabaka 2011, 123). Hip-hop feminism is a term coined by cultural critic Joan Morgan (1999). Deriving from the wider tradition of Black feminism, hip-hop feminism is an

academic tradition challenging the idea of hip-hop as a masculine and providing visibility for the women on the field (Collins 2000, 4-6). It further pays critical attention on how race, class, gender and sexuality are generally being perceived in the context of hip-hop culture. (Pough 2007, v). Hence, hip-hop feminism aims at creating resistance and claiming agency within the realm of hip-hop culture. Rabaka (2011, 125) argues that perhaps the most important contribution of hip-hop feminists' is their creative use of intersectional theory, as well as expanding, de- and reconstructing feminist theory in general.

Many feminist hip-hop scholars (e.g. Pough 2007; Rabaka 2011) have suggested that hip-hop feminism might well be the most socially visible and politically polyvocal feminist movement in contemporary society of the United States. The terrain of popular culture, dominated by hip-hop's influence, reaches a significantly wider audience than the gender studies lectures of the universities. For its potential "to be adapted to wide range of ideas, theories and praxes", hip-hop forms potential platform for many people outside the academia to be exposed to feminist ideas. (Rabaka 2011, 150.) Today, many hip-hop feminists consider the relationship between hip-hop and feminism not as contradictory, but rather a symbiotic one (Rabaka 2011, 122).

2.3.2 Queering hip-hop

"Society hates anything feminine," - *Cakes Da Killa*

Although having largely remained invisible in the realm of popular commercial hip-hop, queer people have been a part of the culture ever since its early days (Hill 2012, 29-31; Walcott 2013). Queer people have contributed significantly to cultivating of the culture with queer creatives working behind the scenes as choreographers, songwriters, stylists, and designers (Hill 2012, 385; Walcott 2013, 168-169). Today, the realm of mainstream hip-hop culture relies increasingly towards the aesthetics and cultural influences of queerness. Regardless, queer artists working behind the scenes are often dismissed and left without proper credit. Especially when it comes to hip-hop music, lyrics rarely tell stories about black queerness. (Eguchi & Roberts 2015, 146.)

Increasingly from the 2010s onwards, the term "queer hip-hop" started to emerge in the realm of popular media. Kehrer (2017) asserts that media outlets jumped on the bandwagon of "gay rap" due to the apparently antithetical nature of the phenomena and hip-hop's aesthetic and

values. These articles grouped queer artists, often from the cultural context of the New York ballroom scene under the umbrella term “queer hip-hop”. However, many rappers connected with the term were dissatisfied with the artificial and misleading term, as this approach by the mainstream media dismissed the artistic variety and musical difference between the rappers. Whilst some artists support the concept for being progressive, revolutionary, and furthering visibility and tolerant ambience, others consider it reductionist, narrow and restricting. (Kehrer 2017, 137-140.)

Glass (2017) asserts that successful queer rapper signifies something very different than a commercially successful rapper. Among the most prominent queer rappers, Cakes Da Killa has contemplated on the scarcity[1] of commercially well-known queer rappers, suggesting that complexities in identity make it difficult to gain access to the realm of mainstream hip-hop. Cakes notes that “a very masculine female rapper can still receive marketability or credibility, but as soon as a man shows any signs of femininity, he’s looked down upon.” Another pioneering queer rapper, Mykki Blanco echoes Cake’s vision. In order to be commercially successful, the queer artist must adopt a persona pre-existing within the masculine context of hip-hop. This way, they may be accepted as non-threatening. (Glass 2017.)

When it comes to queer representations in hip-hop, the genre has however grown more inclusive and diverse in recent years. In the realm of mainstream hip-hop culture, high profile artists such as Frank Ocean and Tyler, the Creator are regularly alluding queerness in their lyrical content. Yet, as Wallace (2012) points out in their study of Frank Ocean, neither Frank nor Tyler are marketed as openly queer artists. Tyler’s case can be argued to be a significant event in hip-hop’s history, as journalist Mikelle Street put it: ”his coming out would position him as the biggest LGBT male hip-hop artist of color”. Street further noted that it would impact the discussions on hip-hop and maybe encourage “other closeted musicians” in the hip-hop scene. (Street 2017.)

Walcott (2013) argues that queering hip-hop may turn out to be surprisingly easy, considering that there have always been queer subjects working in the field. He argues that historically the existence of queerness in hip-hop has often been overlooked, erased, and ignored. Hence, connecting hip-hop and queer might rather be a matter of “where you begin to look and what

[1] Or pre-Lil Nas X nonexistent

you are willing to see". Walcott further encourages widening the approaches towards discussions over queer and hip-hop, as the common approach through homophobia is simply "boring". (Walcott 2013, 168-169.) Like Walcott, I too hope to see more multifaceted discussions on hip-hop. I further agree with Walcott (ibid., 168-169) that considering queerness in hip-hop only in terms of homophobia and heteronormativity provides a simplified and narrow view of the relationship between hip-hop and queer. In this understanding, efforts considering queer rappers as fully functional subjects on the field of hip-hop are much needed. Reducing the existence of hip-hop's queer fans and creators to discourses on homophobia provides simultaneously simplifying and dismissive approach.

2.4 Earlier research on hip-hop, queer, and rhetoric

There exists a moderate body of work by hip-hop feminist scholars, who have provided in-field critique and initiated critical conversations within the genre (e.g. Rose 1994; Pough 2004; Collins 2000; Collins 2006; Rose 2008; Collins & Bilge 2016) Yet, the field of academic hip-hop studies lack research combining intersectional and rhetorical analysis. Although studies connecting hip-hop and queer as a form of resistance have emerged increasingly since the late 2000s, no previous contributions on the body of work of Princess Nokia have come to my knowledge.

Groundbreaking and insightful works on hip-hop culture and queerness as a form of subversion in different forms have been provided by Wilson (2007), McCune (2008), Bailey (2013) and Walcott (2013). Further, other contributions have focused on queering the realm of mainstream hip-hop by queer reading on straight presenting rappers' work (e.g. Lane 2011; Neal 2013; Sullivan 2013; Smith 2014; Kehrer 2017). Further, some contributions have critically weighted on the appropriation of queer culture for aesthetic purposes and capitalist gain by straight presenting mainstream artists (e.g. Kehrer 2018). Echoing intersectional approach, much of hip-hop's queer research is inspired by black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde's complexed intersecting and co-constructive understanding of identities (Bailey 2013, Neal 2013).

Wilson (2007) has considered queer rappers contributions in creating social change through art in the study "Post-Pomo Hip-Hop Homos: Hip-Hop Art, Gay Rappers, and Social Change". Wilson's study centrals on the Bay area underground collectives D/DDC and PostPomoHomo,

and their constructions of political artistic identity. The study considers music and art through as a form of social activism. The study utilizes postmodern theory in connecting and reconstructing "fragmented identities" in the lyrics and interviews with the artists. According to Wilson, the artists' activism lied in 1) continuing previous conversations regarding race and sexuality, started by artists from previous generations 2) contributing to these conversations in the framework of hip-hop and the communities connected to it, and finally 3) to empower and provide a voice to the diverse, global queer experience through the instruments provided by hip-hop. (Wilson 2007).

Lauron Kehrer (2017) has considered intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and legibility in American hip-hop between 2010 and 2016. Kehrer's study aimed at relocating marginalized artists as centralized subjects in hip-hop. Situating hip-hop within the lineage of black queer genres of disco and house, Kehrer aimed at articulating the genre of "Ballroom rap" as a synthesis of black queer culture and hip-hop. For example, Kehrer argues that a prominent queer rapper Mykki Blanco's visual use of drag in "various stages" ultimately questions "realness", or authenticity as a desirable category, further emphasizing the performative nature of gender. They argue that artists such as Blanco remix traditional elements of hip-hop authenticity, such as braggadocio and popular manners of delivery, to traditions from the Ballroom scene. (Kehrer 2017.)

To Kehrer (ibid.), both explicit and subtle references to the "distinctly black queer musical and cultural lineage" function in favor for negotiating heteronormativity in the realm of mainstream hip-hop. They assert that it is not simply the artist's identity positions as black and queer, but further, the incorporation of black and queer cultural expressions in connection with hip-hop, that ultimately forms the new subgenre of Ballroom rap. In addition to a musical genre, Ballroom rap is considered as a site-specific articulation of black queer identity. Kehrer concludes that Mykki Blanco's performative play on gender ultimately resists gender binaries in the contexts of wider societal realm, Ballroom scene, and hip-hop and ultimately demonstrates the co-constructiveness of the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race. (Kehrer 2017.) Kehrer work highlights how hip-hop has been utilized by queer artists to resist heteronormative gender expectations and norms.

There are few studies considering queer women in hip-hop through spatiality (e.g. Clay 2007a; Clay 2007b, McCune Jr. 2008; Love 2017). Adreana Clay (2007a) considered black and brown

women and performance of identity. This study examined “decoding” black hip-hop masculinity and race in a queer club space. Clay (2007a, 155-161) concluded that the queer women were flipping the lyrics in order to ”fit the context” in their performance of gender, concluding that the identities represented were “falsely perceived as natural”. Clay (2007b) has also studied intersectional media representations and lyrical analysis. Clay’s study focuses on one of the first openly bisexual emcees, Me´Shell Ndegeocello, and the significance of her emergence in the field marking a political and ideological shift. (Clay 2007b.)

Jeffrey Q. McCune Jr. (2008) ethnographic study “Out” in the Club: The Down Low, Hip-Hop, and the Architecture of Black Masculinity” has considered queer as a form of resistance in hip-hop. To McCune, hip-hop paired up with queer resists presumptions on normativity, resulting in the “meeting of two queers”. He concludes that black queer subjects in hip-hop generally adopt traditional appropriations of culture, including some of the culture’s heterosexist traits. McCune argues that hip-hop functions as a link between “the black and the queer” in form of reverse power relations and self-determination over one’s identities. An example of this is the re-appropriation of slurs by the queer participants of the culture. According to McCune, black queer subjects simultaneously identified with and performed queer desire (resist/subvert) but also contributed to patriarchal forms of action (re-enforce/accept). McCune concludes that only by utilizing both/and frame and accepting the paradoxical nature of reality can the subjects and the processes be better understood. (McCune 2008.)

Robert Tinajero (2020) asserts that, in many ways, hip-hop music and culture have been disregarded and marginalized in the field of rhetorical studies. However, shifting the rhetorical subject enables new possibilities for both studies on rhetoric and hip-hop. This shift allows to “uncover, recover, and recognize traditionally silenced voices”. (Tinajero 2020, 12-13.) Although studies considering queer artists and rhetorics in the lyrics has yet to come to my knowledge, many authors (Perry 2004; Pough 2004; Tinajero 2013; Mitchell 2014; Marshall 2019) have recognized rhetorical analysis as beneficial in order to analyze the elements of resistance in rap lyrics. A vast majority of the studies on hip-hop’s rhetorics have focused on well-established emcees, such as Tupac Shakur (Mitchell 2014) and Kanye West (Marshall 2019), known for their efforts in creating societal disruption.

A landmark piece considering hip-hop feminism through rhetoric is Gwendolyn D. Pough’s (2004) opus “Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public

Sphere". Pough utilizes Harbermas' concept of the public cultural sphere, complicated by the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class. Pough's focus is specifically on black women using their voices publicly to provide social commentary in hip-hop. Pough's analysis introduces the concept of "wreck" to revise Habermas' thought to describe black America's expression of the right to exist and to be heard in public spheres. Considering hip-hop a political movement, Pough considers representation as a tool for "bring[ing] wreck", and further gaining control over the public gaze. Both the language of present and past are used in order to create "the rhetorics of wreck" (a form of rhetorical act showing resistance) and further create possibilities for self-definition. However, Pough too points out the constant heterosexism and homophobia in the texts used in the analysis. She argues that the lack of coalition forming with queer activists working in the intersections of class and race are among the most significant shortcomings of the texts considered. (Pough 2004.) Pough's conceptualization of "bringing wreck" and approach focusing on lyrical expressions informs my study of expressions of resistance in contemporary hip-hop lyrics.

Mitchell (2014) has examined the influential hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur through Gramscian rhetorical analysis. He examines resistance towards hegemonic structures expressed in Tupac's lyrics. Mitchell's focus is on the Gramscian concept of hegemony, and on the American Hegemony more specifically. Mitchell argues that in his music, Tupac Shakur expresses critique towards the systematic oppression upheld by the current American cultural hegemony, using the strategies of common sense, spontaneous consent and divide and conquer. He emphasized the significance of hip-hop lyrics' power in providing a channel of expression for the formerly "voiceless", as well as a form of critique to the communities, who may lack the element of power in their lived realities. Further, he encourages future research to focus on contemporary hip-hop artists, who challenge social norms and contribute to creating social change within the genre. (Mitchell 2014, 123-130.)

Studies on hip-hop dealing with intersectionality have generally focused on cis, gay men or queering the lyrics of mainstream hip-hop artists who have not publicly claimed queer identities. To a certain extent, a historical lack of queer visibility in hip-hop culture has resulted in lack of academic attention. This, however, has changed in the last decade, with several openly queer artists gaining visibility within in hip-hop and the mainstream popular culture in more general. Therefore, this study is a contribution towards filling this gap in academic discussion on hip-hop, by providing a comprehensive intersectional analysis of resistance in

the lyrics of a Princess Nokia, a contemporary afro-indigenous queer woman rapper, who has achieved a relatively high level of prominence and visibility. In the following section I will provide a general introduction to intersectional feminism, and describe the selected intersectional themes I focus on in my analysis.

3 INTERSECTIONALITY

This chapter focuses on intersectional feminism as a form of social critique and a tool of creating resistance. First, I will briefly consider how the term "intersectionality" is understood in the context of this study. Then, I will shortly discuss the concepts of "gender" and "sexuality", "race" and "ethnicity", and "class". Ultimately, the purpose of this chapter is to map out central discussions on intersectionality as well as to provide theoretical definitions to the social categories presented above. Ultimately, this chapter functions as a theoretical framework as well as the critical lens for the analysis.

3.1 Understanding intersectionality

As a term, "intersectionality" was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw. A civil rights advocate and legal scholar, her effort was to develop black feminist critique and demarginalize discussions on co-contsructiveness on issues regarding race and gender, she made "a simple analogy to intersection". (Crenshaw 1989; Crenshaw 2016). In the context of this thesis, intersectionality is understood as a critical tool to comprehend and analyze the axes of social division based on gender, race, sexuality, and class. Intersectionality hence is considered as a critical social theory and praxis showcasing the disproportionate division of power in societies, and how it further contributes to the aspects of domination, oppression, and discrimination (Collins & Bilge 2016, 1-4, 31-32.) Further, intersectionality is understood as an analytic sensibility considering the construction of sameness and difference in connection with power (Cho et al. 2013, 794).

This study considers intersectionality as a subversive tool disturbing the hegemonic social order, knowledge, and distribution of power. Grzanka (2014) notes that intersectionality aims at challenging the legitimate processes of knowledge production that are recognized as socially constructed and historically conditioned. Intersectional scholars have interrupted dominant discourses by cultivating new knowledges by "critiquing the racist, classist, masculinist, and colonialist epistemologies that have produced oppressive knowledges and, consequently, oppressive social structures, institutions, and inequalities". With the attempt to create counter hegemonic knowledge, knowledge in the context of intersectionality is always political.

Ultimately, the relationship between knowledge and power precedes the understanding of various forms of intersectional oppressions, activisms, and sites of resistance. (Grzanka 2014, 31-32, 36.)

Historically, intersectionality derives from the traditions of critical race theory, black feminism, post-colonial studies, Marxist socialism, and the social movements and activism of black and brown women in the United States from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. (Alcoff 2006, 15; Collins & Bilge 2016, 3, 63-65.) Therefore, in the ideological formation of intersectionality, the contribution of Black feminist thought, Chicana feminist movement, Native women, and the people of the Global South using it as a critical tool ought to be acknowledged (Grzanka 2014, XIV, 35; Collins & Bilge 2016, 1-4, 64-65). Many authors (e.g. Dill 2009; Cho et al. 2013; Grzanka 2014; Collins & Bilge 2016) consider intersectionality as a vital link between theory with practice, as a tool in recognizing and considering inequalities while empowering people both in and outside the academia.

A crucial element in organizing social life, "identity" is both central and controversial in the realm of intersectionality. Identity tied to different social categories remains as the key to access education, institutional resources, income, and health (Grzanka 2014, 67). Identity is further connected to another central idea within intersectionality, standpoint. Standpoint combines identity, politics, and location (Collins 2000, 19). Standpoint forms a central concept and a critical tool in understanding "multiple axes of identity and difference order, rank, and hierarchize knowledge in terms of race, gender, class, and other systems of social inequality" (Grzanka 2014, 33).

Intersectionality has been extensively criticized and disputed over in the field of academia. It has been critiqued for being positivist, essentializing, idealist, incoherent, vague, unclear, and a simple alias to identity politics (e.g. Ferguson 2012, 92-93; Cho, Crenshaw & McCall 2013, 797; Collins & Bilge 2016). In the realm of popular discussions, lack of internal critique appears as a common presumption. Black feminist and cultural theorist Jennifer C. Nash (2008, 13-14) argues that currently, intersectionality serves as a starting point for critical analysis, and the field ought to be pushed beyond that assumption. Sirma Bilge (2014) has argued that after its institutionalization, intersectionality has struggled to remain sufficiently critical. In the center of concerns is the possible clash between the conservative norms of academia and the presumed critical nature of intersectional thought. Indeed, Collins and Bilge (2016, 87) ask

whether intersectionality will settle too comfortably within the frameworks of neoliberal universities, rather than focus on unsettling the existing practices of knowledge production.

However, Collins and Bilge (2016, 194) argue that suggestions towards post-intersectional analysis imitate ideas similar to post-raciality. Regardless of an inevitable risk included in the identity-based movements, they also form a necessary and useful tool to consider and transform social inequalities of their time. (Chun et al. 2013, 937-938). However, Collins and Bilge (2016) ague that understanding of intersectionality simply in terms of individual identity forms a reductionist understanding of the theory. The question between identity and structure remains among intersectionality's greatest challenges (Cho et al. 2013, 797). These discussions can be compared to the disputations over micro and macro or agency and structure debates in the field of sociology (Grzanka 2014, 68).

As this brief overview illustrates, intersectional theory tackles several interconnected and complex issues. For the purpose of my analysis of the lyrics of Princess Nokia's 1992 Deluxe, I am focusing on a handful of specific intersectional identity categories as they relate to expressions of hegemonic resistance in hip-hop lyrics. The rest of this chapter provides theoretical context to these selected categories.

3.2 Gender and sexuality

My study approaches gender as a socio-culturally constructed set of processes. Reilly and Barry (2020) argue that the sites of popular culture and fashion contribute significantly in reimagining and disrupting binary understandings on gender. They further assert that disrupting the binary construction of gender norms is generally considered threatening and met with violence. (Reilly & Barry 2020, 1, 4-5.) Griselda Pollock (2014) asserts that gender, as any other social category, ought to be considered in connection with power, as it can be seen as the denominator of socially produced asymmetrical hierarchy systems. Further, gender in the context of art is significant, as it shapes the social existence of individuals that further regulates artistic expressions. Gender in the context of feminist art critique stands as "a symbolic dimension shaping hierarchical oppositions in representation in texts, images, buildings, and discourses about art". (Pollock 2014, 1.)

Judith Butler (2006) argues that gendered identity ought not to be reduced to ontology, as the gendered body is formed in a process of doing. Butler offers an interpretation of gender as embodied style, as a form of performative doing. Doing gender is inevitably connected to the material realities the gendered bodies exist in. Further, gender is constructed and reconstructed through the acts of repetition and mimicking. In this understanding, gendered identity should be considered as fluid construction open to new significances and recontextualization. Butler considers gendered identity as a combination of personal and cultural histories, as established significances that are further repeated in time. Gender then is the product of multiple stylized doings, such as bodily movements, styles and gestures, through which an illusion of gender as something permanent is created. (Butler 2006, 229-235.) In this understanding, cultural and social norms display a crucial part in the processes of "doing" gender. However, individuals hold some agency over their preferred articulations of gender (Reilly & Barry 2020, 5).

Contemplating Butler's work, Rossi (2003) considers gender as ideological, negotiable, and a product of repetition. She notes that the way we think of gender is inevitably connected to time and place. In this understanding, gender is a context bound construction. To Rossi, gender is political, ideological, and potentially revolutionary. (Rossi 2003, 12.) In the context of this study, it ought to be highlighted that the terms "femininity" and "masculinity" are not synonymous with gender identities, but rather descriptions of cultural and historic conventions. (ibid., 59). In addition to social roles, gender is done through multiple aspects, such as mannerisms, dressing, grooming and speech patterns. In this sense, gender can be considered as an active form of doing. Ultimately, the ways of doing gender are inherently affected by the social context and culture(s) one inhabits. The possibilities of expressing gender are highly nuanced, as different styles of expression are further intertwined with factors such as class, ethnicity, and religion, as well as aesthetics, education and subcultures. (Blank 2012, 18-19.)

Sexuality in the context of this study is considered both as a matter of sexual identities (identifications) and sexualities (ways of being sexual, desire). Further, like gender, sexuality is considered both culturally and historically bound. In the contemporary, the categeries of gender and sexuality work together in construction of normative patriarchal order enforced by compulsory heterosexuality. Heterosexuality can be conceptualized as a political institution that is central in maintaining the current gender hierarchies, hence the subordination of women in relation to men, (Cameron & Kulick 2003, 7-8, 44, 106) and further, genderqueer and trans

men and women. Non-heterosexuality can thus be seen as a disruption towards this subordination (ibid., 44-45). Further, this study recognizes sexuality as fluid.

Similar to construction of gender, sexuality is apprehended through processes that are constantly negotiated regarding meaning, power relations, hierarchies and establishments (Rossi 2012, 21-23). An "enormous amount of social, economic, scientific, legal, political, and cultural activity" is organized around heterosexuality. Since the inception of sexual identities in the late 1800s, heterosexuality has dominated as the cultural norm. (Blank 2012, 10-14.) Thus the multiple meanings attached to these identities are not considered as essential, permanent or objective. Rather, their construction is understood through processes of repetition, disruption, and negotiation through history. Kehrer (2017, 24) asserts that gender and sexuality presentations are significant identity markers that influence how women rappers simultaneously navigate within hip-hop and how they are perceived on the field.

The concept of compulsory heterosexuality and masculinity are central to hip-hop conception of authenticity. Hip-hop artists on the margins of gender and sexuality thus often find themselves resisting oppression within the boundaries of hip-hop culture, and the society in more general. This study aims to examine how Princess Nokia subverts heteronormative and patriarchal subordination through her lyrical expressions, and how her work on *1992 Deluxe* is an important contribution to the tradition of resistance still alive in contemporary hip-hop.

3.3 Race and ethnicity

The concept of "race" is arguably among the most disputed within the discussions over intersectionality. Throughout the years, the concept has been heavily criticized due to its use in colonial, racist, and dehumanizing historical context. It has been deemed outdated (e.g. Gilroy 2000) and inherently racist. However, Crenshaw (1989, 166) argues that race is a vital concept in the context of intersectional feminist analysis, including and considering lived experiences of non-white women. As many Black feminist authors (e.g. Collins 2006; Rose 2008) have argued, pushing the idea of "color blindness" primarily masks the reality as something it is not, further helping to maintain the status quo. That said, instead of an essential category, race is considered as a conceptual tool in consideration of strategies of intersectional resistance in hip-hop. Discussing the relationship between rhetoric and race, Royster (2017) defines race as "a social, cultural, political, and ideological construction". Further, "the

garnering and exercise of agency, power, privilege, authority, and entitlement" are displayed in the interconnection with rhetoric and race. (Royster 2017, 606.)

Stuart Hall (2002, 55) considers race as discursive practices, organizing loose physical differentiations through discourses, representations, and social practices. Hall (2019) argues that these systems form concrete social, political and economic conditions of existence. Hence, race functions as a marker of differentiation, followed by material and symbolic consequences. He contemplates that race relations and racial structures are ultimately inseparable from economic processes, such as colonization. (Hall 2019, 172-178.) Hall et al. (1978) asserts that the moral panics considering the black youth's connection to crime derives from ideas about race, culture and identity. Historic division of black people to "respectable and undesirable" echo the working-class constructions of "the deserving poor" and "dangerous classes". (Hall et al. 1978, 27-29, 347-352.)

Culturally, the concept of race has been employed as a tool in "othering" non-white people. (Hall 2002, 69). Whereas white people's actions are considered by-products of individual decisions or personality, racialized people do not often receive this privilege as their actions are retrieved as a matter of identity. In the course of the history of the United States, crime has indeed been coded "black", whilst white crime has been considered as a matter of individual failure. (Collins 2006, 178-180; Muhammad 2010, 3-5.) Culturally, the effects of race are often also seen in the appreciation towards artistic contributions. Hip-hop, with many other black forms of art, have often lacked general appreciation due to many structural disadvantaged and racist ideas promoted throughout the history of the United States (Muhammad 2010, 1-14).

Hall names three crucial moments through which the racializing representations in the history of the Western popular culture have been produced as 1) the slavery from the 16th century onwards 2) the colonization of Africa during the 19th century 3) the migration from the "third World" to Western World after the second World war. Hall argues that these historic events have thoroughly influenced the representation and perception on race in the realm of Western popular culture. (Hall 2002a, 160-161.)

Hall (2002) argues that discourse on race has historically been constructed through binary opposing practices. Whereas whiteness has been connected to civilization and culture, blackness has been constructed in opposition to it. (Hall 2002a, 166-167; hooks 1994, 199).

Importantly, as Bambara (1996, 141-142) points out, instead of being monolithic, America consists of various realities with historic connections to multiple forms of cultural heritages. For example, whereas colonial North America has been constructed through whiteness, hip-hop is generally viewed as a black cultural form (Perry 2004).

Often used as a more subtle way of discussing race, "ethnicity" is reasonable to consider as a concept on its own. Hall (2002, 54) defines ethnicity as a common cultural background, such as the language, religion, customs, traditions, and locality. In the context of the USA, much of this ethnic knowledge and history was erased by colonial forces as a means of control and oppression directed at enslaved Africans. Especially "conscious" hip-hop artists have long raised awareness about this erased history, tracing their lineages back to and proudly identifying with their specific cultural heritage and traditions. This in itself can be considered a form of anticolonial resistance, breaking down the monolithic understanding of blackness in the USA. Though these expressions of ethnic pride were perhaps most prominent in the 90's, Princess Nokia is a contemporary example of a rapper who incorporates these themes heavily in her work.

3.4 Class

A major mechanism in the production of inequality, class forms an integral part of intersectional analysis. Influential class theorist Beverley Skeggs (2002, 3) posits class as a historically specific discursive construction, operating through the processes of moral distinction. She (2004, 3-4), argues that in addition to economic exchange, class is a question of moral evaluation that precedes all other forms of value. Working-class as a category gains its significance by middle-class conceptualizations. In differentiating themselves from the "others", middle-class ratifies their power and identities to reaffirm the status quo. This process of distinction is defined by sense of anxiety about social order. (Finch 1993.) Historically, classed and raced categorizations formed the hybrid category of "dangerous classes". By the white middle-class understanding, to not be respectable signifies lack of social value and legitimacy. (Skeggs 2002, 3-4.)

Skeggs (2002) asserts the idea of respectability among the most pervasive signifiers in creating class. Respectability further forms a key mechanism in the process of "othering" and pathologizing marginalized groups by the members of the dominant culture. Respectability is

a system of classifying both black and white working-classes as "dangerous, polluting, threatening, revolutionary, pathological and without respect." Concerns on respectability are generally targeted towards the ones that are not considered to have it. Respectability is presented as a desirable quality, as it is generally connected to people with a valued way of being. (Skeggs 2002, 2-3.) Further, the working-class has been differentiated to the "respectable" and "unrespectable" (Skeggs 2004, 1-2). Respectability forms the public site of morality, the object of knowledge (Strathern 2005).

Moral evaluation hence is significant in the creation of class. Skeggs (2002) asserts that in this process, power is transmitted through valuation of cultural characteristics, such as aesthetics and behavior. She further contemplates that class, gender, sexuality, and race based judgements are the core in constructions of respectability. Furthermore, she states that "different groups have differential access to the mechanisms for generating, resisting and displaying respectability". Respectability is primarily constructed through exclusionary practices, in which traits connected with working class personhood, and black and brown people are devalued. Rather than holding value as such, different identity categories provide the framework according to which capital is valued and organized. For example, whiteness and masculinity are cultural norms and hence valued as forms of cultural capital. (Skeggs 2002, 1-7.)

The significance of categories such as class and race reach beyond simple identity positions. Combining different cultural features, the categories further become incarnated in the body as personal dispositions. Further, these markers allow mobility and flexibility attached to some groups and bodies, while restricting movement in social spheres for others. Skeggs asserts that making class through the self functions through four different processes. First, certain bodies are inscribed and marked possessing certain sets of characteristics. Second, various systems of exchange connect certain markers with good and worthy, while connecting others to undesirable and unworthy. Third, value becomes produced through various perspectives. And fourth, these systems provide a framework for the possibilities in which others may read their effects. To conclude, class in the contemporary is made through the processes of inscription, exchange, evaluation, and perspective. Ultimately, the formation of class is a dynamic process. It is produced through conflict, and battelled at the symbolic level. (Skeggs 2004, 1-5.)

In her study about making class through culture, Skeggs (2004) argues that today, class is

often made through and further embodied in the “self”. She argues that class cannot be considered separately from other social categories, such as gender, race, and sexuality. Further, beyond markers of one’s social position, these are interacting features of culture marked into one’s body as “personal dispositions”. Thus, bodies are inscribed and interpreted through various symbolic systems. The process of making class is indeed achieved through the processes of positioning and exclusion, thus in connection with power. Whilst other individuals' dispositions allow them to move (at least seemingly) effortlessly between the social spaces, to others, these possibilities are more restricted. (Skeggs 2004, 1-6.)

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter I shall provide a glance to the data and tools employed for the actual conduction process of the analysis. First, I will discuss the central research questions and aims of this thesis. Then, I will briefly discuss the central methodological tools, rhetorical analysis, and new rhetoric. From there, I will walk the reader through the concrete conduction process of the thesis, after which I will provide insight to the process of data selection and collection and contemplate on the artist considered, Princess Nokia, in more detail. Finally, I will address my position as the author of this study.

4.1 Research questions and aims

The objective of this thesis is to map out intersectional resistance contained in the lyrics of Princess Nokia's *1992 Deluxe* album. In the context of this thesis, resistance is defined as lyrical expressions that challenge hegemonic views, power dynamics, and oppression. I argue that these expressions of resistance in hip-hop can be highly effective strategies to affect social change. My aim is to approach this by addressing three central questions: 1.) How is intersectional resistance expressed in the lyrics of *1992 Deluxe*? 2.) What rhetorical strategies are used to communicate this to the audience? 3.) How can contemporary hip-hop effectively amplify and center marginalized voices?

My analysis will provide rhetorical reading on subversive lyrical content, viewed through the critical lens of intersectionality. I will explore how Princess Nokia achieves to demarginalize, spread awareness and promote opposition to existing power structures and norms. I have chosen the lyrical content of a handful of songs from the album that best exemplify such intersectional resistance. Considering the expression of intersectional resistance through rhetoric, this study aims at contributing to a more nuanced discussion on contemporary hip-hop and its socially disruptive potential.

4.2 Rhetorical analysis and new rhetoric

Deriving from the ancient Greek word "ritoriki", broadly understood, the term "rhetoric" signifies "the art of persuasive writing or speaking". (Engell 2020). More specifically, Brummett (1991, xiv) defines rhetoric as "social function that influences and manages meanings". Rhetorical studies generally focus on the construction and interpretation of an argument and strategies pursuing the audience to agree with the speaker, or the rhetor (Engell 2020). Rhetorical analysis recognizes the situated nature of communication, emphasizing the interconnectedness between the writer/speaker, the audience, and the text (Pigrum 2008, 792). Moreover, language functions through various strategies, aiming to pursue the audience in becoming more agreeable towards the rhetor's message (Vuori 2004, 115). In this understanding, the rhetor's choice of words are purposefully selected in order to convey a certain message.

Rhetorical analysis generally recognizes three primary modes of appeal of *ethos, pathos*, and *logos*. First, *ethos* is understood as qualities attached to the speaker. By appealing to *ethos*, the rhetor generally aims at building credibility in the eyes of the audience. This may be done by constructing an image of expertise or authenticity. *Pathos* on the other hand signifies appeal to the audience's emotions. The emotions in question can be anything from positive to negative, depending on the sentiment the rhetor persuades to achieve. Finally, *logos* is a general appeal to reason. In other words, *logos* is driven by factual information and logic. However, with *logos*, the presenting manner often proceeds the accuracy of the information presented by the rhetor. (Engell 2020.)

Further, rhetoric is a matter of style. Also known as rhetorical devices, the elements of styles are further divided into four categories. More specifically, the categories of diction, syntax, schemes, and tropes. Whereas the three prior devices focus on the specific words chosen, word order and arrangement, the focus of tropes is within the implication behind them. (Engell 2020). From metaphors to puns, tropes consider the plays on meanings, or more broadly, of any type of figurative or suggestive use of language. Tropes may consist of similes (comparisons to familiar) or function as a form of comparison, situating or as overuse of a concept and they are generally used to present and clarify new ideas by referring to the familiar. (Engell 2020.) Ultimately, tropes in different forms are linguistic choices that aim at creating a certain image.

Although equally significant in the tradition of hip-hop, for the purposes of this study and to be able to answer my research questions as comprehensively within certain timely and spatial limits, I decided to focus on tropes. This is, hip-hop's cultural meanings often reach beyond the primary text to the enormous body of secondary texts as points of reference (Driscoll 2009, 42). In this understanding, I shall focus on the tropes of a) *allusion,* b) *metaphor*, c) *allegory* and d) *paradox* and *oxymoron*. I may also mention other strategies, such as diction, when of significance. (Engell 2020, Sloane 2006). Next, I shall elaborate the most common tropes used in the context of this analysis in more detail.

Allusion is generally used to illustrate the rhetor's message. It is a reference to established ideas to the audiences, such as a person, a place or another artist's work. *Metaphor* on the other hand is the use of a phrase or word to represent something else. This is often done symbolically, to emphasize the similar nature between the two things. Like metaphor, *Allegory* too is a site of substitution. However, the encoded meanings are in more extensive form compared with that of metaphor. Finally, *paradox and oxymoron* are two very similar tropes that function through a striking juxtaposition of two seemingly incompatible words or ideas. Whereas *oxymoron* simply contradicts itself within the single term, a *paradox* appears to do so within a phrase or statement. (Engell 2020, Sloane 2006.)

The context of new rhetoric considers genres as an effective form of social action. The approach focuses on texts as contextual and aspirational, as it emphasizes the material, cultural, and situational conditions of the text. (Heikkinen et al. 2012, 24-28; Mäntynen & Sääskilahti 2012, 194.) Compared with classical rhetorical tradition, new rhetoric emphasizes the interpretational aspect of the analysis, connecting texts as forms of social action connected with wider questions on discourses, identity, and ideologies (Heikkinen et al. 2012, 28-30). Although I am using the methods of traditional rhetorical analysis, new rhetoric serves the purpose of this analysis well as it highlights the importance of interpretation. Further, Royster (2017, 606-607) contemplates that in addition to the identity of the speaker, modern approach to rhetorical studies aims at "bringing texture and materiality" to the rhetor's identity by further contemplating on questions on agency, authority, and identity formation. Considering my aim at mapping out Princess Nokia's rhetoric of resistance, the aspects of authority, identity, and agency are central in the process of the analysis.

Though based on the classic rhetorical tradition, new rhetoric emphasizes the analytical side in the art of persuasion, with less emphasis on style and articulation. With emphasis on persuasion through text, the relationship between text and new rhetoric is in many ways goal oriented. Further, the texts are interpreted within the frameworks of their timely and sociocultural context. (Mäntynen & Sääskilahti 2012, 194-198.) In practice, the new rhetoric approach emphasizes the analytical and descriptive sites of the analysis (Kakkuri-Knuuttila 1998, 233–235). However, as Pigrum (2008, 793) points out, rather than a direct method for qualitative analysis, rhetoric serves better as a tool to amplify the researcher's thought process towards possible articulations of knowledge, stylistic representations, and the production of argumentative structures. In this understanding, new rhetoric functions first and foremost as a tool in order to deepen and strengthen the analysis and gain new perspectives.

4.3 Analytical steps

The execution was followed through with hybrid of methods. I started the process by gathering the data in textual form. From there, I moved on to comprehensively familiarizing myself with the data by simultaneously listening to the music whilst reading the lyrics in written form. I proceeded to systematically analyse of the data with the tool of coding. The coding process of combined elements of deductive and inductive coding. (Alasuutari 2011, 30-31; Eskola et al. 1998, 153). That is, the process was conducted in an interaction with the theoretical framework and the data. Intersectionality provided a structural framework in the process of coding. Coding in this context served as a tool to provide encoded notes, and further to re-construct and organize, and finally provide new interpretations of the data (Eskola et al. 1998, 153).

I started by coding out the data under different coding units in order to reduce the data according to my primary observations. These units function as primary observations and categorizations. Such unites were, for example, expressions on brands, hair, cheating, and so on. I then moved on to reorganize the coded data by placing the coding units under different themes. (Tuomi & Sarasjärvi 2019, 104-105.) These themes were informed by the framework of intersectionality hence, a priori themes of gender, sexuality, class, race, and ethnicity. Next, the coding units were reorganized in the process of abstraction, the connection of the theory to the data in order to elevate the process of knowledge formation (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 123-125, 133). Such types were expressions on "moral obliquity" and "aesthetics", for example. This process was executed to facilitate the discussion between the theory and the data. This

practice helped me to thoroughly familiarize myself with the data to better inform my close readings facilitated by the critical lens of intersectionality and rhetorical analysis.

I then moved on to the process of close reading. I further decided to divide this process to a) consider the data as whole according to the thematization above and b) to provide a thoroughly close reading on the key text *Brujas*. In my consideration, this was the most illustrative and insightful approach towards the analysis. Whereas the first part considers the messages of resistance throughout the album in more general, the in-depth analysis showcases the complexity and multilayered nature of resistance expressed. Although all the themes discussed in the chapter five are also present in Brujas, I argue that the division facilitates the overall readability and the structuring of the this, and further is better representative of the data.

4.4 Data collection and selection

The data of this study consists of the lyrics of Princess Nokia's *1992 Deluxe* (2017) album. Due to timely limits, considering the complete body of work from Princess Nokia would have been nearly an impossible task. I chose to consider her sophomore album mainly due to its release time. I argue that *1992 Deluxe* is part of the zeitgeist in hip-hop, that made contemporary queer popstar Lil Nas X's existence in the realm of mainstream possible. Although the analysis was initially conducted of the album as whole, the closer readings are primarily focused on three songs:

- *Bart Simpson*
- *Tomboy*
- *Brujas*

I argue that these songs formed the key texts showcasing intersectional rhetoric of resistance presented throughout the album. In this understanding, the reading is provided primarily from selected samples of designated key texts from the album. However, in chapter five considering the album as whole, some examples are provided outside the three songs. This is especially significant in the chapter 5.4 discussing hip-hop as a subversive style, as the samples are collected throughout the whole album.

Instead of exploring a variety of contemporary rappers, I chose to consider simply one artist. From multiple marvelous artists to choose from, my focus on one artist was first and foremost guided by the timely and spatial limits regarding this thesis. Like mentioned earlier, the subject of the study has not been researched to great extent before. Hence, readily constructed and neatly gathered data did not exist. In this understanding, simply selecting a case to consider the topic appeared both appropriate and manageable option.

Unapologetically outspoken feminist, Princess Nokia's *1992 Deluxe* album provided a fruitful data for the analysis. Engell (2020) argues that certain texts appear to "capture the imagination of a nation or a culture". Such speeches often employ popular strategies of the era, such as reiteration of phrases and logic backed up by entire social movements or political coalitions. (Engell 2020.) My selection of Princess Nokia's *1992 Deluxe* was guided by this notion that certain cultural products exist in the forefront of social movements, further encapsulating central ideologies and sentiments of the time. Further, Feminist rhetor Jacqueline Royster (2017) has urged shifting the legitimate western elite male rhetor in favor of the non-normative subjects and sites. Centralizing afro-indigenous queer woman rapper Princess Nokia as the rhetor marks as my humble contribution towards shifting the hegemonic center of academic rhetorical studies.

The lyrics in textual form were gathered from the website *Genius*, formerly known as *Rap Genius*. The site's legitimacy is accentuated by the popular music streaming service *Spotify*, which has included viewing lyrics through *Genius* whilst using their services. The data consists altogether of 16 songs and it was originally collected in spring of 2018. Further, I familiarized myself with numerous online articles and interviews as contextual background. Although not a part of my formal analysis, the interviews affect the ways the audience receives messages implied in the art.

Another important aspect was the independent status of the artist. As Perry (2004, 185) points out, record labels have immense control over the ultimate cultural product, hence what becomes represented and in what manner. Many authors (e.g. Perry 2004, Pough 2004, Ogbar 2007) have asserted out that creative artistic expression and agency of certain emcees, in these cases discussing women, have been restricted and policed by record companies. This became a significant factor, as previously discussed, a large number of record labels are predominately financed, owned and led by white people (Obasi 2020). I argue that existing outside the forces

of major record companies increases the possibilities for artistic creation and agency, ultimately facilitating the expressions of resistance.

4.4.1 Introduction to the artist: Princess Nokia

Destiny Frasqueri (b. 1992) aka Princess Nokia (she/her) is a New York based Afro-indigenous rapper of Puerto Rican Taíno[2], Cuban and West African descent. Outspoken intersectional feminist, the politics of Princess Nokia's art can be considered starting with her name. In a masculine field dominated by androcentric discourse, her emcee name reflects both gender and class consciousness (Ogbar 2007, 78). Nokia being the only phone accessible to her due to her financial status when growing up (Madden 2017). Inhabiting foster homes after losing her mother to AIDS, Princess Nokia draws a lot of her inspiration and empowerment from the complexity of her heritage (Petridis 2017).

Princess Nokia is known for "creating feminist spaces" with her performances. During her live performances she re-organizes her audience in a way that prioritizes marginalized people, by asking them to come in close proximity to her, while white, able-bodied, heterosexual men are designated to the back of the audience. In the beginning of her show, Princess Nokia suggests that people who rarely get advantages in their daily lives move to the front. She hence physically reorganizes the space to centralize bipoc, queer, disable people, and girls, while ushering people with privilege to physically move to the margins of the room. An idea inherited from the riot grrrl movement and feminist punk band Bikini Kill, placing "girls to the front". is something hip-hop spaces necessarily need (Box 2019). Hence, she actively subverts the existing power relations. "I want girls to feel free; I want them to feel like they're empowered, liberated feminists (Madden 2017). Princess Nokia is fully committed to providing a space, where the societies power relations can be subverted. She contemplates that her show is a physical place where girls and women can claim space in the way men normally do (Box 2019).

Nokia has named "queer culture" among her central influences. Further, pioneer woman rappers such as TLC, MC Lyte, Queen Latifah are among her inspirations. She has contemplated on much belonging, and even more so embodying, hip-hop: "I'm classic hip-hop, I'm old hip-hop – albeit with new-skool flow, identity and relatability mixed in. I'm as a part

[2] Indigenous people of Caribia, allegedly the first people to encounter with Cristopher Columbus in 1492.

of that world as anybody else – sometimes even more so”. (Madden 2017.) Princess Nokia has also weighed on traits of sexism and misogyny in hip-hop. Regardless of certain traits she does not agree with, Nokia has asserted that she will not speak ill about the culture as “hip-hop is a beautiful thing” (ibid.). Nokia has remained independent due to male dominance in the industry, “wanting to dictate or surmise” her work and artistry (LGBT Sentinel 2017). As an independent artist with extensive mainstream following, challenging stereotypes and remaining in control over the artistic processes are central to her (Box 2019).

Nokia is acutely aware of the many forms of oppression marginalized groups face, talking in interviews about her ”beautiful socio-economic awareness and identity” (Petridis 2017), she has also on critiqed gentrification as a form of “modern colonization” (LGBT Sentinel 2017). (Petridis 2017). Further, she considers exhibiting dark historic themes (such as genocide) in her art as her “duty”. To her, connecting with one’s roots enables brown women to understand their potential and further break stigmas. (Dyer & Mandell 2016.)

Her sophomore effort *1992 Deluxe* encapsulates many of the themes discussed, and thus works as an excellent example of how intersectional resistance is expressed in contemporary hip-hop music.

4.5 Researcher disposition

Hirsijärvi et al. (2009, 24) point out that the very topic chosen is an ethical choice in its own right. That said, as a white, predominantly heterosexual cis-woman I acknowledge my position as the conductor of this study confined, and possibly problematic. I was born in the same year “intersectionality” as a term was coined in the world of academia. It happened to be the very same year MTV included hip-hop in their repertoire of musical genres played on their channel (Chang 2005). Growing up in predominantly white, suburban town in Finland with working-class parents, the academic world and hip-hop culture were not exactly my contextual background. However, technically, I have never existed in the world without these two.

Throughout the research process, I strived to remain thoroughly self-reflexive. I constantly returned to ask myself the same questions. Will I be able to provide culturally relevant and accurate analysis of the topic? Is it possible from my position? Am I simply occupying and taking space where I am not needed, ultimately causing more damage? These were among the

numerous questions I continuously considered, and time and time again re-considered throughout the conduction process. That said, I recognize my position as the conductor of this study as limited. In this understanding, comprehensive theoretical and socio-cultural contextualization became emphasized in the process of conduction.

5 ANALYSIS *1992 DELUXE*

This chapter discusses Nokia's gendered, raced, and classed rhetoric of resistance as whole. The following reading is conducted primarily from the songs *Bart Simpson, Tomboy*, and *Saggy Denim,* although some other examples also become highlighted from the album.

5.1 Transgressive messages on gender, race, and class

Significant in the album *1992 Deluxe* was Princess Nokia's transgressive constructions of gender, race, and class. She attributes value to counter-hegemonic ways of doing gender, race, and class, while challenging stereotypical roles and expectations associated with those categories. Several instances throughout *1992 Deluxe* suggest Princess Nokia reverting the power dynamic based on white middle-class construction of respectability. Throughout the album, Princess Nokia strives to transgress the concept of respectability. In the following chapters, I shall provide an analysis of lyrical resistance, as they come expressed through the concepts of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and class in *1992 Deluxe*. As discussed previously, the analysed is conducted combining critical lens of intersectionality and methodological tools of (new) rhetorical analysis.

5.1.2 *Always cheat on ' yo test* – Dangerous class and respectability

Among the central messages expressed throughout the album was resistance towards the normative construction of morality and respectability. Throughout *1992 Deluxe,* Princess Nokia repeatedly resists classed white middle-class morality, sensibilities and expectations. As discussed previously, Skegg (2002; 2004) argues that the value attached to the working-class self is a matter of moral evaluation, in which respectability functions as a tool of distinction. The resistance towards white-middle class respectability becomes evident in the opening song, *Bart Simpson*. Throughout the song, Nokia resists both hegemonic white middle-class expectation with her illegible construction of the classed self, hence ultimately challenging the idea of respectability as a desirable quality to her. The chorus of this song offers unruly gender imagery, while questioning the use-value of middle-class morality.

“Bart Simpson with the shits
Ay caramba, man, you can go and suck my dick
Skatin' down the street, being mischievous as shit” (Bart Simpson)

With her allusion to Bart Simpson, Princess Nokia identifies with the popular fictional character known for his “mischievous as shit” antics, unwillingness to obey the rules, and his resistance towards authority. Conard (2013, 60) describes Bart Simpson as “the Nietzschean ideal”, as “the free spirit; the person who rejects traditional morality, traditional virtues; the person who embraces the chaos of the world and gives style to his character”. Here, with likening herself with Bart Simpson, Nokia is suggesting similar character traits. As an opening song on the album, she immediately presents herself as an anti-authorian, yet likable, figure to the audience. Further, Bart Simpson is widely known popular cultural figure. With this allusion, Nokia evokes senses of nostalgia, commonality, and likeability in the audience. The trope of Bart Simpson does not require extensive or site-specific knowledge[3]. With this commonly known and approachable allusion, Nokia makes the listener feel welcome.

However, the next passages have the effect of challenging the audience's possible preconceived notions of Nokia’s respectability. The effect is reinforced by Nokia’s use of Bart Simpson's catchphrase “ay caramba” connected with heteronormative, gendered diction “suck my dick”. This creates a hyporbola, a commonly used in advertisement and slogans. Nokia is expressing her resistance towards heteronormative expectations of respectability as well as the value attached to them, however in an approachable and non-threatening manner.

In the context of the USA, evaluations related to perceived respectability are mediated by class, race, gender, and sexuality. Pre-existing racial biases interacting with Nokia’s classed position as an “inner city orphan”, further connected her rebellious nature all function together constructing Nokia “rotten apple to the core”. Due to the country’s establishment as a site of white supremacy, lack of perceived respectability may disadvantage black and brown people more than the white working-class in the USA. The exact same behavior often leads to contrasting social outcomes. Coded as a white boy, Bart Simpson is perceived harmless, generally liked and free of any serious consequences for his juvenile tricksterism. Bart Simpson is able to act in a mischievous manner, without having to fear for his safety. By identifying

[3] This is of course in the Western context

with him Nokia asks her audience whether society would respond to her lack of respectability similarly, given her working class, afro-indigenous background. The audience is led to consider how Bart Simpson's traits might be evaluated differently if embodied by her.

"So I say, "yo, fuck this lesson" (Bart Simpson)
"This as good as it gon' get, always cheat on yo' tests" (Bart Simpson)

With these expressions, Nokia continues to subvert white middle class normative understandings of morality and respectability. Additionally, the purpose of this expression is to lead the audience to question the very foundations the American nation is built on: the idea that working hard and obeying the rules leads to upward social mobility. "This as good as it gon' get" is a statement acknowledging the unlikelihood of such mobility given her marginalized identities. That is, institutions often embody and reinforce dominant ideas of morality and respectability. Nokia expresses resistance towards this form of oppression by urging her audience to break the rules of an institution that embodies it: the educational system. In the USA, the quality of basic education is tied to class (and thus race), as is access to higher education. "Always cheat on yo' test" works as a powerful call to action, one that invites the audience to actively resist such oppressive institutions and the standards of respectability they enforce. Ultimately, she is denouncing and resisting the myth of the USA as a land of opportunity by explicitly contradicting it, while evoking a sense of nihilism and transgression in her audience.

"Lie, lie, lie, lie, lie
If that don't work then
Deny, deny, deny" (Bart Simpson)

With this statement, Nokia is proposing her own set of alternative operational models. She is subverting honesty and sincerity as the universal morally respectable ideal. The repetition of the words "lie" and "deny" is a stylistic choice, further creating emphasis to her idea that may be intuitively rejected by the audience. By repeating her morally questionable statement, Nokia facilitates the reception of the message. For her white audience, this provokes a question: why someone in Nokia's position would benefit more from the acts of lie[ing] and deny[ing], rather than sincerely telling the truth?

Instead of conforming to oppressive moral and behavioral standards in the song Bart Simpson, Princess Nokia instead proposes new ones designed to better suit her needs as a working class

afro-indegenous queer woman. She questions the value ascribed to the white, middle-class construction of respectability, as well as the institutions through which it manifests itself. Despite the many transgressive elements in the lyrics of this song, Nokia manages to win her audience over by weaving them into her personal story of growing up as an orphan in New York. She successfully re-evaluates traits lacking in conventional respectability by associating them with a popular fictional character (Bart Simpson), and also by showcasing their utility to marginalized people like herself. By her overt subversion of respectability, Princess Nokia expresses rejection of oppressive hegemonic moral standards. Mixing this subversive message in with the story of her growing up as an orphan makes it more compelling, and makes her appear more sympathetic to the audience.

5.1.3 *My little titties and my phat belly* – Undesirability and gender

Nokia's resistance towards the normative notions of morality and respectability became evident in gendered forms through multiple references to subversive figures. Most commonly, these figures were represented by feminine archetypes, in the form of fictional characters and hip-hop cultural figures, feminine and masculine, contemplated in more detail shortly. Hall et al. (1978, 352) calls the antithetical construction of "respectable" "undesirable". Skeggs (2004) notes that certain types of femininity can be attached to cultural capital. However, historically, the symbolically legitimate manner of expressing femininity is tied to a very particular form of "middle-class moral femininity". In this understanding, the working-class becomes a site of danger, sexuality, and immorality. Respectability then becames the sole possibility in creating exchange value for the working-class. (Skeggs 2004, 16.) Nokia's unorthodox doing of raced and classed gender is considered oppositional to moral respectability, and thus an undesirable way of doing gender. Although historically connected to moral evaluation of black people specifically (Hall 1978, 352), Nokia's identification with the undesirable ways of doing gender and sexuality both included and transcended explicit racial implications. In this understanding, among the central strategies subversion was expressed in *1992 Deluxe* was was what I refer to as "undesirable allusions".

"I been hangin' out with prostitutes and fiend" (Goth Kid)
"Versace, I chill with Medusa" (Flava)
"Good witches I fuck with, bad bitches we run shit" (Brujas)

The data included numerous and repeated allusions to numerous women and feminine figures, whose gendered identity could be characterized "undesirable" by the dominant moral evaluations. In the first line from the song *Goth Kid*, Nokia is identifying "prostitutes and fiends" as her references group. By positioning herself in close proximity with these figures, she suggests similarity of character traits between herself and these undesirable archetypes. Aligning herself with these images, she is takes negative values attached to these personhoods and transforms them to a source of power. Sex workers, Medusa, and witches all represent feminine archetypes shunned, feared, and persecuted by the white patriarchy. With associating with these figures, Nokia is expressing resistance towards the patriarchal power structures, as she presents these figures approachable associates of hers. This in turn leads the audience to renegotiate their own evaluation processes towards this morally shunned figures and the undesirable traits attached to these identities in the realm of public discussions.

Medusa is a mythological figure whose gaze turns men to stone. Through a critical intersectional lens, Medusa can be understood as a feminine archetype resisting the oppressive and objectifying male gaze. Associating closely with such a figure, Nokia is identifying Medusa's resistive characteristics and assigning them with positive value, as desirable. Further, sex work is not only antithetical to respectability in the context of dominant societal context, an immoral way of doing gender and sexuality, but also "immoral earning", marked as an illegimate form of making a living (Hall et al. 1978, 352). Evaluations of morality and immorality are central tools in value inscription. By associating herself with prostitutes and fiend, Nokia is reclaiming undesirable and unrespectable forms of doing gender, as well as recognizing these forms as valuable to her. Instead of dehumanizing characters such as sex workers, she expresses how she stands with them in solidarity as a statement of resistance.

"Reading comics in forbidden planet
I go home to a place of fantasy outside my own
Always been a loner, never had a solid home
I really like Marvel 'cause characters look just like me
And women don't have roles that make them look too sexually" (Bart Simpson)

In this passage, Nokia recalls a time she would habitually visit the comic shop *Forbidden Planet* to read comics and mentally escape the physical conditions of her lived reality. Beyond the literal meaning, an allegorical one is also implied. This reading suggests Nokia yearning for an alternative reality of the one she is currently inhabiting. She describes "place of fantasy"

analogous with “home”, a place where one is valued, seen, and safe. However, her fantasy is a location of something “forbidden”. Next, she states to “really like Marvel 'cause characters look just like me, And women don't have roles that make them look too sexually”. This is an anecdotal recollection of how young Nokia found non-objectifying representations of non-white women and queer-coded characters through an interest in comic books, an interest typically associated masculine. In addition to yearning for representation free from male gaze, Nokia also takes ownership over her own unruly sexuality, and acknowledges its negative evaluation while growing up: “A nerdy girl with nymphomaniac tendencies, Everyone's offended but nobody here offended me”. This elegantly highlights both the oversexualized images of women in the media, as well as young person's need to explore their sexuality freely and safely, without the threat of negative social outcomes. Despite objectifying hypersexualization by the media, femine sexual expressions outside the control of patriarchy is considered dangerous and offensive, especially when it does not cater to the male gaze.

”Who that is, hoe?
That girl is a tomboy!

That girl is a tomboy!

That girl is a tomboy!” (Tomboy)

”With my little titties and my phat belly
I could take your man if you finna let me
It's a guarantee that he won't forget me” (Tomboy)

”Little titties, I'm so damn pretty
Staircase and a cracked philly
Little titties and a phat kitty” (Tomboy)

In the song *Tomboy,* Princess Nokia poses a hypophora. She proposes a question: “who that is hoe?”, to which she instantly provides an answer to: “that girl is a tomboy”. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as “a girl who enjoys rough, noisy activities traditionally associated with boys”. Further in the song “Tomboy”, Princess Nokia discusses the value of aesthetics that challenge conventional beauty and respectability. By describing her body in terms traditionally considered both desirable and undesirable (“little titties” and “phat belly”). Conventional beauty standards catered to the male gaze evaluate “little titties” and “phat bellies” as undesirable, yet she is able to attract men and book high fashion modeling shoots as ”a Calvin Klein model”. Initially, Nokia appears to promote forms of self-expression free from the oppressive standards of white, heteronormative patriarchal hegemony. With the statement “I could take your man if you finna let me. It’s a guarantee that he won’t forget me”. Nokia asserts sexual power over the dominant agents of the patriarchy. This subverts the idea of

feminine sexuality being subservient to patriarchal needs and desires. In this passage, sexuality is not a matter of desire to her, but rather her sexual attractiveness is an assertation of power objectifying the normative subject, men.

”You come to my party, you gon' meet my army
A room full of girls and we actin' real rowdy” (Tomboy)

Here, army is a metaphor for highly organized and hierarchical forms of hegemonic power. With this statement, the aforementioned understanding of an army is subverted. By mobilizing an army of disorderly girls, Nokia rejects the dominant heteronormative, traditionally masculine and patriarchal institution. Instead of hierarchical and organized, her army is constructed fluid and unruly. Mapping the history of feminist rhetoric, Glenn and Lunsford (2017, 585) assert that harnessing the power of collective action was indeed a crucial strategy employed by many second wave (black) feminism rhetors. In this understanding, Nokia creates an appeal to unity in her audience’s mind. She evokes a need to belong, an urgency to join her army of rowdy girls.

With multiple undesirable expressions on gender and sexuality, Nokia evokes a sense of resistance towards normative expectation of compulsory heterosexuality (e.g. Cameron & Gulick 2003), and heteronormative ways of doing gender. With her illegible antics of doing gender, Nokia simultaneously resists the value system of the dominant white culture while adhering to queerness.

5.1.4 *90s mami dressin’ like Aaliyah* – Hip-hop’s subversive style

Although often disregarded as superficial and insignificant by many, fashion and clothing form an important and highly visual dimension of our lived reality. Further, style forms an inevitable part in mapping out the rhetorics of popular culture (Brummet 2008, 12). Fashion and clothing are inherently incorporated with the political, economic, philosophical, and social occurrences of their time. In many ways, clothing is the physical embodiment of the contemporary culture and values of our societies. (Ulrich 2020.) By positioning hip-hop aesthetics and styles as central expressions throughout the album, Nokia is asserting her own standards on excellence and good taste. In addition, her homages to transgressive black and brown style icons and

aesthetics reinforce her messages of resistance towards heteronormative and eurocentric standards of beauty.

"Saggy denim, 1995, I be
All in 'em, L.L on the side" (Saggy Denim)

"Big pants and some scuffed shoes" (Tomboy)

Within hip-hop, style and aesthetics have long been a central form of communication and resistance. Visual signifiers, such as "big pants" and "saggy denim", rooted in black working-class culture have historically been attached with negative symbolic value. Previously ridiculed and marginalized, hip-hop's visual aesthetic and styles are currently being appropriated by luxury brands, and the fashion industry in general. These arenas have historically been dominated by Eurocentric beauty standards, thus this shift in power exemplifies the social and cultural impact hip-hop has had. Despite the immense impact, black designers and pioneers of style are often left without the credit when their ideas have been appropriated. (White 2018, 14.)

"Gold hoops and that name chain
Timb boots and like, four rings
Missy Elliott, can't stand the rain" (Tomboy)

"90's mami dressin' like Aaliyah, quite apparently" (Bart Simpson)

In the passage from *Tomboy,* Nokia lists several black cultural signifiers such as "gold hoops", "name chain", "Timb boots" and excessive amount of jewelry "like, four rings". Followed by an allusion to 1990s and 2000s avant-gardist style icon Missy Elliott, Nokia creates a visual image in the head of the audience. When considering the rhetorics of style and aesthetics, the role of the audience becomes significant, as meanings are evaluated and attached to these visual signifiers (Willis 2009, 246-247). Perhaps with the most frequency Nokia is alluding to the brand "Baby Phat", the iconic clothing brand established by Kimora Lee-Simmons. An epitome of the 1990s and 2000s black feminine aesthetic, Nokia is paying homage and crediting black creative styles feminine, masculine, and those binary transcending.

Princess Nokia centralizes and celebrates black women's aesthetic styles as reference points throughout the album. Aesthetics, especially connected with gender and sexuality, have been central in negotiating spaces for women in hip-hop, and thus central to the processes of creating resistance (Pough 2004, 155-156). Hill (2004, 109) points out that aligning oneself with certain trends positions the person in context with certain time and place, and especially in connection with hip-hop, connecting themselves within that reference group. Popular artists such as Missy Elliott and Aaliyah have been in the forefront in creating the ”tomboy style”, and further pushing forward the value of the black creativity and aesthetic. Elliott has been recognized as a disruptor of heteronormative patriarchal constructions on gender through her work in hip-hop (Lane 2011).

This idea is also conveyed by allusions to other subversive style icons of hip-hop and black culture, known for defying gender norms and expectations. In addition to Missy Elliott and Aaliyah, Nokia alludes to masculine style icons such as Andre3000, and Dennis Rodman, two outcasts in their own way who are known for their immaculate transgressive styles. By both directly referring as well as alluding to the late 90s and early 00s style icons Elliot, Aaliyah, Rodman, and Andre, she communicates the idea of utilizing aesthetics as an effective form of strategy. (e.g. Brummett 2008, 17). Especially the visionary trendsetters Elliott and Rodman were often frown upon during their era, as stylistically, they existed ahead of their time. With these allusions, Nokia claims her position as a creative ahead of er time icon who does what she wants, regardless of what people have to say.

In addition of racial and classed dimensions of style, clothing is an important factor in the production and reception of gender (Reilly & Barry 2020, 1). In this understanding, I argue that Nokia subverts heteronormative expectations on gender and sexuality most notably through her aesthetic allusion. With her "shapeshifting" styles, she subverts the presumption of women rappers having to appropriate either hypersexual feminine aesthetic or confirm fully to masculine coded hip-hop style. In her visual rhetoric on style, Nokia surpasses both and frame, and creates both, and, and in-between frame. In this understanding, Nokia is queering the notions of style, resulting in visual resistance towards heteronormative gender and sexuality expectations.

"My mama she raised me good, I'm chic but I'm always hood" (Excellent)

In this passage, Nokia posits the “chic” and “hood”. For the white, middle-class member of an audience this might appear as a juxtaposition on the behalf of Nokia. By asserting being ”chic but always hood”, she places two words with seemingly contradicting meanings attached to them. However, depicting the terms side by side, Princess Nokia redefines the significance of eloquence, hence subverting the dominant definition of “chic”.

In the song *Mine* Princess Nokia contemplates on the politics of hair. The intro of the song introduces oblivious, curious yet ignorant, white woman “confused” asking ”is that a weave? Is that your real hair?”. To which Nokia claps back by asserting “No, you can't touch my fuckin hair! You ain't got no manners!”. Then, she moves on to the song that is an ode to various traditional hairstyles popular among women of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. As Perry (2004, 178) has asserted “hair plaited, twisted, or curled” is a signifier of cultural pride and celebration. In addition to cultural celebration, she also confronts the subtle form of racism, microaggressions, to her white audience.

“Please do not ask me or any Black or Brown women if our hair is real or not
If it’s a wig, a weave, extensions, braids, don’t fuckin' ask
It’s very rude, it’s extremely personal to be put on the spot like that
How we choose to wear our hair is our personal choice, ok?
We bought it, it’s ours, so have some manners and keep your curiosity to yourself” (Mine)

Nokia politely, yet firmly, addresses her white audience to educate them on the topic of hair, its politics, and the matter of consent. She makes a strong case contemplating on why asking about black and brown women’s hair is “extremely personal” and “very rude”. She appeals the white audience, to whom she may appear as a curiosity, to “have some manners” and to “please --- don’t fucking ask”. In connecting the educational outro to the otherwise up-beat celebratory song, Nokia remains true to hip-hop’s cultural tradition of the songs as both forms of entertainment and tools of education.

5.2 Paradox and other contradictions

In this chapter, expressions in contradiction with the above mentioned strategies of subversion are discussed. Walcott (2013, 171) argues that hip-hop connected with queer ought to resist market forces by providing “anticapitalist critique and or antagonism.” Although primarily presenting an author that rejects respectability and middle-class expectations for material

success, another approach is also suggested. Appearing contradictory to the initial mischievous tomboy rhetor introduced to the audience, themes of money, success, hard work, productivity, and grind are soon presented. Heavily implied throughout the album, to the extent where she "skipped meals and got no sleep", she glorifies "work[ing] hard at everything", hence enforcing the neoliberal understanding as an individual as the architect of their own faith. This suggests a familiar "rags to riches" trope in hip-hop (Harris 2014). By affirming to and embracing capitalist principles, Princess Nokia alludes to the popular trope of "hip-hop entrepreneur" a strategy of articulating authenticity in hip-hop (Ogbar 2007, 177).

A distortion to Nokia's empowered feminism is that occasionally she appears to be affirming giving value to the male gaze. By stating that "I can take you man" Nokia gives value to being sexually desired by men. Although more of an assertation of power in a boastful manner, this aspect still ought to be discussed when paradoxes within the data are discussed. Bailey (2013, 187-195) have asserted that patriarchal, misogynist, and capitalist themes often remain popular also in the lyrical content of artists queering the genre. However, these artists are still contributing reimagining the standards of "what hip-hop can be". (Bailey 2013, 187-195.)

6 *BRUJAS* – ANTICOLONIAL CRITIQUE

A shining example of the album *1992 Deluxe*, Princess Nokia's resistance towards white hegemonic heteronormative middle-class culture becomes perhaps the most clear in the lyrics of *Brujas*. In addition to asserting anti-colonial critique, she alludes to unruly images on gender, while asserting ideas on dangerous class. In many ways, the song is an appeal towards decolonization.

In this understanding, Princess Nokia is "transcending the conventional notions of race and ethnicity while simultaneously celebrating, and bringing attention to, those very cultural markers that give race and ethnicity meaning" (Ogbar 2007, 47).

[Intro]
"I'm the supreme, I'm the supreme"

Princess Nokia opens the track by introducing herself as the speaker with a powerful statement. This introduction is also significant, as it encapsulates many of the ideas expressed throughout the rest of the song.She immediately asserts herself as "the supreme". By claiming her position as "the supreme", she positions herself as the divine being. Further, "the supreme" is a term used to describe the leader of a witches coven. This reading is supported by Princess Nokia's background as a known practitioner of Santería, the traditional afro-indigenous religion, that she considers "sacred and divine" (Dyer & Mandel 2016). Connected with the heritage and identity of the speaker, the statement forms a subversion of the Christian construct of God as a white, patriarchal figure. In addition to forming a link to Christianity by claiming to be "the supreme", Nokia also names herself the leader of a witches coven. She asserts herself as a divine and powerful leader within a community, qualities stereotypically linked to traditional white heteronormative patriarchal leader. By making reference to a witches coven, a sense of sororal solidarity is evoked. Witches have traditionally been feared, demonized, and persecuted in the white patriarchal historic context. Thus, by positioning herself as the "most gifted and powerful" witch, the supreme, she asserts a direct opposition to the established hegemonic order.

[Verse 1]
"We is them ghetto witches, speakin' in tongue bitches
Fall on the floor
, got sage on the door

We is them ghetto witches, speakin' in tongue b itches
Fall on the floor, got sage on the door

We is them ghetto witches, speakin' in tongue bitches
Fall on the floor, got sage on the door

We is them ghetto witches, speakin' in tongue bitches
Fall on the floor, got sage on the door"

The pronoun in plural enforces the above mentioned in-group solidarity. This ratifies the interpretation that Nokia talks not only about herself, but also represents a community of like-minded "ghetto witches", a strategy employed in the more general tradition of black feminist literature. She further ties together her identities as "witch" and "ghetto". Rose (2008, 5) defines "ghetto" as "a systematic matrix of racial, spatial, and class discrimination that has defined black city life since the first half of the twentieth century". What is notable here however, Nokia does not construct a victim narrative. Rather than contemplating the oppression of her people in the hands of white patriarchal supremacy, her approach is instead celebratory.

In the context of Northern America, the failings of "ghettos" can be traced back to structural inequalities enforced by policies designed by and to benefit the white patriarchy. "Ghetto" can also be considered as a quality tied to personhood. Harris (2014) asserts that when connected with a personhood, the phrase "ghetto" describes behavior considered distasteful and unacceptable. The term "ghetto" is an often derogatory term that evokes images of impoverished communities primarily inhabited by black and brown people. By attaching her divine self to "ghetto", the speaker reconstructs the interpretation of the word. Nokia gives it value with self-identification, portraying it as a desirable quality. Location based referencing is also a popular method of articulating class in the contemporary (Skeggs 2004, 15). Hence, this further works as a statement of class consciousness, as the word is as inseparable from the construct of race as it is from socioeconomic class in America. By calling herself "ghetto" Nokia conveys to the audience that she embodies the troubled history, culture and aesthetics of

black and brown people in America. Describing herself as a witch in conjunction with the word ghetto evokes the rich tradition of black feminist traditions born from her culture. Further, witchcraft can be seen as a resistive form of femininity, subversive towards and beyond the control of white hegemonic patriarchy. Ultimately, the audience is led to believe that the speaker's seemingly disadvantageous background is in fact the source of her untethered power that she connects to black and brown femininity. Her ancestors and spirituality informs her resistance to the established order while destigmatizing qualities connected to black and brown working class women.

In the next line, she further specifies the kind of witch she is: “speakin in tongue bitch[es]”. When viewed through the lens of intersectionality, this deceptively simple statement yields a myriad of interpretations. Primarily, “speakin in tongue” appears as a direct reference to a religious phenomenon linked to christianity, in which one uncontrollably channels the voice of divine (Colman 2009). Here, Nokia is further contemplating on the idea that her message has a divine source and appears incomprehensible to an uninitiated audience. To an onlooker unfamiliar with the phenomenon this would sound like incoherent gibberish. Speaking in tongues can however also take a form in which the language is a recognized one, yet previously unknown to the speaker (Johns et al. 2003, 413). Considering “speaking in tongues” through its duality, Nokia’s addressing two audiences simultaneously becomes further supported. By channeling the words of divine, she addresses the one’s to whom already know the language spoken (her peers), whilst sounding entertaining and beautiful gibberish to others (her white audience).

Speaking in tongues also creates an allusion to multilingualism. A metaphoric interpretation of the statement invokes association with the strategy of “code-switching”, a tool employed by racialized people navigating white spaces and cultural context. Further, switching codes serves a communal purpose in creating solidarity between the speaker and the audience. Gardner-Chloros (2009) notes that switching the dialect highlights the preferred audience of the message, while referring to the common heritage establishes the close bond between the speaker and the audience. Ultimately, this strategy functions as a strategy of identity formation and an expression of group identity. (Gardner-Chloros 2009, 4-5.) Nokia is fluent in the language of the dominant white hegemonic culture,“ghetto” culture, and the cultural traditions of her ancestors. The value of a set of skills one possesses is arguably connected to the ‘self’. (Skeggs 2004). In the case of multilingualism, when linked to the racial category of whiteness,

multilingualism is coded as a sign of sophistication, intellect, and culturally valuable. In contrast, when linked to black and brown identities it becomes a sign of otherness and distinction from white cultural hegemony. Nokia alludes to this contradiction while paying homage to her diverse background. However, she appears to move with ease between these worlds traditionally segregated from one another.

Furthermore, 'speaking in tongue' can also be read as a non-verbal form of language communicated through visual cues. Although often dismissed as superficial, style and aesthetics serve a persuasive strategy of communication. Brummett (2008) defines style as "the manipulation of meanings connected to the aesthetic dimension of public presentation". Inseparably connected with one another, factors such as clothing, decor or style of grooming are not insignificant selections. (Brummett 2008, 17.) Rather, they are choices manufactured to serve a certain purpose. Communication in the form of style and aesthetic are employed by the African diaspora for the transmission of relevant cultural information, in forms such as hairstyles, clothing, dance, and various forms of music and arts.

"Talk shit, we can cast spells"

This is a potent statement which resists the idea of feminine fragility, passivity, and subordination in the face of oppression. Instead of idly accepting the misconceptions targeted at her and her peers, Nokia asserts agency by the response of 'cast[ing] spells'. 'Talk shit' here refers to negative stereotypes that the members of dominant culture attach to (especially working-class) black and brown individuals. Here, Nokia promises to retaliate if and when confronted by such misconceptions. The statement in this understanding can be interpreted as a warning to the members of dominant culture. Instead of presenting a submissive and respectable response, she amplifies the fear of unfamiliar 'other' in the minds of members of the dominant culture by clarifying the consequences of their actions.

long weaves, long nails
Corn rows, pig tails, baby fathers still in jail

Next, Nokia lists several aesthetic styles attributed to African diaspora cultures that have historically been deemed disrespectable, immoral and distasteful by the dominant culture. (Harris 2014). Next, she mentions "baby fathers still in jail" illustrating one of the many stark

realities of the black American experience: mass incarceration of the black male. By placing black aesthetic styles in close proximity with, and followed by, 'baby fathers in jail', Nokia implies connection, or even causality between the two. Rabaka (2011, 23) argues that style is inherently connected with the freedom of self-expression due to the fact that aesthetic freedom preceded social and political freedom for black people in the United States. However, freedom of aesthetic expression does not equal individuals being freed from the potential consequences of those stylistic choices. Rose (2008) points out the long historic tradition of considering black youth styles as societal threats. In the minds of hegemonic white America, black American styles have signified "black cultural dysfunction, sexual excess, and violence" and "dangerous invasions". (Rose 2008, 64-67.) For example, black hoodie on a black man may be a life threatening choice. In this understanding, stylistic and aesthetic choices form a political aspect of appearance (Steele 2018, 8-12).

Although historically devalued, members of the dominant white culture have been eager to misappropriate appealing novel qualities of black expressive cultures, while turning a blind eye to structural injustices faced by black people on a daily basis. The past three decades have seen popular mainstream culture adopting many of these styles. Contemporary fashion and styles represented in popular culture have indeed been immensely affected and inspired by the African Diaspora (White 2018, 11-13). Echoing Skeggs' (2004) understanding of creating value through the process of inscription, once accepted by the prominent and dominant culture, certain black forms of style become valued in connection with white middle-class personhood. Nokia's listing of black aesthetic signifiers also illustrates the speaker's intimate familiarity with and respect for black cultural forms of various kinds. She acknowledges both the aesthetic beauty as well as the ugly struggles faced by members of her culture.

"Good witches, I fuck with, bad bitches, we run shit"

The terms "good witches" and "bad bitches" can be interpreted as being synonymous and interchangeable. The speaker reconstructs the derogatory term "bitch", reclaiming it as a term of endearment and pride. This is illustrated by its close proximity to "good witches" which throughout this song has been used to symbolize sororal solidarity, black women empowerment, and intersectional resistance. In the context of hip-hop a "bad bitch" signifies an attractive and powerful woman with agency. The message of solidarity and empowerment is conveyed, and her objective, which is to "run shit", take back control and achieve self-

determination. In this passage Nokia is also subverting ideas of respectability and approval by the dominant culture. Bad bitches and good witches both represent threatening forms of feminine expression, considered threatening and dangerous in the eyes of the dominant white patriarchal order. Nokia is asserting dangerous forms of black femininity to assert dominance over gender, race, and class based hierarchies.

”Four bitches, four corners, North, East, West, South shit”

The speaker is once again making both a biblical reference (“four corners”) and a reference to traditions related to witchcraft. The four corners here symbolize the all-encompassing hegemonia of white christian patriarchy dominating the world. By situating powerful women (“four bitches”) in each of the corners of the world, Nokia is asserting power and control. She is unapologetically demanding and taking space. This statement can be read as the speaker’s attempt to replace the current hegemonic power structures with one based on matriarchy. The speaker is expressing her objective to gain agency and self-determination for her and her peers by renegotiating the established hegemonic power dynamic of gender, race and class.

”Good witches, I fuck with, hopped off of my broomstick”

Here Nokia once again uses the term good witches to describe like minded women who share her resistance towards the current established order. “Hopped off of my broomstick” can be interpreted as the speaker considering herself down to earth, relatable, not having her head in the clouds. Regardless of her success, she is not above the lived realities of marginalized people, instead she is immersed in the same environmental conditions as they are. The broomstick also evokes phallic imagery. Hence, hopping off of it can be read as a rejection of the dominant patriarchal order. Further, by hopping off the broomstick she not only rejects this form of control, but also the idea of America as a moral, sanitary society. This reading is supported by the fact that the earliest forms of reductive connections on the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality were produced through discourses on hygiene (McClintock 1995). Historically, whiteness has been constructed as an exclusionary racial category, further articulated through the idea of exclusion and purity. The “broomstick”, if taken to symbolize the white patriarchy, has provided a tool to sweep (whitewash, erase, reconstruct) inconvenient and dirty truths about America under the rug. Nokia refuses to brush off these inconvenient truths. Instead, she is exposing them to her audience.

”Orisha
, my altar”

Orishas are central spirits of Santería and Yoruba religious practices. Known practitioner of Santería, or Regla de Ocha, Nokia has addressed the fact that her ancestors had to hide their religious customs in fear of death (Dyer & Mandell 2016). Santería is a hybrid form of religious practices, rooted in both West African Yoruba religion and Iberian Catholicism. An outcome of masking Yoruba religious practices as Catholic in the new word, Santería is the outcome of the enslaved population’s attempt to continue practicing their religion. (Rodríguez-Mangual 2003 219-220.) Deeper understanding on the historic background of the religion reveals an interesting level to Nokia’s intersectional rhetoric of resistance, as Santería is the outcome of mixing Euro-centric and Afro-centric approaches. In this understanding, Nokia’s expression on the hybridity of her identities can be understood as a forceful declaration of postcolonial identity (see: Rodríguez-Mangual 2003, 219-220). This hybridity becomes blatantly expressed in the following verse.

”I'm that Black a-Rican bruja straight out from the Yoruba
And my people come from Africa diaspora, Cuba

And you mix that Arawak, that original people

I'm that Black Native American, I vanquish all evil
I'm that Black a-Rican bruja straight out from the Yoruba
And my ancestors Nigerian, my grandmas was brujas

And I come from an island and it's called Puerto Rico
And it's one of the smallest but it got the most people”

The entire excerpt forms a powerful statement regarding ethnic and racial pride, ultimately forming anti-colonial criticism. Referring to herself as “blackarican”, Nokia informs the audience of her rich and diverse background. She describes Puerto Rico as small, and having “the most people” likely referring to both the high population density, and the diversity of the island. She also provides a potent history lesson on the effects of colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade on the demographic makeup of the island of Puerto Rico, as well as

the United States in more general. She does this without mentioning the generational trauma caused by the terrors of the transatlantic slave trade racial oppression.

She educates the audience on the fact that her ancestors arrived to the Americas from diverse tribal and cultural backgrounds, a fact generally overlooked or ignored in canonical retelling of the story of America. She traces part of her lineage to a specific tribe in a specific geographic location (Nigeria, Yoruba tribe). Next, she informs the audience how her West African ancestors mixed with the indigenous population (e.g the Arawak population), to form what we now understand as the afro-caribbean people. In addition to providing nuanced representations and visibility on issues of diversity, Nokia is further subverting the monolithic conception of blackness in the americas. Instead of reducing her heritage to trauma and victimhood, she transcends the narrative of struggle, transforming it into a celebration of cultural wealth, diversity and empowerment.

She posits herself in a long lineage of “brujas”, powerful, disruptive and magical women. Referring to herself as a black native american is a powerful incorporation of previously unheard indigenous voices into the story of black America. This creates a conceptual parallel between the struggles faced by both the African diaspora and indigenous peoples of the world. As race and class are co-constructed, this statement can be understood as a call for solidarity between the two oppressed groups. Placing the word bruja in close proximity to Yoruba links the rich tradition of Santería to traditional western African spirituality. Vanquishing evil in conjunction with references to being a black native conjures a powerful anti-colonial sentiment. This is an articulation of resistance towards colonialism and the hegemonic order of white patriarchy. She is reclaiming power from these institutions by recounting the history of her ancestors, instead of passively reproducing narratives created for the purposes of the dominant culture. “Vanquishing evil” functions as a metaphor for reconstructing the history of black and brown people into one that serves them, instead of one that appeases whiteness.

”Castin' spells with my cousins, I'm the head of this coven
I'm a shapeshiftin' bitch, you don't know who you lovin'”

In this passage, it is reasonable to interpret that the speaker is simultaneously addressing two distinct audiences: white america and black america. She aims to challenge her white audience's misconceptions while educating them on racial dynamics, while communicating

with her black audience through imagery deeply rooted in the black collective experiences. Casting spells can be understood as a metaphor for resisting oppression by claiming agency. She simultaneously expresses solidarity with her "cousins" or peers, while distinguishing herself as a leader (apparent paradox/contradiction between collectivism and individualism? However, nonhierarchical forms of collective actions are often romanticized, not sure if this needs to be contemplated on). A literal interpretation of the term shapeshifting is as a direct reference to the magical ability of Brujas to transform their outer form and reshape the perception others have of them. Additionally, the term can also be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the multiplicities of the speaker's heritage and the intersections she is situated in.

When viewed through the lense of racial dynamics, deeper layers of messaging are unfolded in the statement "I'm a shapeshifting bitch, you don't know who you lovin". The sentiment appears as a direct statement to her white audience. Nokia refers to herself as a shapeshifter to highlight how perceptions and evaluations depend on the audience she is addressing. By calling herself a shapeshifter, the speaker further contemplates on the shifting perception and evaluations of black cultural expressions that are context dependant. The latter statement, "you don't know who you lovin'" Nokia addresses the truncated white understanding on black cultural forms (Rose, 2008). White society's perception of black and brown people is reductive and incomplete, consequently failing to comprehend the complexities of identities and cultural layeredness. This understanding shifts the deceptively simplistic statement into a powerful critique of misconception and exploitative practices targeting black culture. Isolated elements of black culture this truncated perspective are then inscribed with evaluations. Critically, these evaluations made by white society "shift" in a context-dependent manner (Skeggs 2004). For example, in certain contexts, attributes linked to black and brown bodies may be deemed desirable, hip and trendy, while in another, they may be viewed as threatening. This is not only the case for how individuals are perceived, but how black culture as a whole is evaluated by the dominant culture. Skeggs (2004, 14) argues that this "evaluation of cultural characteristics is central to the workings and transmission of power".

By stating "I'm a shapeshiftin' bitch, you don't know who you lovin'" the speaker expresses that the dominant cultures perception of the speaker is in constant flux. The white audience only "loves" the elements of her identity and culture which have been sanitized for their consumption, while ignoring everything else. This necessarily means they are enjoying her

work without fully comprehending it. The white audience, in effect segregated from the lived experience of black Americans will only superficially "love" the speaker from a safe distance, but this positive evaluation is likely to "shapeshift" when the same audience is in close proximity to her black body.

White society's evaluations of black culture are often mediated by exploitative capitalist interests which aim to commodify black culture. This is achieved through rebranding and repackaging a white-washed version of black culture made more palatable to the white consumer. Once adopted by whiteness, the negative symbolic value of black culture signifiers transform, or "shapeshift" into something of higher value. These sanitized cultural elements are seen as desirable and unthreatening. This leads to the white audience having a one-dimensional understanding of the speaker, thus they do not understand what it is they are consuming, and why they enjoy it. She leads the audience to ask themselves a question: why do they love her, and by extension black culture? Essentially, she expresses the idea that her white audience does not comprehend the level of subversion and intersectional resistance towards the established hegemonic order of white patriarchy within her music, but still enjoy it for superficial reasons discussed in the next paragraph.

The speaker is expressing how black culture is forcefully fragmented by white society, a process which dissociates individual cultural elements from their source, i.e black people. These dissociated elements are then negatively or positively evaluated by white society (Skeggs 2004). To a certain extent, the appeal of these cultural elements to the dominant culture is mediated by their distance from characteristics of blackness deemed undesirable, lacking value, or even dangerous. For example, a white audience may find the aesthetics of black rappers in music videos cool and desirable, but these same aesthetics are often perceived as threatening in real-life interactions with black men. Additionally, the acceptability of these black cultural elements to white society is dependent on the racial category embodying them. For example, traditionally protective black hairstyles such as cornrows have been perceived as undesirable when worn by black people, and stylish when worn by white people (Skeggs 2002, 2).

"Better light you a candle, I heard the nighttime was black
And if you don't watch your step the greatest bitch will be back
I cast a circle in white and I can vanquish your spite

And if you hex me with hate then I'ma conjure the light
Your evil ways put no fight, I ain't no queen of the night
I'm a bruja, I'm a bruja, and I'ma dress in all white"

Nokia expresses to her audience their need to educate themselves ("better light you a candle") on matters that are unknown and threatening to them ("the night time was black"). The candle light mentioned in close proximity to description of night creates an allusion to the comfort, safety and warmth such a candle provides in the dark. In the context of the themes of decolonisation expressed throughout this song, she seems to specifically address her white audience here: if they take the time to educate themselves on the history of and struggles faced by black and brown people they would feel less threatened. Next, she recommends her audience approach these matters humbly, with respect and caution ("watch your step"). "I cast a circle in white and I can vanquish your spite, and if you hex me with hate then I'ma conjure the light" can be seen as symbolic of Nokia approach to resistance. She expresses to her audience that she resists her oppression ("spite" and "hate") by spreading truth, awareness and positive empowerement. Symbolised by the use of "circle in white" and "conjure the light" Nokia states to her audience that although she is empowered, she will not use oppressive strategies to achieve her anticolonial resistance ("Your evil ways put no fight, I ain't no queen of the night").

Brujas in this understanding is an a strong appeal towards decolonization. As Samia Nehrez (as cited in hooks 1992, 1) has noted, decolonization "continues to be an act of confrontation with a hegemonic system of thought; it is hence a process of considerable historical and cultural liberation. As such, decolonization becomes the contestatton of all dominant forms and structures, whether they be linguisttc, discursive, or ideological."

By articulating and referencing the multiplicity of her heritage, Princess Nokia re-centralizes the erased histories of women and girls like her in the realm of America. Connected with the anecdotal and personal style of storytelling, she evokes a sense of deep historic awareness. With the deeply personal style of storytelling, she aligns herself with the 19th century black activists and feminist like the clubwomen, to whom autobiographies provided an access to the public sphere, allowing a chance for social commentary by enabling the women to tell their stories through their own experiences and words. In this sense, these texts served dual function as autobiographies and message texts. With wording out the erased experiences function as strategies of uplifting and healing. (Pough 2004, 111-114.)

7 PRINCESS NOKIA'S INTERSECTIONAL RHETORIC OF RESISTANCE

7.1 Princess Nokia's rhetorical strategies

This thesis considered intersectional forms of resistance in the lyrics of Princess Nokia's *1992 Deluxe* album. More specifically, the study set out to interrogate lyrical disruptions towards hegemonic distribution of power in various forms. Situated in the wider context of hip-hop as a highly creative cultural form with immense potential for mobilization and creating resistance, answering the research questions were further facilitated by the critical lens of intersectionality and methods of rhetorical analysis and new rhetoric. The study centered on subversion expressed through the intersections of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, and class. The analysis suggested that resistance was indeed expressed in multiple, often co-constructive manner.

The expressions of resistance observed in this study were often reinforced by appeals to ethos. Princess Nokia achieved this by building herself up as an authentic, and thus credible speaker. This credibility is built from both traditional hip-hop signifiers and more marginalized ones. Nokia bridges these two worlds by focusing in her lyrics on their commonalities, most prominently the counter-hegemonic, resistive elements. Nokia is not simply displaying her knowledge of hip-hop, queer culture, and issues of gender and sexuality. Instead, she does this to strengthen her credibility as a speaker on these issues. As the speaker's credibility is intimately tied to the audience's evaluations and interpretations of their message (especially in hip-hop), it forms a crucial part of the overall message being conveyed.

Another way ethos is appealed to on *1992 Deluxe* is through her communication regarding ethics and morality. She explores topics of racism, misogyny, and colonialism throughout the album, shedding light on her unique perspective on these issues informed heavily by her identity and heritage. Nokia questions traditional understanding of morality not only by directly critiquing them, but by presenting alternatives to her audience in a favourable light. For example, her lyrics often contain messages of empowerment directed at women and girls. This is evident from how she consistently centers their voices and experiences in her work. By doing

this she is renegotiating the value of these experiences and subverting gender-based power dynamics.

One way Nokia achieved effective communication of resistance to her audience was through appeals to pathos. She often accompanies transgressive ideas with emotionally loaded imagery and statements. For example, in *Bart Simpson*, she directly urges her audience to break the rules set by oppressive institutions. She accompanies this call to action with a statement evoking feelings of nihilism, hopelessness, and pessimism. With this strategy, she is drawing an emotional link between the institution she is critiquing and the negative emotions. This persuades her audience to also adopt her critical and subversive political thought.

On many occasions throughout the album, Nokia evokes a sense of pride, empowerment, and self-acceptance. This strategy appears to target the marginalized members of her audience as she makes references to cultural signifiers and shared experiences many of them understand. In her lyrics, Nokia re-inscribes these traditionally undesirable and marginalized identities with positive value. This message of inclusivity and empowerment directed towards marginalized people is significant, as it subverts their subordinate position in society. Notably, the emotions evoked through this device were arguably dependent on whom she was addressing.

Although not as explicit as appeals to ethos and pathos discussed above, Princess Nokia also appealed to logos. For example, she did this by presenting factual descriptions of marginalized cultural traditions and customs. In this sense she was recounting the erased histories of the Americas. In the context of logos, familiarity with these facts depends on whether the audience is white or non-white. Whereas these cultural facts make logical appeal to her peers, they may not be understood as such by the mainstream white audience.

7.2 Conclusions

In the beginning of the study, I set out to answer the following questions:

- How are intersectional forms of resistance expressed in the lyrics of *1992 Deluxe*?
- What rhetorical strategies are used to communicate this to the audience?
- How can contemporary hip-hop effectively amplify and center marginalized voices?

Various forms of intersectional resistances became evident throughout the *1992 Deluxe* album. Princess Nokia challenged normative notions of class and respectability both by directly opposing them and presenting the audience with subverted versions of these notions. Further, she expressed resistance towards respectable construction of gender and sexual expression. Third, she utilizes hip-hop styles and aesthetics as a subversive style, as a visual rhetoric of resistance. The aesthetic site functioned as the most prominent one in Nokia's attempt in queering notions of gender, sexuality, and style in hip-hop. Finally, Nokia expresses anticolonial resistance by raising awareness and centering the plural histories and experiences of the African diaspora, and indigenous people of Americas. Nokia communicates this resistance effectively to her audience by challenging notions on ethics and morality. She also successfully evokes emotions in her audience that facilitate the transgressive messages she is conveying. These strategies mirror those used by other transgressive contemporary hip-hop artists before her. These strategies have potential to impact progressive change not only in hip-hop culture but also in society in more general.

Ultimately, Princess Nokia mixes expressions of her personal politics, cultural pride and awareness, and hegemonic resistance in her music seamlessly. She achieves this through making direct references to historical facts, and more subtly through the use of symbolism, metaphor, allusions, and allegories. This allows her lyrical content to have deep layers of meaning and various possible interpretations. The nature of these interpretations is tied intricately to her audience: a white audience and a black and brown audience may react differently to her messages. She appears aware of the two separate audiences consuming her music. This is illustrated by the two-fold manner of addressing the audiences throughout *1992 Deluxe,* and further illustrated by how she actively re-organizes onlookers at her live shows. It is my conclusion that her shows are the physical embodiment of her intersecting rhetoric of resistance. She pursues and mobilizes both her audiences effectively.

The final question will be contemplated more on the next chapter, that connects Princess Nokia in the lineage of hip-hop queer resistance.

7.3 Princess Nokia in continuum of hip-hip's queer resistance

Next I will contemplate on the results of this study in connection with earlier research on hip-hop, queer and hip-hop's queer resistance.

Wilson (2013) set up on bay area queer rappers' art as form of social activism differed significantly from mine. Most notably, Wilson's study considered black gay underground rappers in their local Bay area context nearly ten years ago. Further, Wilson's lens of postmodernity connected with ethnographic research differed from the emphasis of this thesis of subversion in textual form. However, Wilson's central conclusions also hold relevance in the case of Princess Nokia, who also incorporates her rich cultural heritage with contemporary hip-hop and doing so on global level. Perhaps most central commonality however was the attempt to mobilize the audiences in order to create social change.

Meanwhile Kehrer's (2017) study on intersectionality, legibility, and queer in contemporary hip-hop was alike mine in terms of the set-up, the results differed vastly from mine. This is mostly due to Kehrer's approach aiming at drawing connections between Ballroom culture and hip-hop, and further articulating the genre of "Ballroom rap". In addition, while this study emphasized the textual and rhetorical aspects of intersectionality, Kehrer's data consisted of textual, sonic, and visual data. However, certain similarities in results occurred. Perhaps most notably, the queer rapper's incorporation of previous, marginalized cultural histories in their artistic work. Although Princess Nokia resisted binary categorizations and heteronormative expectations on gender and sexuality to certain extent, these aspects were more evident in Kehrer's results. However, similarities surfaced especially in Kehrer's reading on bisexual rapper Azealia Banks, as she "not only rearticulates black female identity, she rearticulates a black queer female identity, and she does so using black queer terms" and "stylistic and aesthetic values and cultural reference points with other artists in this genre" (Kehrer 2017, 175).

Although McCune (2008) ethnographic study on queer and hip-hop in connection with a club space had different set up, his results echo the one's of this study. McCune concluded that black queer subject simultaneously resist/subvert while re-enforce/accept patriarchal forms of action. He emphasizes the utility of both/and frame in making sense of the seemingly paradoxical reality. To McCune, hip-hop connected with black and queer is a tool of reversing power relations and reinforce self-determination over one's identities.

In this understanding, Princess Nokia can be positioned comfortably in the lineage of hip-hop's queer resistance. Nokia is staying true to hip-hop's cultural logic by breaking barriers and

transcending categories of not just race and class, but gender and sexuality as well. With her intersectional rhetoric of resistance, she is contributing is shifting the center in the realm of contemporary hip-hop. In understanding of Muñoz's (2009, 1), Princess Nokia is indeed demanding another world with queer, anticolonial future.

7.4 Evaluation

The approach towards this study was constructed through multiplicities. In addition to extensive body of work from different points of view in hip-hop, this study considered multiple discussions on intersectionality, and at times complicated method of rhetorical analysis and new rhetoric. At times, the complete process of gathering, grasping, thoroughly comprehending, and further connecting the tremendous amount of information was at times overwhelming. Looking back the theoretical and methodological frameworks worked beautifully combined, and it is my firm belief that I could not have concluded these very results from other approaches. Having said that, the process was at times indeed arduous, time-consuming, and difficult.

For the future efforts, there exists a tremendous amount of fascinating artists, bodies of work, and approaches to choose from. Even in 2022, the research on women, queer and hip-hop is defined by scarcity. In the future, I hope to see this change through multiplicity of efforts with focus on the artistic contributions of woman and queer rappers, cis, trans, and genderqueer. Further, I wish to see contributions with their focus on artistic parallels between the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement and the ever-queering realm of hip-hop post 2010s connected with significant social movements of our time, such as BLM and #metoo. I hope to see multiplicity of contributions with their aim to pluralize the ways in which we talk about the history, the contemporary, and the futures of hip-hop.

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