Author(s): Westinen, Elina; Karkulehto, Sanna; Tervo, Mervi

Title: Localized hip hop authenticity in early 2000s Finland : Retaining representations of race, class and gender in Beauty and the Bastard

Year: 2023

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

Please cite the original version:

Westinen, E., Karkulehto, S., & Tervo, M. (2023). Localized hip hop authenticity in early 2000s Finland : Retaining representations of race, class and gender in Beauty and the Bastard. Journal of Scandinavian Cinema, 13(1), 27-45. https://doi.org/10.1386/jsca_00087_1

Localized hip hop authenticity in early 2000s Finland: Retaining representations of race, class and gender in *Beauty and the Bastard*

Elina Westinen

University of Jyväskylä

Contributor Details

Elina Westinen is a postdoctoral researcher in the ERC project MUSICONNECT and was previously a postdoctoral researcher of the Academy of Finland (2019–22). She specializes in sociolinguistics and discourse studies, with a particular focus on race and ethnicity in Finnish hip hop culture. Her work has recently been published in the *International Journal for the Sociology of Language* (2022), *Global Hiphopography* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2023) and *The Sociolinguistics of Hip-Hop as Critical Conscience* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Contact: elina.westinen@jyu.fi

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1071-8871

Sanna Karkulehto

University of Jyväskylä

Sanna Karkulehto is a professor of literature at the University of Jyväskylä, adjunct professor/docent of literature and cultural studies at the University of Oulu and of gender studies at the University of Lapland, Finland. Her most recent publications include co-edited volumes *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Planetary Well-Being* (Routledge, 2024), *Violence, Gender and Affect: Interpersonal, Institutional and Ideological Practices* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and *Reconfiguring Human, Nonhuman and Posthuman in Literature and Culture* (Routledge, 2020).

Contact: sanna.karkulehto@jyu.fi

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7267-9612

Mervi Tervo

Independent Scholar

Mervi Tervo was a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oulu (2010–12) and currently works as a communications manager. Her Academy of Finland research project, 'Urban Youth and Hip-Hop Culture in Finland', focused on audio-visual content, including cinema and music videos. She has published articles in the *European Journal of Cultural Studies* and *Popular Music and Society*.

Contact: mervi.tervo@iki.fi

https://orcid.org/0009-0002-9171-9522

Received 22 October 2022; Accepted 7 November 2022

Abstract

Beauty and the Bastard (Karukoski 2005), a pioneering and award-winning youth film set within the emerging Finnish hip hop culture, draws on early twenty-first-century music-related youth films produced in the United States and reaches out thematically and

musically to both African American and Finnish hip hop culture and rap music. Set in a predominantly White Finnish society, the film confronts many representational challenges concerning diversity, whether racial, class or gender. Based on contextual analysis of audio-visual representations, we discuss how such categories contribute to the construction of the film's 'authenticity' – a key notion of hip hop culture – as a localized representation. We argue that in its project of localizing hip hop authenticity in early 2000s Finland, the film retains, rather than challenges or questions, representations of normative Whiteness, oppressive class distinctions and unequal gender norms.
Keywords: diversity, ethnicity, Finnish cinema, majority–minority, multiculturalism, normative Whiteness, postcolonial complicity, rap

Dome Karukoski's *Tyttö sinä olet tähti* (*Beauty and the Bastard*) (2005) was the first, and until 2018, the only film representing Finland's emerging hip hop culture. It won the Nordic Amanda Prize for best debut film and was voted the best youth film at the Olympia International Film Festival. The film not only sky-rocketed the career of its director but also led to future stardom for its most notable actors, including Pamela Tola, Samuli Vauramo, Eero Milonoff and Joonas Saartamo. As a work that has significantly contributed to the formation and development of hip hop culture in Finland, it has also influenced an entire generation of actors and audiences (Kartastenpää 2020).

In addition to its thematic and audio-visual connection to both US and Finnish hip hop culture and rap music, *Beauty and the Bastard* draws on and resembles early twenty-first-century music-related films from the United States oriented to teenage audiences, such as *Save the Last Dance* (Carter 2001), *Honey* (Woodruff 2003) and *Step Up* (Fletcher 2006), with a heteroromantic plot and a setting in which race, class or both are

problematic in various ways (for the US context, see Arzumanova 2014; Borelli 2014; McNelis 2017). In this article, we examine how *Beauty and the Bastard* alludes to and combines themes from such young adult and hip hop films while confronting many challenges concerning diversity and multiculturalism and explore how these challenges are addressed in a local, Finnish context. Karukoski's pioneering film reminds present-day viewers that thematizing diversity is a relatively recent phenomenon in Nordic cinema and that the challenges in representing diversity, such as questioning normative Whiteness or gender norms, remain an ongoing process (see also Moffat and Asava 2022).

By analysing *Beauty and the Bastard*, we aim to shed light on the intricacies of an early cinematic representation of Finnish hip hop culture and its resonance with the current sociocultural context. With the global impact of the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, critical discussion of the significance and power of representations of diversity and multiculturalism has flourished; the recent *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema* (*JSCA*) Special Issue on 'Approaching Race and Ethnicity in Nordic Film Culture' (Moffat and Asava 2022) is one such example (see also, e.g., Stubberud and Ringrose 2014). This article continues exploring the topic. While our specific analytical focus is on one domestic film representing the early development of Finnish hip hop culture, we present a more general argument regarding the structures of popular culture and society and their intertwining with the power of representations and critical questions concerning diversity. We claim that not only class divisions (see Römpötti 2017) but also race, ethnicity and gender differences are negotiated in *Beauty and the Bastard* in ways that bring to the fore societal questions and challenges that remain unresolved in the

Nordic countries even today (see, e.g., Moffat and Asava 2022; Mulinari et al. 2020; Salö et al. 2022; Stubberud and Ringrose 2014).

The spatial and temporal context of the film and its strong connection to US hip hop culture open up some specific challenges in representing this culture in a ('street') credible way. Whereas in African American hip hop culture a significant factor establishing its authenticity (e.g. McLeod 1999; Ogbar 2007) – a characteristic still considered one of the key components of hip hop and rap – is the dominant, unmarked and even stereotypical Blackness of the culture and its key actors, in Finland, artists, other agents and audiences of hip hop culture have been predominantly White throughout its forty-year existence. This characteristic can be seen as mirroring the White majority of the Finnish population and limited possibilities to adopt elements of African American popular culture tradition. Moreover, it may hinder and even prevent non-White people from breaking the boundaries of White hegemony, as Finnish hip hop culture has 'always' been dominated – quite paradoxically in relation to its US origin – by White Finns. *Beauty and the Bastard* shares this characteristic not only in its casting but also in its storyline, dialogue and music.

Of specific interest in our examination of the film is how, in the Finnish context in 2005, the absence of Black hip hop artists, musicians and other agents is negotiated (see also Hare and Baker 2017) when it nevertheless seems to lean on hip hop's African American heritage. Given that the Finnish title literally translates as 'Girl, you're a star', we also ask how gender is represented in the film, which at least on the surface highlights femininity through the protagonist, a young woman aiming for a music career. Focusing on a White female musician rather than Black ones is yet another factor in *Beauty and the*

Bastard that contradicts hip hop's stereotypical and normative ideology of authenticity (McLeod 1999; Rose 1994).

Our representation analysis of race and gender, which also intersect with class in the film, draws theoretically on gender studies, postcolonial Nordic feminism (Mulinari et al. 2020), inspired by Black feminist thought, and cultural hip hop studies. Our method of analysis is based on contextual close reading and looking, combined with feminist and queer reading against the grain (see, e.g., Rossi 2020; Karkulehto 2012). In the analysis, we focus on fractures and inconsistencies in the film's storyline, scenes and imagery when it aims at pursuing authenticity by simultaneously referring to the African American roots of hip hop culture, coming to terms with Whiteness and promoting girlhood and female stardom (Armstrong 2004; McLeod 1999: 142). We argue that, in its project of localizing hip hop authenticity in early 2000s Finland, it ends up retaining rather than challenging or questioning representations of normative Whiteness, oppressive class distinctions and unequal gender norms.

Globalized hip hop culture and authenticity

As an urban cultural form, hip hop has been an appealing format for the global popular music industry and commercial Hollywood cinema for decades. In the early 1980s, *Wild Style* (Ahearn 1982) and *Beat Street* (Lathan 1984) became global hits, and hip hop culture has since figured in many successful US films (Stewart 2009) such as *8 Mile* (Hanson 2002), *Notorious* (Tillman 2009) and *Straight Outta Compton* (Gray 2015). As these 'boyz-n-the-hood' films substantiate, the hip hop movie scene has been dominated by men (Jones 1991; Stewart 2009: 62–64; Pough 2004: 130), depicting the often-harsh

realities associated with ghetto life, Black masculinity[1] and the importance of community (Smith-Shomade 2003: 29; Stewart 2009: 52).

Based on African American, African Caribbean, Puerto Rican and Asian American youth cultures, hip hop culture was born in the ghettos of South Bronx in New York City in the mid-1970s. Prioritizing 'black voices from the margins of urban America' (Rose 1994: 2), hip hop culture has been overtly male-dominated from the start (e.g. Guevara 1996: 51; Rose 1994: 151–55). Although women have always been part of the culture, contributing to it in various ways,[2] even today the interconnections between hip hop, the African American male identity and socio-economic marginalization remain strong. An 'authentic' hip hop identity that is 'keepin' it real', 'staying true to yourself' and claiming local and communal affiliation (McLeod 1999: 142) is still often expected to embody personal Black, ghetto and heterosexual male experiences (e.g. Armstrong 2004; Lane 2011).[3]

In what follows, we refer to a classic categorization of the semantic dimensions of African American hip hop authenticity by Kembrew McLeod (1999)[4] and analyse how *Beauty and the Bastard* locally negotiates these dimensions in its imagery, storytelling, dialogue and music. Drawing on a large pool of various data on US rap music, McLeod argues that authenticity within hip hop is built on six dimensions: in addition to the 'staying true to yourself' mantra (the social-psychological dimension), authenticity relates to identification with Blackness instead of Whiteness (the racial dimension), staying underground and not selling out (the political-economic dimension), being hard (the gender-sexual dimension), keeping a tight connection to the street (the social-locational dimension) and sticking to the old-school hip hop tradition (the cultural

dimension). Accordingly, 'fake' hip hop is White; aims at commercial, mainstream success; promotes soft and feminine features; comes from the suburbs; follows popular mass trends; and does not acknowledge the roots of hip hop culture (McLeod 1999: 134–50). Even if this stark division has been challenged by, for example, several popular female rap artists, not to mention that one of the globally most popular male rap artists is White – although even Eminem's recipe for success as a White rapper has been analysed in the framework of hip hop authenticity (Armstrong 2004) – it proves its effectiveness in our analysis of a film aiming at representing a culture that in its transcultural and localized adaptation faces challenges connecting with its historical roots. Like Inka Rantakallio (2019: 87; see also Westinen 2014), we see hip hop authenticity as locally (re)constructed in and through various discourses and connected to – albeit also independent from – the US scene. When hip hop authenticity still typically seems to require African American and masculine influences, focusing on ghetto and male experiences, we specifically explore the ways in which *Beauty and the Bastard* addresses McLoud's classifications of race, class and gender in its contribution to the authenticity construction of the then-emerging Finnish hip hop culture.

Beauty and the Bastard as a localized hip hop movie

The geographical and sociocultural context of *Beauty and the Bastard* is a Nordic country of 5.5 million inhabitants, known for its (alleged) gender equality (e.g. Holli 2003; Rossi 2020), a (supposedly) classless society (e.g. Erola 2010), an extensive social security system (e.g. Timonen 1999), the overall happiness of its inhabitants (e.g. Helliwell et al. 2020) and a high ranking as one of the safest countries in the world (e.g. Martikainen et al. 2016). Compared to most of the other Nordic countries, Finland has remained – or at

least has been officially presented and constructed – as ethnically and culturally relatively homogeneous (Häkkinen and Tervonen 2005; Mulinari et al. 2020), which has left various ethnic groups that have lived in Finland for centuries, including the indigenous Sámi as well as the Roma and Russian-origin minorities, marginalized and often discriminated against. This, and the fact that larger-scale immigration to Finland did not begin until the post-Cold War period and in particular the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 (Rapo 2011), may have contributed to the common understanding of 'Nordic exceptionalism' in Finland, that is, the naïve self-image according to which the Nordic countries have had nothing or very little to do with, for example, colonialism, and hence are exempt from issues such as racism (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Mulinari et al. 2020; Rossi 2020; Stubberud and Ringrose 2014). In both academic and public discourse in Finland, the concept of 'race' has largely been missing; instead, discussion increasingly focuses on ethnic groups, immigrants and cultural diversity (Mulinari et al. 2020; Rastas 2019: 357; Rastas and Seye 2019). Stemming from and normalizing racism, xenophobia and right-wing nationalism (cf. Mulinari et al. 2020; Pitcher 2006; Lentin 2014; Krzyżanowski 2020), there has been a recent surge of critical and hostile debate on the effects of immigration, cultural differences and multiculturalism on culture and society.

That said, during the making and release of *Beauty and the Bastard*, the overall number of 'foreign language' speakers and people 'with a foreign background' was still small in Finland.[5] Due to moderate and rigorously regulated immigration politics, Finland has changed very slowly into a more ethnically and racially diverse society, decades later than many other European countries. Despite the demographic and

sociocultural differences between the United States and Finland, the African American-rooted hip hop culture and rap music have gradually become a visible part of Finnish popular culture (e.g. Westinen 2014; Tervo 2014; Sykäri et al. 2019). When *Beauty and the Bastard* premiered in 2005, Finnish hip hop had just experienced its first big commercial success (around 2000), but not yet peaked for a second time (around 2008–09). In 2005, then, Finnish hip hop was more in the margins than in the mainstream as well as highly male-dominated, as the various local scenes were mainly known for their male rappers and groups.[6] In terms of its ethnic and racial constellation, Finnish hip hop was still predominantly, almost exclusively White, the only notable exceptions to this including rappers Tidjân (with a Senegalese background) and Tonoslono (with a Chinese background), along with the Sámi rapper Amoc and Roma rapper Bulle.

Beauty and the Bastard both starts and ends with a rap gig. As it also borrows from US young adult films in its storyline, the leading female character Nelli (Pamela Tola), a sweet, ambitious, upper-middle-class White girl from a wealthy suburb, plays an important role. She is a dance instructor who goes to parties at a fancy nightclub and sings in a women's choir but simultaneously dreams of a career in the pop music industry and finding her true self. The beginning of the film introduces an accidental encounter between Nelli and Sune (Samuli Vauramo), the leading male character, who is a White rapper with a working-class background. He is represented as an uncompromising artist who stays true to himself and the underground, old-school hip hop tradition (cf. McLeod 1999: 143–44). As Sune later agrees to produce Nelli's demo songs, the two start cooperating and eventually become infatuated with each other, despite coming from completely different socio-economic backgrounds. In the following, we will analyse how

Beauty and the Bastard, mixing the genres of US young adult and hip hop films, becomes a representation of gender and ethnic/racial differences in Finnish hip hop culture in a manner that brings to the fore some problematic societal questions and challenges regarding diversity and multiculturalism, critical issues in Nordic countries even today.

'Well, it's rap this and Bronx [N-word] that': Localizing racial and social dimensions of hip hop authenticity

Even if the normative Whiteness of the leading characters of *Beauty and the Bastard* is more or less expected in Finland in the early 2000s simply because of the demographics, it has also been argued that Finnish films of that time depicted Finland as culturally and ethnically more homogenous than it actually was (Hiltunen 2019: 99). Finland was beginning to recognize both its present and past multiculturalism, but Finnish films still focused more on creating homogeneity than on openly discussing this emerging multicultural change. Spurred by this argument, we ask how *Beauty and the Bastard*, a Finnish film that genre- and topic-wise is deeply involved with the US and African American cultural heritage, deals with representations that 'should' somehow acknowledge this very heritage and how this resonates with the emerging multicultural change in Finland. How does *Beauty and the Bastard* take into account and come to terms with the fact that hip hop culture has traditionally built its authenticity on racial identification with Blackness (McLeod 1999), while in Finnish hip hop culture the racial dimension has instead been downplayed and bypassed? One tactic in de-emphasizing the original Blackness and Brownness of the culture – and nevertheless appearing authentic – has been de-emphasizing one's own Whiteness. As Damian J. Rivers argues, 'such [White] artists often make efforts to avoid highlighting the issue of race, instead selecting

to overemphasise displays of masculine toughness, social hardship and a life of oppression' (2018: 105; see also Armstrong 2014; Oware 2015).

At first glance, *Beauty and the Bastard* indeed seems to be an extremely 'White' film: the protagonists and their families and friends as well as other associates and acquaintances are without exception White. In one of the rare scenes where non-White people appear, Nelli, accompanied by her boyfriend Mikko (Jussi Nikkilä), is heading to Sune's studio to make a demo tape and thus entering his neighbourhood, presented as impoverished and alien to both of them. As upper-middle-class young adults from the suburbs, they presumably have no prior first-hand experience of this environment. Gazing from a distance through a car window, they see a concrete square with worn-out bar signs, loitering teenagers and drunkards, and Black Finnish people, two men facing the camera and a woman, wearing a white headscarf, shot from behind. Mikko, driving the car, comments: 'This is a really shabby neighbourhood. I would *never* move here' – an evaluative statement that Nelli confirms: 'Mm' (see Figure 1).[7] They are driving through the area as tourists, examining Otherness voyeuristically from a safe and isolated distance (see also Xie et al. 2007: 455) and conveying their dislike verbally. Mikko's emphatic 'never' further contributes to the disidentification they – or at least he – feel for the area and its residents, and perhaps also towards Sune, who lives there and is (too) involved in his girlfriend's life.

Figure 1: Nelli (Pamela Tola) and her boyfriend Mikko (Jussi Nikkilä) driving through Sune's (Samuli Vauramo) neighbourhood, depicted in the film as a place for non-White ethnic minorities and (other) marginalized people. Dome Karukoski (dir.), *Beauty and the Bastard*, 2005. Finland. Helsinki-filmi. Used by permission.

The depiction of the imaginary and constrained Finnish 'ghetto' environment Sune is associated with differentiates his character from Nelli and Mikko and connects him to the notion of a rap artist suffering from but artistically drawing on his socio-economic marginalization and harsh realities associated with ghetto life (Forman 2002: 83). Moreover, the scene supports the genre and story level of the film, as the inner city (or, in this case, 'hood') representations of poverty and ethnic minorities establish an analogy to hip hop ghetto movies (Jones 1991) and relate to the localized construction of authenticity, keeping a tight connection to the street (the social-locational dimension [McLeod 1999]).

As argued in earlier research, the often-used 'ghetto imagery' of hip hop culture has become an easily recognizable commodity, deployed by artists and practitioners across the globe (e.g. Hess 2005). This applies especially in Finland, where actual 'ghettos' exist mainly as a conceptualization and a discourse but are nevertheless connected particularly to East Helsinki, stereotypically represented as a low-income and crime-ridden area (see, e.g., Kelekay 2022). The 'ghetto' scene in *Beauty and the Bastard* suggests how space and race may 'intersect in ways that powerfully affect life experiences and life chances' (Bobo 2014: 190). Both as a location referring to the origins of hip hop and as a socio-economic context of 'racially segregated and disadvantaged social spaces' (Bobo 2014: 190), the scene helps establish the credibility of *Beauty and the Bastard* as an authentic hip hop film.[8]

In addition to this symbolic 'ghetto scene', which creates and maintains the disadvantage of both lower-class and Black bodies and connects them with societal inequality (Bobo 2014: 190), the only other spaces where Black people are shown in

Beauty and the Bastard are two rap gig scenes, where a few Black men are seen as part of the audience. Such Black 'tokens' in a Finnish hip hop film show how race and its 'sticky' quality, as Lawrence Bobo maintains, are 'deployed as a tool of social and self-understanding' and especially as something that structures 'who occupies positions of power, money, and prestige' and who does not (2014: 189). The film aims at creating an imaginary space where Black people representing social and self-understanding of identities who do not occupy positions of power, money and prestige 'sticks' or relates to a specific group of White people – the ones who represent the emerging Finnish hip hop culture – to gain their authenticity (cf. Rantakallio 2019). It becomes crucial, however, that the Black individuals only play the role of marginal(ized) bystanders and fans rather than active agents of the Finnish hip hop culture and music business. Hence, they do not possess power or prestige as artists, producers or managers, since these positions are for White people. This kind of utilization of (a particular) racial background becomes, in a similar vein as in the ghetto scene, a questionable project that can be considered a (post)colonial practice, exploiting racial inequality (Bobo 2014: 189) and tying the film to a process that Diana Mulinari et al. call 'postcolonial complicity', with which '(post)colonial images, practices and products are made to be part of what is understood as the "national" and "traditional" culture of the Nordic countries' (2020: 1–2).

Moreover, *Beauty and the Bastard* represents elements of Blackness, or the non-White racial and ethnic heritage of hip hop, in its imagery in the form of posters of global idols. The poster of an African American male rapper, K-Rino, on the wall of Sune's studio connects to the global hip hop community and Black dominance in the global rap music business, creating authentic links to the 'original' US hip hop scene. Nelli's room,

in turn, features a large Beyoncé poster, along with other famous female R&B and neo soul singers such as Mary J. Blige and Erykah Badu, which also brings to the fore the gender-sexual dimension of hip hop authenticity (McLeod 1999: 142): the famous rap artists are men, whereas female artists represent the softer R&B. Such idol posters function not only as connections to the global world of pop music but also as a contrast to Sune's authentic hip hop world. The film repeatedly sets masculine rap against soft, feminine R&B, considered 'fake' in McLeod's authenticity categorization (1999: 139). The posters also signify a specific race or ethnicity, as all the figures are African American musicians. Thus, the film represents Black musicians and agency in the music business only as one-dimensional, flat poster images, isolated in closed and private spaces. They are acknowledged as original authorities but are not actually part of the localized hip hop culture, located far away from the everyday reality of the protagonists. Significantly, they reference 'Black coolness', which consequently also makes White people associated with them cool (e.g. Hare and Baker 2017; Walker 2012). The film again draws on and makes use of this 'stickiness' of (a particular) race as a signifier (Bobo 2014).

One further indication of the stickiness of race can be seen in a dance class scene and in the ensuing dialogue between Nelli and her best friend Mari (Elena Leeve). Wearing baggy pants and a T-shirt, Nelli instructs an all-female class, including her friend. By the looks on the participants' faces, this class is something unprecedented – because of the (local) rap music ('Hidastaa' ['Slow down'] [2005] by Asa), the hip hop dance choreography and the instructor's baggy clothing. The dance scene calls to mind US hip hop youth films, as the White female protagonist is able to construct a new

identity and 'choreographically pass as a different race', without losing, due to her Whiteness, any privileges that her racial centrality and normativity offer (Arzumanova 2014: 180). After the class, race in connection to hip hop is explicitly brought up by Mari in a highly controversial way:

> MARI: This was the weirdest class ever.
>
> NELLI: How so?
>
> M: Well … your pants are wider, and your music's changed.
>
> N: Shouldn't I be excited about new clothes and bands and …?
>
> M: No, I think you're excited about something else completely.
>
> N: How so?
>
> M: Well, it's rap this and Bronx [n-word] that … all you ever talk about nowadays is Sune.
>
> N: You're so wrong.

The use of the highly derogatory n-word in a Finnish hip hop-themed film from 2005 shows how uncontroversial and accepted it still was at the time (see also Rastas 2012), compared to the present day. While at the same time referring to hip hop culture's origins, the Bronx in New York City and manifesting how alienated Mari feels when Nelli is interested in such a culture, Mari also Others 'them' and situates 'them' somewhere beyond her own locality, defining the hip hop world as 'essentially', 'naturally' and 'authentically' Black. Moreover, Nelli does not react to the word in any way but rather to her friend suggesting 'improper' behaviour with Sune. Thus, *Beauty and the Bastard* takes part in keeping Black people 'in their place', drawing on the language of racial insult and sustaining entwined ideas of Black inferiority and White supremacy (Asim 2007: 3). Throughout the film, Whiteness remains the unquestioned norm.

‘Has Mom gone nuts again?’ Negotiating the absence of Blackness via social and spatial distinctions

Besides the ‘ghetto’ near his studio, other spaces showcasing Sune’s class and societal background are his neighbourhood and the interior of his home. The area where Sune and his friends live is gloomy and grey, with seemingly endless blocks of old flats and only occasional hints of green. While Sune mostly spends the nights in his studio, the home of his mother and younger brother is also depicted in one scene. His brother is shown playing video games alone in a messy living room, with a collapsed cupboard and empty wine bottles. Sune asks, ‘Has Mom gone nuts again?’ and the brother’s silence indicates the ‘normalcy’ of these conditions.

In an apparent effort to comfort his brother and distract him from a depressing family situation he cannot escape, Sune gives him a CD by a young White Finnish rapper Pikku G (‘Little G’). Pikku G was very popular at the time in Finland, particularly among children and teenagers, and is clearly admired by Sune’s brother, while Sune himself does not appreciate his music or regard it as authentic, seriously made rap. The brother is surprised and comments, ‘But you hate this?’ As a compromise and to make his brother feel better, Sune replies, ‘Well, yeah, but you like it’. The bleak family background and Sune’s loyalty to his brother, established by his gesture of kindness despite his dislike for the commercial ‘pop rap’ Pikku G represents, not only connects *Beauty and the Bastard* with the genre of US hip hop movies representing ghetto life, masculinity and the importance of community (cf. Smith-Shomade 2003: 29; Stewart 2009: 52) but also testifies to Sune’s authenticity as an underground, uncompromised artist (cf. McLeod 1999).

Contrasted with Sune's personal space, both Nelli's home (Figure 2) and room embody the upper middle class. The white, two-storey concrete house comes with two garages, expensive cars, fancy interior design and up-to-date technology, for instance, a digital security system that is quite uncommon in Finland even today. That her father owns a sailboat while not knowing how to sail further suggests superfluous wealth and the status-oriented lifeworld Nelli lives in. In these representations of the protagonists' homes, the social overlaps with the spatial, as specific groups and identities are typically understood as being located in particular places and spaces (e.g. Eriksson 2010). *Beauty and the Bastard* follows this pattern by exposing the polarity between an artificial upper middle class and a more authentic lower class where people are willing to bend their principles to express loyalty, sympathy and care. This distinction is both spatial and social, as the wealthy suburban world is contrasted with ethnic minorities, displacement and ordinary workers of the 'ghetto' and industrial areas. Simultaneously, the film equates Whiteness quite effortlessly with the upper middle class, wealth and prosperity and leaves it an unquestioned, invisible and 'raceless' norm throughout the narrative.

Figure 2: *Beauty and the Bastard* pits two worlds against each other. Above, Sune (Samuli Vauramo) and his friends listen to music and chat in their own neighbourhood; below, Nelli's (Pamela Tola) home in a prosperous suburban area. Dome Karukoski (dir.), 2005. Finland. Helsinki-filmi. Used by permission.

Just as discussions of race typically emphasize only races of colour and leave Whiteness the invisible norm (Dyer 1997), discussions of class tend to focus on the lower class, the middle class functioning as the invisible norm (Skeggs 2004). In *Beauty and the Bastard*, however, representations of the upper middle class are highlighted and critically

examined, allowing the lower class to represent a real and authentic space for hip hop and hence negotiating the lack of 'colour' in the localized context. In a setting where hip hop's racial dimension – Blackness – is largely absent, authenticity is established by other parameters, such as class differences represented via contrasting social and spatial dimensions: Nelli's lifeworld is embedded in White, upper-middle-class suburban wealth and soft, feminine R&B, whereas representations of Sune's lifeworld reveal the harsh realities associated with lower-class 'ghetto' life, the street and uncompromised, masculine hip hop. In this sense, *Beauty and the Bastard* resembles early twenty-first-century music-related US films oriented to teenage audiences, such as *Save the Last Dance* and *Step Up*, where a White woman with a privileged background falls in love with a man who, because of his race/ethnicity and/or class, is in a weaker societal position. Relatedly, *Beauty and the Bastard* also appears to romanticize disadvantaged social spaces (see Bobo 2014) and impoverished, unsatisfactory life conditions. Thus, the film and its storyline can be described both as a 'slumming drama' in which the rich become interested in the poor (also romantically and sexually), since they have something the rich do not – a simple, authentic life – and as a 'slumming trauma' in which the lower class both suffers and gains from their class background, making them 'cool' survivors (Gandal 2007: 6–7).

'Girl, you're a star'? Maintaining the gender and sexual dimension of hip hop authenticity

The original Finnish title of *Beauty and the Bastard*, which translates 'Girl, you're a star', highlights a young woman as the leading character of the film and at least on the surface appears to disrupt the gender-sexual dimension of hip hop authenticity (McLeod 1999:

142). As seen above, the film makes use of (elements of) Blackness, hard 'ghetto life' and the lower class by representing them as parallel and interchangeable, romanticizing and utilizing them to promote narrative credibility as a hip hop movie. Concerning the representations of gender and sexuality, the film seems to use a similar strategy, albeit somewhat differently. Whereas Blackness, ghetto life and the lower class hardly become valued as essential features of local hip hop authenticity but are, rather, romanticized and exploited, femininity and the female gender are explicitly positioned in the foreground, as the main female character Nelli is represented literally as the star of the film.

The story begins by presenting Nelli's musical ambitions and desire to succeed in the Finnish pop music industry and then follows her trajectory from dreams of R&B stardom, struggles in the competitive and objectifying music business to finally finding her own voice and mode of musical expression. Thus, the storyline quite clearly accentuates and foregrounds Nelli's path to stardom. In some regards, Nelli's career nevertheless remains a secondary concern, as the narrative focuses extensively on the heteroromantic relationship between Nelli and Sune and his development as a character and a musician in the hip hop world (see also McNelis 2017: 30–42). The depiction of her attempts to establish a pop career focuses on the shallowness of the commercial music industry, where she becomes a product of the commodifying machinery of the record company and represented in a stereotypical, objectified position determined by the male gaze (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Nelli (Pamela Tola) posing for the cover of her debut single, under the male gaze of the record company. Dome Karukoski (dir.), *Beauty and the Bastard*, 2005. Finland. Helsinki-filmi. Used by permission.

Nelli's storyline is contrasted with Sune's career as an uncompromising male rapper who is 'keepin' it real' while working and living in an area represented as a ghetto and staying loyal to his crew rather than abandoning them when he receives an economically compelling offer from the mainstream record company. Like Sune, Nelli finally decides to leave the record company. She ends up rejecting the superficial career and status as a passive female pop star because, like him, she does not want to 'sell out'. However, she does not discover an alternative to the commercial music industry; this is suggested by Sune, who is mentoring and initiating her to underground hip hop culture and its main principles and practices. For instance, he takes her to band rehearsals and gigs and demonstrates how (illegal) graffiti is made at night. Although Nelli is won over by the authentic hip hop culture that Sune and his music and all-male group represent, she remains committed to becoming a soft and feminine R&B singer, eventually finding the courage to resist the expectations set by her family and to choose a music career over medical school. In the final rap gig scene, Nelli is asked to join Sune's rap group onstage. She sings the chorus and the men do the rapping. Nelli has indeed become a star, but this scene makes it obvious that her brightness is shadowed by the real star of the film: the up-and-coming, male-dominated Finnish rap and hip hop culture that remains reserved for 'hard' men (McLeod 1999) and heterosexual masculinity, a core constituent of hip hop authenticity secured by her role as Sune's girlfriend.[9]

Conclusion

Although it is no longer meaningful to define hip hop authenticity merely as an expression of lower-class African American heterosexual male identity, now that hip hop has become localized across the globe, the apparently indisputable need to substantiate –

or at least negotiate and examine – the relationship to this 'original' hip hop authenticity still seems to remain. This claim is supported by a large body of hip hop research on localized authenticity in many countries and cultures (e.g. Armstrong 2004; Hare and Baker 2017; Mitchell 2001; Pennycook 2007; Westinen 2014; Rantakallio 2019).

In research on Finnish hip hop culture, authenticity has been linked with mediating one's own local experiences, highlighting masculinity and drawing on musical styles from US rap, whereas the race and class aspects typical of US rap are often neglected and/or left in the background, since most Finnish rappers even today are White, middle-class men (Westinen and Rantakallio 2019). The specifics of race and class are difficult to transmit and apply in Finnish hip hop because in Finnish and US society, the demographics and historical, cultural, political and geographical circumstances are considerably different (Westinen and Rantakallio 2019; see also Rantakallio 2019; Tervo 2014). Our analysis of *Beauty and the Bastard* has focused on the negotiation of authenticity in such different circumstances. As a local hip hop movie, Karukoski's film has influenced the shaping of the then-emerging Finnish hip hop culture and its local authenticity construction by borrowing, blending and remaking the features of US-based African American hip hop culture and films. In 2005, *Beauty and the Bastard* aimed at verifying its authenticity by referring to hip hop's African American roots as well as lower-class and ghetto experiences even if it does so in a more or less problematic manner, as we have established in our analysis. Hence, while localizing a hip hop authenticity of its own, the film nevertheless also remains loyal to African American hip hop authenticity.

In retrospective examining of how the cinematic representation of *Beauty and the Bastard* negotiates and constructs localized authenticity in relation to the 'original' hip hop culture, we were specifically interested in how the film compensates for the absence of Blackness – in other words, the absence of the unmarked and stereotypically 'essential' feature of hip hop culture (e.g. Ogbar 2007), one of the six semantic dimensions characterizing hip hop authenticity (McLeod 1999). As we established in our analysis, this absence is negotiated by spatial representations of imaginary ghetto scenes that connect Black bodies and the lower class with Sune's living conditions and rap studio and differentiate them from Nelli's upper-middle-class background, equated with normative, unquestioned Whiteness.

Furthermore, although the Finnish title of *Beauty and the Bastard* ('Girl, you're a star') posits a White, upper-middle-class girl daydreaming of R&B stardom as the main character and literally the star of the story, the storyline eventually confirms that the real star of the film is male-dominated, 'real' and authentic Finnish rap and hip hop culture. By differentiating this culture from the upper middle class and femininity, promoting identification with the lower class and drawing on the 'stickiness' of non-White race, the film's project of localizing the originally African American hip hop culture in Finland utilizes, if not exploits, race, class and gender.[10] On the one hand, the film (re)produces an understanding of Finland as ethnically homogenous. It does not engage with culture and identities through multiplicity or heterogeneity but rather makes external, superficial use of race and ethnicity in the 'colouring' of the local White scene and culture, ultimately leaving it homogenous and intact. On the other hand, the film maintains binary and hierarchical class and gender divisions, thus retaining rather than challenging or

questioning representations of normative Whiteness, stereotypical class distinctions and unequal gender norms.

In 2005, when *Beauty and the Bastard* premiered, there was little if any public conversation about race or ethnicity in Finland. In 2023, there is clearly more awareness of the interconnectedness of representations, majority–minority sensitivities and diversity, as well as female agency in popular culture and media. As the demographics of Finland are slowly changing, Black and Brown rappers have gradually gained visibility and popularity in the previously almost exclusively White hip hop scene (see, e.g., Leppänen and Westinen 2017). Some of them have also strategically drawn on their Blackness as one of the prerequisites for hip hop authenticity (e.g. Westinen 2018). While doing this, they also engage in 'talking back' (hooks 1989) to dominant racial norms and identities and to media discourses about, for instance, East Helsinki as a neighbourhood of poverty, crime and drug abuse (Kelekay 2022).

Nevertheless, the relationship to hip hop culture's African American origin remains somewhat troublesome. For example, the documentary series *Mist sä tuut?* ('Where are you from?'), released in 2021, describes the development of Finnish hip hop culture, focusing on different cities and areas. Although the first season was praised for doing important work on local histories and cultural actors, it was also criticized for not being thoroughly explicit about the Black roots of the culture and for featuring only a few non-White or female rappers. Apparently, this criticism was taken into consideration and the second season (2023) featured a more versatile representation. Nevertheless, for those generations who have lived with (mostly White) Finnish rap all their lives, the connections to the 'original' culture and its anti-racist themes seem to be much more

vague, even non-existent. Fading out and marginalizing the non-White ethnic and racial heritage of hip hop culture can be seen contributing to postcolonial complicity, still visible in various media representations of twenty-first-century Finland.

Funding

This project was supported by two postdoctoral research grants from the Academy of Finland (grant numbers 315461 (Westinen) and 272168 (Tervo)).

References

Androutsopoulos, Jannis and Scholz, Arno (2003), 'Spaghetti funk: Appropriations of hip-hop culture and rap music in Europe', *Popular Music and Society*, 26:4, pp. 463–79.

Armstrong, Edward G. (2004), 'Eminem's construction of authenticity', *Popular Music and Society*, 27:3, pp. 335–55.

Arzumanova, Inna (2014), '"It's sort of members only": Transgression and body politics in *Save the Last Dance*', in M. B. Borelli (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 166–81.

Asim, Jabari (2007), *The N Word: Who Can Say It, Who Shouldn't, and Why*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Books.

Bobo, Lawrence (2014), 'The stickiness of race: Re-articulating racial inequality', *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 11:2, pp. 189–93.

Borelli, Melissa Blanco (ed.) (2014), *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and the Popular Screen*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dyer, Richard (1997), *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, New York: Routledge.

Eriksson, Madeleine (2010), ‘“People in Stockholm are smarter than countryside folks”: Reproducing urban and rural imaginaries in film and life’, *Journal of Rural Studies*, 26:2, pp. 95–104.

Erola, Jani (2010), *Luokaton Suomi? Yhteiskuntaluokat 2000-luvun Suomessa*, Helsinki: Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press.

Forman, Murray (2002), *The ‘Hood Comes First: Race, Space and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Gandal, Keith (2007), *Class Representation in Modern Fiction and Film*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Guevara, Nancy (1996), ‘Women writin’ rappin’ breakin’’, in W. E. Perkins (ed.), *Droppin’ Science: Critical Essays on Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, pp. 49–62.

Häkkinen, Antti and Tervonen, Miika (2005), ‘Johdanto’, in A. Häkkinen, P. Pulma and M. Tervonen (eds), *Vieraat kulkijat – tutut talot: Näkökulmia etnisyyden ja köyhyyden historiaan Suomessa*, Helsinki: SKS, pp. 7–36.

Hare, Sarah and Baker, Andrea (2017), ‘Keepin’ it real: Authenticity, commercialization, and the media in Korean hip-hop’, *SAGE Open*, 7:2, pp. 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017710294.

Helliwell, John F., Layard, Richard, Sachs, Jeffrey D. and De Neve, Jan Emmanuel (eds) (2020), *World Happiness Report 2020*, New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Hess, Mickey (2005), ‘Hip-hop realness and the White performer’, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 22:5, pp. 372–89.

Hiltunen, Kaisa (2019), 'Sisään- ja ulossulkemisen strategiat Leijonasydämessä', in K. Hiltunen and N. Sääskilahti (eds), *Kuulumisen reittejä taiteessa*, Turku: Eetos, pp. 78–101.

Holli, Anne M. (2003), 'Discourse and politics for gender equality in late twentieth century Finland', Ph.D. dissertation, Helsinki: Department of Political Science, University of Helsinki.

hooks, bell (1989), *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, Boston, MA: South End Press.

Iandoli, Kathy (2019), *God Save the Queens: The Essential History of Women in Hip-Hop*, New York: Dey Street Books.

Jones, Jacquie (1991), 'The new ghetto aesthetic', *Wide Angle*, 13:3&4, pp. 32–43.

Karkulehto, Sanna (2012), 'Litteraturforskning och queerpolitisk läsning', in K. Kivilaakso, A.-S. Lönngren and R. Paqvalén (eds), *Queera läsningar: Litteraturvetenskap möter queerteori*, Stockholm: Rosenlarv Förlag, pp. 18–41.

Kartastenpää, Tero (2020), 'Tyttö sinä teit tähtiä', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 27 November, https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000007641270.html. Accessed 27 November 2020.

Kelekay, Jasmine L. (2022), '"We're not all thugs in the East": The racial politics of place in Afro-Finnish hip hop', in J. Hoegaerts, T. Liimatainen, L. Hekanaho and E. Peters (eds), *Finnishness, Whiteness and Coloniality*, Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, pp. 207–37.

Kolarič, Jožef (2020), 'Homophobia in rap', in M. Gadpaille and V. Kennedy (eds), *Words, Music and Gender*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 119–32.

Krzyżanowski, Michał (2020), 'Discursive shifts and the normalisation of racism: Imaginaries of immigration, moral panics and the discourse of contemporary right-wing populism', *Social Semiotics*, 30:4, pp. 503–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2020.1766199.

Lane, Nikki (2011), 'Black women queering the mic: Missy Elliott disturbing the boundaries of racialized sexuality and gender', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58:6&7, pp. 775–92.

Lentin, Alana (2014), 'Post-race, post politics: The paradoxical rise of culture after multiculturalism', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37:8, pp. 1268–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.664278.

Leppänen, Sirpa and Westinen, Elina (2017), 'Migrant rap in the periphery: Performing politics of belonging', *AILA Review*, 30:1, pp. 1–26.

Loftsdóttir, Kristín and Jensen, Lars (2012), *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identities*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Martikainen, Harri, Vertio, Kia, Holmström, Lauri and Antikainen, Jutta (2016), Valtioneuvoston selonteko sisäisestä turvallisuudesta, Helsinki: Ministry of the Interior, https://intermin.fi/documents/1410869/4113506/67644_julkaisu_082016.pdf. Accessed 30 June 2022.

McLeod, Kembrew (1999), ‘Authenticity within hip-hop’, *Journal of Communication*, 49:4, pp. 134–50.

McNelis, Tim (2017), *US Youth Films and Popular Music: Identity, Genre, and Musical Agency*, New York: Routledge.

Mitchell, Tony (2001), ‘Introduction: Another root – Hip-hop outside the USA’, in T. Mitchell (ed.), *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, pp. 1–38.

Moffat, Kate and Asava, Zélie (2022), ‘*JSCA* Special Issue: “Approaching Race and Ethnicity in Nordic Film Culture”’, *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, Special Issue: ‘Approaching Race and Ethnicity in Nordic Film Culture’, 12:1, pp. 3–10.

Mulinari, Diana, Keskinen, Suvi, Tuori, Salla and Irni, Sari (2020), ‘Introduction: Postcolonialism and the Nordic models of welfare and gender, in S. Keskinen, S. Tuori, S. Irni and D. Mulinari (eds), *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*, New York: Routledge, pp. 1–18.

Ogbar, Jeffrey Ogbonna Green (2007), *Hip-Hop Revolution: The Culture and Politics of Rap*, Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Onanuga, Paul Ayodele (2020), ‘When hip-hop meets CMC: Digital discourse in Nigerian hip-hop’, *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 34:4, pp. 590–600.

Oware, Matthew (2015), ‘“We stick out like a sore thumb …”: Underground White rappers’ hegemonic masculinity and racial evasion, *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 2:3, pp. 372–86.

Pennycook, Alistair (2007), *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*, New York: Routledge.

Pitcher, Ben (2006), ‘“Are you thinking what we’re thinking?” Immigration, multiculturalism and the disavowal of racism in the run-up to the 2005 British general election’, *Social Semiotics*, 16:4, pp. 535–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330601019892.

Pough, Gwendolyn D. (2004), *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*, Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press.

Rantakallio, Inka (2019), ‘New spirituality, atheism, and authenticity in Finnish underground rap’, Ph.D. dissertation, Turku: University of Turku.

Rapo, Markus (2011), ‘Kuka on maahanmuuttaja?’, in *Tieto & trendit*, vol. 1, Helsinki: Tilastokeskus, http://tilastokeskus.fi/tup/tietotrendit/tt_01_11.html. Accessed 1 February 2020.

Rastas, Anna (2012), ‘Reading history through Finnish exceptionalism’, in K. Loftsdóttir and L. Jensen (eds), *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Countries: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identities*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, pp. 89–103.

Rastas, Anna (2019), ‘The emergence of race as a social category in Northern Europe’, in P. Essed, K. Farquharson, K. Pillay and E. J. White (eds), *Relating Worlds of Racism: Dehumanization, Belonging and the Normativity of European Whiteness*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 357–81.

Rastas, Anna and Seye, Elina (2019), 'Music and anti-racism: Musicians' involvement in anti-racist spaces', *Popular Music and Society*, 42:5, pp. 592–610, https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2018.1526527.

Rikala, Sanna (2018), 'Masennus, työkyvyttömyys ja sosiaalinen eriarvoisuus nuorten aikuisten elämänkuluissa', *Yhteiskuntapolitiikka*, 83:2, pp. 159–70.

Rivers, Damian J. (2018), 'Where is the love? White nationalist discourse on hip-hop', in A. S. Ross and D. J. Rivers (eds), *The Sociolinguistics of Hip-Hop as Critical Conscience: Dissatisfaction and Dissent*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 101–29.

Rose, Tricia (1994), *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.

Rossi, Leena-Maija (2020), 'Licorice boys and female coffee beans: Representations of colonial complicity in Finnish visual culture', in S. Keskinen, S. Tuori, S. Irni and D. Mulinari (eds), *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region*, New York: Routledge, pp. 189–204.

Römpötti, Tommi (2017), 'From success to human waste management: Class, family and traces of neo-liberalism in the Finnish films *Beauty and the Bastard* and *Bad Family*', *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 7:3, pp. 225–42.

Salö, Linus, Karlander, David, Leppänen, Sirpa, Westinen, Elina and Spindler Møller, Janus (2022), 'Introduction: Spaces of upset in the Nordic region', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 275, pp. 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2021-0115.

Skeggs, Beverley (2004), *Class, Self, Culture*, London: Routledge.

Smith-Shomade, Beretta E. (2003), '"Rock-a-bye, baby!" Black women disrupting gangs and constructing hip-hop gangsta films', *Cinema Journal*, 42:2, pp. 25–40.

Solomon, Thomas (2009), 'Berlin–Frankfurt–Istanbul: Turkish hip-hop in motion', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 12:3, pp. 305–27.

Stewart, Jesse (2009), 'Real to reel: Filmic constructions of hip-hop cultures and hip-hop identities', *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, 26:2, pp. 49–67.

Strand, Heini (2019), *Hyvä verse: Suomiräpin naiset*, Helsinki: Into.

Stubberud, Elisabeth and Ringrose, Priscilla (2014), 'Speaking images, race-less words: *Play* and the absence of race in contemporary Scandinavia', *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 4:1, pp. 61–76, https://doi.org/10.1386/jsca.4.1.61_1.

Sykäri, Venla, Rantakallio, Inka, Westinen, Elina and Cvetanović, Dragana (2019), *Hiphop Suomessa: Puheenvuoroja tutkijoilta ja tekijöiltä*, Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto.

Tervo, Mervi (2014), 'From appropriation to translation: Localizing rap music to Finland', *Popular Music and Society*, 37:2, pp. 169–86, https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2012.740819.

Timonen, Virpi (1999), 'A threat to social security? The impact of EU membership on the Finnish welfare state', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 9:3, pp. 253–61.

Walker, Rebecca (2012), *Black Cool: One Thousand Streams of Blackness*, New York: Soft Skull Press.

Westinen, Elina (2014), 'The discursive construction of authenticity: Resources, scales and polycentricity in Finnish hip-hop culture', Ph.D. dissertation, Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Westinen, Elina (2018), '"Who's afraid of the dark?" – The ironic self-stereotype of the ethnic Other in Finnish rap music', in A. Ross and D. Rivers (eds.), The Sociolinguistics of Hip-Hop as Critical Conscience: Dissatisfaction and Dissent. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 131–161.

Westinen, Elina and Rantakallio, Inka (2019), '"Keep it real": Rap-artistien näkemyksiä autenttisuudesta', in V. Sykäri, I. Rantakallio, E. Westinen and D. Cvetanović (eds), *Hiphop Suomessa: puheenvuoroja tutkijoilta ja tekijöiltä*, Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto, pp. 124–49.

Williams, Melvin (2017), 'White chicks with a gangsta' pitch: Gendered Whiteness in United States rap culture (1990–2017)', *Journal of Hip-Hop Studies*, 4:1, pp. 50–93.

Xie, Philip Feifan, Osumare, Halifu and Ibrahim, Awad (2007), 'Gazing the hood: Hip-hop as tourism attraction', *Tourism Management*, 28:2, pp. 452–60, doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2006.03.009.

Film references

Ahearn, Charlie (1982), *Wild Style*, USA.

Carter, Thomas (2001), *Save the Last Dance*, USA.

Fletcher, Anne (2006), *Step Up*, USA.

Gray, F. Gary (2015), *Straight Outta Compton*, USA.

Hanson, Curtis (2002), *8 Mile*, USA.

Karukoski, Dome (2005), *Tyttö sinä olet tähti*, Finland. DVD, Finland: Finnkino, 2006.

Lathan, Stan (1984), *Beat Street*, USA.

Tillman Jr., George (2009), *Notorious*, USA.

Woodruff, Billie (2003), *Honey*, USA.

Yli-Suvanto, Tomi (2021), *Mist sä tuut?*, Finland: Moskito Television, Yle.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Westinen, Elina, Karkulehto, Sanna and Tervo, Mervi (2023), 'Localized hip hop authenticity in early 2000s Finland: Retaining representations of race, class and gender in *Beauty and the Bastard*', *Journal of Scandinavian Cinema*, 13:1, pp. 00–00, https://doi.org/10.1386/jsca.

Notes

1. A notable exception is *8 Mile*, largely based on the life experiences of Eminem, the first commercially successful White US rapper, who is considered 'authentic' due to his exceptional skills and flow, affiliation with a renowned African American producer and rappers and working-class background (Hess 2005).

2. Notable early examples include Queen Latifah, Roxanne Shanté and MC Lyte. A few current ones, especially Nicki Minaj and Cardi B, have in fact become global megastars (see, e.g., Iandoli 2019).

3. Over the years, hip hop has proved to be an adaptable cultural form and a significant tool of self-expression for youth across the world (e.g. Mitchell 2001). Nowadays hip hop cultural forms can be encountered across the globe, and the specific mixes of African American influences and local elements have also attracted local hip hop studies (Androutsopoulos and Scholz 2003; Forman 2002; Solomon 2009; Westinen 2014; Onanuga 2020). As Pennycook has aptly suggested, we ought to understand this mixing of local and global aspects not as a dichotomy but as 'transcultural flows', in other words, as 'the ways in which the cultural forms move, change and are reused to fashion

new identities' (2007: 6–8). According to him, hip hop may well be one of the most significant fields for the study of (cultural) processes of globalization.

4. Although this model is based on US rap music, it is applicable to an analysis of a Finnish hip hop movie due to its general overview and multiple discursive arguments concerning hip hop authenticity.

5. In 2005, in the population of 5.3 million, 2.7 per cent were foreign language speakers and 3 per cent (157,000) were officially categorized as people 'with a foreign background' (i.e. at least one known parent was born outside Finland), compared to 2020, when the figures were 7.8 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively (OSF 2023; see also Mulinari et al. 2020).

6. In recent years, there have been some elements of change, such as clubs featuring only female rappers, more collaboration between female rappers and efforts to change the public discourse about them, along with a recent book focusing solely on Finnish female rappers (Strand 2019).

7. All citation translations from Finnish to English are by Elina Westinen.

8. The film is shot in several locations in Finland (Helsinki, Sipoo, Vantaa and Turku). However, in terms of Finnish hip hop and geography (e.g. Westinen 2014), the Helsinki metropolitan area is arguably quite different from the rest of the country: most Black and Brown people live there, often in specific neighbourhoods, and the Finnish hip hop scene (artists, fans, studios, live venues, record labels) centres around that location.

9. This authenticity project is also supported by White male cameo roles and the soundtrack of the film. In hip hop culture, White female rappers in particular are often

treated as inauthentic and their contributions to the scene remain largely underexamined (Williams 2017).

10. Gender, race and class are not the only markers of difference in the promotion of hip hop authenticity in the film, however, as these markers also intersect with sexuality. Finnish hip hop authenticity is seemingly constructed via concerted heterosexual orientation and encounters and by framing homosexuality as something deviant, repressed and ridiculed (in rap and hip hop see, e.g., Kolarič 2020). This in itself would be worth an in-depth examination, as the entire heteroromantic plot of the film is built on a homophobic bet: if Sune does not succeed in seducing Nelli, his friends will consider him a homosexual. For reasons of space and scope, however, compulsory heteronormativity and homophobia represented in the film are not explored in this article.