

Jay-Z: A Jay Without a Jay's Decency –  
 the Discography of Shawn Carter Read  
 Against the Landscape of Joe Hamilton

Jay-Z, the iconic persona created and actualized by Hip-Hop artist and business mogul Shawn Carter, is the latest in a line of African American literary figures whose representations reflect an inexperience, an ignorance, a *greenhornedness*, consistent with those who have no clue about the Nature of the terrain upon which they tread. Like Paul Lawrence Dunbar's character Joe Hamilton, in his 1902 novel *Sport of the Gods* (*SOTG*), Jay-Z is "a jay without a jay's decency" (211). Calmly exclaiming narratives which facialize the landscapes of young black bodies – male and female – Jay-Z's lyrical presentation of the life and times of Shawn Carter affects black men becoming "the twin brother of Rich Porter" ("There's Been a Murder") and black women becoming Jay-Z's "beautiful beeeitch" ("Dirt Off Your Shoulder").

In *SOTG*, the narrative revolves primarily around the trials and tribulations and celebrations of the Berry family – Berry, Fannie, Joe and Kitty. After Berry Hamilton is wrongly convicted and imprisoned for theft, the remaining family members decide to relocate to New York City from their Virginia homestead. Reflecting the postbellum wandering of the formerly enslaved and foreshadowing the Great Migration north experienced by so many African Americans, *SOTG* is a great example of what Pauline Hopkins calls fiction's great achievement as a record of the advancements and history of the African American race. In his post-New York characterization of Joe Hamilton, Dunbar presents Joe as one in the long line of just so many Joes who are lost in the game of life and are completely ignorant of just how lost they are. Joe is not the only character that Dunbar characterizes as a jay, but he is the only character whose facialization of Others'-jayness explicitly serves to reflect his, Joe's, jayness. Someone should tell Jay-Z that his put downs and insults and condescension to those he considers economically and intellectually and romantically inferior to himself only serve to reflect just how economically and intellectually and romantically naïve and inferior is the persona Jay-Z.

After introducing his sister Kit (as she becomes known in New York) to Hattie Sterling – his love interest and guide to all that *is* New York – Joe discovers that Kit is interested in working with Hattie on the stage shows for which New York will one day become so famous. Hattie herself not only is a performer in minstrelsy shows, but the vaudeville acts as well. In addition to managing "her [own] company" (*SOTG* 164), Hattie works in the company managed by Mr. Martin and promises to get Kit an interview with the manager. In regards to talent and business acumen, Joe's facialization of Hattie<sup>1</sup> should have resulted in Joe being more successful in his art and occupation (like the city of New York itself). But he does not become a world-class barber, nor a businessman in barber products. In regards to Jay-Z becoming Joe Hamilton and Joe Hamilton becoming Jay-Z, at least Jay-Z prospers artistically and economically. I mean, he is "a Business, Man" (qtd. in "Diamonds of Sierra Leone", remix). This is a good thing, right? I digress... After learning that Kit wants to be in show business, Joe remarks, "Kit is a good deal jay yet" (*SOTG* 176).

Joe does not believe that his sister is talented enough to sing on the stages of New York. While she is a gifted singer of the African American spirituals so popularized by

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on this, see "Faciality in the Landscape of Dunbar's *Sport of the Gods*: When Forces are Captured, Affects are Becoming" by Labancamy Jankins.

the Fisk Jubilee Singers – evidenced by her role as prized vocalist, chosen to “sing for the benefit of the A.M.E. church” (16) – Joe believes Kit is only showing her ignorance, her greenhornedness, her inexperience when dealing with the managers of shows in New York, when she self-facializes as a “chorus” girl (173). Although Hattie tells Kit her “voice is too good for the chorus” (173), and although Hattie is the only one among the three to have any experience in New York show business, Joe believes Kit to be a jay for her self-facialization as a New York chorus girl, for becoming-chorus girl. In response to Joe’s statement, Hattie responds:

Oh, yes, this world is full of jays. Lots of ‘em have seen enough to make ‘em wise, but they’re still jays, and don’t know it. That’s the worst of it. They go around thinking they’re it, when they ain’t even in the game. Go and get beer. (176)

Hattie’s dismissal of Joe – sending him to get beer after Kit has departed and after patiently and delicately explaining what a jay is in the hopes that Joe would recognize his own jayness – highlights a few things that could benefit Jay-Z’s character.

One, the world is full of jays in all shapes, sizes, genres, colors, and intellectual and economic forms. The world is and has always been full of them. Two, some jays are just too ignorant of their own jayness. Even when people are patient, and delicately point out the nature of jayness, some jays, like Joe Hamilton (like Jay-Z), just will not search the depths of their souls and reflect a modicum of decency in the effort to counterbalance their jayness in the furtherance of their jayness being more readily accepted and excused. Three, although Hattie is more sophisticated than Kit – by New York Banner Club standards, anyway – and more powerful than Kit – in a Foucauldian sense – Hattie is mindful of the jayness she writes upon the facialized landscape of Kit. Hattie does not order beer in the presence of Kit, because Hattie intuitively discerns that Kit is not a drinker. Kit is a jay in the world of the Banner Club. But Kit knows that Kit is a jay. And, she will only drink beer with Hattie because of Hattie’s superior position of power, in the Foucauldian sense, again. For, Hattie is Kit’s only entrée into the world of New York chorus shows. Mr. Thomas might offer some opportunity, but at what costs? The only sensible thing for Kit to do is to make good company with Hattie. So, if Hattie drinks beer, then from Kit’s perspective: When in Rome... So, Hattie recognizes the thought that Kit recognizes her (Kit’s) own jayness. In her superior position, Hattie reads Kit’s self-recognition of her own jayness in the presence of a social superior (Hattie) as a sign of respect for those in a position of superiority and authority. Intuitively understanding that Kit is in a superior position of power in the landscape of singing and that she, Hattie, is a somewhat jay at her age and abilities, Hattie also respects Kit’s desire not to drink beer, even though Kit will and did – a tad. This, Hattie intuits because she can read the signs of the facialized landscape that is Kitty Hamilton. In facializing the landscape of Kitty Hamilton affecting Kit becoming-jay, Hattie recognizes the “always double” (Deleuze 305) nature of becomings and facializations. In the landscape of Kit, Hattie recognizes her own jayness. Jay-Z could benefit from reading the landscape of African American men and black women with a bit more tact and respect.

The ignorant jay, ignorant of his own jayness and a whole hosts of other things, begins to wear seriously on the souls of those who love him when the jay continues to

facialize the City in its worst image of actualization. That is what “Jigga[boo]”<sup>2</sup> does in *The Life and Times of Shawn Carter*, volumes one, two and three (along with a number of other writings found in the discography of Shawn Carter) (“Money, Cash, Hoes”). And, so too does Joe Hamilton in *SOTG*. The continued drinking of alcohol, and possibly getting a “touch” [of heroine?] (*SOTG* 122) as proffered by the “fraternity” (168), and the “touching” (222) of his sister Kit, transgressing God’s laws, all write poorly and destructively upon the landscape of Joe Hamilton affecting Joe becoming nothing but a “loaded” “dog” (211). As a loaded dog, Joe destroys Hattie, who is New York, who has become Joe.<sup>3</sup> In the end, Joe is isolated and aloof. He is only able to communicate with animals. He destroys Hattie. He destroys New York City. He destroys himself. Perhaps, if Joe would have been a bit more cognizant of his own jayness, then the outcome would have been different. Perhaps he would have actualized life without contributing to destruction of his woman, his sister, his people, his city, his world. Will Shawn Carter ever wake up to the Jayness of his characterization of the persona known as Jay-Z? Will Mr. Carter have to become an isolated and aloof dog before he recognizes the dangers inherent in his jayness?

I know what you are thinking: Jay-Z is not the latest in a line of jays; he is a rap god! Here is a list of literary figures that are considered jays: the Mack, Carlito, Michael Corleone, Ice Berg Slim, Larry Hoover, Big Meech, Frank Lucas, Nicky Barnes...the list goes on and on. But the aforementioned should suffice to underscore my point “pimps, playas, shot-callas...all of us” are jays (“Pimps, Playas, Hustlas”). Let us take a look at Jay-Z’s rise within the landscape that is Hip-Hop music and American culture and let us determine if **Jay-Z** is the latest (as Z is at the end of the alphabet) in a long line of jay’s without decency.

After graduating from college in 1999, my very first job was as a high school teacher of History. I envisioned myself as an eventual university professor and I dressed as I believed a professor would dress. In addition to lively discussions related to history, I was best known to the student body for my assortment of overcoats and hats: picture Sherlock Holmes. One day as I was heading to my classroom a student stopped me to comment on my hat. The young lady said to me, “Mr. Jenkins, your hat is *pimpin’!*” For me, her comment caused pause. Of course she was not suggesting that my hat was the overlord of other hats used to solicit money from still other hats in exchange for sexual favor. She was attempting to express her approval, her delight, regarding my hat; she thought my hat was a nice hat.

As I reflect on our exchange over a decade later, I realize that what set me aback in \_\_\_\_\_ was my amazement at the level to which the lyricism of a fictional character named Jay-Z pervaded American culture and lexicon. And, continues even to this day, perhaps even more. In 1999, Jay-Z’s song “Big Pimpin’” was one of many songs that dominated American airwaves, music video channels and the song was largely responsible for the platinum sales status of the album *Vol. 2...Hard Knock Life* on which the song could be found. How could the ideological outlook of a character steeped in the impoverished landscape of the underclass be absorbed so readily by a young lady of an

---

<sup>2</sup> The persona Jay-Z also goes by the following monikers, just to name a few: Jay, Jigga, Jiggaman, Hov, J-Hova, Hovito, S. Carter (read S-Dot-Carter), Shawn Carter, Shawn, the greatest rapper alive, Beyonce Baby-Daddy, Beyonce husband.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1.

upper class, almost aristocratic, background? The answer, at least for me, lies somewhere within the matrix of the structural components of Troy literature and mythology and the commercial viability of a genre of hip-hop music referred to as cocaine rap. I argue that like the Norman conquerors of medieval England, Jay-Z uses the concept of *translatio imperii* to foment a sense of legitimacy and authenticity with regard to his position as *the* authority of cocaine rap. Combined with hip-hop music's ability to seep into the deepest recesses of American culture, it is no wonder that the young lady so easily internalized Jay-Z's lyrical flashes. Jay-Z's rise to cultural prominence and his authority to influence culture in America reflect his use of *translatio imperii* with a difference, when compared to the Norman lords of medieval England.

Before we delve headlong into how Jay-Z translates the power of empire, as evidenced by his literary corpus, let us define *translatio imperii* and explicate its use by medieval Norman lords as the conquest of England was completed. Also, the Deleuzian concept of *repetition with a difference* needs to be elucidated.

The Latin phrase *translatio imperii* refers to the transfer or translation of political power or legitimacy from one civilization to another. In medieval Europe, both political and cultural legitimacy were thought to have been passed down from classical antiquity. When William the Conqueror defeated Harold at the battle of Hastings in 1066, he emerged from the conquest as not only the duke of Normandy in France, but as the king of what would be called England. Technically speaking, although William was king of England, he was still a vassal, an inferior, to the king of France. Quite a position for a king, the supreme ruler of a land, to find himself. As time progressed, the kings of England did not like being considered the vassals of the kings of France. The Norman kings of England needed a story, a narrative, a mythology, to justify political independence from France. The theme of *translatio imperii* was used to establish how political legitimacy had been transferred from classical antiquity to England, and by default English kings. The idea was to sever ties with the political dominance of the French kings with regards to the English kings as a result of feudal structuralism. *Translatio imperii* served as a line of flight from the schema of French Kings. In order to perform such a severance, such a separation, a mythological narrative centered on the first British king of Britain in what would become England was developed.

The story of the first British king, Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas - the legendary founder of Rome in Virgil's *Aeneid* - was just that story. For the Romans, Aeneas represented a transfer of imperial authority from Troy to Rome. As the grandson of Aeneas, the story of Brutus could be used to establish the legitimacy, authority and existence of the Norman kings of England - as imperial power was transferred from Rome to England - eliding subordination to the kings of France. The establishment of a genealogical link to Troy was used "throughout the Middle Ages" according to Lee Patterson in *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (90). Patterson references Guido delle Colonne's *History of the Destruction of Troy* to illustrate the proclivity for the legitimization of European medieval *imperia* in connection with Troy. England, France, Venice, Sicily and Tuscany, Naples and Calabria (in addition to other European sites of *imperia*) all used genealogical descent from figures of Trojan mythology: Brutus, Francus, Antenor, Sicanus, Aeneas and Diomedes, respectively. Patterson writes,

Trojan origins provided a powerfully legitimizing tool for medieval rulers. The location of historical authority in a single source naturally appealed to

a medieval monarchy interested in promoting its own role as an exclusive source of political power, and the linearity of *translatio imperii* was convenient support for hereditary dynasties and genealogical claims. (92)

The first literary text in England to introduce the story of Brutus was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the King's of Britain* in 1136. The *History* begins with Brutus and continues describing the lineage of the kings of England down to the Norman Kings. Geoffrey mentions a warlord named Arthur who helped to foment British resistance against the Anglo-Saxon invaders after the fall of the Roman Empire some time in the sixth century (*History* II. 25-36). According to the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, one of the successes of Arthur was the conquest of Rome (6). Arthur's descendants therefore (i.e. English kings) can claim to not owe fealty to the French Kings. Because the French claim to political legitimacy was rooted in descent from Rome and because Arthur conquered Rome, France could not claim control over the descendants of Arthur (i.e. the kings of Anglo-Norman England). Moreover, the Norman lords, by connection with Brutus, could claim a genealogical link to Britain's prehistory that would legitimize Norman rule over the various Pictish, Welsh, Saxon and English peoples over which they ruled. The connection between King Stephen of England, the grandson of William the Conqueror and the nephew of Henry I, (the last of the sons of William the Conqueror) and Geoffrey of Monmouth may help to shed some light on the process of *translatio imperii*.

In "History as Symbolic Capital," Laurie Finke and Martin Shichtman explain how history – story, narrative, myth – could be used as symbolic capital to provide a "narrative of legitimacy" for supporters of King Stephen (51). Henry I had no male heir upon his death in 1135; his daughter Matilda was designated his heir. According to Finke and Shichtman "she was at the time married to Geoffrey, count of Anjou [in France]...and her son Henry was still an infant" (46). Quite possibly motivated by disgust of English monarchical subordination to the French crown and a desire to keep French imperial influence as far as possible from the throne of England, Stephen quickly seized the English throne upon the death of Henry I. On December 22, 1135, Stephen was crowned king of England. During the two decades of his reign, "Matilda waged an on-and-off civil war to regain her throne" (46). Stephen's reign was steeped in conflict regarding who was the rightful monarch of England. If Stephen and his supporters could point towards a narrative, a story – a myth – which legitimized Stephen's authority and acquisition of the throne in connection with the prehistory of Britain [a time before the conquest of the Normans], then perhaps Matilda's claims could be dismissed outright. The exchange of symbolic capital, in the form of a history of the kings of Britain, between Geoffrey of Monmouth and Stephen and his supporters provided the path to just such a story.

According to Pierre Bourdieu, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, in a precapitalist economy, economic consideration must be extended to all the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after:

which may be fair words or smiles, handshakes or shrugs, compliments or attention, challenges or insults, honors or honours, powers or pleasures, gossip or scientific information, distinction or distinctions. (178)

Of the surviving 215 complete manuscripts of the *History of the Kings of Britain*, a majority are dedicated to: 1) Robert of Gloucester, 2) Waleran, count of Meulan and/or 3) King Stephen himself (Finke and Shichtman 46). Robert and Waleran were supporters of Stephen and sworn enemies of Matilda; Stephen's stance toward Matilda requires no explanation. None of the surviving manuscripts are dedicated to Matilda. Geoffrey's dedications of the history of British kings to Stephen and his supporters distinguish, that is make distinct, to whom imperial power should be transferred in the contest between Stephen and Matilda. This exchange of symbolic capital, centered on the origins of Britain's mythological past, works to legitimize Stephen's claim to the English throne to the detriment of Matilda. Just as the transfer of imperial power from Troy to Rome to England works to sever any authorial claims by the kings of France with regard to the land holdings of Norman monarchs in England, Geoffrey's dedications of the *History* work to sever any authorial claims of Matilda with regards to the English throne itself. Geoffrey's text works to elide Matilda from legitimate claims of the throne based on the narrative truth his *History* establishes.

I submit that Jay-Z's rise to cultural prominence in America is due, in part, to his use of the concept of *translatio imperii* just as the medieval Norman rulers of England's rise to political prominence was based, in part, on the use of the concept of *translatio imperii*. Just as the creation of a genealogical link between the medieval Norman kings of England with a mythological British past legitimized Norman rulers' authority, like Stephen, over England, Jay-Z's creation of a genealogical link between himself and a mythological cocaine past in America legitimizes his authority with regards to the genre of hip-hop music referred to as cocaine rap. Jay-Z's use of *translatio imperii* when compared with that of Geoffrey's in the *History* represents a repetition of the concept, but with a difference.

Let us work through Giles Deleuze's concept of *repetition with a difference* for further elucidation. In *Telling It Again and Again*, Bruce Kawain posits that "exact repetition" is "impossible" (7). Deleuzian thought would suggest that repetition is "not a matter of the same thing occurring over and over again" but "variation in and through" every occurrence: "to repeat is to begin again; to affirm the power of the new and the unforeseeable" (Parr 223). For Deleuze, "repetition offers the possibility of *reinvention*, repetition dissolves identities as it changes them, giving rise to something...productive" (223, italics mine). Additionally, difference is not "a relative measure of sameness," but a "difference from the same," a "difference from the same over time," a net variation between two states (Stagoll 72). Jay-Z is a reinvented version of Shawn Carter. His repetitious use of *translatio imperii* with a difference permits the man known as Shawn Carter to reinvent himself as Jay-Z by dissolving his identity as Shawn Carter in the furtherance of giving rise to something productive, something new, something unforeseen: a cocaine rap icon exerting tremendous cultural hegemony over the imagination of Americans, and people worldwide.

Now we move from the medieval scene to the modern scene (or perhaps postmodern according to some; my position regarding historical and literary epochs notwithstanding and irrelevant to the discussion). In the twentieth century, one could argue that power, authority and legitimacy of empire were transferred from Great Britain to the United States. While the aftermath of World War II and the disintegration of the British Empire signaled such a shift, the transfer of Arthurian Camelot to Kennedean

Camelot during the reign of the administration of American President John F. Kennedy symbolized this shift and captured the moment for the imagination much better.

In *Black Camelot: African-American Culture Heroes in Their Times, 1960-1980*, William Van Deburg analyzes the iconic stature of John F. Kennedy who, claims Van Deburg,

fulfilled the two basic requirements of a modern-day cultural hero: a traditional heroism combined with a mass marketed celebrity. Kennedy serves as a near perfect paradigm because his extraordinary power over the popular imagination in his day and thereafter reflected the powerful need of the populace for leaders with a combination of paradoxical qualities: physical charm and extraordinary courage and competitiveness, but with a universal appeal to the ordinary person. (1)

When John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, his assassination killed both the president and the American vision of Camelot. Van Deburg argues that, for African Americans, “black cultural heroes filled in some of the void [left by the assassination of Kennedy] for many people” (22). ‘Black cultural heroes,’ according to Van Deburg include “athletes, musicians, urban badmen, and fictional “superhero” detectives who provided the psychological boost” necessary for many African Americans. Van Deburg concludes, this “Black Camelot has gone the way of the other Camelots before it, but a residual influence remains” (1). Understanding this “residual influence” of black cultural heroes, specifically urban badmen - those Van Deburg labels social bandits in *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life* - is the key to understanding the mythological structure of a cocaine past with which Shawn Carter makes a genealogical link in his use of *translatio imperii*. The psychological boost provided by social bandits provided access to a mythological structure by which transfer of authority, power and legitimacy from Kennedy’s Camelot to those creative enough to claim inheritance could take place, at least culturally anyway.

In *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life*, Van Deburg states that the social bandit was typically depicted as a “tough, self-reliant, subversive, steeped in the warrior tradition” (*Hoodlums* 68). Eric Hobsbawm invented the term ‘social bandit’ in his study of popular forms of resistance, entitled *Primitive Rebels*. He further expanded the field in his work entitled, *Bandits*. Social banditry was a widespread phenomenon known in many societies and some argue that it still exists in remote areas and on high seas: pirates, for example. Social scientists have also discussed the terms applicability to more modern forms of crime, like street crime and drug dealing. The social bandit, historically within the black community, was a “controversial individual vilified by whites for proclivity towards evil, but revered in the black community as necessarily insurgent and revolutionary” (qtd. in Washington 660). Some within the black community ‘revere’ those blacks considered by the white community to be controversial and evil. The ideological perspective of some Americans considers the actions of a social bandit to be good. Yes, the social bandit frequently “operates outside the law, but at the same time personifies group resistance to oppression” (68). The bandit is technically a criminal. To some within the black community, the social bandit is a symbol of resistance to oppressive forces, however: and, as such, is honored. Black social bandits “address racial injustice and function to stick it to the MAN” – the white power structure machine

(71). Some black Americans have “developed an oppositional culture that blunts and inverts the racial stigma” which results from values being color-coded in America: white being good, worthy of full American citizenship; black being bad, unworthy of full American citizenship. Some blacks “recognize that what whites consider to be villainy more accurately could be conceptualized as social banditry – the act of being bad for a good reason” (*Hoodlums* 68). Being born in 1969, Shawn Carter (Jay-Z) came of age during the very period when African Americans began to invest tremendous cultural capital in the figures of cultural heroes like the social bandit.

The investment of cultural capital in social bandits coupled with the dire economic straits faced by young African Americans like Shawn Carter by the 1980s, resulting from the terrible fiscal policies of the Ronald Reagan era (Reaganomics), created the perfect milieu for the development of a mythology surrounding social bandits like Harlem’s Rich Porter and his comrades Alpo and Azie. It is this triumvirate, with particular emphasis on Rich Porter, with which Shawn Carter makes a genealogical link in order to establish authority regarding his status with respect to cocaine rap.

Rich Porter was a famed cocaine drug dealer from Harlem, New York; he was callously murdered January 4, 1990. In “The Legend of Rich Porter,” it is noted that Porter was “born in 1965 [and] was known for his flamboyance and high-profile lifestyle. He began selling drugs at the youthful age of twelve. By the time he was eighteen years old, he was rumored to own his first brand new BMW and some believed he kept a garage in Manhattan filled with dozens of luxury cars” (Civil). Not only a fan of fast cars and women, Rich took great pride in his appearance; it was even rumored that he never wore the same outfit twice. His life style is legendary amongst New Yorkers and the way in which his life ended continues to live in infamy. In an interview with *Complex.com*, New York hip-hop recording artist and Harlem native Jim Jones, of the acclaimed *VH1* series *Chrissy and Mr. Jones*, explains the relevance of figures like Porter:

When it comes to Rich Porter, he was a very instrumental person from Harlem as far as the days of hustling[selling illegal drugs]. He set the precedent for my generation coming up. Watching the hustlers, the fast cars, pretty girls, and the fast money and things like that. And the story that goes behind it as far as the love and the betrayal. This is Harlem history. So, you know for the Diplomats, me, Juelz, Zeke and Cam, coming up and being instrumental in Harlem right now, it’s like synonymous to the life we live. We do business and we’re rapping, but this is pretty much the fast life of the entertainment industry. (*Complex.com*)

Porter was a business partner with childhood friends Azie Faison and Alberto “Alpo” Martinez. The trio was involved in many drug deals with Mafioso Ian “E.N.” Saporita before he was shot and killed in front of a bodega in Harlem. Along with Azie and Alpo, Porter “earned more than \$100,000 a week selling cocaine in Harlem, New York during the peak of America’s “War on Drugs” between 1983-1990” (Civil). This is the legendary, mythological structure centered on America’s cocaine past with which Shawn Carter makes genealogical links in the invention of Jay-Z, America’s authority on cocaine rap.

Cocaine rap is a sub-genre of hip-hop music that focuses on “the trade of cocaine” (*xxlmag.com*). The sub-genre, along with its aesthetic, is the preferred music of choice for today’s generation of rappers. From artists such as Lil Wayne

who, having been under the wing of Cash Money Records since he was knee-high to a kilo, has no verifiable trafficking history to speak of to Juelz Santana (he of the memorable moniker “Human Crack in the Flesh”) and his Dipset ilk, cocaine rap is the choice of the new generation. Even an artist like Busta Rhymes, known mostly for feel-good party anthems throughout his long career, chose to play up his stint in the drug game for the run-up to his album, *The Big Bang*, and jumped on the beat from Rick Ross’ “Hustlin’,” bragging about “that inconceivable” “guap” he made selling “cocaina” during the Reagan era. (xxlmag.com)

And, of course, *the* authority of cocaine rap, Jay-Z. But, just how did Jay-Z rise to such prominence and why? I believe that the answer lies in Shawn Carter’s transfer of power, authority and legitimacy regarding the trafficking of cocaine from Rich Porter by creating a genealogical link between him and the mythology surrounding Porter, Faison and Martinez.

On his song entitled, “There’s Been a Murder,” Jay-Z says, “...they placed me on this earth/ The twin brother of Rich Porter, separated at birth/ I got the soul of a hustler” (II. 9-11). In this concise moment, Shawn Carter transfers authority regarding the trade in cocaine from Porter to himself. In a world where all we have left of mythical cocaine kingpins is memory and reminiscence, Jay-Z has become the once ‘separated at birth’ ‘twin brother’ of Porter. If anyone has the authority to speak about the trade in cocaine, it must be the twin brother of a well-acknowledged cocaine dealer, right? Realness, better understood as authenticity, “is put at a premium in hip-hop” (xxlmag.com). And there would exist no one more authentic than someone who not only claims to have been involved with drug dealing, but one born into the family of those who represent the pinnacle of success with regards to dealing the drugs. For a public unaware of just how drugs are manufactured and distributed, Jay-Z seems to spell it out, with great facility: “quarters getting trayed/ Bricks getting chopped, mom’s pots getting used/ One thrown in that water/ try the soda if there’s two” (“There’s Been a Murder” II. 2-4). For those in the know, this is the recipe for creating crack cocaine: its use one of the deadliest epidemics to ever be experienced by the African American community. ‘Quarters,’ or one-fourth of a kilogram of cocaine, are spread out; ‘bricks,’ or kilograms of cocaine, are broken down from their compressed form used for transport in general; he uses his mother’s pots, ideally Pyrex glass pots, in order to complete the chemical process to produce crack, which also requires the addition of baking soda, ‘soda,’ and water. Man, this guy knows what he is talking about; no wonder, he *is* the twin brother of Rich Porter. This guy, whose “Momma was a mink wearer” and whose “papa ran numbers” (“American Gangster” II. 1) is part of an entire nuclear family of social bandits. Perhaps, he is the “New Rich Porter,” Jay-Z Porter (I. 3).

Shawn Carter does not stop at singing lyrics that create the genealogical link between his literary character called Jay-Z; his record company, Roc-a-Fella Records, through its film division, creates movies that pictorially depict such a link through an exchange of symbolic capital.

In 2002, Roc-a-Fella Records produced the movie *Paid in Full* based on the lives of Rich Porter, Azie “AZ” Faison and Alberto “Alpo” Martinez. Jay-Z even makes an appearance in the movie. While it is true that Jay-Z, as president of Roc-a-

Fella Records, probably had full say over who could and could not appear in the movie, the ‘distinction’ afforded him, in relation to other hip-hop artists who practice cocaine rap is undeniable. It only makes sense that Jay-Z’s company produced the movie and that Jay-Z appears in it: after all, he is Porter’s twin brother. What better way to acknowledge such a narrative fact that to appear in the movie focused on Porter’s life?

Jay-Z’s authority regarding cocaine rap is evidenced by the many “rap beefs,” or lyrical contests, in which he has been a part: all with other practitioners of cocaine rap. Two of the most famous involved the Queensbridge (Queens), New York artists known as Nas, Nasir Jones, a solo artist and eventual business partner of Jay-Z, and Prodigy, a member of the rap group Mobb Deep. Perhaps explication of the beef with Prodigy, which resulted in the destruction of Mobb Deep’s career in hip-hop, should be fleshed out first, for it will allow a better understanding of the beef between Nas and Jay-Z.

Around 2001, Prodigy finally decided to become perturbed with a line from Jay-Z’s 1999 “Money, Cash, Hoes.” Prodigy believed that Jay-Z made unflattering subliminal remarks with regard to Mobb Deep, as a whole, and with regard to Mobb Deep’s past beef with rappers Tupac Shakur, Snoop Dogg and their record label Death Row Records. On the record, exhorting the life of Harlem drug dealers, Jay-Z says, “it’s like New York’s been soft/ Every since Snoop came through and crushed the buildings” (II. 7-8). Now, Jay-Z is making reference to a symbolic gesture by Snoop that only makes sense in the context of what the media labeled the East Coast/West Coast rap war. In the video for the song entitled “New York, New York,” released by Death Row rap group Tha Dogg Pound in 1995, Snoop is seen kicking over the Empire State Building. Feeling upset and disrespected by the West Coast rap group’s disrespect of an icon of New York, Mobb Deep released a song entitled, “L.A., L.A.” But while “New York, New York” was received with great acclaim, “L.A., L.A.” received little fanfare. Jay-Z’s line suggesting that ‘New York’s been soft every since Snoop came through and crushed the buildings’ was taken by Prodigy to mean that Mobb Deep’s defense of New York with regard to the rap war was lacking. In response to word that Prodigy was displeased with the line from “Money, Cash, Hoes,” Jay-Z spoke out against Prodigy and eventually released a song entitled “The Takeover” attacking Prodigy’s credibility and authenticity as a cocaine rapper. He would eventually perform the song at Summer Jam 2001 in New York where he also revealed pictures of Prodigy dressed like Michael Jackson, the antithesis of a hustler. In the song, Jay-Z recites,

I don't care if you Mobb Deep, I hold triggers to crews  
 You little FUCK, I've got money stacks bigger than you  
 When I was pushin weight, back in eighty-eight  
 you was a ballerina I got your pictures I seen ya  
 Then you dropped "Shook Ones," switch your demeanor  
 Well - we don't believe you, you need more people  
 Roc-A-Fella, students of the game, we passed the classes  
 Nobody could read you dudes like we do  
 Don't let 'em gas you like Jigga is ass and won't clap you  
 Trust me on this one - I'll detach you

Mind from spirit, body from soul  
 They'll have to hold a mass, put your body in a hole  
 No, you're not on my level get your brakes tweaked  
 I sold what ya whole album sold in my first week  
 You guys don't want it with Hov'

Ask Nas, he don't want it with Hov', nooooo! ("Takeover" II. 1-16)

Jay-Z does a number of things in this verse which lead to the destruction of Mobb Deep's career: he acknowledges that when he (Jay-Z) was 'pushin' weight,' selling drugs, Prodigy was a 'ballerina.' He has the 'pictures' to prove it (which he politely displayed to the crowd at the Summer Jam concert). Jay-Z then suggests that Prodigy changed his stance and attempted to become hardcore when he 'dropped,' or released, the Mobb Deep song entitled, "Shook Ones," an ode to street life and criminality. 'Well,' Jay-Z does not believe such a drastic 'switch' in Prodigy's 'demeanor;' the switch does not conform to what the twin brother of Porter understands to be true of true social bandits, especially those who specialize in the traffic of cocaine. Jay-Z makes references to Mobb Deep's lack of record sales, discusses Prodigy's diminutive size and finally suggests that Mobb Deep seek out Nas, a fellow Queensbridge (Queens), New York rapper, and ask him about attempting to challenge the authority of Jay-Z (at the time Jay-Z was having sexual relations with the mother of Nas's daughter). The hip-hop public agreed with Jay-Z. Mobb Deep never recovered from Jay-Z's attack; the group lacked authenticity in the eyes of the buying public and would never sell records to the degree that they did before Jay-Z's tirade.

The jab against Nas seems almost haphazard on the surface; it's clear that the main target of the verse, and for that matter the song, is Prodigy. At any rate, the slight, in itself a form of symbolic capital, is most likely in response to a few lines in Nas's "We Will Survive" of 2001. If the insult is a form of symbolic capital, then who is the patron and who is the client? When medieval exchanges of symbolic capital took place, the exchange usually took place between the crown (patron), along with the aristocracy, and others, who served as clients. Was Jay-Z's reference to Nas in "Takeover" an unconscious manifestation of Jay-Z's acknowledgment that his status as *the* authority of rap cocaine was in question *or*, was it an indication of the beginning of Jay-Z's ascendancy to the throne? More on that later. At any rate, "We Will Survive" is an elegy written in honor of a number of African American music entertainers who have passed on to the afterlife. With respect to hip-hop, the most important figures mentioned are the Notorious B.I.G. - Christopher Wallace - and Tupac Shakur. These two icons within the world of hip-hop and twentieth century American culture, and, at least in the case of Shakur, world culture and world history, were murdered (Shakur in 1996, Wallace in 1997), in part, due to the escalating violence surrounding the media driven East Coast/West Coast rap war. The first two verses are in reference to Wallace and Shakur, respectively. In the first verse of the song, Nas laments: "Whattup Big? You know shit is rough after you slid/ You in God's hands now, keep a place for the kid" (We Will Survive I. 1-2). "Dear 'Pac, every thug sheds a teardrop" begins verse two acknowledging Shakur (II. 1). But it is what else Nas says in verse one that strikes Jay-Z's ire. Nas howls,

It used to be fun, makin records to see your response  
 But, now competition is none, now that you're gone

And these niggaz is wrong -- usin your name in vain  
 And they claim to be New York's king?  
 I had to put it in writin to keep me and Brooklyn from fightin. (I. 14-16)

In the void within the world and culture of hip-hop music left by the deaths of Shakur and Wallace stepped Jay-Z. At a time when hop-hip fans were weary of the nonsense surrounding the rap war, there was a simmering clamor, almost a mellow but steady clarion call, for someone to unite the coasts and signal an end to the shenanigans. At least, the opportunity for such a situation *presented* itself in 1999. And Jay-Z, on the heels of his critically acclaimed album *Vol. 2...The Hard Knock Life*, responded to the call and snatched the mantle of emperor that had been left by the two most authorial monarchs of the East and West coasts: Wallace and Shakur, respectively. By the time Nas released “We Will Survive” in 2001 (after the release of “Takeover”, version one), Jay-Z had been referring to himself as a king of New York for at least two years and had been acting very imperialistically in the world of not only hip-hop and hip-hop culture, but business as well (it would take another paper to discuss Jay-Z’s entrepreneurial ruthlessness and navigation through some of the most successful industries in America). So when Nas says there is no competition, regarding hip-hop music, and that some have been using Wallace’s name in vain - being from Brooklyn and a friend of Wallace, Jay-Z makes reference to Wallace in numerous songs – and, rather sarcastically, that some (Jay-Z?) claim to be the king of New York, Jay-Z responds with a short reference to Nas in “Takeover” that is packed with an insult that cuts so deep that it seems Jay-Z is hoping to not only call into question the authenticity of Mobb Deep as a whole in the song, Prodigy specifically, but any rapper representing Queensbridge. In 2001 there was no rapper from Queensbridge more well known and widely accepted by the hip-hop populace than Nas. But Nas’s hip-hop career was not as easy to destroy as that of Mobb Deep.

Nas is blessed with a lyrical acumen that makes hip-hop fans dream for more rappers whose style, flow, delivery, and poignant depiction of subject matter, regardless of genre, could live up to that which Nas displays in his debut album *Illmatic*, released in 1994. And, Jay-Z was very aware of this fact in 2001. So when Jay-Z makes reference to Nas in the first version of “Takeover,” is he seeking a rap beef? Is he seeking a lyrical battle between himself and Nas? If so, why? The answer to that question can be revealed using the concept of symbolic capital. Let us return to a question that I put on hold earlier. Is the directive by Jay-Z to Mobb Deep to ask their Queensbridge ally Nas about his (Jay-Z’s) authority in the world of hip-hop an example of the exchange of symbolic capital between Nas and Jay-Z? And if so, then who is the client and who is the patron?

If Jay-Z believed himself to truly be the king of all of New York in 2001, then there would be no need for him to insult Nas and challenge him to a rap battle. There would be nothing to gain; only an opportunity to damage his own status if indeed a beef took place and he lost (like Prodigy). If, however, Jay-Z was playing the role of client, then there would be much to gain. The recognition received from the homage paying hip-hop populace as a result of defeating the crown, or at least an aristocrat of high standing, would be tremendous. I posit that, either consciously or unconsciously, Jay-Z recognized that perhaps he was not king of *all* of New York in 2001. Perhaps he *was* king of his native Brooklyn. Perhaps he was king of a number of places, at least according to his record sales. Perhaps he was an emperor, a practitioner of the *translatio imperii* (but with

a difference), handed down from those Trojans of so long ago. But, he just wasn't the king of Queensbridge (Queens). At any rate, along with the destruction of Mobb Deep, I believe Jay-Z thought that he may as well take on all of Queen's while he was at it. One could say he was already taking Queen's sexually, but only if Nas *was* the king of Queensbridge in 2001. If Nas was king, then by having sexual relations with the mother of Nas's daughter, Jay-Z could be considered to have conquered the queen of Queens (pardon the pun). I believe this to have been the situation. When Jay-Z throws the jab at Nas in the first version of "Takeover," he is picking a fight. At stake is the borough of Queens. And the key to taking Queens is the destruction of the monarch who resides in the duchy of Queensbridge.

Almost immediately after the release of Nas's "We Will Survive," Jay-Z added an extended verse to the original incarnation of "Takeover" and released it as a second version. In the new verse, Jay-Z says:

I know you missin all the - FAAAAAAAME!  
 But along with celebrity comes bout seventy shots to your brain  
 Nigga; you a - LAAAAAAAME!  
 You'se the fag model for Karl Kani/Esco ads  
 Went from, Nasty Nas to Esco's trash  
 Had a spark when you started but now you're just garbage  
 Fell from top ten to not mentioned at all  
 to your bodyguard's "Oochie Wally" verse better than yours  
 Matter fact you had the worst flow on the whole fuckin song  
 but I know - the sun don't shine, then son don't shine  
 That's why your - LAAAAAAAME! - career come to a end  
 There's only so long fake thugs can pretend  
 Nigga; you ain't live it you witnessed it from your folks pad  
 You scribbled in your notepad and created your life  
 I showed you your first tec on tour with Large Professor  
 (Me, that's who!) Then I heard your album bout your tec on your dresser  
 So yeah I sampled your voice, you was usin it wrong  
 You made it a hot line, I made it a hot song  
 And you ain't get a corn nigga you was gettin fucked and  
 I know who I paid God, Serchlite Publishing  
 Use your - BRAAAAAAAIN! You said you been in this ten  
 I've been in it five - smarten up Nas  
 Four albums in ten years nigga? I could divide  
 That's one every let's say two, two of them shits was due  
 One was - NAHHH, the other was "Illmatic"  
 That's a one hot album every ten year average  
 And that's so - LAAAAAAAME!  
 Nigga switch up your flow  
 Your shit is garbage,  
 but you try and kick knowledge?  
 (Get the fuck outta here)  
 You niggaz gon' learn to respect the king. (Takeover III. 1-32)

While Jay-Z throws a jab in his opening salvo against Nas in the first version of “Takeover,” the second version is a flurry of uppercuts, body blows, right-hand crosses, left hand-crosses and any number of a combination of punches that Jay-Z could muster. The fact that the structure of the typical rap song calls for three verses sixteen lines in length and three choruses eight lines in length suggests that the sheer exertion by Jay-Z signifies the intensity of his effort towards Nas. Let us witness. In the first eight lines Jay-Z suggests that Nas is no longer famous, a has been, a lame; that he is no longer the celebrity sponsor for Karl Kani and ESCO clothing companies because he has lost his fame; that Nas began his career with promise, but now he is just garbage; that he is so poor with regard to his rap skills that his (Nas’s) bodyguard’s verse on a recent song is better than the verse which Nas recites on the song.

Jay-Z spends the next eight lines exposing what he considers lack of authenticity regarding Nas’s position as a cocaine rapper. In an excoriating fashion, Jay-Z says that: there is only so long fake thugs, fake social bandits in the guise of Nas, can pretend; that Nas did not actually participate in the game of trafficking cocaine, he simply witnessed those who did from the home of his parents; that it was he, Jay-Z, who showed Nas the very first automatic weapon Nas ever saw when the two of them were together on tour with another rap artist named Large Professor; that the reference to Nas’s ownership of an automatic weapon is a fantasy based upon an experience Nas shared when in the presence of Jay-Z.

As if that is not exhausting enough, Jay-Z continues on. In the next eight lines Jay-Z explains why business dealings between he and Nas never took place (because Nas is lame, Jay-Z has to explain any connection he may have with Nas less people believe him (Jay-Z) to be lame by association). Jay-Z explains: yes, he sampled Nas’s voice for use on one of his most authentic songs according to the aesthetic of cocaine rap, but only because Nas does not even know how to use his own voice; Nas’s use of the line which he sampled was just that, a hot line; when he (Jay-Z) used the line he transformed it into a hot song; that he did not even pay Nas to use his voice, he paid a third part who owns the rights to Nas’s voice; that Nas has been in the business of creating and selling hip-hop music for ten and that he (Jay-Z) has only been in the business for five years, yet he (Jay-Z) has more hit records in a five year time span than Nas does in a ten year time span.

Jay-Z’s intensity begins to wane as he delivers his final eight bars, like a boxer who is running out of energy, waiting for the ring of the bell. He acknowledges that *Illmatic* was a great album; the rest of the lines return to the theme of Nas’s lame status and the verse finally ends by Jay-Z suggesting that Nas should pay homage to the king: Jay-Z himself.

So, there is a lot going on in the added verse. Jay-Z is aiming to knock Nas out and end the rap battle in the first round. But Nas is a very gifted lyricist. And his retort, “Ether,” released in 2001, is quite effective in neutralizing a great deal of the effort extended by Jay-Z. Some rap critics even suggest that Nas gets the better of Jay-Z in the song. While I will not gloss Nas’s lyrics from “Ether,” the following fact underscores the song’s effectiveness in light of the rap battle between he and Jay-Z: Jay-Z called off the battle. *At the request of his mother*, Jay-Z suggested that he and Nas should focus on more productive ways of extending their lyrical genius in light of the negativity that surrounded the East Coast/West Coast rap war. Later, when Jay-Z worked as an

executive for Def Jam Records he was instrumental in bringing Nas to the label as a recording artist.

There are two ways to understand the results of the rap battle between Nas and Jay-Z over the kingdom of Queensbridge (the borough of Queens): 1) Jay-Z, while still an emperor with an empire consisting of subjects from all over the land, did not win the kingdom of Queensbridge. Severely wounded in the campaign against Nas, he left the battlefield before he sustained a wound that could place his entire empire in jeopardy or 2) in 2001, Jay-Z was not a monarch. He was a very powerful aristocrat, with great influence, but the power vacuum left by Tupac and B.I.G. remained open. The battle was a modern-day War of the Roses, between Nas and Jay-Z, with competing factions from the same kingdom, New York, from the same family, the genre of cocaine rap, that represented different duchies within the realm, Queensbridge and Brooklon, respectively. Jay-Z would eventually rise to the level of monarch, but only after other actions had taken place. The battle between Jay-Z and Nas pointed to the beginning of Jay-Z's ascent to the throne. Only after he positioned Nas as his subordinate as an employee of the company over which he presided would the way be clear for an unobstructed path to the mantle of emperor; only after a feudal relationship was developed with Nas as subordinate, if only as a liege, was the threat to Jay-Z's acquisition of the imperial crown neutralized.

I vacillate regarding which of the two possible outcomes I hold to be the more accurate. It no longer sets me aback when I think about that young lady's question in 1999. "Big Pimpin'" can be found on *Vol. 2...Hard Knock Life*, which also contains "Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)," Jay-Z's biggest hit record to date in 1999. The record sold millions of copies on the strength of that song alone. Was Jay-Z already a cultural imperialist, *the* authority of cocaine rap, in 1999? That question remains open to debate. I believe that there is plenty of evidence to suggest so. What is certain is that in 2013, Jay-Z is a cultural imperialist and *the* authority of cocaine rap. Jay-Z's legitimacy as the authority of the genre of hip-hop found most popular today works to position him as the authority in rap music and hip-hop in general. As a result of the pervasiveness of hip-hop music and culture in America's overall culture, Jay-Z has morphed into an overall American cultural icon. Such status has afforded him the clout and influence to direct peoples taste in jewelry (platinum and diamonds), watches (first Rolex, then Automach), cars (the Bentley, the Phantom, the Maybach), style of dress (Roc-A-Wear clothing), entrepreneurial interests (investment in the New Jersey Nets basketball team and clubs and restaurants), lifestyle (the monogamous, married life evidenced by his marriage to R & B superstar Beyoncé Knowles), etc. And, not only has Jay-Z influenced the lexicon of a tenth grade high school female, but the class design of a prominent American professor and cultural critic: Dr. Michael Eric Dyson.

Dr. Michael Eric Dyson teaches a class at Georgetown University, entitled "Sociology of Hip-Hop: Urban Theodicy of Jay-Z." Brandon Soderberg writes, in "Defending Dyson's Georgetown Jay-Z Class", "Jay-Z's career is perfectly suited for the study of that discipline [sociology]." Dyson explores issues like "the imagistic conception of blackness that is evoked in a white world thinking about black culture," as found in the lyrics of Jay-Z. Hamilton Nolan, in his article entitled "You Won't Learn Hip-Hop In This Man's Classroom," calls Dyson's approach "academic bullshit" and took issue with

anybody dedicating an entire semester to Jay-Z's music (Hamilton). I am ambivalent about the issue.

Like Dyson, I too “wanna be a rap star,” at least I did at one point in my life (Dyson 420). So I can understand that, given the opportunity to not only create a class about the most iconic rap star today, but, to get to interact with him as well is very tempting. Which is what Dyson's fame and exchange of symbolic capital with Jay-Z has afforded him (he wrote a book entitled, *Decoded*, based on Jay-Z's entire corpus, which is a requirement for the class and works to legitimize Jay-Z as a serious literary figure in the world of academia). But to suggest that Jay-Z speaks on ‘the imagistic conception of blackness that is evoked in a white world thinking about black culture,’ when Jay-Z himself claims to promote an authentic, precise imagining of black culture is a bit ingenuous in light of Dyson's previous stance towards rap artist who he criticizes for being “the black face of white desire” (413). If Jay-Z's lyrics speak to the precise conception of blackness that the white world evokes when thinking about black culture, then is Jay-Z not providing the ‘black face of white desire?’ Is Jay-Z not giving the white world the very image of blackness that Dyson so painstaking explains as problematic when he suggests that “the glamorization of violence and the romanticization of the culture of guns” espoused by some rappers is “troubling” regarding a healthy conception of blackness (413)? There is no genre of rap that highlights the infatuation with gun culture more than cocaine rap. After all, drug dealers need weapons to protect their merchandise. And remember, it was Nas's ignorance regarding automatic weapons that Jay-Z used in his effort to dethrone the king of Queensbridge. So what is Dyson talking about? Perhaps the awe he feels regarding Jay-Z has made his previous stance obsolete; he “boasts” about “text-messaging Jay[-Z]...verses” (in the hopes of inclusion in a Jay-Z song one day perhaps?) (Soderberg). Perhaps his fanaticism and fantasy of being a rapper have clouded his judgment regarding his criteria for what it takes to be an American icon. As I have argued, I too believe Jay-Z is an American icon, but I would add that that iconic status stems, in part, from the ignorance and desire of “voyeuristic whites and naïve blacks” who crave “a slice of authentic ghetto life” (Dyson 413). Don't they know that Jay-Z's authenticity is the result of a fiction developed into a narrative truth? Don't they know that instead of an authentic slice of ghetto life that what they are getting when they listen to the lyrics of Jay-Z are “colorful exaggerations” (413)? To argue that at the heart of Jay-Z's corpus is anything but the peddling of stereotypical images of blackness is disingenuous on Dyson's part. But I guess the stereotypes always, already exist, so one may as well profit economically from exploiting the situation. Both Professor Dyson and Shawn Carter seem to be in agreement on this point.

I began this section by positing that Jay-Z's use of the concept of *translatio imperii* is a repetition with a difference when compared with the use of the concept with regards to the medieval Norman monarchs of England. While Norman rulers are genealogically linked to the mythological structure surrounding the founder of Britain in Geoffrey's *History*, the legendary Brutus of imperialistic Trojan descent, Jay-Z is genealogically linked to the mythological structure of America's cocaine past surrounding Rich Porter in many of the texts within his corpus. Jay-Z's rise to prominence in American culture is built upon such a use of *translation imperii*. Without authority as a cocaine rapper, perhaps Jay-Z's career could have gone the way of Mobb Deep. However, due in part to America's fascination about stories of an unseemly side of

ghetto life, Jay-Z has enriched himself economically and become a cultural hegemon. The situation makes one wonder if economic success is the only measure of who is worthy of being afforded power, legitimacy, authority and clout in America. Based upon the people presently occupying Wall Street in light of the economic and power disparities between the top one percent of the American population and the bottom ninety-nine percent, unfortunately I am left to conclude that the answer to such a question is: YES!

Now, what do you make of Jay-Z: jay, or no?

### Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Carter, Shawn (Jay-Z). "American Gangster." *American Gangster*. Roc-A-Fella Records, 2007.
- "Dirt Off Your Shoulders." *The Black Album*. Roc-a-Fella Records, 2004.
- "Money, Cash, Hoes." *Vol. 2...Hard Knock Life*. Roc-A-Fella Records, 1998.
- "There's Been a Murder." *Vol. 3: Life and Times of S. Carter*. Roc-A-Fella Records, 1999.
- "Takeover." *The Blue Print*. Roc-A-Fella Records, 2001.
- Civil, Karen. "The Legend of Rich Porter: 22 Years Later."  
<<http://KarenCivil.com/2012/01/04/the-legend-of-rich-porter/>>
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Tran. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
- Dunbar, Paul Lawrence. *Sport of the Gods*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1902.
- Dyson, Michael. *The Michael Eric Dyson Reader*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004.
- Finke, Laurie and Martin Shichtman. "Profiting from the Past: History as Symbolic Capital," from *King Arthur and the Myth of History*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005.
- "The History of Cocaine Rap."  
<http://www.xxlmag.com/magazine/2006/11/the-history-of-cocaine-rap-all-white/>

- Jones, Nasir (Nas). "We Will Survive." *I Am*. Columbia, 1999.
- Kawain, Bruce. *In Telling It Again and Again*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972.
- Luniz. "Pimps, Playas, Hustlas." *Operation Stackola*. Noo Trybe/Virgin/EMI Records, 1995.
- Nolan, Hamilton. "You Won't Learn Hip-Hop In This Man's Classroom." GAWKER.  
<<http://gawker.com/5856017/you-wont-learn-hip-hop-in-this-mans-classroom>>
- Parr, Adrian. "Repetition" in *The Deleuze Dictionary* edited by Adrian Parr. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Patterson, Lee. *Chaucer and the Subject of History*. London: Routledge, 1991.
- Soderberg, Brandon. "Defending Dyson's Georgetown Class." SPIN Magazine. 11 Nov 2011.  
<http://www.spin.com/articles/defending-dysons-georgetown-jay-z-class>
- Stagoll, Cliff. "Becoming" in *The Deleuze Dictionary* edited by Adrian Parr. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Thorpe, Lewis (ed). *Geoffrey of Monmouth: Historia Regum Britanniae*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1977.
- Van Deburg, William L. *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Washington, Robert E. "Review: *Hoodlums: Black Villains and Social Bandits in American Life*." *American Journal of Sociology*.(pdf)
- West, Kanye. "Diamonds from Sierra Leone." *Late Registration*. Roc-a-Fella Records, 2005.