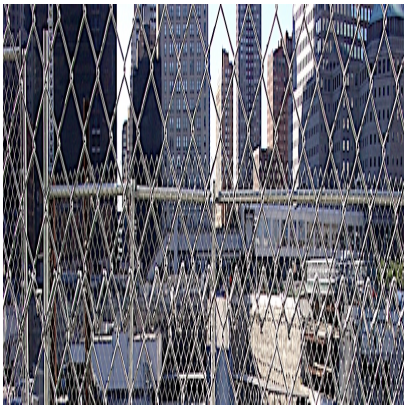


The word on the street

## Description

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You may wonder at the affinity amongst rich, famous, powerful and (mostly) white men â?? and hip hop. We may have expected an affinity between Barack Obama and rappers such as Jay-Z and Kanye West, but not Donald Trump.

To those in the know, rap gives expression to social conditions where thereâ??s â??unemployment, violent crime â?¦ drug abuse, fierce materialism, and the objectification of both men and womenâ?• (504). With its purchase in the underground economy, when you can get it, hip-hop culture depicts â??work as chaotic, uncontrolled, dangerous and possibly violentâ?• (506).

But some accomplished street artists gets rich. Writing in 2005 on the subject, Scott Crossley identifies the lyrics of rap songs as fiercely materialistic, and he alludes to a â??racial reflexâ?• that draws on a collective memory of â??having once been sold as chattelsâ?• (507).

> â??This attitude leads to a general conception that material objects are the signs of success and has affected the hip-hop generationâ??s approach to love, sex, and relationships by perceiving them as being materialistic and objectiveâ?• (507).

Even in 2005, *Trump* is the one name mentioned as an icon of wealth in Crossleyâ??s article. According to a more recent source (*The Washington Post*), Trumpâ??s name was mentioned in over 300 rap songs over a period of 30 years.

> â??Youâ??d know him as a personification of wealth, an avatar of luxury, a role model, a villain, a hustler, a brand name, a punchline, a dark cloud, a bad haircut, a boss, a bigot, a king of his own reality, and fundamentally, a syllable that rhymes with â??slump,â?• â??pumpâ?• and â??chump.â?•â?•

Rapâ??s flirtation with that particular ostentatious *other* has fallen away now. (That 30 year awareness passed me by. Some of us only heard of him as an insistent land developer complaining about wind farms in view of his golf resort in Scotland.)

For those of us on the edge of cool, rap lyrics come across as an exercise in deixis, esoteric codes where you need to understand the context to get the message. The particular street language is explained in the Urban Dictionary as â??ebonics.â?•

But I was attracted to Crossleyâ??s article not least as he appeals to the role of metaphor and metonymy in rap lyrics, that in turn give expression to aspects of street culture.


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## On My Block

Some rap terms invert the usual metaphorical associations with space. For example, the respectable terms of *home*, *neighbourhood* and city *block* are given alternative readings in rap.

According to Crossley, the rapper â??Scarface uses the metaphor of *the block* to describe impoverished urban African American neighborhoods, neighborhoods frequently referenced as â??the projects,â?• â??the crib,â?• and â??the bricksâ?•â?• (501) connoting places of enclosure and confinement. The home is similarly constrictive, and neighborhoods â??have deteriorated trust between law enforcement and hip hoppersâ?• (510).

On My Block is the name of a song by Tupac Scarface. Crossley uses this song to drive home the rapper view of urban living, and I would say of urban spatiality. The city block in rapper metaphor loses its solidity.

Like Cockney rhyming slang, thereâ??s the obtuse reference to the simple part of something complicated that is meant to stand in for the whole.

> â??*chromes* for hubcaps, *stones* and *chips* for jewelry, *paper* and *Benjamins* for dollar bills, and wealth generally through terms like *bank* and *trump*â?• (508).

## A sense of place

But thereâ??s sentiment here. Through the apparent cynicism, worship of material things and nihilism, the song begins and ends with affinity to place: see smart music video on Youtube.

> â??On my block, we got some â??Nam vets shell, shocked
> Who never quite got right, now they inhale rocks
> On my block, itâ??s like the world donâ??t exist
> We stay confined to this small little section we living in

Oh my block, I wouldnâ??t trade it for the world
Cause I love these ghetto boys and girls
Born and raised on my blockâ?•

## References


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## Note

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- This week saw the release of the RAP sheet to advance the impeachment of Donald Trump. Here, RAP stands for Record of Arrests and Prosecutions.

### Category

1. Architecture

### Tags

1. hip-hop
2. metaphor
3. metonymy
4. rap
5. trump

**Date Created**
December 14, 2019
**Author**
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