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Is the post- in post-identity the post- in post-genre?

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Abstract

The 'post-' in both post-identity politics and post-genre musical practice refers to the same thing. Through readings of Taylor Swift's 'Shake It Off', Diplo's description of his practice as a DJ, producer and impresario, Sasha Frere-Jones's infamous New Yorker *piece on indie rock miscegenation, and critical race theorists Cristina Beltran and Jared Sexton's critiques of post-racial politics, I demonstrate that progress past traditional commitments to white racial purity is both the defining characteristic of post-racial whiteness, and what makes multigenre pop practice count as post-genre. The 'post-' in post-*identity *is what distinguishes post-genre practice from supposedly more primitive forms of genre transgression, such as the love & theft-style cultural appropriation Eric Lott identifies in 19th century blackface minstrelsy or Pitbull's Latin American style racial/musical mestizaje.*

Introduction

From 'race records' to disco demolition's not-so-latent homophobia to brostep and bro country, identity politics are an important component of American pop music genres. Fans, critics, musicians and music industry professionals use stereotypes about gender, race, sexuality and class as tools to draw, express, and police genre boundaries, and to rank the value of genres, styles and songs. For example, feminists like Susan Cook (2001) and Angela McRobbie have argued that we associate socially devalued genres with socially devalued people – namely, girls, and 'race music' used to *be* a genre.

Now, however, because mainstream, centrist institutions like schools and corporations overtly champion diversity, it can seem like we have overcome the sexism and racism that motivated identity politics. As Alana Lenin argues in *Feminist Legal Studies*, (neo)liberal democracies practice a 'politics of diversity' grounded in a 'consensus around the notion that western societies are post-race' (Lenin 2011, p. 159). Similarly, beginning in 2014, mainstream publications like *Time, USA Today, Noisey* and *Buzzfeed* evaluate pop stars' and pop songs' commitment to feminism: feminism, not sexism, is the new norm and expectation. Just like overt sexism and racism have fallen out of fashion in the neoliberal mainstream, the idea of genre has similarly fallen out of fashion in pop music aesthetics: it is one of the things Taylor Swift shakes off in 'Shake It Off', and, as Diplo says in his March 2015 interview in *Cuepoint*, 'we're trying to break the genres down man. Like, it's a big genre castle, that's Babylon. We're trying to break it down and set it on fire' (Schecter 2015).

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Diplo's hate for genre provincialism echoes the rejection of aesthetic provincialism that Kwame Anthony Appiah cites in his 1991 article, 'Is the post- in postmodernism the post- in postcolonial?' According to Appiah, late 20th-century Western intellectuals think 'that the first and last mistake is to judge the Other on one's own terms' (Appiah 1991, p. 339). This is a symptom of postmodernism's definitive move, where an 'antecedent practice whose claim to exclusivity of vision is rejected' (Appiah 1991, p. 348). Here, the antecedent practice is Western modernity's Eurocentrism. 'The post- in postcolonial, like the post- in postmodern' (Appiah 1991, p. 348) is not just 'a post- that challenges earlier legitimating narratives' (Appiah 1991, p. 353), but a post- that challenges the *same* legitimating narrative that postmodernism does: the universality of European modernity.

Like the post-s in their PoMo & PoCo cousins, the post- in post-identity and post-genre rejects an older practice's claim to exclusivity. It is the same move, but applied to a different object: in this case, purity. This 'post'- marks the preference for incorporating all differences into one heterogeneous mix over sorting different phenomena into internally homogeneous segments or subgroups. Reading Swift's 'Shake It Off', Diplo's *Cuepoint* interview, and a few other musical examples alongside Cristina Beltran's and Jared Sexton's work on post-identity neoliberal multiculturalism, I will show that purity was once privileged, but now diversity is.

Yet some kinds of diversity are better than others. In post-identity/post-genre discourse, diversity is good because it is evidence of progress or 'post-'ness. If it does not feel like the overcoming of obsolete commitments to purity, diversity is perceived, ironically, as evidence of homogeneity and inflexibility. Comparing Swift and Diplo's post-genre-ism with that of Bruno Mars and Pitbull, I show that post-racial whiteness is what makes post-genre performance legible as such. Progress past traditional commitments to white racial purity is both the defining characteristic of post-racial whiteness and what makes multigenre pop practice count as post-genre. The 'post-' in post-*identity* is what distinguishes post-genre practice from supposedly more primitive forms of genre transgression, such as the love & theft-style cultural appropriation Eric Lott identifies in 19th-century blackface minstrelsy or Pitbull's Latin American-style racial/musical mestizaje.

Because the post- in post-genre comes from the post- in post-identity, I want to think through the latter first.

Post-identity politics

'Identity politics' refers to classical liberalism's use of social identities to unequally distribute access to citizenship, personhood and status (Brown 1995). Although things like sexual and ethnic difference have long been the basis of social and political exclusion, social identities are a sociohistorically specific method of doing this. Social contract theory invented race and gender so that liberal democracies could *say* they treated everyone equally under the law while in *practice* granting only white straight men access to equal treatment. According to philosopher Linda Martín Alcoff, social identities use the body's outward physical appearance 'to be the determinate constitutive factor of subjectivity, indicating personal character traits and internal constitution' (Alcoff 2006, p. 183). In this framework, phenotype is as an index of one's IQ or criminality, just as secondary sex traits are indices of rationality or irrationality, activity or passivity, etc. These supposedly 'natural attributes' (Alcoff

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2006, p. 192) justify differential political access and social status: only rational, healthy, self-possessed and self-governing subjects – straight white men – could be trusted with full and unrestricted freedom. Everyone else needed limits on their freedom.

Post-identity politics claims to have actually achieved, in practice, the universal enfranchisement and inclusion that identity-based liberalism offered only in theory. A post-identity society thinks it has *overcome* identity-based exclusion or marginalisation. The presence of otherwise privileged members of traditional race-, gender- and sexuality-based minority groups in positions of power and/or influence in social institutions like the mainstream media, business and government serves as evidence that identity-based social and political oppression is over. For example, we have black millionaires had a black president, there are more women enrolled in college than men, and so on. This is what political theorist Christina Beltran (2014, p. 139) calls 'the postracial [or postfeminist] logic that uses elite visibility to argue that racial [or gender] justice has been achieved'. However, that apparent justice is just an illusion.

Beltran argues that post-identity concepts of diversity perform their *political* function – hiding white supremacist patriarchy behind faux inclusion – by manifesting as an *aesthetic* phenomenon. The aesthetic judgment of beauty or pleasure serves as a political judgment about justice: 'for many race-conscious citizens, descriptive representation [perceptible racial diversity] has a kind of beauty that feels and looks like a form of justice' (Beltran 2014, p. 153). Equality and fairness are traditional measures of justice; post-identity discourse replaces them with beauty.

It is not just any concept of beauty. Critical theorist Jared Sexton locates the origin of post-racial beauty in 20th-century Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos's theory of the 'cosmic race', which is an ideal mix of races. The cosmic race 'is accomplished by a selection "founded on the dazzling produced by beauty" in an aesthetic resolution of conflict' (Sexton 2008, p. 201) among individual races. As Sexton emphasises, the beauty of this cosmic mix is contingent on its eugenic management of blackness, which Vasconcelos equates with 'unsightliness … ugliness and inferiority' (Sexton 2008, p. 200). Vasconcelos defines racial blackness as devolutionary sexual practices, practices that impede the evolution of humanity's beauty. This is why Sexton thinks his theory of cosmic 'beauty' is an aesthetics of antiblack sexual respectability. It is this same concept of beauty that reappears, as Beltran shows, in 21st-century post-racial aesthetics.

Twenty-first century post-racial beauty tweaks Vasconcelos's concept to reflect neoliberal values of flexibility and adaptability. The 'post-' in post-identity refers to the solubility or flexibility that distinguishes healthy, adaptable populations from dysgenic, regressive ones. Diversity is evidence of that adaptability. From this perspective, non-diverse ('pure') phenomena must be incapable of or unwilling to evolve past obsolete behaviours and ideas. As 'the [nonwhite/white] color line of the twentieth century is swiftly transformed into "the new black/nonblack divide" … of the twenty-first' (Sexton 2008, p. 55), blackness and black people represent that old-fashioned purity. 'Negatively "purifying" … racial blackness in particular' (Sexton 2008, p. 51), neoliberal institutions and biopolitcal practices *produce* blackness as whatever is 'unable to be re-formed' (Spence 2011, p. 15), 'an antiquated state of confinement from which the "multiracial imagined community" … must be delivered' (Sexton 2008, p. 6). Blackness is ugly because it does not feel diverse.

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Purity is ugly, but not all mixes are beautiful. In order to count as a *beautifully* racially diverse mix, that mix must be the result of *overcoming* old-fashioned purity: it has to be 'post-' to be beautiful. 'Post-' indicates progress past some former state. Thus, even though 'post-civil rights era United States' appropriated Vasconcelos's ideas and 'is imagined as the land of the cosmic race' (Sexton 2008, p. 204), Vasconcelos's own idea of racial mixing does not count as 'post-' because it is not the result of *overcoming* US-specific concepts and practices of white racial purity (in particular, the one-drop rule). Traditional Latin American approaches to mestizaje do not count as post-identity because they are just that: traditional. They have not, from a US perspective, rejected an antecedent practice's commitment to exclusivity. Similarly, mixed-race people do not necessarily count as either post-race individuals or evidence of a post-racial society; they have to demonstrate that rejection of a prior commitment to exclusivity or purity to count as post-race and post-identity.

If it is this same 'post-' that prefixes 'post-genre' pop, then this also explains why 'post-genre' usually describes music by white artists that branches out from traditionally white genres like rock and pop. However, first I need to prove that it is in fact the same 'post-'.

Post-genre omnivorousness

Mannes School of Music at the New School in New York City offers a minor in 'Post Genre Music: Performance and Creation'.[1] Their curriculum is an explicit and fully fleshed out description of 'post-genre' musical practice. It sells the minor with a line that sounds a little too much like a movie trailer cliché: 'In a world where musicians can no longer stay confined to a single genre, performers need to be able to survive and thrive in a wide variety of styles of music and, increasingly, in music that combines many different styles into one'. Repeatedly emphasising the fact that post-genre flexibility necessary to survive in the 'here and now' of the '21st century', the curriculum implies that genre rigidity is an obsolete practice that leads to career suicide. According to the curriculum's learning objectives, post-genre musicianship includes the ability to 'perform in multiple mixed ensemble settings, spanning a range of styles, sizes, and instrumentation', and 'awareness of the history and context of multiple genres of music including, but not limited to, indie rock, hip hop, rock opera, folk music, world music'. However, because this is a minor open to students already enrolled in classical or jazz performance majors, 'post-genre' means competence in both art music genres and (some) popular genres.

This version of post-genreism – art music plus some pop – overlaps with what sociologists Richard A. Peterson and Roger Kern (1996) call 'omnivorous consumption'. Their study treats omnivorousness as a late 20th-century variation on highbrow taste; it begins from traditional highbrow preferences but expands to include some conventionally non-highbrow genres. It is the same technique Mannes music school uses, applied to music appreciation rather than musicianship. Peterson and Kern define omnivorousness as 'an openness to appreciating everything. In this sense it is antithetical to snobbishness, which is based fundamentally on rigid rules of exclusion' (Peterson and Roger Kern 1996, p. 904). Like Appiah's postmoderns, omnivores are progressives who think they have overcome the 'enthnocentrism central to

[1] http://www.newschool.edu/mannes/minors-post-genre-music/

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snobbish elitism' (Peterson and Roger Kern 1996, p. 904). Omnivores demonstrate the openness to diversity that post-identity society demands, and this openness to diversity is a marker both the overcoming old-fashioned attitudes, and thus also of elite status. Both explicitly and implicitly, omnivorous taste uses the same post- as post-identity politics: in both cases, 'post-' refers to the overcoming of obsolete investments in purity and the preference for an aesthetically pleasing, respectable mix.

Diplo/Jack Ü and Taylor Swift use post-genre musicianship to demonstrate their commitment to and capacity for the kind of respectable diversity that defines the 'non-black' side of the post-identity colour line. However, for non-white artists like Bruno Mars and Pitbull, the equation is not so simple. Because they are not white, it is harder for them to be perceived as having *overcome* old-fashioned white supremacy and white genre snobbishness (like rockism) – it is less likely they had those views to begin with.

Diplo's presence-as-coolness

Jack Ü is a collaboration between DJ/producers Skrillex and Diplo. Their commitment to post-genre musicianship is the central focus of Diplo's 2015 interview with Jonathan Schecter. Schecter explains that the duo's work 'is diverse by design', both in method and in content – 'they're into all kinds of rock, rap, pop, house, trap, twerk and other styles'. In this context, 'diversity' means something like the ability to flexibly navigate a range of genre-specific sounds and put them to work in a way that 'defiantly' (Schecter 2015) refuses to settle into a new set of genre conventions. For example, their biggest hit, 'Where Are Ü Now?' features a mix of R&B influenced teen-pop vocals (provided by Justin Bieber), tropical house and trap percussion, and variations on EDM-pop soars. The Jack Ü album is similarly all over the musical radar: it has socca-style vocals from Bunji Garlin, 2Chainz's Atlanta trap, Fly Boi Keno's NOLA-style rapping, EDM diva vocals from Kai & Kiesza and AlunaGeorge's British-flavoured electronica, just to list a few of the styles on the album.

As Diplo explains, it's not genre that unifies his solo and collaborative work, but his own omnivorous taste, which he labels 'hipster'. He says that when he got started,

> hipsters didn't exist back then . . . scenes didn't mix. And me and Low Budget, I think we kind of were the precursor to like what hipsters are, which is people who are just into cool things. Not any particular genre, you can't mark them as being from a certain space or community. And we were just mixing everything together at the time. (Schecter 2015)

So, hipsters are not into *every*thing – they are into anything that is 'cool'. Single-genre mixes or scenes cannot be 'cool'; cool sounds necessarily lack identifiable genre. The commitment to cool over and above genre is what makes hipsters 'hip', or, in Schecter's term, 'fresh and cutting-edge'.

Hipster taste has overcome genre snobbishness. Just like the 'cool' objects of their aesthetic desire, 'you can't mark' hipsters 'as being from a certain space or community'. In what sounds like an earnest articulation of the desire that James Chance parodies in his song 'Almost Black', Diplo says his music is so genre-transgressive he *sounds* black, even though he is white: 'I've always been like, a DJ that plays black music. And a few people . . . they're like confused that I'm white actually'. Diplo

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thinks he exhibits the racial flexibility that the 'post-' in post-identity describes. Does his personal racial flexibility contribute to the perception that his music is post-genre? I will return to this question in the next section. First, I want to talk about the way Diplo takes the 'presence-as-beauty' logic that Beltran identifies in contemporary American politics and applies it to pop music.

Diplo uses the presence-as-beauty/coolness logic that Beltran identified as a key feature of post-identity society. First, he says that his post-genre music brings 'the kids, like the younger kids, raver kids, black kids, white kids' together into a happily multicultural and trans-subcultural crowd. There is a mix of different types of kids, and a mix of cis men and women.

Unlike the promoters who pay women to work as go-go dancers at parties, Diplo and Jack Ü just play music women want to dance to for fun (emphasis mine):

> Pretty much Vegas is like girls who dance all week long and this is the time when they can dance with their friends. *They're not getting paid to dance* … It's all about girls dancing. If you get girls in the club and they are having a good time – trust me, everybody else will show up. *If you just make songs for dudes to jump and pound their fists to, girls are eventually gonna leave and go to my club.* (Schecter 2015)

Unlike DJs who play for rooms full of fist-pounding dudes, his music attracts women, who in turn attract 'everybody else'. (Even though his parties might be more mixed-gendered, they're not necessarily less patriarchal, more feminist, or better places for women. For instance, instead of *paying* women to dance at his show, Diplo banks on their free labour.) The presence of different races, subcultures and genders is what makes his parties and his aesthetic 'cool'. He judges the aesthetic value of his music in the very same (aesthetic) terms that post-identity society assesses social justice; Beltran calls it 'beauty', Diplo calls it 'cool', but it is the same underlying concept of progress past obsolete commitments to purity. The presence of women and kids of many subcultures and races is evidence that his post-genre musicianship succeeds where the gendered, racial and genre narrowness of 'big room EDM' fails. The 'post-' in Diplo's 'post-genre' is the same as the 'post-' in Beltran's 'post-identity'.

Back to the question I raised earlier: does an artist's professed racial flexibility impact the way their genre-mixing is heard? Is an artist's post-racial identity part of what makes mixed-genre music *post*-genre? Taylor Swift's 'Shake It Off' has some answers to these questions.

Who can shake off genre?

In her 'Shake It Off' video, Taylor Swift uses racialised gender identity and musical genre as metaphors for one another. She 'shakes off' both gendered and genre stereotypes so she can make a sound that is both uniquely hers and unquestionably 'pop'.

According to *Billboard*, '"Shake it Off" was her official breakup letter' (Aswad 2014) with country music. It is the lead single from her 2014 album *1989*, and this album was explicitly marketed and widely received as completing her crossover from her country-inflected beginnings to full-fledged Top 40 pop. (In fact, the marketing for and conversation about this album presented Swift's past work as more country than it actually was.) Yet what makes something pop? In the early 1980s 'pop' solidified as a genre distinguished by its capacity to blend the racialised

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style markers that individual genres like R&B or rock supposedly kept pure. 'When he supposedly integrated MTV in 1982, [Michael] Jackson did not racially cross over but redefined what the mainstream was … Pop and "the mainstream" Jackson helped establish are based not on a specific sonic or racial category but on the tension between realizing and transcending race through sound' (Roberts 2011, p. 20). In the same way that multiracial discourse demonstrates its 'post'-ness by 'realising' and reaffirming the existence of monoracial phenomena as backwards, pop combines hyperracial genre-specific signifiers (in Jackson's case, rock guitar or rapping) to demonstrate its racial and aesthetic transcendence of those specific signifiers. Because that tension or flexibility is its most prominent feature, pop does not *feel* like a fixed genre (even though it is). So, for Swift to demonstrate her pop cred, she has to perform this tension between realising and transcending racialised genre narrowness – not just her own country roots, but all the genres that contribute to the pop blend. That's exactly what 'Shake It Off' does.

In the video, Swift tries on lots of the feminine stereotypes that music videos have popularised: Toni Basil's cheerleaders, Lady Gaga's futuristic monsters, Destiny's Child's bootylicious dancers, b-girls, modern dancers, even the ballet dancers from, say, Kanye's 'Runaway' (no line dancing or squaredancing, though). Swift's character often breaks the fourth wall, shooting audiences a look of mocking incredulity that asks 'Why am I bothering to do this thing that is clearly ridiculous?' She rehearses the different subcultural femininities associated with different pop subgenres, but fails to adequately execute any of them. This shows that Swift and her song cannot be made to follow rigid genre conventions and gender stereotypes. Unlike the (mainly women) dancers who drank their respective flavours of Kool-Aid and unquestioningly adhere to genre conventions, Swift's character knows better than to be duped by such narrow-minded authority. In the opening shot, for example, Swift's character literally rises above all the other women in the frame, as if to say she's matured beyond the partisan (or subcultural?) adherence to any strict style … which, by the song's climax, she does. Here, she's accompanied by a number of regular people dressed in 'normcore' clothes unmarked by subcultural style and who move to the music in what appear to be unchoreographed, untrained ways.

The song adopts a similar approach to sonic symbols of racialised genre. Just as the video avoids obvious markers of country, the song eschews guitars and other strings, favouring horns and electronics. Compositionally, it combines verse–chorus–bridge pop structures with an EDM-style drop (Swift's vocal melisma is the drop), while lyrically it borrows terms from hip hop and skater culture: 'haters', 'players', 'sick'. Both visually and sonically, 'Shake It Off' uses hyperracialised, hypergendered and hyper-genre-ised symbols to present Swift and her song as the pop artist that transcends both identity and genre purity. That is why there are no references to country music: that would remind us that she is not infinitely flexible but an artist marked with roots in a very specific racialised genre.

Claims to genre transcendence are credible when they are made by artists who, like Swift, appear free of any particular social identity. In order to sound post-genre, one has to seem post-identity. Beyoncé works all sorts of genres – she even sampled Diplo's group Major Lazer in 'Run The World (Girls)' – but when the idea of her genre-transcendence is floated, as it was on an online fan forum in 2010 and in my Spring 2016 music appreciation class, most people still interpret her as operating

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somewhere within R&B, a black genre.[2] Similarly, in order for Bruno Mars to 'shake off' identity-based genre stereotypes, he had to get rid of his Hispanic last name to avoid being pigeonholed as performer of Latin music. As Chris Heath writes in his *GQ* profile of Mars:

> He parodies the kind of response he would get: 'Your last name's Hernandez, maybe you should do this Latin music, this Spanish music … Enrique's so hot right now'. He shakes his head. Eventually he sidestepped the issue by adopting the name Mars, perhaps figuring that the best way to avoid being stereotyped by race is to sound as though you came from another planet altogether. (Heath 2013)

A mixed-race artist with a Hispanic name who wanted to make pop songs, Mars was trying to be a 'post-race' artist who made art that was not either about race or tied to the aesthetic and artistic traditions of his racial/ethnic group. However, the industry would not let him be either post-race or post-genre: they could only understand an artist who appeared to be Hispanic as the performer of Latin music. Even performing as Bruno Mars, he reads as Afro-American instead of Afro-Latino, and his record-of-the-year-winning 'Uptown Funk' uses James Brown-style horn lines and lyrical hooks purchased (after the fact) from Trinidad Jame$ to situate him in a universe of black musical references. Because they are not white, Beyoncé and Bruno Mars are perceived as racially particular, and audiences expect their musical output to correspond, genre-wise, to their racial identity.

This inability to parse non-white artists as post-genre is at least part of what motivates non-Latin responses to Pitbull, which music critic Julianne Escobedo Shepherd (2014) described as 'more a general disdain for his persona than a distaste for (or even working knowledge of) his music'. There's something about Pitbull himself that puts off mainstream audiences. Escobedo-Shepherd argues that musical omnivorousness is his persona's defining characteristic: an artist who 'declares himself "Mr. Worldwide"', he is 'a consummate tastemaker whose open ear dalliances with the new types of music and musicians put him, at times, on par with globally inquisitive DJs like Diplo'. Two main things distinguish Pit's sonic cosmopolitanism from Diplo's coolness. First, Pit unabashedly positions himself as pop, whereas Diplo situates himself as more underground (even though the dude has a show on BBC radio); gendered distinctions between feminised pop and masculinised underground lead people to see Pit as unserious and inauthentic. Second, obviously, Pit is Hispanic and Diplo's white. So, like Mars, Pit's cosmopolitan post-genre-ism strikes cognitive dissonance in mainstream audiences, who can only understand Latino artists as performers of narrowly Latin music and bearers of the racialised genre specificity against which pop defines itself.

US audiences mishear Pit's cosmopolitan mixing as a fixed particularity because they correctly interpret it as a Latin American approach to mixing race. As philosopher Linda Martín Alcoff has argued, North America and Latin America have two distinct approaches to racial mixing and assimilation. In North America, whiteness was a fixed ideal to which anyone could assimilate: anyone who could embody the culturally specific norms of reason and rationality could 'melt' into the big pot of American society – this is Sexton's white/non-white model. In Latin America, there was not a fixed centre, but more of a moving target,

[2] http://atrl.net/forums/showthread.php?t=474968

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which was the effect of 'the constant absorption and blending of difference into an ever larger, more complex, heterogeneous whole' (Alcoff 2006, p. 273) – a non-black/black model. However, as I argued in the first section, Anglo-American post-identity discourse appropriates, via Vasconcelos, this Latin American approach to identity mixing (Sexton 2008, p. 3). Appropriating the Latin American racial model, the US shows that it is flexible, adaptable and capable of reform. Because Latin America has always used this method, they appear unchanged, held back by 'the (supposed) fixity and rigidity of colonized cultures' (Alcoff 2006, p. 270). Just as pop presents itself as the *tension* between hyperracialised sounds and racial transcendence, US postracialism 'establishes itself as a *movement* of opposition to or defiance of the one-drop rule, an injunction entirely singular to the historical construction of racial blackness in the North American instance' (Sexton 2006, p. 229; emphasis mine). Because the one-drop rule was not a hurdle Latin America had to overcome (per se), their 'diverse' society is not evidence of flexibility, adaptability or capacity to reform. 'We' changed, but 'they' did not.

Mainstream US audiences may hate Pitbull because they think, regardless of which approach he actually adopts, he, as a Latino artist, exhibits a globally Southern approach to racialised genre mixing. As is the case with Mars, Pitbull's racial specificity makes it difficult for mainstream audiences to hear him as adequately post-racial and thus capable of creating authentically post-genre music: he has not rejected an antiquated exclusivity, so he does not sound 'post-'. In terms of actual practice, Pitbull's genre mixing does not sound properly omnivorous because it does not always centre Anglo-American genres of rock and pop as its point of departure – it is not 'white canon plus [X]'. Neither his identity nor his musical practice exhibit evidence of having overcome the white/non-white politics of purity, so they both appear atavistic, inflexible, even a bit queer. As Roderick Ferguson (2004) and Ladelle McWhorter (2009) have shown, the discourse of sexual deviance, especially queerness, was invented in the 19th century as a way to indicate and intensify blackness/racial 'degeneracy'. In Pitbull's case, his racial 'backwardness' is sometimes perceived as a deficiency in his (cis/hetero)masculinity. For example, mainstream media outlets and personalities described the trousers he wore in the 2014 World Cup Opening Ceremony outfit as 'mom capris' or 'borrowed [from] JLo' (Cooper 2014). Pit is a bit too femme in his literal and metaphoric pants.

It is no surprise that Pit's perceived deficiency is expressed in sexual terms: as Sexton argues, sexual respectability is the primary factor that post-identity discourses use to distinguish between 'beautiful' diversity and the unhealthy cross-racial desire of the past. Traditionally, whites' desire for non-whites is thought to be sexually deviant: it either contaminated white racial purity or was exploitative (Sexton 2008, p. 38). Post-race white supremacy treats cross-racial desire as normal, even preferable (Wang 2012). Prior commitments to white racial purity made cross-racial desire unacceptable; accepting these desires is one way to show that you reject those prior commitments to purity. Yet, just as some kinds of diversity are better than others, not all kinds of interracial desire are equally acceptable. For all the old stuff it rejects, post-identity politics sticks to traditional notions of sexual respectability, the ones that treat married, reproductive sex as the most normal and least gross kind.

In fact, post-identity discourse often uses reproduction as a way to avoid thinking about actual sex altogether. We can talk about the ends – 'the soundness and healthiness of mixed-race people' (Sexton 2008, p. 38) – without having to face any uneasiness we may have about the means – actual interracial sex acts – which still

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seem possibly exploitative and/or fetishising because we have not actually resolved the white supremacy problem. Sexual respectability and reproduction are red herrings that let post-racial discourse evade the issue of lingering white supremacy. In this context, anything that is explicitly sexual appears racially deviant and backwards because it draws our attention to race and white supremacy – things healthy post-racial people have left in the past. Sexual respectability works like aesthetic beauty does: it separates healthy diversity from regressive commitments to purity. More importantly, it is a tool post-genre practitioners use to establish their post-racial whiteness. Using a distinction between illicit and respectable sexuality to assert that 'miscegenation' is both distinct from and more artistically and politically valuable than love & theft, Sasha Frere-Jones's infamous 2007 *New Yorker* article about musical miscegenation does just this.

Post-genre makes an honest woman out of love & theft

Eric Lott famously defines blackface minstrelsy's white appropriation of black vernacular culture as love & theft. 'These narratives of love and theft are manipulations of historical anxiety meant to overcome the threatening implications of their primary concerns' (Lott 1992, p. 39): miscegenation (cross-racial desire) and slavery (cross-racial theft). Love & theft was motivated by, as Lott puts it, 'amalgophobia' (Lott 1992, p. 40). Amalgophilia, then, would be a good way to show you've overcome the prior commitments to purity that make mixing at least somewhat troublesome. This would prove that you have also overcome old-school white supremacy, and that your genre mixing is post-identity enough to count as post-genre. This dynamic is the crux of Sasha Frere-Jones's distinction between amalgophilic indie rock 'miscegenation' and amalgophobic love & theft. However, unlike Diplo, who relies on beauty or coolness to cut that line, Frere-Jones uses sexual respectability.

Frere-Jones argues that 'miscegenation' is a vital element in the 'musical DNA' of indie rock – vital in the sense of what enlivens it, keeps it evolving with time and allows it transcend race-based genre narrowness. For example,

> The Beatles … *married* blues and soul with the verse–chorus–bridge structure common to songs from the English music hall and Tin Pan Alley, and hooked teen-agers on a combination of Irving Berlin and Muddy Waters that previously would have been unthinkable. Similarly, when Mick Jagger stopped trying to imitate Bobby Womack he became, *musically speaking*, an *original – a product of miscegenation*. [emphasis mine] (Frere-Jones 2007)

Like all accounts of respectable sexuality, these two sentences begin with marriage and end with reproduction. Blending white pop with black vernacular musics, The Beatles' and Jagger's music produce a vibrant 'originality' that was unavailable to either tradition in isolation. They 'fuse[d] disparate traditions into a sound that was obviously related but unique – a true offspring' (Frere-Jones 2007). Innovative, pleasurable music is the offspring of an interracial liaison that is only metaphorically miscegenation – miscegenation 'musically speaking'. McCartney's and Jagger's 'intercourse' is with black *music*, not black *people*. Focusing only on the music, Frere-Jones does not talk about 'moves like Jagger', about Mick Jagger's and Paul McCartney's performances of black masculinity, about the sexual dimensions of cross-racial identification – as though this was not *part* of their musical performance to begin with. Abstracting away from bodily intimacy and sex and appealing to the

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aesthetic virtue of the interracial encounter's 'offspring', Frere-Jones's argument exhibits the same respectability politics that Sexton diagnoses in multiracial discourse. Both desexualise race by 'restricting the debate … to the terrain of reproduction' and treat the offspring as 'retroactiv[e] legitim[ations of] the interracial sexual relationships from which they issue' (Sexton 2008, pp. 158, 157).

The interracial musical relationships that birthed classic rock were, in Frere-Jones's account, pretty salacious and in need of legitimation. As he frames it, the illicit and, indeed, *unethical* nature of love & theft is the source of its sexual charge: 'the uneasy, and sometimes inappropriate, borrowings and imitations that set rock and roll in motion gave popular music a heat and an intensity … There's a reason t*he lights were off*' (emphasis mine). However, beginning in the 1990s, increased awareness of the harms of cultural appropriation cooled that previously ravenous desire for musical miscegenation: 'it was as though your parents had come home and *turned on the lights*' (Frere-Jones 2007; emphasis mine). Distinguishing between 'lights off' and 'lights on' interracial musical encounters, Frere-Jones's article uses sexual respectability to argue that genre 'miscegenation' is ethically (and aesthetically) superior to love & theft. Turning the lights on indicates that, even if love & theft felt good, you know it is unacceptable and reject the reason the lights were off. It shows that you are 'post-' prior commitments to white supremacy, in particular, to racial purity. Turning the lights on takes the sex out of the cross-racial encounter, thus distinguishing progressive amalgophilia from 'a pornographic racial fetishism' (Sexton 2008, p. 158). Using miscegenation as a metaphor for (mainly white men's) cross-racial musical encounters, Frere-Jones flips the post-racial script that we get from Beltran via Vasconcelos. Instead of making a political judgment in aesthetic terms (racial diversity is beautiful), Frere-Jones makes an aesthetic judgment in sexualised racial terms: good music is respectably miscegenated. Sexual respectability makes 'enlightened' indie miscegenation appear to have moved past the 'dark ages' of love & theft. Both of these scripts flip around the same axis, and that axis is the 'post-' common to post-identity and post-genre.

The 'post-' common to post-genre and post-identity indicates progress past obsolete markers of purity (the white/non-white racial binary, snobbish highbrow taste) and forms of cross-racial desire (love & theft, 'lights off' sexuality). As such, this 'post-' is a type of respectability politics that uses sexual and aesthetic pleasure (or rather, sexualised aesthetic pleasure) to differentiate healthy, adaptable phenomena from regressive, static ones. Post-identity politics and post-genre aesthetics do not just share a common 'post-', they *intersect* (in the feminist theoretical sense of 'intersectionality'). Only artists who inhabit the 'non-black' side of the post-identity colour line, artists who appear to have progressed past old-school white racism and love & theft, only they are legible as *post-genre* practitioners.

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