"ONE LINE FLOWS, YEAH I GOT SOME OF THOSE": GENRE, TRADITION, AND THE RECEPTION OF RHYTHMIC REGULARITY IN GRIME FLOW

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ABSTRACT

Alexander Harvey Marsden: "One Line Flows, Yeah I Got Some of Those": Genre, Tradition,
and the Reception of Rhythmic Regularity in Grime Flow
(Under the direction of Jocelyn Neal)

In its musical style and performance practices, the British rap genre grime bears the traces of London's electronic dance music scene, out of which it emerged in the early 2000s. One such trace is grime's characteristic style of flow—the rhythmic dimensions of a rapper's delivery of text—and the role that this plays in encouraging grime's listeners to move. This thesis argues that grime flow exhibits a tendency towards rhythmic regularity, which differentiates it from flow styles that tend toward irregularity. Drawing from music cognition and music-theoretic work on the pleasures of repetition for listeners, particularly in electronic dance music, it asks what listeners find engaging about grime flow's regularity. It argues, through an analysis of Skepta's "That's Not Me," that grime flow encourages a participatory mode of listening from its audience, which in turn contributes to a broader orientation towards communality in the genre.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1: The History and Aesthetics of Grime

Introduction

In the introduction to his 2014 hit, "That's Not Me," the British grime rapper Skepta boasts, "one line flows, yeah I got some of those."[1] In grime parlance, "one line flows" are patterns within lyrics where a rapper will finish every line of text of a verse with the same word or phrase. "One line flows" were a particularly common and distinctive stylistic feature of grime rapping in the genre's early heyday in the early to mid-2000s.[2] This brief moment acts as a framing device, as Skepta reaffirms his credentials within the genre and places the ensuing performance within this particular style. But, in so doing, Skepta is also implicitly participating in the never-ending process of differentiating and delineating among rap genres. This process inevitably involves politically charged questions about originality, homogenization, and localization.

This thesis takes as its case study grime, and proposes a model of its distinctive characteristics, focusing particularly on flow. Grime is undoubtedly British in its origins. Its stylistic influences, which have determined grime's distinctive flow style, betray the unique configuration of genres and performance practices that are the result of the UK's, and more specifically London's position in the international movement of people, media, and musical styles

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[1] Skepta ft. JME, "That's Not Me," Boy Better Know, 2014, Mp3. Skepta's birth name is Joseph Junior Adenuga

[2] See the verses of Roll Deep's 2005 "When I'm 'Ere" for a particularly masterful display of "one line flows." Roll Deep, "When I'm 'Ere," on *In at the Deep End*, Relentless Records CDREL07, 2005, compact disc

across the Black Atlantic.[3] In addition, grime's history as a dance music, its origins in a geographically specific EDM (electronic dance music) scene and lineage of dance genres, and the distinct role of the MC in this scene—itself a legacy of Caribbean-influenced performance practices—have shaped the genre and its characteristic style of flow.[4] Indeed, the early scene and the particular performance role of the MC in it have been central to the nostalgic, back-to-basics self-image of grime since the commercial resurgence, beginning with the release of "That's Not Me."

Throughout this thesis, I use the terms "flow" and "beat" as they are conventionally used in grime and hip-hop discourse. Generally speaking, "flow" is the *way* in which rappers deliver their lines. In this thesis, I predominantly focus on the characteristic rhythmic features of grime flow, but "flow" is a broadly defined term that can also encompass vocal timbre and the degree to which a rapper anticipates or lags behind the pulse. "Beat" is more clearly defined in grime and hip-hop discourse; it is the instrumental track over which an MC raps. The beat is often composed by someone other than the MC. This artist is known as the producer.

I follow Skepta in viewing "one line flows" as a characteristic lyrical device for grime MCs, but I also argue that "one line flows" are illustrative of broader characteristic features of grime flow. In this thesis, I argue that grime flow, in general, has greater tendency towards regularity than other styles of flow. In particular, it is significantly more regular than many American hip-hop styles of the 1990s and 2000s, which have been the focus of much of the academic work on

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[3] The concept of "Black Atlantic" was coined by Paul Gilroy to describe the shared cultural space of African and Afrodiasporic populations around the Atlantic. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1993)

[4] MC is an alternative term for rapper. It is used more frequently than "rapper" in grime discourse.

rap.[5] Thus, as well as attempting to grapple analytically with regularity, this thesis is, in part, an answer to Oliver Kautny's call for a "'regionalized' view on hip-hop cultures and their poetics," to counteract a hitherto primary focus on American hip-hop.[6]

Regularity, as I refer to it in this thesis, is a concept that manifests in many musical domains. Broadly speaking, it implies repetition and predictability. With regards to harmony, for example, it might describe a chord sequence that repeats throughout a verse. Alternatively, one could describe a simple, unvarying verse-chorus song structure as being regular. When used to describe rap flow, it might describe phrase length, rhyme schemes, structures of accents, and rhythmic patterns. By contrast, irregularity implies a relative lack of repetition and unpredictable and surprising musical structures.

In this analytic consideration of regularity, this thesis enters into long-standing theoretical debates about repetition, predictability, and complexity. These debates have been particularly central to pop music analysis, in which analysts have sometimes highlighted complexity as a means of legitimizing an otherwise maligned genre (and, by extension, the study of it). Indeed, an early trend in academic analyses of hip-hop flow was towards identifying and lauding complex structures and rhythmic patterns. Kautny argues against this tactic, cautioning against academic hip-hop analysts "focusing on the aspects [of rap music] which fit their values best."[7] Writing

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[5] The relationship between hip-hop and grime is hotly contested. MCs and others in grime discourse have adopted various positions in this debate including: that grime is a completely distinct tradition from hip-hop; that grime is a subgenre of hip-hop, and; that grime is the UK's version of, or answer, to hip-hop. These debates are complicated and raise historiographical questions of influence, and political and ethical questions about articulation international commonalities or local particularities of Black Atlantic cultures. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I emphasise both grime's distinct history and musical stylistic features, and, as a rap genre, the clear debt of influence it pays to American hip-hop.

[6] Oliver Kautny, "Lyrics and Flow in Rap Music" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop*, ed. Justin Williams, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 114

[7] ibid, 115

against a trend in early rap analysis essays to predominantly focus on irregular and intricately woven patterns of flow, he argues that, "[i]t is easy to fall into the 'trap of complexity,'" overlooking the fact that complex flows are not appreciated by all members of the hip-hop community."[8] He concludes that "the study of flow needs a corrective," of which his sketching of the "articulative" dimensions of flow is one approach.[9]

As a way of avoiding the "trap of complexity," I take grime flow's regularity seriously, and ask how listeners and fans might find it pleasurable or engaging. Through an analysis of "That's Not Me," I argue that it encourages a kind of heightened and participatory attention in its listeners, and that small rhythmic changes and shifts in accent placement within a predominantly regular framework continuously stimulate the listener's creative play of attention and entrainment.[10] In other words, I would argue that this style of flow is a crucial part of what makes grime sound so rhythmically exciting and energetic, and that it encourages its listeners to move along with it.

In this thesis, then, I identify a tendency towards regularity as a characteristic feature of grime flow, one that is a result of the genre's function as a dance music, and the performance traditions it inherited from other Caribbean-influenced music scenes in the UK. I argue that grime flow, in its regularity, encourages its audience to listen to it in an actively and bodily engaged manner.

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[8] ibid, 115. These "articulative" dimensions include the degree to which a rapper's speech style is slurred or clipped, and the degree to which they place their syllables before or after the beat.

[9] ibid, 115

[10] By this, I refer to the listener's capacity to attend to different musical elements in a loop, to entrain to different rhythmic patterns in a rhythmically layered beat, and to shift direct their experience in a creative and enjoyable way. I expand on these this concept in chapter 3.

In so doing, by proposing a model of the pleasures of this regular style of flow for its listeners, I contribute to academic discourse about what listeners engage with in rap. This model may be instructive for other styles of flow and other dance-oriented rap genres and styles, and so does not describe a model of listening that is necessarily unique to grime. Nevertheless, this model is distinct from accounts of rap's value that focus predominantly on texts, as well as from those that highlight complex and intricate flow patterns, which tend also to deal primarily with less dance-oriented styles of hip-hop, such as gangsta rap and jazz rap.

The Prehistory of Grime in London's Clubs: International Stylistic Influences and the Development of a Scene

The distinctive flow style and performance function of grime MCs are, in no small part, the legacy of the genre's genealogy. This genealogy reflects the unique mixing of popular musical styles in Britain's post-imperial cities, in which American styles compete with, and are refracted through Caribbean and Northern European influences. The history of rap in the UK, in particular, reflects both the international spread of American hip-hop, facilitated largely by multinational record labels and media platforms, and the longer-term, if more geographically limited germination of Caribbean rap styles and performance practices.[11] In this chapter, I trace this history, introduce the genre, and briefly survey the academic literature on grime.

Since the 1950s, following the first waves of migration from what were then British colonies in the Caribbean, popular music styles from Trinidad and, in particular, Jamaica have had

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[11] For a broader survey of the influence of hip-hop on various styles of British popular music, see David Hesmondhalgh, and Caspar Melville, "Urban Breakbeat Culture: Repercussions of Hip-Hop in the United Kingdom" in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside of the USA*, ed. Tony Mitchell, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001)

a strong foothold in London, Birmingham, and other large cities. In the 1960s, labels such as Island Records began to import records from Jamaica to sell to recent migrants as well as to white British fans. The influence of these musical styles on music that emerged from the UK was particularly clear in the late 1970s. For example, the "second wave" ska revivalist movement, as represented by bands such as The Specials, The Selector, and Madness, explicitly imitated the sounds and rudeboy sartorial style of early '60s Kingston, Jamaica.

However, it was not only the music styles themselves that were influential in the UK, but also the particular performance practices that accompanied them. Since the 1960s, Jamaican-style sound systems had operated in London, Birmingham, and elsewhere. "Sound systems" refers to a business model in which DJs would be hired to provide music for parties and club nights, and would bring with them a proprietary set of large speakers and a closely guarded personal record collection.[12] DJs would also hire MCs to act as hype men, singing, praising the DJ and the club, encouraging people to dance, and rapping short phrases.[13] Audiences appraised sound systems by the performance skills of the DJ and MC, the quality and distinctiveness of their record collection, and the quality, tone, and power of the speakers.

These sound systems, and the role of the MC in them, helped shape Britain's club culture in the late 1980s and '90s, and the music that was produced in this scene. The UK's first nightclubs devoted to electronic dance music (EDM), such as the famous Shoom in Southwark, opened in

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[12] The term "sound system" is also used to refer to the sets of speakers themselves.

[13] Somewhat confusingly, MCs were originally known as DJs in 1960s and '70s Jamaica. The early rap historian David Toop also identified these Jamaican MCs as an important early predecessor to American rap, noting that several of New York's hip-hop pioneers, such as Afrika Bambaataa, were of Jamaican descent. David Toop, *Rap Attack 3: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*, (London: Serpent's Tail, 2000)

London in the late '80s.[14] As well as being directly inspired by the all-night house and techno clubs of Ibiza, a popular holiday destination for young Britons, these clubs were influenced by sound systems. [15] Other institutions of London's EDM culture, most notably pirate radio stations, similarly drew on sound system culture.[16] In clubs and on air, MCs would accompany DJs by rapping over the records in a manner reminiscent of MCs at sound systems.

The first music to be produced in this scene was hardcore rave. This style, which was popular in the late '80s and early '90s in clubs and at large outdoor raves, was influenced more by American house and techno, and trance from the Low Countries, than by Caribbean dance music styles. However, MCs remained a part of the scene, albeit infrequently featured on records, and the later styles of British EDM drew more obviously from Caribbean styles.[17]

Jungle, or drum n' bass, as it came to be known, combined the keyboards and vocal samples of rave, low basslines borrowed from dub and dancehall, and, most distinctively, sped up and timbrally altered drum breakbeats from hip-hop.[18] Unlike in hardcore rave, MCs were occasionally

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[14] Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture*, 3rd edition, (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2012), p.38

[15] For an academic account of this scene, from a sociological perspective, see, Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

[16] Pirate radio stations, so named after 1960s stations, such as Radio Caroline, which escaped Britain's broadcasting laws by transmitting from offshore ships, proliferated in London in the 1980s and '90s. These largely youth-run stations would have a broadcast range of only a few miles and would often be set up in tower blocks to boost their range. They were illegal and the police targeted them, saying that their broadcasts could interfere with the radio communications of the emergency services. Many of these stations were devoted to electronic dance music. For more on this, see Alice Nicolov, "The history of UK pirate radio – and why it's still here," *Dazed*, January 19, 2017, http://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/34394/1/pirate-radio-history-and-future, accessed July 2, 2017.

[17] It is worth noting that while Caribbean popular music performance styles and practices have been highly influential on grime rapping, many grime MCs do not have family backgrounds in the Caribbean. Black grime MCs, to say nothing of the many non-black grime musicians, are just as likely to have family who migrated to the UK from Ghana, Nigeria, Somalia, and elsewhere in Africa than the Caribbean.

[18] Jungle track tempos typically range from 160bpm to 180bpm.

featured on jungle records, but the producer—rather than the MC—was still credited as the main artist behind a record. A particularly famous example of a jungle track featuring an MC is M Beat's "Incredible," which features General Levy rapping in a dancehall style, with heavy use of Jamaican patois.[19]

Jungle flourished in the UK in the mid-90s, before it was overtaken in the late '90s in London's clubs by UK garage.[20] This style again reflected British dancers' tastes for faster tempos than those preferred by American producers. Simon Reynolds describes how the style first developed around 1997 after DJs started playing contemporary American R & B records, by artists such as Brandy and Monica, at faster speeds.[21] British producers soon started to make their own tracks that replicated the sound of these manipulated American records. Unlike jungle, which had used heavily manipulated sampled drum beats, they used synthesized drums, with characteristic "shuffling" hi-hats, but they did use low, syncopated basslines, similar to those featured in jungle.

UK garage was popular in Britain's clubs, and its more forgiving tempos and timbres made it more amenable to popular crossover.[22] In addition, UK garage fit the mold of mainstream pop more easily than jungle and hardcore rave, as it was more orientated around vocalists than these earlier genres. Garage singers such as Craig David and production/vocalist teams such as Oxide

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[19] M-Beat ft. General Levy, "Incredible," Renk Records, RENKT42, 1994, 12" record

[20] Drum n' bass was, however, the first Britain EDM genre to spread beyond the UK's club culture. Although it lost its pole position in the UK's EDM culture, it maintained a significant international following off dancefloors.

[21] Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, 419

[22] At around 130bpm, UK garage tracks tend to be significantly slower than jungle records. Jungle record sleeves were often dark or jarringly garish and drew influence from horror films and comic books. The jungle label Metalheadz's logo, for example, features a skull wearing headphones. Garage was, in Reynolds' words, associated with "'the finer things in life' – designer clothes, flash cars, champagne, [and] cocaine." Reynolds, *Energy Flash*, 419

and Neutrino achieved success in the UK Singles chart in the late '90s and the first two years of the new millennium with party hits and songs about young love.

Alongside the increasing public popularity of these "good times" tracks, a parallel stream of development in UK garage was the increasing prominence of MCs and rappers. As with jungle, MCs remained a key part of the scene in which UK garage was produced and performed, but increasingly they were also featured on records, and even identified as the main artists in UK garage. MCs such as Ms Dynamite, and crews of MCs and producers, such as Heartless Crew and Pay As U Go Cartel (whose member Wiley, real name Richard Cowie, went on to be key figure in grime) released garage tracks but drew on the model of American rappers and hip-hop crews for their public and artistic personae as the primary, rather than secondary, authors of this music. Indeed, the turbulent career of the most well-known UK garage crew, So Solid Crew, even inspired moral panics in the British press in a similar vein to those in the American press surrounding hip-hop groups such as N.W.A, particularly following the conviction of Carl Morgan, one of their members, for murder in 2005.

Grime's Beginnings

Grime emerged as an intensification of the trend in garage towards MC-focused music and iconography derived from American hip-hop, particularly gangsta rap. Grime MCs and music videos, when compared to UK garage, showed an increased focus on themes of violence, mastery, inner city street life, and competition. It also was increasingly male. Whereas UK garage featured several prominent female singers and MCs, grime was, and continues to be, almost exclusively

male.[23] More Fire Crew's 2001 single, "Oi" is illustrative of this shift in imagery and sound.[24] Released before the label "grime" had emerged, More Fire Crew described themselves as UK garage at the time, but their lyrics and music video provided the blueprint for later grime tracks.[25] They rap about their personal and collective prowess, and make threats against any other MCs who dare to challenge them. In the video, shots of More Fire Crew rapping in London council estates, at parties, and in carparks are interspersed with shots of people doing tricks on motorcycles.

Musically, "Oi" also contains a number of features that would become increasingly common in, and characteristic of grime. For example, the orchestral synthesizer timbre doubling the bassline in much of the track is a recurring technique in grime production, one that is frequently used to create a quasi-cinematic, "dark," and dramatic mood in tracks such as Skepta's "Shutdown."[26] The slight distortion on the square wave synthesizer patches used for the bassline is another common grime production technique. Wiley's early 2000s instrumental tracks, such as "Igloo," "Eskimo," and "Ice Rink" made use of similar synth timbres, and were highly influential on other grime producers.[27] "Oi's" pattern of changing synthesizer timbres every eight bars is another central feature of grime beats. At 135bpm, "Oi" is also close to grime's typical tempo of 140bpm.

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[23] Notable exceptions include Shystie, Lady Sovereign, Lady Leshurr, and Lady Chann

[24] Platinum 45 featuring More Fire Crew, "Oi!" FTL FTL009, 2001, 12" record

[25] "More Fire Crew," *Designer Magazine*, n.d., http://designermagazine.tripod.com/MoreFireCrewINT1.html, accessed May 31st 2017

[26] Skepta, "Shutdown," on *Konnichiwa*, Boy Better Know BBKS004CD, 2016, compact disc

[27] Wiley, "Igloo," Wiley Kat Records WK017, 2003, 12" record. Wiley Kat, "Eskimo," Wiley Kat Records WK003, 12" record. Wiley Kat, "Ice Rink" on *Eskiboy/Ice Rink*, Wiley Kat Records WK015, 2003, 12" record.

Grime's Unrealized Crossover Promise and its DIY Scene

The popularity of "Oi" and Wiley's instrumentals contributed to a growing sense of interest and excitement around this new style emerging from London. Other focal points were Wiley's new, loose-knit crew Roll Deep and their shows on Rinse FM, a major pirate radio station, and Roll Deep member Dizzee Rascal's track "I Luv U."[28] This record, originally self-released in 2002 as a "white label," sold highly.[29]

The 18-year old Dizzee Rascal was given a record contract with the prominent independent label, XL Records. His first album, *Boy in Da Corner*, marked grime's first breakthrough moment into public consciousness.[30] In 2003, it won the prestigious Mercury Music Prize, thus propelling Dizzee Rascal, real name Dylan Mills, into Britain's newspapers and mainstream radio stations.

Dizzee Rascal's sudden critical and commercial success created a sense of commercial promise in the grime scene, further strengthened by the chart success of former More Fire Crew member Lethal Bizzle's 2004 hit "Pow! (Forward)."[31] A number of grime MCs, including Bizzle (real name Maxwell Owusu Ansah), Wiley, and Kano were signed by major labels and prominent independent labels in the period from 2002 to 2005. However, for the most part, the albums and singles they released were commercially unsuccessful, and within a few years, these MCs were

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[28] Dizzee Rascal, "I Luv U," no label DS – 001, 2002, 12"

[29] "White labels" were self-released records pressed in limited runs, often of only a few hundred records, primarily for use by DJs.

[30] Dizzee Rascal, *Boy in da Corner*, XL Recordings XLCD170, 2003, compact disc

[31] Lethal Bizzle, "Pow! (Forward)," Relentless Records RELTDJ 15, 2004, 12" record

dropped from their labels. The first foray of grime into a more public and commercial space fizzled out.

The exception to this trend was Dizzee Rascal, whose second and third albums, *Showtime* (2004) and *Maths+English* (2007) sold over 100,000 copies in the UK.[32] His musical style, however, drifted further from that of "I Luv U." Although he retained his distinctive vocal timbre, his stylistic influences became increasingly diverse and increasingly international. *Maths+English* sampled James Brown and featured a collaboration with the American rap group UGK. He achieved true mainstream success in the UK with his fourth album *Tounge N'Cheek* (2009), on which he collaborated with dance/pop producers Calvin Harris and Armand Van Helden, and which included four #1 singles.[33] The Calvin Harris-produced single, "Bonkers," which Rascal performed in the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony, is representative of this crossover style. Rascal raps lyrics about partying over a four-on-the-floor house beat, with a mid-heavy electropop synthesizer timbre.[34]

Other British MCs produced similar house and electropop inflected party tracks, perhaps with a similar eye on the crossover market, with varying degrees of commercial success. Skepta's 2009 electropop-esque "Rolex Sweep," failed to chart higher than number 86, whereas Wiley's 2008 "Wearing My Rolex," reached #2 on the UK singles charts.[35] Around 2007-2009 a number of younger MCs, including Tinchy Stryder, Chipmunk, and Tinie Tempah were signed by major

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[32] Dizzee Rascal, *Showtime*, XL Recordings XLCD181, 2004, compact disc. Dizzee Rascal, *Maths+English*, XL Recordings XLCD273, 2007, compact disc.

[33] Dizzee Rascal, *Tounge N'Cheek*, Dirtee Skank Recordings STANK007CD, 2009, compact disc

[34] Dizzee Rascal, "Bonkers," on *Tounge N'Cheek*

[35] Skepta, "Rolex Sweep," on *Microphone Champion*, Boy Better Know JME030, 2009, compact disc. Wiley, "Wearing My Rolex," Asylum Records ASYLUM1CD2, 2008, compact disc

labels. The dance-pop singles and albums they released were similarly aimed at a more mainstream audience. They frequently collaborated with pop singers and more high-profile American artists, and released songs about romance, such as Tinchy Stryder's "Number 1," and Chipmunk's "Oopsy Daisy."[36]

As with the earlier wave of major-label signings, these artists largely failed to generate commercial success beyond a second album. [37] During the extended period of repeated tantalizations of commercial breakthroughs, and subsequent slow, ignominious declines for individual MCs, the London-based scene of clubs and radio stations (many of them now legitimate) nevertheless continued. As well as continuing to support MCs and grime, the scene also incubated new genres, including dubstep, UK funky, and bassline. Reverting to the model of the pre-grime UK EDM, these genres were less MC-centric and, in the case of UK funky and bassline, were more explicitly dance music.

Grime artists weathered these changing fashions by developing a grime-specific infrastructure, tangential to the commercial scene but mainly built around older pillars of the UK underground dance scene.[38] Grime producers, MCs, and others involved in grime began producing and distributing DVD series, such as Risky Roadz and Lord of the Mics, that featured MC clashes,

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[36] Tinchy Stryder feat. N-Dubz, "Number 1," Island Records 2701362, compact disc. Chipmunk, "Oopsy Daisy," Jive 88697588692, compact disc.

[37] Tinie Tempah has been the exception to this rule. His third album, *Youth*, was released in April 2017 and reached number nine in the UK album charts.

[38] They were also forced to find alternative income streams and other ways of spreading their music by restrictive policing of their club nights, enforced through the notorious form 696. Venues in London have to submit this risk assessment form to the Metropolitan police whenever they host events featuring DJs and MCs. Until 2009, this form asked the genre of music that would be played and the likely ethnic makeup of the event's attendees. Similar forms in other counties still require venues to report the genre that will be played. Grime MCs have long complained that form 696 has been used by the Met to discriminatorily target and shut down grime shows. JME, who had a show cancelled at late notice in 2014, hosted a documentary for *Noisey* about this form. Noisey, "Form 696: The Police Versus Grime Music," *Vice*, May 29, 2014, https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/kw9qbe/the-police-versus, accessed June 28, 2017

shows, and documentary footage of the scene. They also produced music videos for the digital television station dedicated to UK "urban" music, Channel U. In the 2010s, YouTube channels such as SB.TV and GRM Daily superseded these early digital video platforms. Alongside the developing platforms for grime MCs to cheaply disseminate video content, a number of grime artists who had either not been signed by major labels, or refused contracts with them, also established other means of independently generating income and nurturing the scene. They set up their own record labels, which often had links to other business interests and musical projects. JME (real name Jamie Adenuga) and Skepta's Boy Better Know is the most prominent of these. Named after their crew, Boy Better Know also had a show on the radio station Rinse FM, and continue to sell T-shirts and other branded clothing.

Although they were engaged in building a self-sustaining infrastructure that was not dependent on major label contracts, these relatively underground MCs and producers were not immune to the lure of potential crossover success. This was reflected in the pop-friendly style of some of the singles they released, such as Skepta's "Rolex Sweep," which was initially released on his label Boy Better Know.

Despite that, the fact that the MCs, both "underground" and those signed to major labels, had somewhat drifted away from it in the late 2000s, the "classic" grime style of the earlier half of the decade still retained devoted fans and some degree of critical prestige and excitement. Since grime's breakthrough into widespread public consciousness in 2003, critics and fans had identified it as Britain's equivalent to American hip-hop. Thus, even while MCs moved towards more international styles in the late 2000s, grime, as it was encapsulated in recordings and videos from 2002 to 2005, maintained cultural significance for British pop critics.[39] This continued aesthetic

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[39] Simon Reynolds has been one of its most prominent fans in music criticism, describing it in 2010 as a "noise you could believe in." Simon Reynolds, "Simon Reynolds Notes on the Noughties: Grime and Dubstep – a noise you

interest in the grime of early Dizzee Rascal, Wiley, and others, who were either still active in the underground scene or actively pursuing crossover success, combined with the entrepreneurial infrastructure assembled by independent grime artists, laid the foundations for the nostalgic resurgence of grime in the 2010s.

The Nostalgic Resurgence of Grime

A prominent early example of a nostalgic grime release was Lethal Bizzle's "Pow 2011."[40] Since the release of his 2004 hit, "Pow! (Forward)," Bizzle's career had been slowly dwindling. "Pow 2011" was a remake of "Pow! (Forward)" and the MCs featured on it—including Wiley, Kano, Chipmunk, and JME—make repeated references to their longevity in the scene, or their triumphant return to it.[41] The track was Bizzle's biggest hit since 2005, reaching number 33 on the UK singles chart.

After the success of "Pow 2011," there was a renewed journalistic interest in telling the history of the genre and mining it for forgotten gems, particularly following the 2012 release of *White Label Classics*, a compilation of the grime crew Ruff Sqwad's beats from the mid-2000s, by No Hoods No Hats, a grime record label that has ties to London's elite visual art scene.[42] A key

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could believe in," *The Guardian*, January 11, 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2010/jan/11/notes-noughties-grime-dubstep, accessed July 1, 2017. As well as being one of the most important historians of UK EDM, Reynolds was also an influential figure in a circle of cultural studies scholars, political philosophers, and bloggers whose online writings imbued grime with futurist or accelerationist political significance. Reynolds, alongside Mark Fisher, Jeremy Gilbert, and Alex Williams, saw grime and other UK EDM genres as rare examples of genuine innovation in a pop music landscape otherwise addicted to nostalgia and recycling, which in turn reflected an inability to imagine different political futures.

[40] Lethal Bizzle, "Pow 2011," 360 Records, compact disc.

[41] For example, Chipmunk raps, "Still the grime scene saviour//Back now, just a bit more paper"

[42] Ruff Sqwad, *White Label Classics*, No Hats No Hoods NHNHCD1005, compact disc.

theme of these histories was technology and the do-it-yourself approach of the genre's early producers.[43] That many artists had relied on pirated music production software, cheap PCs, Playstations, and near-obsolete VHS cameras was a marker of the genre's early gritty authenticity, which had ostensibly been lost in its push for crossover success.

Skepta's 2014 single, "That's Not Me," which heralded the beginning of a sustained resurgence in grime, similarly harked back to the DIY approach to technology in the early years of grime. Its video was shot on VHS, reminiscent of the Channel U videos and self-produced DVDs of a decade earlier.[44] This deliberately anachronistic visual style was also used for Novelist's 2015 "Endz" and Wiley's 2017 "Handle Ya Business Freestyle."[45] Key lyrical themes in these releases were longevity, a commitment to the scene, and explicit rejections of earlier attempts at gaining mainstream fame by acquiescing to major label demands.[46] Sonically, "That's Not Me," and Skepta's follow-up hit "Shutdown," similarly draw on the stylistic norms of early grime, as I shall discuss in the next chapter. The synth lines, both in timbre and rhythm, are reminiscent of classic grime beats, as is the overall stripped-back production style.

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[43] See, for example, Dan Hancox, "A History of Grime, by the people who created it," *The Guardian*, December 6, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/dec/06/a-history-of-grime, accessed July 1, 2017.

[44] UZI, "Skepta ft JME – That's Not Me," *Youtube* video, posted by Underdogpsychosis, March 16, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YJ0dNAz9TI, accessed April 29, 2016.

[45] Novelist, "Novelist – Endz [Official Video]," *Youtube* video, posted by MMMYEHChannel, October 19, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GYYYZbGEuU, accessed July 19, 2017. Wiley, "Wiley-Handle Ya Business Freestyle-Official Video," *Youtube* video, posted by Wiley, January 11, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emNNgX2NY_Q, accessed July 19, 2017.

[46] For example, in "That's Not Me," Skepta raps, "yeah, I used to wear Gucci, I put it all in the bin cos that's not me" and in "Handle Ya Business Freestyle," Wiley lists several MCs whose careers he helped establish, "When Titch first popped I was there//When JME first popped I was there//When Stormzy first popped I was there//And I'm still here today after all these years"

A number of factors sustained the resurgence of grime following the release of "That's Not Me." First, a number of major British MCs, including Wiley and Dizzee Rascal, have produced tracks with similarly nostalgic "classic" grime styles. Second, the scene has been reinvigorated by a number of younger MCs, who grew up listening to the early grime tracks of the older generation. The most prominent of these are Stormzy, Novelist, and Meridian Dan, all of whom produce tracks in the mold of early-mid 2000s grime. Third, there has been more media and industry interest in grime in the last two years. For instance, the Music of Black Origins Awards, a major music industry award show in the UK, added a "Best Grime Act" category in 2014; grime acts are playing larger venues and to larger audiences, such as Stormzy's appearance at the 2017 Glastonbury festival; and grime MCs have even been credited with helping to bring about Jeremy Corbyn's electoral upset in the 2017 UK parliamentary elections.[47] Fourth, since 2014, grime has spread internationally, to a greater degree than ever before. In particular, it has established a niche but dedicated fan following in the USA. This was in part due to a handful of high-profile North American rappers expressing interest in grime. Kanye West brought dozens of grime MCs on stage during a performance of his "All Day" at the 2015 BRIT Awards, and Drake has become an honorary member of Boy Better Know.

This recent resurgence in grime has been accompanied by a slew of short documentary films, recounting the genre's staggered history, exploring forgotten or overlooked aspects of the scene, and following the rising fortunes of its stars. Perhaps taking their cues from earlier

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[47] A number of grime MCs, most prominently JME, endorsed Corbyn and campaigned for the Labour party. Although newspapers, such as *The Guardian*, largely treated this support as little more than a curiosity before the election, some suggested after the election that these endorsements had significantly helped boost Labour-leaning youth turnout in the election. For example, see Roisin O'Connor, "How UK Rappers helped Jeremy Corbyn in the General Election," *The Independent*, June 9, 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/corbyn-general-election-labour-seats-hung-parliament-uk-rappers-win-akala-stormzy-jme-aj-tracey-a7781371.html, Accessed June 28, 2017.

journalistic lionizations of the London EDM scene's creativity, such as Simon Reynolds'

influential histories of this music, these documentaries frequently wax most lyrically about the

early grime *scene* and its networks of institutions and performance spaces, as opposed to focusing

solely on particularly influential individuals. For example, GQ's *The Business of Grime* celebrates

the DIY entrepreneurial spirit of the grime scene and FACT magazine's *Eskimo Dance – 13 Years*

of Reloads focuses on grime's longest running club night.[48] *Pirate Mentality*, Toby Robson's 2017

film for SBTV and Channel 4, solicits nostalgic recollections of pirate radio sessions, self-

produced DVDs, and key records shops in London. The film culminates in a recreation of a star-

studded pirate radio-style session on the former premises of Rhythm Division, a record shop in

London's Bow district that sold grime white label records.[49]

Grime, Analysis, and Intersubjectivity: Mapping the Discourse and Argument

The focus on the scene, as opposed to the individual, as the locus of creative energy in

recent grime documentaries is echoed in much of the academic work on grime. For example, in

the sole academic monograph devoted to London's rap scene, Richard Bramwell primarily

analyses grime and other forms of rap music using the tools of literary and film analysis, alongside

his ethnographic research into its social function in London's youth culture. Drawing on the work

of critics such as Paul Gilroy and Henry Louis Gates, Bramwell argues that Caribbean oral poetry

forms, in which he includes both grime and hip-hop, function in an essentially different way to

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[48] Ewen Spencer, "The Business of Grime: Full Documentary British GQ," *Youtube* video, posted by British GQ, July 26, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_2AVogIb5c, accessed June 30, 2017.
Edward Henry Jones, "Eskimo Dance – 13 Years of Reloads – Documentary," *Youtube* video, posted by FACTmagazine, November 13, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEAHE7SOX5s, accessed June 30, 2017.

[49] Toby Robson, "Pirate Mentality: How Pirates Made Grime," *Youtube* video, posted by All 4, February 17, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4lSFWTx3L6Y, accessed June 30, 2017.

Western art forms.[50] He argues that the latter engenders a withdrawal to a "private subjectivity,"[51] whereas the former is characterized by "*intersubjectivity*."[52] Drawing on Bourdieu to contrast a petit bourgeois aesthetic of individuality and atemporal spirituality with a popular culture that focuses on "being in the present,"[53] Bramwell argues that the aesthetics of London's rap musics are markedly orientated towards the everyday and sociality. He goes so far as to write that "[t]he work of MCs, whether in cyphers or on stage, is valued not so much for its semantic content as for its social function."[54]

Given that grime has been demonized by a number of UK newspapers and media figures for supposedly promoting violence and anti-sociality, there is much to sympathize with in Bramwell's call for a contextualized understanding of grime aesthetics as being profoundly social.[55] Other sociologists and cultural studies scholars have also argued that youth in the UK embrace and exploit grime in the performative creation of identity and as a tool of resistance.[56]

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[50] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*. Henry Louis Gates, "The 'Blackness of Blackness': A Critique of the Sign and the Signifying Monkey," *Critical Inquiry* vol. 9, no.4, 1983.

[51] Richard Bramwell, *UK Hip-Hop, Grime and the City: The Aesthetics and Ethics of London's Rap Scenes*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2015) 8

[52] ibid, 9

[53] ibid, 9

[54] ibid, 71. Cyphers are informal and improvised performance events, in which rappers and other performers jam and compete, usually standing in a circle.

[55] ibid, 2

[56] See, for example, Nabeel Zuberi, "'New Throat Fe Chat': The Voices and Media of MC Culture," in *Black Popular Music in Britain Since 1945*, eds. Jon Stratton and Nabeel Zuberi, (Farnham, Ashgate, 2014) Todd Dedman, "Agency in UK hip-hop and grime youth subcultures – peripherals and purists," Journal *of Youth Studies* 14, no.5, 2011.

To the extent that these scholars employ close reading as part of their methodological apparatus, they tend towards analysis of lyrics or of grime iconography. When they do address it as music, they frequently treat it as another set of symbols to be interpreted hermeneutically. In so doing, they highlight musical parameters such as grime's distinctive timbres and textures, at the expense of detailed discussions of melody or rhythm, in discussions of the "dark" or "cold" mood of the tracks.[57] What listeners might find distinctive or pleasurable about the sound of grime, beyond its symbolic content, is therefore beyond the scope of their research questions.

One result of this focus on symbolism and cultural analysis, I would argue, is that grime's function as a *dance* music is overlooked, as is the MC's role in facilitating dance. In my own listening, for example, it is grime's rhythmic energy that I find most compelling. For me, the distinctive, rhythmically regular style of flow employed by many grime MCs is a key part of this sense of energy and liveliness. Furthermore, the capacity of an MC's flow to heighten this sense of energy, to make me want to move and dance to this music, is not one I experience frequently in other rap genres.

In this thesis, then, I aim to explore how flow in grime can create this sense of rhythmic energy. In chapter two, I start by identifying a key characteristic feature of grime flow, its tendency towards rhythmic regularity, particularly when compared to flow styles in canonical hip-hop of the '90s and '00s. I draw on the methodologies and terminologies of the analyses of hip-hop flow by Adam Krims and Kyle Adams, but I argue that their complexity-orientated mode of analysis is stylistically inappropriate for grime flow, given its rhythmic regularity. I propose a modified

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[57] Nabeel Zuberi, "Worries in the Dance: Post-Millenial Grooves and Sub-Bass Culture" in *Britpop and the English Music Tradition*, eds. Andy Bennett and John Stratton (Farnham, Ashgate, 2010)

analytic approach that engages with the characteristics of regular flow toward an understanding of grime's priorities and values in explicitly musical construction and form.

The third chapter addresses the question of what, if anything, listeners might find valuable and exciting in grime flow's rhythmically regularity. I turn to music theoretical discussions of repetition and analyses of groove, particularly in EDM, informed by music cognition. I argue that the regularity of grime flow invites the listener to participate and to entrain in a more engaged manner. In a context of grime's highly syncopated and metrically ambiguous beats, the small shifts in accent placement and limited rhythmic variation within grime flow serve to continuously stimulate the listener's creative capacity to perceptually attend and entrain to different rhythmic patterns within the beats.

By identifying the form and structure that is distinctive to grime, then exploring reasons beyond its symbolic content why listeners might enjoy grime flow, an analysis of grime on these terms might temper some of the more ambitious and overstated claims made about grime's radical potential as a form of expressive resistance. Nevertheless, I believe that an account of how grime does make its listeners want to move and the role of the MC's flow in this process of rhythmic coercion could strengthen the case for a characterization of grime as a genre orientated towards sociality.

Chapter 2: Regularity in Grime Flow

How to Rap British: Flow and Genre

The question of how to cultivate an "authentic" and localized rapping style—one that is somehow distinct from American styles that dominate global hip-hop markets—has vexed rappers around the world. Despite the long and complicated history of rapping in the UK outlined in chapter one, grime rappers and historians have also repeatedly grappled with the question of what an "authentically" British style of rap may be. Undoubtedly, answers to this question often center on regional accent, slang, and local lyrical topics. However, as in other discussions of rap's localization, the more ambiguous phenomenon of flow is also sometimes invoked as a marker of grime's distinctive rapping voice.

What constitutes "grime flow," however, is unclear. Grime MCs do not share a single, uniform style, and the genre's somewhat porous boundaries and wide variety of influences result in a wide range of flow styles among MCs identified as grime. Nevertheless, there are some stylistically characteristic features shared by a number of core grime MCs, which fans and MCs associate with the genre's distinctiveness.

In this chapter, I focus on grime flow's tendency towards rhythmic regularity, of which "one line flows," invoked by Skepta as a marker of his credibility in the genre in the introduction to "That's Not Me," are an extreme example. As I will illustrate, primarily with reference to "That's Not Me," grime flow generally includes a higher degree of rhythmic regularity than other styles of rapping. Grime rhyme schemes tend to be highly regular and repetitive, and grime rappers

make less use of syncopation or irregular stress placement than many other forms of rapping, particularly canonical American hip-hop of the late '80s, '90s, and early '00s.[58] Grime's regular style of flow is, I argue, a key stylistic marker of its genre identity to its performers and fans.

Regularity of Flow in "That's Not Me"

"That's Not Me" and its deliberately lo-fi video were successful as performances of nostalgia and assertions of authenticity.[59] "That's Not Me" was widely received as a back-to-basics release by Skepta, a welcome return to a raw, authentic grime style after a number of years in which purist fans accused the grime scene, including Skepta himself, of diluting the genre's distinctive character in an effort to achieve crossover success. [60] In a short documentary released with the video for "That's Not Me," Skepta confirms this interpretation of his release, saying that he feels free from commercial pressures, and that he has returned to simply making music that he and his friends like.[61] Given the reception of "That's Not Me" and Skepta's claims to authenticity through the performance of nostalgia, I suggest that this track offers analysts a window into what grime MCs and fans consider normative practices in "authentic" and "old-school" grime.

To my ears, Skepta's flow in "That's Not Me" is indeed representative of many of the norms of grime flow, particularly with regard to regularity. His flow exhibits regularity in a number of ways, the most obvious of which are phrase length, rhyme scheme, and rhyme placement. In

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[58] By this is I am referring to such subgenres as gangsta rap, reality rap, and jazz rap.

[59] When he received his MOBO award for best video, Skepta proudly stated that the video was produced for only £80. MOBO Awards, "Skepta ft. JME. Best Video Award Acceptance Speech at Mobo Awards. 2014," *Youtube* video, posted October 22, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rj-iv1mGfXM, accessed April 29, 2016.

[60] Noisey Staff, "Noisey UK's 25 Best Tracks of 2014: 10-1," *Noisey*, December 9, 2014, http://noisey.vice.com/en_uk/blog/noisey-uks-25-best-tracks-of-2014-top-ten, accessed April 29, 2016.

[61] UZI, "Skepta ft JME – That's Not Me"

these ways, in addition to the images, narrative, and choice of vocabulary, the structure of his flow is a key means of performing the evocation of the past.

Figures 1 and 2 use two different transcription methods to highlight the regularity of Skepta's flow in "That's Not Me." They both include the chorus and the first half of Skepta's first verse. Figure 1 draws attention to text and the means by which grime MCs create rhythmic accents through the delivery of text, namely rhymes and the double tracking of individual words and phrases.[62] Each row of the grid represents one bar, with the numbers in bold text representing crotchet beats and the numbers in plain text representing semiquaver subdivisions. The shaded cells highlight rhymes, with different colors representing different rhymes. The text in bold indicates the words that are double-tracked, either by a single rapper, or by a crew joining in on crucial phrases.[63]

Figure 2 uses conventional Western rhythmic notation. As such, it draws attention to the percussive and non-textual dimensions of Skepta's flow, including the lengths of his phrases and the rhythms he uses. The slurs in this transcription mark the syntactic units of Skepta's lyrics. Double-tracked words are again marked with bold text.

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[62] My transcription method in Figure 1 is adapted from those of rap analysts Adam Krims and Kyle Adams. See Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Kyle Adams, "On the Metrical Techniques of Flow in Rap Music," *Music Theory Online*, 15, no.5, 2009.

[63] One problem with this transcription method is that it does not distinguish between different types of rhymes. For example, it does not distinguish the end rhymes present throughout this extract from the internal rhyme in line 7. Similarly, this transcription does not distinguish between multisyllabic and monosyllabic rhymes. Nor does it distinguish between the "one-line flow" of the chorus, and the more varied end-rhyme word choice of the verse.

	1	2	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	4	2	3	4
Chorus 1 1					Nah				**That's**		not		me			
2	Act		like	a	waste-		man		that's		not		me			
3	Sex		a-	ny	girl		nah		That's		not		me			
4	Lips		a-	ny	girl		nah		That's		not		me			
5	**Yeah**				I	used		to	wear		Gu-		cci	(I)	put	it
6	all		in	the	bin		cos		That's		not		me			
7	true				I	used		to	look		like		you,		but	
8	dress-	ing	like	a	mess		nah		That's		not		me			
Verse 1 9					It's		the	re-	turn		of	the	mac			
10	I'm		still	a-	live		just		like		**Tu-**		pac			
11	Girls		in	the	front		row,		girls		in	the	back			
12	Spit		one		ly-	ric	ev-	ry-	bo-	dy's	like		brap			
13	Flash-		back		to	the	cold		nights		in	the	trap		now	I'm
14	in	the	new		whip		count-		ing	the	**big**		stack			
15	Yel-	low	gold		chain		and	the	**dia-**		monds	are	black			
16	Jack		me		nah		you	don't	wan-	na	do		that			

Figure 1. "That's Not Me" chorus and first verse. Grid transcription.

Regarding phrase lengths, I suggest that in rap, syntactic units of lyrics are the primary determining factor in marking musical phrases. The regularity of Skepta's phrase lengths is most immediately evident in Figure 2. Most phrases are just one bar in length, and align with the start and end of the bar. Skepta's less frequent two-bar phrases also align exactly with the two-bar hypermetrical units of the beat (discussed further in chapter 3). In Figure 2, the dotted slurs mark antecedent and consequent sub-units within these two-bar phrases. Skepta's flow thus contains a high degree of "correspondence between syntactic units and metrical units," which Kyle Adams, writing in 2009, argues that the majority of then contemporary (American) rap aims to avoid.[64]

Skepta's rhyme schemes are highly regular, as is made plain in Figure 1. This regularity is due, in no small part, to his frequent use of a single rhyming syllable throughout this section. The

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[64] Kyle Adams, "On the Metrical Techniques of Flow in Rap Music," para.9

Figure 2. "That's Not Me" chorus and first verse. Traditional notation

uniformity of color in bars 9-16 (Figure 1) makes clearly visible how Skepta uses a single rhyme throughout this first half of the verse. The chorus is also highly regular. The repetition of the track's tagline, "that's not me," in bars 1-4, 6, 8, combined with the "–ci" on beat 4 in bar 5 produces an AAAAAABA rhyme scheme throughout the chorus. Furthermore, the potential disrupting effect of the non-rhyme, "you" in bar 7 is lessened by it being the antecedent line in a two-line phrase, and by this word being the antonym of the rhymed word heard throughout the rest of the chorus.[65]

Skepta's placement of his rhymes within the bar is also highly regular. Throughout the extract transcribed in Figures 1 and 2, and indeed throughout all but three of Skepta's phrases in "That's Not Me," Skepta places his main end-rhyme on the fourth beat of the bar. This regularity of rhyme placement is represented by the thick band of shaded cells on beat four of Figure 1. The regularity of rhymes is a particularly common feature of grime flow, although the end-rhyme need not always fall on the fourth beat. For example, JME, the other MC featured on "That's Not Me" places his end-rhymes on beat 3 in the final verse of the track. I will discuss some implications for listeners' entrainment of this shift in end-rhyme placement in chapter 3, but of relevance to this analysis, the metric placement of the rhymes at the level of the beat reinforces the predictable patterns of rhythm in this performance.

As already mentioned, rhyme placement is one of the key ways in which rappers create rhythmic accent. Thus, the regularity of Skepta's rhyme placement also contributes to another facet of his flow's regularity, namely the regularity of his rhythmic delivery. Skepta's rhythms are close to what EDM scholar Mark Butler identifies as "even" rhythms, those that reinforce the basic meter

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[65] This departure from the rhyme, in the penultimate line of the chorus, also allows Skepta to create a sense of conclusion by returning to the rhyme on the final line of the chorus.

by subdividing it into units of equal length.[66] As Figure 2 shows, Skepta makes next to no use of syncopation. He also makes limited use of offbeat accents, either in his rhymed or in double-tracked syllables. Furthermore, his only offbeat double-tracked accents are either in a chain of accented syllables, as in bar 15 and the "not" of the "that's not me" tagline, or act as a lead-into an end-rhyme, as in bars 10 and 14, thus further reinforcing the meter.[67]
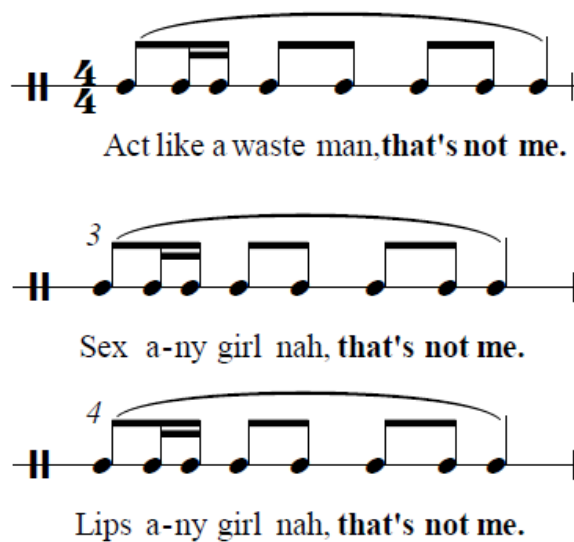

Figure 3. Rhythmic repetition in "That's Not Me" chorus, bars 2-4.

The sense of regularity in Skepta's flow in "That's Not Me," is also the result of his consistent use of a few rhythmic motives, or rhythmic cells. Unsurprisingly perhaps, this is most

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[66] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) 82

[67] Another aspect of Skepta's flow that may add to a sense of regularity is the degree to which he is metrically aligned to the beat. This issue is beyond the scope of this thesis, but I do believe that the degree to which grime MCs place their attacks *on* the beat is a characteristic feature of grime flow. This is especially clear when we compare grime flow to more self-consciously "artistic" subgenres of American hip-hop like jazz rap, in which rappers are significantly more flexible in the placement of their attacks. This "locked in," metronomic quality of grime flow is, I would argue, a legacy and key component of the "hype up" performance function of British MCs in clubs and on radio sessions.

prominent in the chorus, where bars 2, 3, and 4 all use the same rhythm, as shown in Figure 3. Similarly, as shown in Figure 4, Skepta uses a distinctive syncopated rhythm at the beginning of both bars 5 and 7, which are the corresponding antecedent bars in the pair of two-bar phrases in the second half of the chorus.
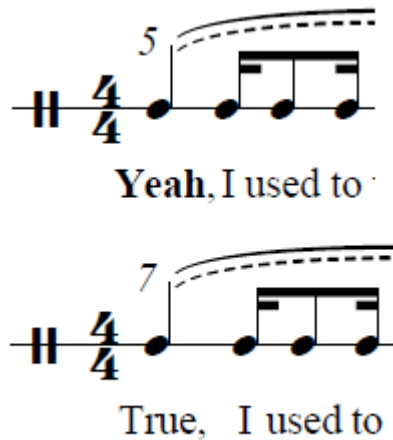

Figure 4. Rhythmic correspondence in "That's Not Me" chorus, bars 5 and 7

His repetition of rhythmic cells in the verse is slightly less blunt and more varied, but a small number of rhythmic cells still suffuse his lines. The first three lines of verse 1 show a high degree of motivic consistency, as demonstrated in Figure 5. These lines, bars 9-11 in Figure 2, are dominated by a three-note rhythm first heard at the beginning of bar 9. This cell, marked x in Figure 5, is immediately repeated and expanded (x_1 in Figure 5). Skepta then further transforms and extends it on the first beat of bar 10 (x_2 in Figure 5) and bar 11 then combines the first half of bar 10, with the second of bar 9.

In terms of his choice of rhythmic cells, Skepta's cadences are especially regular. Figure 6 outlines the cadence patterns that Skepta throughout his two-bar hypermetric units in bars 9-16. In the antecedent phrases of these hypermetric units, the cadential syllable is preceded by two

semiquavers. In the consequent phrase, there is a full quaver gap between the penultimate and final syllables. To my ears this consequent patterns sounds more conclusive, perhaps because the semiquavers in the antecedent phrase create a sense of continuing motion. Figure 7 highlights these cadence patterns in bars 9-16.

Figure 5. Motivic consistency in "That's Not Me," bars 9-11

Figure 6. Cadence patterns in "That's Not Me," bars 9-16
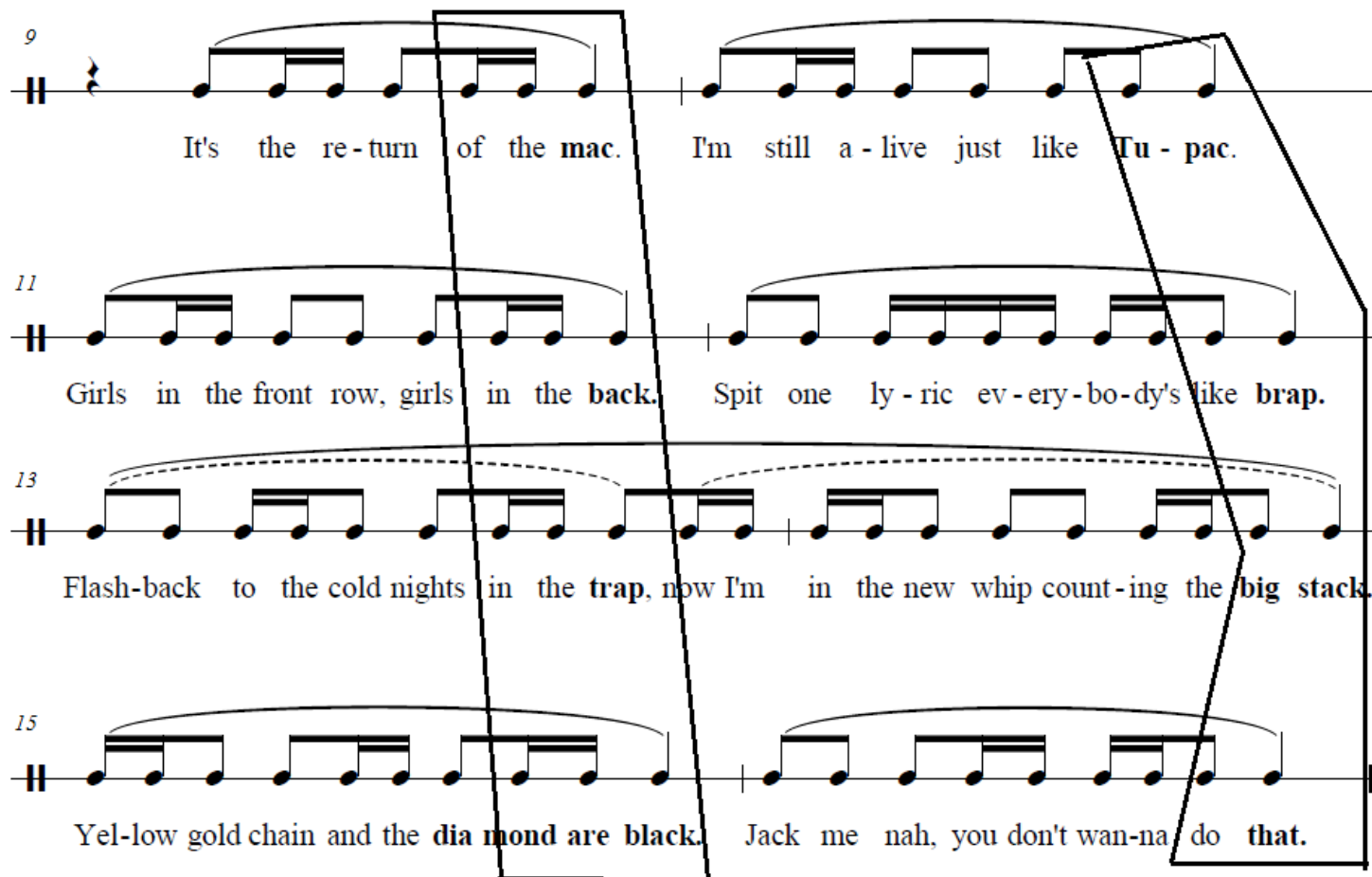
Figure 7. "That's Not Me" bars 9-16, cadences highlighted.

Grime Flow Regularity Beyond "That's Not Me"

Those features of Skepta's "That's Not Me" that show a high degree of regularity can also be seen in two other grime tracks that perform nostalgia and make authenticity claims on that basis, Lethal Bizzle's "Pow 2011" and Wiley's "On a Level" (2014).[68] Like Skepta, Lethal Bizzle uses one end-rhyme throughout the chorus and his verse, and he places his main end-rhymes uniformly on beat 4, as shown in Figure 8. His rhythms are similarly, if not more, even, and his double tracked

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[68] Wiley, "On a Level," Big Dada, 2014, Mp3.

accents and phrase lengths again reinforce the meter, as shown in Figure 9. Lethal Bizzle also uses small rhythmic motifs in a similar manner to Skepta. For instance, in the first four bars of his verse (bars 9-12 of Figure 4) Bizzle uses the same rhythm on beats 3 and 4. Lethal Bizzle's flow in "Pow 2011" is thus similar to Skepta's in containing a high degree of regularity.

		1	2	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	4	2	3	4
Chorus	1	Pow				Yeah		I'm		Le-		thal	the	B			
	2	Pow	I	got	the	top		grime		dogs		with		me			
	3	Pow				If	you	don't		know	a-	bout		me			
	4	Pow				Yeah		I'm		Pow				Yeah (?)		I'm (?)	
	5	Pow				Yeah		I'm		Le-		thal	the	B			
	6	Pow	I	got	the	top		grime		dogs		with		me			
	7	Pow				If	you	don't		know	a-	bout		me			
	8	Pow				Yeah		I'm		Pow						Yow	
Lethal Bizzle verse	9			Yow		They're	like			who's		on	the	rid-	dim		
	10	On-	ly	real		top		grime		dogs		I'm	a	get-	em		
	11	Hype		ting,		on-	ly	one		thing's		on	the	rid-	dim		
	12	For-		ward		re-		load		that's		what	I'm	big-	in'.		you
	13	might		see	me	creep		throug	the	hood				chil-	in'		
	14	Go		link	a	quick		pret-	ty	ting				wom-	en		
	15	Tryn-	na	get	that	Bill		Gates		mon-	ey			swim-	in'		I'm
	16	Us-		ain		Bolt		on	a	rid-	im		I'm	win-	nin		

Figure 8. "Pow 2011" chorus and first verse. Grid transcription.

Wiley's 2014 single "On a Level," which was produced by Skepta, contains numerous references to both Wiley's long career and the history of the scene.[69] Wiley's flow also displays a high degree of regularity, although it is slightly less regular than Skepta's or Lethal Bizzle's. In

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[69] The track's "on a level" hook and rhythmic motif are taken from a legendary 2004 clash between Wiley and Kano on the first *Lord of the Mics* DVD. In the song's chorus, Wiley references his old crew, Roll Deep. The line "I don't know what they told you, but I'm not a mook" also paraphrases a famous moment from another early grime DVD, in which Dizzee Rascal shouts this at the up-and-coming MC Crazy Titch as they almost come to blows.

Figure 9. "Pow 2011" chorus and first verse. Traditional notation

		1	2	3	4	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	4	4	2	3	4
																On	a
Chorus	1	Lev-	el.			Still		roll		deep		on	a	lev-	el.		I
	2	re-	pre	sent	the	best		M		Cs		on	a	lev-	el.		I
	3	don't	know	what	they	told		you		but	I'm	not	a	mook.		You	could
	4	ne-	ver	be		like		Wi-		ley		on	a	lev-	el.		
	5			Give	me	tro-		phies	a-	wards		and		med-	als.		Cos
	6	ev-	ery	time	I	want	to	put		pre-	ssure	on	the	lev-	els,		
	7		I	say		no		till	I'm	li-	ving	off		shek-	els.		So
	8	tell	a	sound		boy	you	can't		play		with	the	lev-	els,	on	a
Verse 1	9	lev-	el.	Steam		whi-	stle.			Take	off		your	head		like	a
	10	big		scud		mis-	sile.		My	style's	af-		ter	iz-	zle.		My
	11	don-	ny	got		caught	on	the	road		with	twen-	ty	jiz-	zle.		
	12	Ain't	heard	a		word		from	him,		he	gone		miz-	zle.		
	13	Can't		be	a	bear	if	you	don't	real-	ly	want	to	griz-	zle.		
	14	Shit's		gon-	na	hap-	pen	if	you're	keep-	ing		it	riz-	zle.		
	15			Yes,			talk		is	cheap		like		li-	dl.		A
	16	man-	a	old		school		like		pig-	gie	in	the	mid-	dle		

Figure 10. "On a Level" chorus and first verse. Grid notation.

the portion transcribed in Figure 10, his end rhymes fall on beat four in all but two of the lines, in addition to the "on a level" tags which he uses to bookend the chorus. The first verse starts with a short two beat phrase that places the end rhyme on beat two. A more usual bar-length phrase follows, again ending on beat two, before another two-beat phrase reverts the end-rhyme placement to beat four. This brief momentary deviation from the regular rhyme placement scheme functions to further mark the start of the verse. Like "That's Not Me" and "Pow 2011," Wiley's rhyme scheme in "On a Level" is highly regular. He uses one end rhyme throughout the chorus and another throughout the first half of the verse.

In terms of rhythm, Wiley's flow is similarly slightly less regular than Skepta's or Lethal Bizzle's, whilst still being overwhelmingly regular. His rhythms are less uniformly even than those of Skepta and Lethal Bizzle and he makes occasional use of syncopation. For example, he places the significant words "road" and "him" a semi-quaver before the beat (bars 11 and 12 of

Figure 11. "On a Level" chorus and first verse. Traditional notation

Figure 11), thus creating a small syntactic accent that works against the meter. Despite brief moments like these, his choice of rhythms and use of double-tracked accents in the verse generally reinforce with the meter.

These three representative tracks are indicative of the relatively high degree of regularity in grime flow. To be clear, I do not want to argue that such regularity is the sole defining feature of grime rapping. As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, fans and musicians categorize British MCs and their rapping styles using a number of parameters including, but not limited to, the timbral and rhythmic qualities of the beats they rap over, their regional accent and slang, and the contents of their lyrics. Furthermore, although I would argue that there is a greater tendency towards rhythmic regularity in grime MCs' flow than in many other rap genres, and that such regularity is a characteristic feature of grime flow, there is nevertheless considerable stylistic variety among grime MCs. Absolute regularity is not a necessary quality of grime flow, as shown by the degree to which Wiley's flow is less regular than those of Skepta and Lethal Bizzle. Other rappers who identify as, or who are identified by fans as grime MCs, such as Ghetts or D Double E, have highly individual and distinctive styles of flow that do not fit easily into the model I have described above. Yet both rappers are understood by fans to be grime MCs, primarily because they participated in the London scene out of which grime emerged.

Categorizing Grime Flow

The definitional caveats aside, how might grime flow be categorized, and how distinctive is it when compared to other rap styles, particularly those of American hip-hop? It is clear from descriptions and categorizations of flow styles in the academic literature on hip-hop flow, that the regularity of grime flow is distinctive but not unique when compared to other styles of rapping.

Significantly, however, its regularity does differentiate it from the canonic flow styles of late '80s, '90s and early '00s American hip-hop, which largely defined the listening context in which grime was initially heard and against which it was measured in the UK in the early-mid '00s. Indeed, a common refrain in the critical reaction to Dizzee Rascal's *Boy in da Corner* was to note how distinct his rapping sounded from American hip-hop artists.[70]

The music theorist Adam Krims categorizes broad styles of flow in his landmark 2000 monograph *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, which was the first major attempt to analyze rapping as a distinctly musical process.[71] Krims' notation and his taxonomy of rapping styles have been highly influential.[72] He categorizes flow into three main types, which he associates with particular eras of hip-hop history and particular sub-genres of hip-hop. Although hip-hop sub-genres and rapping styles have changed substantially in the decades since the publication of Krims' book, his taxonomy is nevertheless useful for identifying broad stylistic trends in hip-hop flow.

Krims labels the first of his types of flow as the "'sung' rhythmic style" because it mirrors the "rhythms and rhymes" of sung popular music.[73] He writes, "characteristic of the sung style are rhythmic repetition, on-beat accents (especially strong beat ones), regular, on-beat pauses […] and strict couplet groupings."[74] He also suggests that "sung" flow tends to be slower than his other two types.

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[70] For example, NME's reviewer, Louis Pattison wrote that "you never heard hip-hop sound this brutal, this alien, this foreign. No scratch that, this English." Louis Pattison, "Dizzee Rascal: Boy in da Corner" *NME*, n.d., http://www.nme.com/reviews/album/reviews-dizzee-rascal-7140, accessed May 29th, 2017.

[71] Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*

[72] Krims established the now commonplace practice of notating rap in metrical grids, with one row for each bar.

[73] Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, 49-50

[74] ibid, 50

Krims describes the second and thirds types as "effusive." He writes that this term "refers to a tendency in rap music to spill over the rhythmic boundaries of the meter, the couplet, and, for that matter, of duple and quadruple groupings in general."[75] Broadly, he argues that rappers in the late '80s and '90s employed a number of techniques to make their flows more "complex."[76] Krims writes that these techniques "may involve staggering the syntax and/or the rhymes; it may involve relentless subdivision of the beat; it may involve repeated off-beat (or weak-beat) accents; or it may involve any other strategy that creates polyrhythms with four-measure groupings of 4/4 time."[77]

Krims splits the effusive styles into "percussion-effusive" and "speech-effusive."[78] He suggests that in the former, the rapper is using their voice like a percussion instrument, using "a combination of off-beat attacks with a sharply-attacked and crisp delivery"[79] in order to create patterns of articulation that "subdivide regular rhythmic units."[80] In "speech-effusive" rapping, the MC uses a flow that is akin to natural speech to outline rhythms that are "irregular and complex, weaving unpredictable polyrhythms."[81]

Other rap analysts identify a similar trend towards greater "complexity" as hip-hop matured and diversified from the late '80s onwards. For example, Kyle Adams explicitly portrays the "sung"

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[75] ibid, 50

[76] ibid, 49

[77] ibid, 50

[78] ibid, 50

[79] ibid, 50

[80] ibid, 51

[81] ibid, 51

rap style of Kurtis Blow (real name Curtis Walker) in his 1984 track "Basketball" as being exemplary of an earlier, more simplistic developmental stage of rap.[82] Adams writes, "Walker's reliance on end rhyme and his coordination of accented syllables with accented beats makes the lyrics sound more like a nursery rhyme than a work of poetry."[83]

Adams insists that this comparison is not meant as a value judgement, but throughout his essay he highlights the means by which rappers use complex and irregular structures to demonstrate their sophistication. These means include using multiple internal rhymes, irregular rhyme schemes and phrase lengths, enjambment, and frequent, unpredictable offbeat accent placement. Arguing in 2009 that such complex, intricate techniques were common in rap of the '90s and '00s, he writes, "the *majority* of rap today focuses on placing rhymed and accented syllables in irregular locations, and on avoiding correspondence between syntactic units and metrical units."[84]

Grime flow's highly regular rhyme schemes and phrase lengths, as well as its general lack of syncopated rhythms, distinguish it from the irregular, "complex" styles of hip-hop flow identified by Krims and Adams. Instead, grime flow resembles Krims' "sung" style flow in a number of key ways. Like "sung" flow, grime flow uses on-beat accents far more frequently than off-beat accents. It also makes frequent use of rhythmic repetition and couplet groupings. It also does not exhibit the characteristic techniques that Krims argues '90s hip-hop rappers used to make their flows more complex.[85]

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[82] Kurtis Blow, "Basketball," Polydor 881 529-1, 1984, 12" record.

[83] Kyle Adams, "On the Metrical Techniques of Flow in Rap Music," para. 33

[84] ibid, para.9, emphasis added

[85] Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, 49

Despite these similarities between grime flow and Krims' "sung" flow, there are nevertheless crucial differences. Most crucially, regardless of its regularity, it would be hard to characterize grime flow as "sing-songy" or as resembling "much of sung pop or rock musics" in its rhythms.[86] Indeed, with its fast tempo, its high density of syllables, its occasional use of nonsense words, and its sharp, crisp style of delivery—which I would argue grime flow shares with "percussion effusive" flow—grime flow resembles neither singing nor speech. In this sense, grime flow bears some resemblance to "percussion effusive" flow. Like hip-hop rappers employing this style of flow, grime MCs often sound like they are using their voices like percussion instruments. However, while grime flow may share this percussive aspect, it is not effusive, in Krims' sense. Unlike in "percussion effusive" flow, the sharp attacks of grime flow fall predominantly on the beat.

While grime flow does share some qualities with both "sung" and "percussion effusive" styles, then, it is distinct from both. Despite its regularity, *it is not* nursery rhyme-like or "sing-songy" and yet *it is* percussive, in spite of its relative lack of complexity. In this sense, it is distinct from the flow styles that have long been at the center of global hip-hop markets and media. Although the question of what it would mean to rap in an authentically British way remains murky, grime flow's distinctive qualities, conventions, and terminology, such as "one line flows" allow it to function as a marker of genre and geographic identity, and by extension authenticity, for grime MCs.

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[86] ibid, 50

Chapter 3: "I Got the Whole Crowd Bubbling Like a Crack Pot": Regularity, Participation, and Pleasure

Introduction: What is Engaging about Regularity in Rap Flow?

Grime flow's regularity raises questions of how the voice functions in grime and what listeners find engaging about this style. At first glance, by virtue of its regularity, grime flow may seem simple and potentially unengaging. However, observation of the scene yields the opposite impression. Instead of tuning out, listeners are intensely focused on MCs and their flow, as evidenced by the degree to which an MC can whip up excitement from a dancing crowd in clubs or at a concert.

The questions of what might be engaging about grime's regular flow style are brought into sharper focus by Adam Krims' and Kyle Adams' narratives of increased complexity and, by implication, sophistication in hip-hop flow styles. For Krims, the different styles of flow lend themselves to different functions and modes of listening due primarily to their relative degrees of regularity and complexity. In the analyses of both Krims and Adams, effusive flows function to create dynamic and intricate rhythmic interest for listeners, and to create a sense of non-normativity and aesthetic sophistication.

Sung flow, on the other hand, has an altogether different function. Krims writes that the regularity of the sung flows in '70s and '80s "party rap" is "more conducive than many [other types of flow] to audience memorization and sing-along (especially in the choruses); and DJs in dance clubs not surprisingly often value party rap for its ability to incite enthusiasm through

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listener (and dancer) participation."[87] Adams' characterization of early rap styles as being akin to nursery rhymes also suggests a similar function of invited listener participation through easily memorizable lyrics and predictable rhythmic patterns.

Following Adams and Krims, we might think that the similar regularity of grime flow might lend it a similarly nursery rhyme-like participatory quality for its listeners. I would argue, however, that while grime flow shares sung flow's regularity, the former's percussive qualities combined with its lyrical density mean that it does not invite participation in the easy, sing along song-like way that sung flow does. What, then, do grime fans find engaging about regular grime flow? To put this question another way, if grime flow's regularity makes it less appropriate for the kinds of complexity-oriented rap analysis outlined in chapter two, how might we describe the pleasure and interest listeners find in grime flow?

In seeking to answer this question I turn to analytic literature on groove, as well as music theory and cognition work on the pleasures of repetition, and consider how regular grime flow relates to the layering of syncopated rhythms in grime beats. Through an analysis of "That's Not Me," I argue that grime flow maintains and encourages an exciting and highly participatory sense of engagement on the part of its listeners, by mirroring and amplifying the listener's own capacities for flexible and creative perception of these rhythmic layers. This sense of participation and engagement in turn resonates with and amplifies the focus on the scene and on communal performance spaces in the nostalgic self-image of the genre.

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[87] Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity*, 56-7

Repetition and Participation

Asking how listeners might take pleasure in repetition and regularity stands in contrast to a long tradition of composer-oriented music analysis aiming to explain away surface-level simplicity by identifying and discussing moments of surprise and structural significance within a piece. Furthermore, as EDM scholar Luis-Manuel Garcia describes, the body of analytical work on repetitive work also writes against and grapples with the common characterization, particularly formulated by modernist ideologues such as Adorno, of repetitive music as infantile, if not infantilizing.[88]

It is well-established, however, that some degree of repetition does indeed seem to increase listeners' enjoyment of music. In the introduction to *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*, Elizabeth Margulis reports on experiments she conducted in which audiences were asked to rate their enjoyment of and interest towards several excerpts, which included unaltered passages from atonal pieces by Berio and Carter, and manipulated excerpts from these same pieces in which some material was repeated. Audiences, both highly trained and untrained, rated the manipulated passages higher in terms of both enjoyment and interest. Margulis writes that, "the simple introduction of repetition, independent of musical aims or principles, elevated people's enjoyment, interest, and judgements of artistry."[89]

While regularity does not imply exact repetition, it is closely related to and entirely dependent on repetition. Music that is regular in my definition exhibits a high degree of repetition, particularly at higher metrical and structural layers. Furthermore, regularity entails predictability,

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[88] Garcia, Luis-Manuel, "On and On: Repetition as Process and Pleasure in Electronic Dance Music," *Music Theory Online*, 11, no.4, 2005.

[89] Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 16

and the fulfilment of expectations themselves derived from repeated experiences. This capacity to make predictions based on repeated exposure to similar musical stimuli, and to measure an unfolding musical experience against those predictions, points to an important dimension of musical repetition; namely, that it invites participation on the part of the listener.

Margulis writes that repetition invites participation by encouraging entrainment to predictable repeating structures, by activating verbatim musical memories, and by blurring these two processes into a single state of "extended subjectivity."[90] In what Thomas Turino labels as participatory musical contexts, such as jam sessions or nightclubs, this repetition-induced participation can be actual, in the sense of moving people to sing, play, dance, tap, or otherwise entrain bodily to music.[91] In more presentational contexts, such as seated concerts, listeners are still invited, however, into *virtual* participation by repetition, in which a listener imagines themselves as moving with, "merging with,"[92] or "inhabiting"[93] the unfolding music in some way. Virtual participation then describes a psychological experience of feeling that you are moving with the music, and participating in performance with it, even if this movement or performance is not manifested physically.

The loop-based beats of grime, as I describe below, are highly repetitive, as are those of most hip-hop. As with other groove-based genres of popular music, this repetition invites the participation of its listeners. However, in grime, the rapper's flow also invites participation, thanks

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[90] ibid, 141

[91] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 26

[92] Margulis, *On Repeat*, 141

[93] ibid. 11

to its regularity, as Krims argued with respect to sung flow's easy-to-memorize lyrics and rhythms. More irregular flow styles, I would argue, do not invite participation in the same way, as they disrupt listeners' predictions more frequently.[94]

Certainly, many other factors influence the degree to which listeners participate, as well as the form this participation takes. These include the social context in which they are listening, whether or not they are encouraged or able to dance, their familiarity with the music, and their willingness to participate. For example, listeners dancing at a nightclub with their friends, will likely participate in a highly bodily-engaged and social manner. In more private listening contexts, listener participation will likely be more virtual than actual. For example, someone listening to grime through their headphones on a morning bus journey, will likely barely move their body, beyond possibly tapping their feet of moving their head. A listener playing their music at home alone through speakers may fall somewhere between actual and virtual participation, as would feel more freedom to move around and participate in an actual, bodily way than the bus rider, without being socially encouraged to do so, as they would in a club. But in spite of these different contextually-determined responses, grime flow's regularity is a musical catalyst for encouraging participation, regardless of the form it takes.

Listening to EDM: Process Pleasure and Perceptual Play

The concept of virtual participation may, at first glance, suggest a relatively passive mode of engagement. However, the repetitive loops and heavily syncopated rhythms of groove-based

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[94] Like Margulis, I believe that it is useful to think of the participatory and presentational modes of music as two poles. As such, I don't want to suggest that regular flow styles, like sung flow or grime flow, are only, or even necessarily predominantly participatory. The rapper's delivery of text, much of which will not be repeated in a track, pulls it towards a more presentational style. Instead then, all I want to argue is that, in its rhythmic regularity, sung flow is more participatory than less regular styles of flow.

styles, such as grime, afford listeners opportunities to actively shape their perceptual experience, by shifting their attention as a loop repeats and by entraining to different rhythms within a groove one at a time.

Luis-Manuel Garcia argues that the listener's capacity to direct perceptual experience is crucial to understanding the particular pleasures afforded by musical repetition. In one of the earliest music theory articles on electronic dance music, Garcia defines three different broad types of pleasure, drawing from the psychologist Karl Bühler. "Satiation pleasure" is the pleasure derived from "receiving" or from achieving a goal. This is the model of pleasure underlying theories of resolution and prolongation in harmony.[95] "Creation pleasure" is the pleasure derived from "making" something, such as the satisfaction gained from giving a good musical performance. By contrast, "process pleasure," is the pleasure derived from actually "doing" an activity. In a musical performance context, for example, this might describe the particular in-the-moment pleasure of performance, as distinct from that of reaching a conclusive cadence or of the pride of delivering a praiseworthy performance.

As well as pointing to reasons why the act of performing music is pleasurable, "process pleasure" also accounts for listeners' enjoyment of highly repetitive music, Garcia argues. His argument depends on the feeling of "mastery," which Garcia, following Bühler, identifies as a crucial feature of process pleasure. For Garcia, the mastery of process pleasure is the feeling of control "over an activity and the objects involved in it."[96] In performance, mastery is exercised through control over an instrument and the sounds being produced. Listeners and dancers, by contrast, may feel this sense of mastery when directing their own perceptual experience of highly

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[95] Garcia, "On and On," para. 3.4

[96] ibid, para. 3.4

46

repetitive music, as the focus of their attention and entrainment shifts between different musical elements and rhythms. Mastery is obviously qualitatively different for performers and listeners; the latter lack the tactile, physically productive, and potentially persuasive dimensions of mastery that are key parts of performance mastery. Nevertheless, mastery in both contexts crucially involves control and a heightened sense of engagement in a process.

By presenting listeners with repeated stimuli, which they can then internalize and become wholly familiar with, highly repetitive music increases listeners' capacity to have more control over their own perceptual experience of that music. By making available the possibility of this particular kind of highly focused listening, Garcia writes that "repetition functions as a sort of process, structuring activity in a manner that optimizes opportunity to exercise mastery of listening/dancing."[97] In EDM, Garcia argues, listeners can and do attune and entrain to different rhythms as loops repeat and are overlaid onto one another. Thus, he argues, EDM's particular manifestation of process pleasure depends on a kind of creation pleasure. In EDM, "a listener is able to construct his/her own process(es) of attention, creating a unique sonic pathway and manifesting a form of mastery over the ordering of these looping elements. This contingent and improvised process is then made available to process pleasure."[98] In other words, the particular pleasure of highly repetitive music is, in part, the pleasure derived from both the experience of shifting perceptual attention and the capacity to direct that experience.[99]

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[97] ibid, para. 3.6

[98] ibid, para. 5.2

[99] While I focus exclusively on listeners' capacity to direct their perception of rhythm, Garcia's notion of shifting points of perceptual attention is broader, allowing for listeners' capacities to hone in on features of timbre, texture, and pitch inflection, as well as rhythm.

Garcia's account of the experience and pleasures of EDM is persuasive and is echoed in Elizabeth Margulis' suggestion that interest can be manifested as an affective response to music. She writes that the experience of a "committed and sustained interest" is as much a part of our affective experience as "feeling states" such as happiness and sadness.[100] Furthermore, repetition encourages this experience of interest, by focusing our attention on lower perceptual levels and on smaller musical details, "making possible a vivid and immediate experience that is intrinsically pleasant."[101] I find this hypothesized experience of affective interest to be a compelling model for the kind of pleasure I posit grime flow engenders in its listeners. Grime flow keeps its listeners hooked, sustains their interest, and draws them into participation, be it actual or virtual.

Rhythmic Layers in the "That's Not Me" Beat

Grime beats are highly repetitive and provide ample opportunity for the kind of shifting attention described by Garcia. They are usually built on loops of one, two, or four bars, and often prominently feature syncopated rhythms. Figure 12 shows a transcription of the beat from "That's Not Me," which I will use to discuss some of the affordances for shifting attention to rhythm in typical grime beats. The keyboard lines in this transcription represent the pitched synthesizer lines. The top line represents the higher pitched synthesizer first heard at the beginning of the track. The line notated in the bass clef notates the melody played by a bass synthesizer and a string synthesizer, first heard in the first chorus (starting at 0:27). The parts labelled "guiro synth" and "friction synth" are first heard in the second half of the intro (starting at 0:13). In the verses, the hi-hat and string synthesizers are removed.

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[100] Margulis, *On Repeat*, 18

[101] ibid, 18

Figure 12. "That's Not Me" beat

Within this beat, there are three underlying rhythmic patterns, which interact and interlock with each other. Listeners can variously focus their attention on and entrain to any of these patterns, and shift their attention around as they loop. Figure 13 outlines these rhythms and how they are sounded in the various synthesizer parts. In this figure, the less structurally significant attacks are marked with smaller noteheads, and the arrows indicate anacruses. The first of the three rhythmic patterns (figure 13a) is the basic 4/4 meter. This is most clearly outlined by the bass and snare attacks on beats one and three, respectively, as well as by the hi-hats, which sound on every eighth-note division.

The second rhythmic pattern (figure 13b) is a 3+3+2 rhythm, which is common to many Caribbean popular music forms and to electronic dance music. This is predominantly articulated

Figure 13. "That's Not Me" beat patterns

by the lower-pitched synthesizer, in its structurally significant attacks on F2 and B♭2.[102] The bass drum also reinforces this pattern, by sounding it in diminution in the second bar of the beat. The listener may also hear the guiro synth as aligning with this pattern. In this hearing, its semiquavers always function as an anacrusis, making the attack on the fourth semiquaver of each bar more structurally significant. Alternatively, the listener might interpret the guiro synth as aligning with the 4/4 meter. In this hearing, the listener would hear the on-beat attacks as the most structurally significant. I suggest that listeners could experience either or both of these hearings, and may be able to consciously switch between them.

The third underlying pattern (figure 13c) is a *clave* pattern. Unlike the 4/4 meter, and the 3+3+2 rhythm, this pattern is two bars long. The higher-pitched synthesizer articulates this rhythm most prominently. In the first bar of the loop, its rhythm almost matches that of the lower-pitched synthesizer. In the second bar, its structurally significant attacks on beats two and three complete the *clave* pattern.[103] The line that I have labelled as the "friction synth" also interlocks with the *clave* pattern. In this reading, its attack on the sixth quaver of the first bar is an upbeat to following on-beat attack.

Listeners are able to perceptually attend to and entrain to each of these patterns as the beat loops. They also have the capacity to move between these patterns, playing with the distinct rhythmic qualities of each and exploring their interactions. For example, the interaction of the 3+3+2 and *clave* patterns results in a constant oscillation between synchronicity and tension over

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[102] I hear the lower synthesizer's F3s as anacruses.

[103] I hear the E♭4 on the second beat of the bar as being more structurally significant than the preceding quavers, as it acts as a leading tone, albeit in flattened form.

the two bars of the beat's loop. Listeners actively entraining to either one of these patterns will feel this ebb and flow of tension as the loop repeats.

Metrical Dissonance in "That's Not Me"

The hypothesized experience of perceptually tuning into different rhythms in the "That's Not Me" beat is an example of a kind of "sonic pathway" theorized by Garcia. This concept is expansive in Garcia's use, and it encompasses the capacity to attend to particular timbres as well as rhythms. The particular experience of perceptually tuning into and entraining to different rhythmic patterns in dense, multifarious rhythmic layering, such as the "That's Not Me" beat bears further scrutiny. The qualities of the underlying rhythmic patterns and the way in which they relate to one another provide a particularly compelling and engaging set of stimuli for listeners to engage with.

Mark Butler's account of EDM rhythm is instructive in exploring the perceptual affordances of dense rhythmic layering, such as the "That's Not Me" beat. To discuss the different characteristics of categories of common EDM rhythms, Butler distinguishes between "even," "diatonic," and "syncopated" rhythms.[104] "Even" rhythms, as discussed in chapter 2, are those that subdivide the meter into units of even length. "Diatonic" rhythms, of which 3+3+2 is a good example, are a special class of what would more typically be described as syncopated rhythms. Butler describes how "diatonic" rhythms have unique properties when compared to the broader

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[104] Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*, 84

class of syncopated rhythms. Patterns like 3+3+2 or 3+3+3+3+4 are "maximally even,"[105] and "maximally individuated."[106] These highly distinctive qualities mean that diatonic rhythms are not experienced in the same way as other syncopated rhythms, according to Butler. The interest generated by syncopated rhythms more broadly depends on "a dynamic tension between our perception of a note's position [in a syncopated rhythm] and our sense of where it *should* be,"[107] in an even metrical framework. In contrast, diatonic rhythms are more independent. They "are not heard as *subordinate* to an underlying metrical structure. Rather than being measured against an absolutely even, strictly regular norm, they create their own kind of evenness through their distinctive structural properties."[108]

The strength of diatonic rhythms to assert their relative perceptual independence from an otherwise overbearing even, regular metrical framework blurs the distinction between meter and rhythm. Noting the gradual, generative foundations of the perception of meter and the "almost triple"[109] quality of 3+3+2 diatonic rhythms, Butler argues against a strict rhythm/meter separation. He writes that EDM rhythms such as these seem "to suggest rhythm as meter,"[110] and that the differences between the "even" and "diatonic" rhythms can and should be understood "as metrical in nature."[111]

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[105] "this means that their attacks are distributed as evenly as possible throughout the measure." Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*, 84

[106] "this means that any given note forms a unique network of relationships with the other notes in the pattern." Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*, 84

[107] ibid, 87

[108] ibid, 89

[109] ibid, 89

[110] ibid, 105

[111] ibid, 115

This insight is critical for Butler's understanding of metrical dissonance, and the kind of fluid, indeterminate experience of it that I am positing with regard to the "That's Not Me" beat. That diatonic rhythms achieve some degree of metrical strength, and yet are often heard in conjunction with even rhythms allows listeners to experience an "ambiguity of metrical type."[112] Butler describes this as being "the result of underdetermination, of competing metrical divisions (e.g. diatonic vs. even), and of simultaneously stated metrical types of relatively equal strength."[113] This ambiguity does not necessarily afford, nor demand resolution, and Butler writes that in EDM "metrical dissonance is "emancipated" from its need to resolve."[114] "Dissonant" layerings of metrical types play out, unchanged, across long spans of EDM tracks.

The concept of metrical ambiguity is perhaps not as applicable to grime as it is to the genres the Butler focuses on, such as techno, in which producers frequently deliberately avoid giving a clear sense of meter throughout long sections of their tracks. Grime, by contrast, is almost always unambiguously 4/4. Nevertheless, Butler's account of the relative independence of diatonic rhythms and the multiplicity of possible interpretations and entrainments within EDM beats is still highly applicable for grime beats.

The sense of multiplicity of experience and interpretation is echoed in other scholarly treatments of groove music. Writing about funk riffs, Anne Danielsen uses phrases like "perfectly imperfect balance," and "highly accurate inaccuracy" [115] to describe the multiple possible

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[112] ibid, 123

[113] ibid, 123

[114] ibid, 170

[115] Anne Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure: The Funk Grooves of James Brown and Parliament*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 78

interpretations of slightly offbeat attacks, and the way in which this multiplicity leads to the distinctive off-kilter rhythmic feel of funk. Crucially, the multiplicity of experience described by Butler and Danielsen is distinct from the model of complexity that I identified in Kyle Adams' work. Whereas complexity described the moment-to-moment subversion of expectations, or small-scale disorientations created by irregularity, the notion of perceptual multiplicity within EDM beats describes a more constant perceptual experience. It describes situations in which listeners are presented with more than one equally, or near equally, valid interpretations without clear signals for a "correct" interpretation.[116]

The experience that I have posited in listening to "That's Not Me" is slightly different from the phenomenon of metrical dissonance, as described by Butler. In my analysis of the "That's Not Me" beat, I have argued that there are three underlying patterns that listeners can tune into and out of. While the conflict between the coterminous basic meter and 3+3+2 patterns is a clear example of metrical dissonance, as Butler describes it, it is harder to claim that the *clave* pattern has enough metrical qualities to claim that it contributes to a particularly *metrical* sense of dissonance. Its two-bar length and high degree of internal irregularity mark it out as being more rhythmic than metrical. Nevertheless, its short cyclical nature allows listeners to lock into it, physically and perceptually. As such, despite it not being as *metrical* as the other two patterns in the beat, it still contributes to the overall sense of dissonance. It provides a waypoint, albeit a somewhat qualitatively different one, for listeners' "sonic pathway" through this track.

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[116] In an article covering a wide range of musical genres and traditions, Richard Cohn identifies a mathematical basis for this kind of ambiguous metrical/rhythmic experience. Noting that there are no multiples of 3 that are powers of 2, he describes how therefore rhythmic cycles based on spans of 2 and 3 will never align at structurally significant moments. Instead, musicians have to artificially extend or curtail a 3-span rhythmic unit to make them align. This, he argues, is the basis for the kind of diatonic 3+3+2 rhythms that suffuse many genres of global popular music. Richard Cohn, "A Platonic Model of Funky Rhythms," *Music Theory Online*, 22, no.2, 2016

Grime Flow: Stimulating Process Pleasure

"That's Not Me" engages the interest of listeners by providing them with a layered rhythmic environment, through which listeners can chart out their own "sonic pathway" by attending to and entraining to the different competing rhythmic patterns within the looping beat. And, seemingly, it does all of this independently of the voice. So where does the rapping voice fit into this? Aside from the obvious interest it adds for the listener through text, timbre, and pitch, what might its function be as a bearer of rhythm?

The voice *does* play a significant role in engaging listeners rhythmically in "That's Not Me," by making audible and adding to the play of shifting perceptual entrainment afforded by the beat's multiplicities. It does this by interlocking with or reinforcing different rhythmic patterns within a grime beat, and by subtly shifting between these patterns by small rhythmic changes, or by changes in accent placement, thus making these patterns more prominent for the listener. In so doing, the voice guides, nudges, cajoles, and even sometimes disturbs listeners' attention and entrainment towards and away from particular cyclical rhythmic patterns in a grime beat. Importantly, this all takes place within a flow style that is, by nature of its rhythmic regularity, already conducive to participatory listening, as discussed above.

This capacity is particularly powerful and important in grime, given the way in which tracks are structured. Grime tracks usually have simple, static structures. The most common structure used by producers is simply to alternate between two eight-bar units, which are in turn constructed from one- or two-bar loops. These loops might be variants of the same beat (as in "That's Not Me" or Ruff Sqwad producer, XTC's celebrated "Functions on the Low"), or two

different beats (as in Musical Mob's "Pulse X").[117] When tracks are released as instrumentals first, they tend to simply alternate between these units every eight bars to give an ABABAB…etc., structure. In vocal tracks the two units might not alternate every eight bars, but instead be used for verses and choruses (as in "That's Not Me").[118]

These simple, alternating structures contrast with the structures of typical house and techno genres, and these differences are significant in understanding how the voice engages listeners rhythmically in grime. An important feature of Butler's account of listeners' experience of techno, house, and other EDM genres, was the additive structures of these tracks. As loops are added to (and removed from) a mix, as the track builds in textural intensity, listeners' play with and adapt to the new rhythmic affordances and implications created by the interplay of the changing lattice of loops. Thus, the listeners' cognitive mechanisms involved in the kind of play of attention and entrainment described by Butler and Garcia are frequently stimulated by the introduction (and subtraction) of loops.

Grime, by contrast, does not use such additive structures, and so does not afford a sensation of stimulation in the same way to its listeners' perceptions of rhythm. Indeed, for me, listening to grime instrumentals quickly becomes boring, and after a few alternations between eight-bar units, I can no longer sustain much interest. I tend not to have this experience with grime vocal tracks. I find that my interest is held, not simply by the voice's text or by the "articulative" dimensions of an MC's flow, as Kautny identifies them, but by the rhythmic qualities of the delivery as well.[119]

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[117] XTC, "Functions on the Low" on *Misty Cold Remix / Functions / Baby Wipes*, no label OBI 001, 2004, 12" record. Musical Mob, "Pulse X," Musical Mob Royale MMR001, 2002, 12" record.

[118] As with the oscillatory structures of grime beats, grime lyrics tend not to be structured around a narrative arc. Instead they usually consist of a patchwork of vignettes, boasts, and comments centred around a central topic.

[119] Kautny, "Lyrics and Flow in Rap Music"

Grime vocal tracks feel rhythmically exciting and vibrant, in a way that I find to be less true with grime instrumental tracks. I believe that this is because the voice's slight rhythmic changes and its shifting points of emphasis—all taking place within a highly regular framework that is already conducive to participation and dancing—serve to stimulate the listeners' capacities for process pleasure, in a manner analogous to the changing web of loops in a techno track's additive structure.

To give an example of how grime flow can have this effect, I would like to return to "That's Not Me." Focusing first on the chorus and Skepta's verses in "That's Not Me," we can see how his regular flow further participates in and intensifies the sense of rhythmic multiplicity within the track's beat. It does this by echoing and reinforcing different rhythms within the beat simultaneously. As already discussed, throughout his lines, Skepta's rhythms are overwhelmingly even. The brief moments of syncopation, such as the second beat of bar 5 in figure 2, do not significantly disrupt the 4/4 meter. Furthermore, he tends to place the stressed syllables of important nouns and verbs on the crotchet beats. In this way, Skepta's flow articulates and reinforces the basic 4/4 meter.

However, Skepta's accent placement also aligns with and supports the 3+3+2 pattern. As the "cadence" point of a rapper's phrase, end rhymes create the strongest rhythmic accent in grime flow (and rap flow more generally), as discussed in chapter 2. By almost always placing his end rhyme on beat 4, Skepta thus adds emphasis to this beat, perhaps reinforcing the 3+3+2. The strong vocal accent on beat 4 also does not align with the strong-weak-strong-weak accent pattern of the basic 4/4 meter, as articulated by the bass and snare drum hits on beats 1 and 3. Thus, Skepta's flow subtly and simultaneously reinforces two of the beat's underlying patterns.

JME's end rhyme placement creates further variety for listeners' entrainment, thus adding to the sense of multiplicity across the track. He begins his two-syllable end rhymes on the third

beat of every second bar, as shown in figures 14 and 15. In so doing, he adds emphasis to, and creates a sense of cadential closure on these beats. By using two-bar phrases in which he draws attention to the third beat of every second bar, his flow thus partially aligns with and reinforces the *clave* pattern of the beat. Furthermore, by using two-syllable rhymes, he aligns these accented notes with the beat 3 attacks of the friction synth. This variety of end rhyme placement across verses is common in grime, in both solo and ensemble tracks. For example, Lady Leshurr shifts her end rhymes between beats 3 and 4 in different portions of "Queen's Speech 4," and even in the Roll Deep's "When I'm 'Ere," which is otherwise dominated by one line flows, Jet Li's penultimate verse moves the end rhyme from beat 4 to beat 3.[120] As grime tracks unfold, therefore, listeners are presented with shifting accent schemes, which alter the environment for the creation of their "sonic pathways," briefly making different rhythmic patterns in the beat more salient.

Verse 3 (JME)

#																
41			From		day		one	I	said	I	was		ser-		ious	then
42	ser-	ious				hit		the	jack-		pot					
43	Peo-		ple		ask		what		mu-		sic	I	make	turn		the
44	vol-		ume		up		cuz		that's		what					I
45	don't		wear		no	bait		de-	sign-		er		brands			I
46	spit		these		bars		in	my	black		top				you'll	
47	nev-	er	see		me		smo-		king	a	cig-	a-	rette		cos	
48	cig-	a-	rette		smoke		nah		that's		not		me			
49					nah				that's		not		me			
50					nah				that's		not					
51	when	I'm	on	a	mike		in	a	rave			I	got	the	whole	
52	crowd		bub-	ble-	ing		like	a	crack		pot					
53	see		me		and		Skep-		ta		in	the	vid-	e-	o	
54	with	a	nos-		tal-		gic		back-		drop				there'll	
55	nev-	er	be	a	day		when	I	don't		make		mu-		sic	
56	cos		si-		lent		nah		that's		not		me			

Figure 14. "That's Not Me" third verse (1:54-2:21). Grid notation.

[120] Lady Leshurr, "Queen's Speech 4" on *Queen's Speech*, no label, 2016, digital download. Roll Deep, "When I'm 'Ere"

59

Figure 15. "That's Not Me" third verse (1:54-2:21). Traditional notation.

The change in end-rhyme placement from beat four to beat three between Skepta and JME's verses, is a fairly striking change, one that may well be felt powerfully by listeners moving or rapping along to the track, even if it is not noted consciously. However, the kind of experience that I am positing—of grime flow working to continuously stimulate a listener's process pleasure and sustain their interest—depends also on much smaller, less significant, and momentary rhythmic and accent variations.

For example, in a number of moments in the first verse, Skepta creates small additional accents that pull at listener's attention, particularly through his placement of stressed syllables. Figures 16 and 17 show Skepta's first verse. In bar 10, Skepta slightly lessens the weight of the accent created by the end-rhyme, by using an unstressed syllable. When spoken, the first syllable in "Tupac" is stressed. Skepta's gives further additional weight to the "Tu-" by double-tracking both syllables. Thus, to my ears, the end-rhyme of "-pac" is less accented than those that precede and follow it.

Verse 1																
9					It's		the	re-	turn		of	the	mac			
10	I'm		still	a-	live		just		like		Tu-		pac			
11	Girls		in	the	front		row,		girls		in	the	back			
12	Spit		one		ly-	ric	ev-	ry-	bo-	dy's	like		brap			
13	Flash-		back		to	the	cold		nights		in	the	trap		now	I'm
14	in	the	new		whip		count-		ing	the	big		stack			
15	Yel-	low	gold		chain		and	the	dia-		monds	are	black			
16	Jack		me		nah		you	don't	wan-	na	do		that			
17	A-	ny	time	you	see		me		wear-		ing	a	glove			
18	Boy		bet-	ter	know	I		ain't	come	here		to	fight		like	
19	Jet		Li				spray		this		till	the	clip		is	
20	emp-		ty			I	know	you	get		what	I'm	say-	ing		you
21	get		me?		Love		for	the	Gs		in	the	ends			
22	But	we	don't		love		no		girls		in	the	ends			
23	Last		time		I		fell	in	love		with	a	sket		but	
24	trust		me		I	will	ne-	ver	do		that	a-	gain			

Figure 16. "That's Not Me" first verse (0:41-1:08). Grid notation.

Figure 17. "That's Not Me" first verse (0:41-1:08). Traditional notation.

62

In this moment, the additional accent created does not reinforce any of the competing underlying rhythmic patterns in the beat, but instead simply briefly alters the accent structure to which the listener is responding in their play of attention. Other slight accent changes do strengthen one of the underlying patterns, albeit fleetingly. For example, Skepta places stressed syllables on the fourth quavers of bars 13 and 14. In bar 13, the word "cold" is more heavily stressed than the on-beat "nights" that follow it. Similarly, in bar 14, the stressed first syllable of "counting" is placed on the fourth quaver, with the unstressed "-ting" falling on the beat. In this way, Skepta briefly emphasizes the 3+3+2 pattern in the beat.

These examples may seem trivial, given their brevity and the small-scale shifts in rhythmic emphasis they describe. However, the listener experience of grime flow that I have posited—of it subtly stimulating the listener's process pleasure and maintaining their interest, all within a highly regular context that encourages perceptual participation—depends on the accumulation of these small, seemingly insignificant moments. These examples are also not meant to be exhaustive and other ways in which grime flow may stimulate a listener's interest may be harder to pinpoint.

Furthermore, I do not want to suggest that the mode of listening that underpins this analysis is the only possible way to hear grime rapping, or that grime flow's tendency towards regularity is total. Indeed, in "That's Not Me" there are moments of more overt irregularity and complexity.[121] The second half of the first verse includes one such instance. Skepta extends the syntactic phrase in line 18, so that the end-rhyme of this line of text arrives on the first beat of bar 19. The next two phrases also follow this pattern, with the end-rhymes also falling on the first beat of bars 20 and

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[121] As Robert Fink has argued, it is also important to acknowledge a multitude of processes and organisational principles *within* rather than simply between repertoires and genres, particularly when analysing predominantly Black genres. Robert Fink. 'Goal-Directed Soul? Analyzing Rhythmic Teleology in African American Popular Music,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol.64, no.1, 2011.

21. These bars, then, display Krims' effusiveness, as the syntactical units do not align with the metrical units.

This moment is illustrative of the fact that regularity and irregularity exist on a spectrum. Some MCs are more regular in their flow than others are (as already discussed, JME's flow is less regular than Skepta's in this track), and within a single MC's verses on a track, some verses and portions of verses are less regular than others are. Similarly, the modes of listening I have described are not absolutes. A listener may hear these three lines as wholly disruptive, pulling them out of a participatory mode of listening. Alternatively, they may experience them as less disruptive, interpolating the shift in phrase and rhyme placement into their play of attention in the similar manner to JME's shift in rhyme placement. How the listener experiences this moment will likely depend on a variety of factors, including the context in which they hear it, their familiarity with the track, and their own preferred mode of listening.

Conclusion

In his "That's Not Me" verse, JME raps, "[w]hen I'm on a mic in a rave, I got the whole crowd bubbling like a crack pot."[122] Just as Skepta's "one line flows, yeah I got some of those" line pointed towards grime flow's tendency towards regularity, JME's boast is revealing of the distinctive mode of listening afforded by grime flow and its regularity. In particular, the image JME conjures up with the verb "bubbling" is particularly illustrative of the listening experience posited in this chapter. The crowd are engaged and moving, and they are highly energetic, but not explosively so. Instead, like the surface of a simmering liquid, they are kept in a state of constant

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[122] I hear the final two words of this line as being "crack pot," and the line appears like this on lyrics websites. However, I think it is possible that the line might be "crockpot." JME is famously teetotal, and tends not to rap about drugs.

action and motion by JME's flow, without ever boiling over. Despite occasional moments of potentially disruptive irregularity, the excitement generated by grime flow is not one of large-scale complexity. Instead, this excitement and sense of liveliness in grime flow is the accumulation of small, low-level moments of variation that serve to continuously and largely unconsciously maintain the listener's interest, by stimulating their creative play of attention and entrainment in regularity-induced process pleasure.

In contrast to the confidence of JME's boast, the account of grime flow I have offered in this thesis is deliberately one of tendencies, encouragements, and affordances. Grime flow *tends* towards regularity. Regularity *encourages* participation. In conjunction with rhythmically layered beats and the listener's state of heightened, participatory entrainment, grime flow *affords* process pleasure, and *encourages* it by continuously stimulating the listener's interest with small variations of stress and rhythm.

A number of factors motivate this framing of tendencies and affordances. First, I do not want to be deterministic about listening experience. As I have argued, listeners may hear grime rapping in a variety of ways that are different from the mode of listening outlined above. Some listeners may focus on and respond predominantly to a rapper's text. Others may listen with an ear for moments of linguistic and rhythmic complexity and MC virtuosity, rather than engage with it in a more participatory manner. These modes of listening may also not be entirely mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, I would maintain that the rhythmic qualities of grime flow, particularly its regularity, make the mode of listening I have described more possible and potentially more inviting for the listener.

Second, I remain cautious about genre-defining claims, particularly with respect to grime. As already stated, many grime MCs do not have especially regular flow, and multiple other factors

contribute to fans' assessments of what is and isn't grime. For example, in the star-studded "That's Not Me (All-Star Remix)," Tempa T's flow is extremely regular, whereas Sox's is quite irregular, to the extent that is close to Krims' "speech effusive" style of flow.[123] As such, it bears repeating that my claim about the regularity of grime is one of general characteristics and tendencies.

Third, relatedly, I acknowledge that my description of grime flow's regularity and analysis of the mode of listening it affords may be applicable to other genres and other styles of rapping. As I discuss in chapter 2, 1980s "sung" style hip-hop flow shares grime flow's regularity. More recently, flow in trap, a subgenre of hip-hop, also displays a high degree of regularity, particularly with regard to end-rhyme placement. As such, some listeners might engage with the voice in these styles in a similar manner to grime, although the slower tempi in these styles and the slurred, speech-like style of delivery in trap might make them less likely to encourage an engaged, bodily form of participation than grime.

My account of the mode of listening and engagement afforded by grime flow might more convincingly be applicable to the Caribbean, and more directly Caribbean-influenced dance genres that fed into grime, such as dancehall and UK garage. MCs in these genres have flow styles that share several qualities with grime flow, particularly its regularity. Listening to classic UK garage tracks, such as "Booo!" by Sticky Feat. Ms Dynamite or So Solid Crew's "21 Seconds," I find myself engaged in a similar participatory and process pleasure manner to grime.[124]

Rather than diminishing the sense to which grime flow can function as a mark of genre identity, however, the fact that it shares rhythmic characteristics and performance roles with other

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[123] Skepta, "That's Not Me (All-Star Remix) [Music Video]: SBTV," *Youtube* video, posted by SBTV: Music, June 10, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOR-C3tFTjU, accessed July 19, 2017.

[124] Sticky Feat. Ms Dynamite, "Booo!" FFRR FX399, 2001, 12" record. So Solid Crew, "21 Seconds," Relentless Records RELENT16T, 2001, 12" record.

historically and geographically related genres may in fact strengthen the association of the flow style to a particular place and time. Grime flow's historical precedents, particularly UK garage, locate it in a particular scene, in London's clubs and pirate radio stations. In so doing, this differentiates grime from other forms of predominantly American-influenced global rap, and places it in a lineage that is distinct from hip-hop's gradual spread out of the Bronx.

JME's boast in "That's Not Me" reflects grime's focus on the scene as the focal point of creative energy and the wellspring of authenticity. He relies on a distinctly British usage of the term "rave"—referring to an EDM club night—to pinpoint the scene-specific audience his voice and flow engage and excite. By encouraging and stimulating a participatory, process pleasure mode of engagement, even in private listening, grime flow can recreate, however fleetingly, the sensation of being in a rave, of the collective excitement of moving together with others who are equally well clued-in.

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