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RESISTANCE THROUGH GRIME

Using music to fight racism and discrimination

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ABSTRACT Grime is a musical genre born at the beginning of the 21st century, in poor and unattended areas of East London. Influenced by genres such as Hip Hop, Reggae and Dancehall, the new music style became a movement and culture allowing the African-Caribbean British younger generations to gain a sense of identity and belonging. Often accused by hegemonic power of perpetuating crime and violence, Grime will be analysed in this study through different lenses such as subcultural studies, critical race theory and ethnography in order to showcase the benefits of the music genre and its transcendence for the disenfranchised Black British population.

KEY WORDS Grime music, Grime subculture, Black British, Black music, Black sound, African-Caribbean in Britain, police racism, media racism, crime, resistance, identity, hegemony

I. Introduction	5
II. Grime as Subculture	7
1. Historical context	8
2. Refusing hegemony	10
3. Bricolage and homology	11
4. Recuperation through commodification	14
5. Recuperation through vilification	15
III. The Persecution of Grime	16
1. Animosity is key	17
2. Pirate radio	18
3. Rejected by the industry	19
4. Grime vocabulary, as per the media	20
5. Is Grime a crime?	22
IV. The Voice of Grime	24
1. Black sound	25
2. Music as ethnography	25
3. Denunciation as resistance	27
4. From wrong models to role models	29
5. Women in Grime	31
V. Conclusion	32
VI. References	35

Let's talk about the day the wind was rushed up on the shore
They promised us so much and then they left us to be poor
Need superhero capes for the stuff our mum's had to endure
Just heading to the store, no blacks, no Irish and no dogs
SYM – Kano, 2019

All we see is broken homes here and poverty
Corrupt government officials, lies and atrocities
How they talking on what's threatening the economy
Knocking down communities to re-up on properties
Introvert – Little Simz, 2021

The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice
A kid dies, the blacker the killer, the sweeter the news
And if he's white you give him a chance, he's ill and confused
If he's black he's probably armed, you see him and shoot
Black – Dave, 2019

I. Introduction

On the 9 of December of 2010, the city of London saw the culmination of a series of student-led manifestations that had been taking place for almost a month. After David Cameron's government decided to scrap the Education Maintenance Allowance, an economic help given to working-class teenagers to incentivise them to stay in school and pursue their studies, students all around England took to the streets to protest against this decision and the consequences it could have in the poorer areas of the country.

The day of the final demonstration, thousands of students from very different ethnicities (of which 60% were Caribbean, African and Asian) led a march that would lead them to Parliament Square, one of the most policed areas in the city. Protestors arriving at the site decided to showcase their anger through chants directed at the building and the people inside. Threatened by the amount of young people united in calling out the government's recent behaviour, the police performed the "kettling" technique, also known as "containment", where they surrounded all protestors in the square and prohibited anyone from entering or leaving (Hancox 2018, Addley 2010).

This encapsulating technique that deprives citizens of their liberty and contains them in a place without even being under arrest could have triggered episodes of violence and rioting from the imprisoned students, but it did not. Socializing with each other, playing some music and dancing around to the tunes blasting through the speakers, protestors decided to transform a dangerous and frightening situation into a party for everyone to enjoy. The soundtrack of this party would be none-other than Grime (Hancox 2018, Walker and Paige 2010).

Grime is a musical genre born at the beginning of the 21st century, in East London, England. In a time of economic change, social relocation and straight out discrimination towards specific ethnic groups, Black young kids, living in poor and unattended parts of London, felt the desperation and claustrophobic feeling of having little to no future prospects in life and no similar role models to look up to. As a way to cope with their day to day, spent on the streets for lack of facilities and space at home, the younger generations of the English lower social classes

decided to spend their time *spitting bars*(=rapping) over the electronic music they were creating and playing on their brand new Nokia mobile phones. The boredom and alienation created by the lack of funds the Government felt like spending in the council estates they inhabited, was channelled through art and ended up creating one of the latest and most successful English musical exports of the last few years.

The Grime musical genre, similar to Rap, Garage and Jamaican Dancehall, was made out of fast beats and even faster lyrics, usually narrating the hardships, injustices and crude lifestyles the Caribbean and African diaspora, living in London, were subjected to (Charles 2018, Adams 2019, White 2021). Starting out in East London, the area where the poorer council estates of the country could be found, Grime was always marked by a strong sense of resistance and rebellion towards the established order and was often criticised for its dark themes and volatile sentences (Swain 2018, Fatsis 2018). With time, Grime acquired an extremely negative reputation that initially prevented the genre from growing and the artists from reaching fame and recognition.

Accused of perpetuating crime and violence, the main means of escape black marginalised kids have had during the last two decades, has in my opinion been wrongly deemed as more than a nuisance than a way for young black people to thrive and express themselves in the racist and discriminatory system so eager to dismiss them.

It is for this reason that, through this work, I aim to highlight Grime to be a perfect way for Black British people living in inner cities and suffering high levels of discrimination, to feel acknowledged, to have a sense of belonging and to be able to speak up through their own personal voice.

To do so, I will analyse what the experts have already written about the genre and its following, as well as analysing what the actual members of Grime have to say about it, both through their testimonies and their song lyrics. I will first focus on the music genre in question and the people around it not only as simple entertainment, but as a subculture creating unity and agency. I will then continue with the persecution of Grime at the hands of British hegemonic entities in order to showcase the institutional racism still present in the country nowadays. Lastly,

I will focus on all the aspects of the Grime subculture I consider to be fundamental examples of the genre's transcendence in current Britain, not only for Black British people but for society as a whole.

II. Grime as Subculture

Hipsters, teddies, mods, rockers, hippies, skinheads, punks, grunge... These are just a few of the subcultures that have occupied sociologists and cultural theorists' time for the last few decades. All relating to different types of people but all stemming from particular music genres, these subcultures are very appropriate examples of what I believe Grime to be: not just a genre of music, relating to Hip Hop and Jamaican dancehall, but a movement, a collective and a cultural phenomenon.

First used by American scholars in Chicago in the 1970s, and later developed and enhanced by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, the term 'subculture' refers to "a group of individuals who share particular interests, ideologies and practices" (Bennett 1999; Woo 2009; Hartley 2002, 220). This concept was created to try and bring some sense in the post-war period and the economical struggles Great Britain was suffering at the time. Closely related to social classes, subcultures were born in contraposition of a wealthy and privileged established ruling class (Hebdige 1991, Hall and Jefferson 1976).

When talking about subcultures, different theorists come to mind, but a useful guide would be Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson's work "*Resistance through Rituals*" (1976). The book, written in collaboration by many writers and subcultural experts such as John Clarke, Rachel Powell and Dick Hebdige, presents readers the basis for understanding of subcultural studies and its main idea. Another important work to consider is Phil Cohen's "*Subcultural Conflict and Working-class Community*" where the author analyses the birth of subcultures as well as coining the term "parent culture" to refer to the main culture each subculture would oppose (1997, 56). Lastly, and to acknowledge some of the criticism the CCCS's subcultural theory has been

exposed to, I consider it important to mention both Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber, for focusing on the often ignored involvement women had with subcultures and the ways they experienced them.

The aforementioned Hebdige was extremely influenced by the CCCS but decided to broaden subcultural studies by analysing groups of people of various ethnicities and the importance ideology, community and style had for subcultures in his work “*Subculture: The Meaning of Style*” (Bennett 1999, Woo 2009, Hebdige, 1991). It is for these reasons that Dick Hebdige’s work is of considerable transcendence and will be used in this first part of this study as the blueprint to present Grime beyond musical terms and as a whole subculture of its own. To do so, I will analyse Grime, its creators, followers and distinctive elements, by applying them to the different characteristics Hebdige considers necessary to make a subculture: a specific context in which to be born, a refusal and resistance towards the hegemonic order, the bricolage and homology that unites the subculture’s members, and the opposition’s will to defuse the subculture’s power and/or impact on society.

1. Historical context

The beginning of the new millennium started out in England with Tony Blair and his New Labour party having taken leadership in the country. After 18 consecutive years of Conservative government, the 1997 General Elections seemed to be a sign of hope, improvement and wellbeing for society at large. Despite these first impressions, the New Labour presidential terms were simply going to accentuate the already existing social differences and ethnic discrimination present in England for centuries (Perera 2019, Boakye 2018).

Dick Hebdige believes when a subculture is created, “[the material] being transformed into culture [...] is always mediated: infected by the historical context in which it is encountered” (1991, 80). In this manner, the moment surrounding the emergence of a new subculture is crucial to its construction and can even represent “a ‘solution’ to a specific set of circumstances, to particular problems and contradictions” (Ibid, 81).

It is in this moment of political and social change Grime would be born in. The New Labour improvements that were supposed to reshape the city ended up impairing the poor even more. But, while it is important to acknowledge the effect and causality Tony Blair's era had on low income families living in forgotten council estates, and young Black kids who suddenly became the primary suspects and scapegoats of a whole country, it would be an oversimplification to attribute the birth of Grime to said political change in leadership. New Labour's "urban renaissance" consisting of the cleansing of East London's council estates was just one more misstep on the long lasting race relations between Great Britain and the inhabitants of their 20th century colonies (Hancox, 2018, 19, Perera, 2019).

The end of the Second World War left many countries with incredible amounts of human loss. With such a lack of manpower in England, the government decided to bring in people from Caribbean and African colonies (Charles 2019, Barron 2013, Tyler 2013). The Windrush boat that made the first voyage in 1948, would give name to the generations of people arriving in England between 1948 and 1971. As "British subjects" the men and women that made the trip "arrived as members of empire, and with British passports in hand offering a promise of entry and settlement" (Cummings 2020, 5). The big majority of newcomers settled in East London boroughs but would quickly be met with racist behaviours of the autochthonous population fearing a change in the established order: "disenfranchised blacks in their colonial outposts, with privileged whites at the imperial centre" (Charles 2019; Perera 2019; Lowe 2018, 11).

The racist events followed throughout the rest of the century, with Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech, inciting people to fear and despise the Black population, to the numerous Immigration Acts that kept revoking rights and citizenship to the Windrush generation and its descendants, and with Oliver Letwin's decision to refuse any type of economic empowerment to the Black community not to fuel any possible "disco and drug trade" (Powell 1968; Tyler 2013; Reddie 2020; Press Association 2015;).

It was all these events and its effects that would lead fed up Black British adolescents to express their discontent and disappointment with their country through music. As Hall and

Jefferson express regarding subcultures, “the young inherit a cultural orientation from their parents towards a ‘problematic’ common to the class as a whole” that will “weight, shape and signify the meanings they then attach to different areas of their social life” (1976, 29). In this manner, Grime was a response to a specific historical context that would allow the younger generations to fight against the hegemony subjecting their families, which leads us to the second inherent characteristic of subcultures: refusal.

2. Refusing hegemony

As expressed by Hall, hegemony is “the moment when a ruling class is able, not only to coerce a subordinate class to conform to its interests, but to exert a ‘hegemony’ or ‘total social authority’ over subordinate classes” (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 38). To do so, hegemonic ruling classes need to possess a “power [...] so that the granting of legitimacy to the dominant classes appears not only ‘spontaneous’ but natural and normal” (Ibid). When the desired outcome is acquired, any type of opposition or refusal to said order would be considered as a transgression and could even be labelled as dangerous or evil.

Grime being born in a context of hostility towards a specific group of people struggling to make ends meet in a political and economic system specifically designed to make them fail, just because of their ethnicity and social class, is a good example of a subculture using music as a means of defence against hegemonic power (Reddie, 2020). Especially when “directly and potently articulating experiences of oppression and struggle in black urban environments” and “encourage[ing] public engagement with social problems [...] suffered by the ‘urban outcasts’” in the music they perform (Barron 2013, 534; Fatsis 2019).

Grime MCs (title used to describe the artists of the genre) usually use their studio-recorded songs to shed light onto the issues they consider important, and unapologetically call out politicians just like Skepta did with the rhymes: “Tell the President we ain’t forgot, tell the Prime Minister we still remember, man don’t care what colour or gender, nobody’s votin’ for your corrupted agenda” (Skepta, 2016). Nonetheless, refusal can often be a lot more spontaneous, just

like Stormzy proved during his 2018 live BRIT Awards' performance when he asked the Prime Minister:

Yo, Theresa May, where's that money for Grenfell?
What you just thought we just forgot about Grenfell?
You're Criminals. And you got the cheek to call us savages
You should do some jail time, you should pay some damages (Stormzy, 2018)

With these rhymes, the South London MC was denouncing the government's lack of effort and initiative when having to deal with the Grenfell Tower fire that had occurred the previous year when, a block in the North Kensington area burned down causing 72 deaths (McKee 2017, Watt 2017, Fatsis 2019)

3. Bricolage and homology

While such straight attacks towards politicians and political entities might seem out of the ordinary, this tradition actually comes from other types of music Grime stems from. American Rap and Hip Hop are big influences to Grime, but even in other dissimilar types of music can be found some of the foundations that would create our analysed genre.

Reggae and Jamaican Dancehall were a crucial part of the Jamaican diaspora's day to day in Britain. As a way to stay connected and honour their roots, the parents and grand-parents of Grime artists would make sure the music of the Caribbean was something the younger generations would listen to from an early age (DJ Target 2019, Hancox 2018, White 2021). For diaspora kids, often disenfranchised both from the country of their ancestors and from the one they had been born in, musical genres such as Jungle and Garage would be the perfect music to flock to. Made out of very distinctive Caribbean and British sounds, it was the perfect mix (White 2021, Charles 2018). But there was still something missing. Jungle was too foreign, Garage was too vain. Neither of the two genres talked about the things Black British kids and adolescents knew about (Charles, 2019).

That is until a new group of artists decided to change the rules of the game. “Garage lyrics had always been about the club, enjoying yourself and the pretty ladies by the bar, but the younger new wave of MCs were talking about real-life situations they were going through, the struggle of inner-city life” (DJ Target 2019, 95). In a harsher, cruder and grittier way, Grime MCs started making music that would resonate with people living in London council estates, while at the same time using all the already established sounds that had made the African and Caribbean diaspora connect back to their past.

This practice of re-usage and re-assignment of meaning to already established objects, signs and sounds allows for “a new discourse [to be] constituted” and “a different message [to be] conveyed” (Hall and Jefferson 1976, 177). Referred to as bricolage, due to its action of “rearrangement and juxtaposition of previously unconnected signifying objects to produce new meanings” it is a key element of subcultures and the way they articulate themselves (Barker 2004, 17). Re-using sounds and music elements of previous genres from different countries, Grime MCs became bricoleurs. But these are not the only examples of bricolage we can find in Grime.

Another aspect of the Caribbean and African influence found in Grime is the way the artists express themselves. The usage of Jamaican patois as well as accentuating African and Caribbean accents are ways for the Black British population to wear with honour and pride, the differences Britain insists on imposing on them. But not all elements of bricolage need to have ideological or social connotations. It can also refer to the usage of beats from the first mobile phones and video consoles Grime artists had as kids to make their music, or the sentences and exclamations used to signal the beginning and end of Grime battles originating from videogames such as Street Fighter (Gallagher 2017, Adams 2019, D Double E 2010).

The performance in front of live audiences is also an important aspect of Caribbean music genres Grime incorporates by using different methods for the fans to feel part of the act. Engaging the crowd by motivating it to be loud and go wild is a crucial aspect of Dancehall MCing that has found its way into Grime. But maybe the most important one is the *wheel up*, which consists of the immediate rewind and replay of a song, right after an MC’s rhyme or line, deemed to be celebrated due to its quality (Charles, 2019). While the wheel up has become the

perfect praise for any Grime performer to experience throughout their act, it is often misunderstood by the audience not belonging to the subculture and interpreting it as “technical difficulties” (Aizlewood, 2016). This different ways of interpreting a same aspect of the music, such as the *wheel up*, is a great metaphor of what Paul Willis proved with his studies that “contrary to the popular myth which presents subcultures as lawless forms, the internal structure of any particular subculture is characterized by an extreme orderliness”, just like the rewind of a song can seem like absolute chaos to an outsider, it is a symbol completely understood by everyone belonging to the Grime subculture (Hebdige 1979, 113).

This sense of unity and community is defined in subculture studies as homology, a term referring to “the symbolic fit between the values and lifestyles of a group” (Ibid). While homology and the sense of belonging people being part of the Grime subculture acquire by simply listening to the music while relating to its lyrics, will be explored further in the third part of this study, I would like to simply summarize it with a sentence usually stated by Black kids from council estates when asked about Grime music: “It’s something that we can be proud of” (Dedman 2011, Adams 2019 White 2019, 2021).

This brings us to the last characteristic of subculture, which involves the response of the parent culture and its methods of “bringing back into line” and defusing the subculture’s power and its members (Hebdige 1991, 94).

As explained by Hebdige, this recuperation can be effectuated by two different forms:

1. The conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects (commodity form);
2. The ‘labelling’ and re-definition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups - the police, the media, the judiciary (ideological form), (Ibid)

In Grime’s case, both methods were employed to limit the power of the movement, although as we will see in the second part of this study, the ideological form would be the most impactful one, while the commodity form is still in process nowadays.

4. Recuperation through commodification

Commodification is defined as “the process associated with capitalism by which objects, qualities and signs are turned into commodities where a commodity is an item whose prime purpose is sale in the marketplace” (Barker 2004, 28). Commodification of Black people and their bodies can be found in sports, fashion and of course music (Walker 2000, Ilan 2012, Griffin 2012, White, 2014).

Usually used by “the culture industry [to] serve its interests”, commodification was long kept away from Grime, until the sudden success of the genre in the last few years allowed the music and its creators to become part of the recuperation process effectuated by the media and the keepers of political and social order in England (Barker 2004, 28; White 2014).

In the early 2000s, the relatively small fame of Grime forced its artists to produce their own music, as well as sell it, promote it and market it for the fans and followers of neighbour council estates. But with the success of Dizzee Rascal’s *Boy in Da Corner*, considered the first Grime album to be made, major labels started offering record deals to upcoming artists while “push[ing] them towards a more mainstream audience” and trying to “alter their sounds in order to accommodate” the broader public (Boakye 2018; Hancox 2018; Dedman 2011, 518). But the industry would not be able to win this battle. Owing a lot more than money and success to Grime, MCs and DJs that had grown up feeling part of something and being able to vent their frustration with the world along their friends and peers were not ready to abandon the essence of the music genre and the meaning behind the songs to comply with the industry and the broader audiences (Dedman 2011, Hancox 2018, DJ Target 2019).

Through the incorporation of Grime artists in mainstream media and culture, their radical opinions, the ideals they conveyed and their criticism towards social inequality, systemic racism and immigration laws, lost strength and often even meaning. With what Marx’s named the commodity fetishism, “the surface appearance of goods sold in the market place is said to obscure the origins of those commodities” and in the case of Grime, their initial drive (Marx 1967, Barker 2004, 28). By commodifying artists like Dizzee Rascal, through his participation in

the Olympic Games opening ceremony that recalled all of England's history, but completely omitted the exploitation and colonial past of the country, or Stormzy, who headlined the white and usually upper-class festival that is Glastonbury, the line between parent culture and subculture blurs and can often defuse the artists' words, by making them the target of scrutiny and critic.

While Grime music being accepted into day to day life as just another genre could be perceived as progress being made, especially with the normalization of Jamaican patois in Britain, the admiration of people from different backgrounds towards the musicians from poor and marginalised areas, and the style of said artists becoming the latest fashion trend, the reality was much more different. All these are simply perfect examples of commodification benefiting some at the cost of others. Better explained by musician and activist Akala, "blackness is both despised and highly valued" (2019, 122). While some elements are quick to be copied and appropriated by the upper white class, other aspects are still deemed inappropriate and frowned upon, even in the entertainment industry where

"There is no limit on the numbers of tracks by Black men that are played [in clubs], but there is a limit on how many of [Black men] are let in to appreciate it. Black cool is a desirable product. Black people? Not so much" (Owusu 2019, 153).

In a similar way, while white men and women sporting trendy tracksuits, made famous and wearable by successful black artists and athletes, are praised for their fashion sense, Black men and women wearing the same item of clothing, are often stopped and searched by the police and vilified by the media, just because of their style and the colour of their skin. Which brings us to the second method used to defuse subcultures: vilification.

5. Recuperation through vilification

As Hebdige explains, "the emergence of a spectacular subculture is invariably accompanied by a wave of hysteria in the press" (1979, 92). Just like Punk experienced in the past, this wave is followed by polarizing opinions, critics and a vilification of its members.

The refusal and resistance subcultures direct at hegemonic ideologies and its institutions can often be perceived as a threat, as a “movement away from the consensus” that needs to be abolished so order can be re-established (Hebdige 1979, 132). Where commodification cannot reach, other forms can be used to turn subcultures and its participants into public enemies causing worry, fear and even disgust, or as Imogen Tyler likes to express, “revolt” (2013, 3). To do so, the government, police forces and the media, can play a crucial role in criminalising and vilifying the targeted subjects, to try and make the subculture’s rebelling messages lose strength and meaning.

While Grime might be considered by some simply as a music genre uniting disenfranchised kids to entertain their days and keep them away from the streets, it has been targeted by hegemonic institutions since the moment it was created due to its rebellious and informative content. The result would be a constant persecution of its members and followers, as well as the entities and systems making it work, along with the creation of a bad reputation related to the genre and its constituents, still present even to this day.

But how exactly was this accomplished? What would be the media’s role? How would race, ethnicity and social class come into it? And what does the need and the tactics employed to vilify said subculture members really tell us about the political and social order England was so keen on keeping in place?

III. The Persecution of Grime

In 2006, the leader of the UK Conservative Party David Cameron was asked about the growing number of stabbings taking place in the country. He responded by accusing a BBC Radio 1 show of playing music that “encourages people to carry guns and knives” (Times Online, 2006). The music he referred to was mainly Rap, Hip Hop and obviously Grime.

Based on the definitions of Lorde and Marable, fundamental theorists in Critical Race Theory, racism is understood as a group considering itself superior to the rest and possessing the

power and means necessary to subject those considered inferior while benefiting from it (Lorde 1992, Marable 1992, Yosso and Solórzano 2005, Delgado and Stefancic 2001). To properly evaluate if the persecution Grime suffered can be considered as proof of racism, we will evaluate the parties involved in said process and the methods used by focusing on the genre's criminal record (or lack thereof), its relation with the music industry and the media, to finally have a closer look at the persecution not only of Grime but its members, by the government and its law enforcement.

1. Animosity is key

Harsh lyrics, defiant words, mentions of violence and hostilities not only experienced by the artists themselves but as threats towards opposite MCs are a few of the elements that have characterized Grime as music that “promotes messages of aggression and uncivilised behaviour”, “condones criminality” and is even considered as “outward manifestations of an ‘outlaw culture’” (Swain 2018, 482; White 2017, 4; Fatsis 2018, 447). With time, this distorted view of the genre has led people like David Cameron to believe Grime can actually cause people to physically attack each other. While the same statement would seem implausible for any other type of genre, it is true that Grime has always had a more confrontational side. Known as “rap battles”, the competition that pits different MCs against each other, making them lyrically defeat the opponent by creating the best verses and rhymes they can come up with on the spot is one of the activities that characterized the rowdier sound of the genre (Hancox, 2018). The artists performing in said battles would use the harsher and cruder lyrics possible, just like a boxer or wrestler would use all the strength from their body to win a match. Yet, once the winner is decided, everything settles back down and all the tension exits the room (DJ Target, 2018).

While these lyrical battles could easily be seen as just any other musical performance and even be considered in an artistic manner, there is one element of said events that could be tied to illegality: the radio stations where the competitions would take place.

2. Pirate radio

Pirate radio has been present in the United Kingdom since the late 1950s. At a moment when broadcasts were controlled and monopolised by the state, offering a very narrow and limited programming that simply seemed to serve the ruling classes' agenda, different illegal radio stations would be set up away from countries' jurisdiction (Robertson 1982, Palmer 2021). It is for this reason pirate radio and the pirates creating it would always be examples of "rebellious or marginal culture, operating outside managed or official creative avenues, and often ending up changing them" (Hancox 2018, 85).

Crucial for marginalised communities to find a platform and express themselves, Lisa Amanda Palmer believes "sound systems and pirate radio stations in black urban centres functioned as interwoven and interdependent public forums that were integral to the creation, production, formation and circulation of black popular music in the UK" (2021, 164). Furthermore, for Grime and its youngest members, pirate radio would become the "the megaphone" Black British kids' "voices needed to be heard" (DJ Target 2019, 165). Especially at a time when Black creative expression was far from the public eye.

Nonetheless, not everyone would see pirate radio in such a good light and, still being considered as an illegal and criminal activity, the control and surveillance inner-city youth were subjected to with the aim to put an end to pirate transmissions, was severe. Coinciding with New Labour's will to regenerate London's poorer areas and the implantation of exorbitant amounts of CCTV cameras, pirate stations located at the highest levels of London's tower blocks, would become one of the central targets of the Metropolitan London Police (Hancox 2018, Bischoff 2021). "Routinely monitored, criminalised and aggressively policed by the state and castigated as a menace to mainstream music and radio broadcasting", predominantly black pirate radios would be the perfect excuse to advance Grime's vilification process and watch over the already extremely patrolled Black British population (Palmer 2021, 164; DJ Target 2019; Fatsis 2019). But perhaps it is of more importance, when talking about black creative expression through pirate radio, to look into the reasons why this illegal practice was performed to begin with.

3. Rejected by the industry

As Monique Charles simply puts it “black music directly from the underground, was rejected by licensed radio” (2019, 307). Even from an early age, Grime was already perceived as a threat to the establishment and deemed inappropriate to be played on the radio. Similarly, the music industry would turn its back to the new genre emerging from London council estates, driving the artists and producers to turn to pirate broadcasting methods to be able to share their creations with the world (Ilan 2012, White 2014, Charles 2019). Which brings us to one of the most emblematic elements to Grime music, the DIY (Do It Yourself) spirit that entrenched itself in the creative heart and mind of black young artists.

Often compared to the “doit-yourself” culture of 1970s punk rock”, Grime artists necessity to make their own music and spread it around the UK without any external help is one of the consequences of the lack of opportunities given to black underground music, not entirely understood by the prominently white and wealthy music industry or its audience (Barron 2013, 539). The music genre would not only be completely ignored by the mainstream industry but misunderstood as well (Charles, 2019). To fight against such limitations, Grime MCs and producers started making everything themselves. The bedrooms, living rooms and kitchens of the houses the artists lived in became the studio and mixing stations used to record songs, while also taking care of CD production, advertisement and all forms of merchandising.

MCs and producers such as Skepta, Jammer or Wiley are a few examples of successful artists bound to put in extra work to be able to share their art with the public. As self-made Grime legend Kano stated, the impression black marginalised artists got by the industry was that of “not [being] supposed to be shit, or have shit, or become anything great”, “an underlying attitude” also present throughout their whole childhoods (Wrench, 2016).

This same attitude would follow Grime around throughout its life, influenced not only by the racism and discrimination that had kept Black culture and African-Caribbean life at the margins of British society for centuries, but by the media and police forces so intent on making Grime, its creators and its fans into enemies of the law.

4. Grime vocabulary, as per the media

Antonio Martín Cabello, believes the media is able to create and promulgate its own reality with images and symbols “cuidadosamente elegidos para sugerir una interpretación concreta del mundo” often making it into “una proyección de los intereses de la clase dominante” (Martín 2012, 38). To exemplify the media’s ability to reshape the public’s opinion on a specific subject, we will focus on different controversial imposed terms and definitions used to describe both Grime and its practitioners.

Oddly enough, the first label assigned to Grime music was the name itself. According to Britannica, the term *grime* refers to the “dirt that forms a layer on the surface of something” (Curry & Decker, 2020). Grime being such a dark and crude musical genre, as well as being used by disenfranchised adolescents to signal everything that is wrong, awful or dangerous in the world they live in, it is not difficult to see the connection the name might have with the sounds and lyrics it gives form to. Nonetheless, the name was not given by the artists themselves but by the media and musical industry that would reject them for the following decade (DJ Target 2008, Hancox 2018). Relating the music to something dirty and disgusting, the press had ensured the new-born musical genre would have a rough start.

Another term that would accompany Grime throughout its life and for similar genres such as Hip Hop, R&B, Jungle or Garage, would be the label *urban music*, a term often considered an imposed title of dubious clarity and ambiguous contempt (Andrews 2018, Ilan 2012). Even if used by a lot of people as nothing more of a description and not with the will of disparagement, the term is only associated with alternative and non-mainstream predominantly black types of music and seems to cramp up together very different musical genres for simply being “linked to disadvantaged, urban and ethnic minority populations” (Ilan 2012, 41). One of the main problems with labels such as these is that, once you are assigned one, it is difficult to break from it, and even harder to keep people from believing the stereotypes attached to it. But “urban” is not the only degrading adjective usually used to describe Grime. Another one of dubious character would be the word *ghetto*, originally used in the United States to describe “poor black communities” (Hall 1978; Perera 2019, 21). When the music artists make is defined as “ghetto”,

not only are black creators stripped from their “agency and identity” but the music described becomes a synonym of poverty and lower social classes (Charles 2019, 306; Boakye 2019). Again, we see ourselves with labels seen as “an imposition, forced [...] by commercial interests and the media” leading to a “process of intervention, dehumanisation and directing the narrative of the oppressed group” (Ibid).

While the wording chosen in these examples can be problematic, they are at least used to describe the music, and not the people. Nonetheless, the term *gang* has long been utilised as a way to vilify Black British males and is often found in the descriptions surrounding Grime. The definition of the term *gang* has never been clear and is still nowadays believed to be vague and varying depending on necessity. Sociologist Frederic Thrasher defined it in 1936 as “an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict” (Thrasher 1936, 46). A few decades later, William Arnold a fellow sociologist specializing in juvenile delinquency decided to set the definition to date by stating five characteristics all gangs needed to entail: group integration, conflict, structure, minimum six members and mode of conflict (engaging in antisocial behaviours but without attacking the moral validity of norms) (1966). Despite Arnold’s efforts, the definition for *gang* is nowadays still confusing. Following Britannica’s explanation, a gang is “a group of persons, usually youths [...] who generally engage in criminal behaviour” (Curry and Decker, 2020). While criminality does not seem to be an intangible requirement to gangs, it is at present perceived as part of gang culture, associating hostility, violence and danger to the word. Often used to describe Black people, by simply “gathering in groups, wearing garments of the same colour and referencing particular geographical areas” African-Caribbean residents in the UK would often be targeted as possible gang members (White 2017, 13). This vague definition of the term allowed the MET to stop and search Black Britons simply standing around with friends in the street or for praised private catholic schools to break up and punish groups of more than three students gathering in the playground to hang out (Owusu, 2019). Which brings us to the last party involved in the vilification process of Grime and its people: police forces and the politicians behind them.

5. Is Grime a crime?

Since their arrival, African-Caribbean people were met by the motherland with disdain, distrust and fear quickly turning into anger and hate. Fuelled by the incendiary speeches of political leaders and immigration laws unwelcoming the arriving forces from the colonies, the British population would quickly increase their animosity towards the new population. This same hostility would be shown by the police forces that, allowed by the judicial system and the Government, would make Black people and anything they created to be perceived as “the enemy within” to keep in line or try to defeat (Gilroy 1992, 45). The persecution of music such as Grime would perfectly fit in this agenda.

Black music has long been the subject of strict and exaggerated policing tactics. Genres such as reggae, jungle, dancehall or ska used to be persecuted by agents of the law raiding locals, clubs and houses where the music could be heard playing (Fatsis 2018, 2019, Hancox 2018). Similarly, Grime seemed to be the primary target for the MET during its birth in East London, to its nowadays international success. But instead of fighting against the music, thought to be provoking spikes of violence in the country, the police would take a more direct, imprecise and impractical approach by focusing on any type of person closely related to the genre and creating new laws and methods to subject them.

A perfect example would be the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998, implemented by Tony Blair with the aim to challenge the idea children could not commit crimes. It brought with it a series of measures to control the younger population such as the now famous Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO), made to punish someone acting “in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress” (Crime and Disorder Act, 1998). Protected by such a law and due to the imprecise definition of what could be considered “distress”, the MET initiated a series of stop and search operations directed particularly towards the Black British people.

“Black people are over nine times more likely than white people to be stopped and searched; over three times more likely to be arrested, and four times more likely to have force used against them by the police”. (Perera 2019, 21)

It is also known that the presence of Black people in UK prisons is 12%, while only representing 3% of the general population (Boakye 2019, Prison Reform Trust 2017). These types of discriminatory behaviours could be attributed to the stereotypes that have accompanied African-Caribbean people in Great Britain, heightened as already mentioned by the media, the press and the “image of Black men on TV [...] created and controlled by white people” (Owusu 2019, 160).

The aforementioned term *gang* would give London police carte-blanche to arbitrarily stop and search groups of black men spending time together. Since the making of Grime consisted of precisely that, different MCs and producers of the genre would on different occasions face the singling out and scrutiny of the law, even at their place of work. One example of this would be the incident of July 2018, when policemen carrying machine guns decided to stop and search a group of teenagers trying to record a hip hop music video in the streets of their own borough (White 2017, Perera 2019, Virk 2018). Using their platform to inform the public and denounce these discriminatory practices, Grime artists would often rap about said incidents in their songs (Lethal Bizzle 2007, Tinie Tempah 2015, Wretch 32 and Avelino 2015). But this type of public denunciations would not please England’s criminal justice system, leading to new methods to suppress Black music and culture such as the Promotion Event Risk Assessment Form (Form 696).

Grime MCs and producers having had to work on its own for so long, were grateful to know they had a big following willing to support their music and their art. Being such a vibrant and intense genre, live performances would become the main attraction for the fans and the main source of income for the artists. But Form 696 would quickly put an end to that. As a way to “identify and minimise any risk of most serious violent crime happening at the proposed event”, Form 696 targeted events with a predominant Black population attending or performing in it and was deemed after years of being operational as an incredibly racist and discriminatory form, since even the ethnicity of people attending the event had to be specified (Metropolitan Police UK 2005, Ilan 2012, Fatsis 2019). The form would lead to numerous “event cancellations, ‘bashment bans’ and club closers” (Hoffman 2014; Fatsis 2019, 449-450).

More than a decade after its implementation, the form would finally be terminated due to London's mayor Sadiq Khan insistence and his belief that all the form accomplished was "compromise the capital's vibrant grassroots music industry or unfairly target one community or music genre" (Hanley 2017, Adams 2019, Nerssessian 2017).

It is clear by these examples that the persecution of Grime is just a hidden façade to properly persecute minorities and marginalised populations, still not accepted in Great Britain. All the examples shown would work towards a criminalisation of Black lower social classes, by focusing police activity on the boroughs they lived in and the areas these communities were more present at. Any negative action perceived by the media would quickly make the headlines and increase the already stereotype-fuelled bad reputation attributed to the African-Caribbean community, making the persecution and harassment of groups of people considered less important or human than the rest, completely normal to the public eye (Boakye 2019, Owusu 2019).

But what means are possessed by these marginalised English communities to fight against the established order and resist hegemonic power? How can lower classes regain their stripped identities? And how could a subculture as negatively perceived as Grime, become one of the fundamental tools of said resistance?

IV. The Voice of Grime

As a subculture with enough of a following to mark a generation, Grime was subjected to constant scrutiny for the leading parties of the country to keep control and weaken any possible rebellious message. But the criminalisation of the music genre was also directed at the people involved to such a degree, that it only fuelled the sentiments of resistance and revolt of the targeted Black communities.

In the last part of this study, we will focus on the different ways in which Grime can be seen not only as a positive element for the African-Caribbean population in Britain, but as a

means for Black communities to express themselves, be heard, denounce the injustices suffered in their everyday life and develop a sense of identity for the younger generations.

1. Black sound

Cheraine Scott analysed in 2020, the policing tactics employed in England by white hegemonic institutions to silence Black people. Basing her study on writings of Simone Browne and Brandon LaBelle, she comes to the conclusion that Black sound, defined as “all sounds Black bodies emit, produce and create” is just as powerful as it is feared (Browne 2015; LaBelle 2010; Scott 2020, 57). If we understand Grime as one of these sounds emitted by the English Black population, we can start to understand the strength a musical genre could have, by simply giving a platform for marginalised communities to finally make themselves heard.

If any type of Black sound can be considered as “having the ability to give form to the formlessness of racial injustice, to create a space of mutuality, and to touch those with whom it comes into contact in transformative ways”, these same characteristics can easily be associated with the poignant and political genre that is Grime (Scott 2020, 57-58). Taking advantage of their voice and the reach it could obtain through music, Grime MCs would fill their songs with protest, denounce and more often than not, simple statements of their day to day life.

2. Music as ethnography

In his song “T-Shirt Weather in the Manor”, Kano narrates his summer days at the London council estate where he grew up (2016). While referencing the smell of the barbecue in the garden, the clothes the boys and girls attending the party are wearing, and the music the younger and older generations fight to put on the stereo, the Grime MC depicts a clear picture, easy for any listener to visualise. Yet the mood of the song swings the moment the artist starts to acknowledge the more negative parts of life in the inner-city with the lines

“And it could all change in a minute,
I’ve seen innocent summers turn sinister
Tempers flare up,
Violence is imminent” (Kano, 2016)

And truth is, life in London’s council estates is not always remembered in such a positive light. MCs D Double E, Avelino or Ghetts often talk about grittier parts of their childhoods, such as their single mothers not having enough money to pay rent, resorting to criminal activities (car theft, drug dealing, etc.) at an extremely early age to help at home, or seeing their friends and family members go to prison and die due to avoidable street confrontations (2018, 2020, 2021).

While some of the re-enactments of past Grime MCs’ lives can be grimmer than others, they all paint a clear picture for the listeners to see, bringing them closer to a reality they might not be familiar with or completely ignore. Therefore, we could easily consider Grime songs as ethnographic documents since, as Barron explains, when listening to it, “we can observe and experience unfamiliar social environments and social conditions as seen through the eyes of its participant observers” and thus acquire a better understanding of cultures and ways of life different than what we might be accustomed to (2013, 532). Another comparison that could be made with Grime as a source of information would be with the musical compositions created by enslaved African-Americans and termed as “sorrow songs” by W.E.B. DuBois since “examples of slaves in bondage creating songs to not only articulate their struggle, but also to communicate messages of liberation and secrets to their peers, are numerous” (1989; Owusu 2019, 29). Sorrow songs would then become tales of ethnographic value for generations to come and sociologists considering them to be “useful documentations of the long history of oppression and struggle against that oppression” Black communities have suffered and continue to experience everyday of their lives (Stewart 2005, 197).

Through their words and sentences, MCs and rappers can too voice their personal experiences, opinions and beliefs, as well as transmitting their stories to the people around them. CRT considers “the experiential knowledge of people of colour” often found in their “methods of storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, *cuentos*, *testimonios*, chronicles, and narratives” to be of massive importance (Yosso and Solorzano 2007, 123). Yet this

knowledge cannot only be found in these manners of expression but also music. Grime songs, with all their accounts of everyday life, as well as spontaneous events and emotions felt by performing artists, are just as valid as any other form of story, and as Clara Lomas declares, “a story does something to the storyteller; it does something to the listeners/readers, the spectators: It has the capacity to transform them” (2003, 2-3)

Able to leave a print for coming generations and inform the present populations of realities unknown to them, Grime music can serve not only as a descriptive testimony but as a poignant statement, a sign of resistance and demand for change.

3. Denunciation as resistance

“This generation of young artists feel a sense of duty to use their voice and their platforms to call out incidences of systemic racism that play out in this country” (Scott 2020, 56).

From its very beginnings, Grime would distance itself from the type of music playing in clubs and raves. The messages of wealth, glamour and success, usually present in Hip Hop songs did not allow kids from poor council estates to relate. But Grime was different. Acknowledging the dark parts of London, the institutional racism faced in council estates, the lack of money families had access to and the criminal activities kids were forced to take part in in order to afford food, clothes and schoolbooks would fill the lyrics of this new musical genre, with which a big part of the Asian and Black British population could easily identify with (Owusu 2019, Hancox 2018). With time, the critical side of Grime, as well as their rebellious messages and the desperation turned into anger emanating from the subjected lower classes of Britain, would acquire strength and reach a lot further.

In “Message in the Music” expert and professor in Black and African American studies James B. Stewart developed a framework to classify political songs, depending on the level of engagement and rebellious messages they contained (2005). He believes distinctions should be made between songs “designed to educate listeners about the seriousness of a particular set of

circumstances”, ones demanding “that external forces cease and desist from exploitative behaviours”, or songs with a more international revolutionary tone calling “for the wholesale restructuring of existing political and economic institutions” (Stewart 2005, 202-203). In a similar study, Theresa Martinez analysed the content of American Rap songs focusing on the most prominent themes. “Distrust of the police, disillusionment with the Health Care System, anger at racism [and] action in the face of oppression” seem to be the most mentioned in Rap and unsurprisingly, in a big number of Grime songs (Martínez 1997, 276-278).

We have already presented a series of ways by which the police take advantage of their power to control and subject a part of the population. The bias treatment received by the African Caribbean and Asian communities in England is criticised in songs such as Lethal Bizzle’s “Police on My Back” or Wretch 32 and Avelino’s Fire in the Booth session where the former raps “that’s messed up, like them cops on the day shift, who just can’t stop and search without tazing” (2007, 2015). While these are just a couple of examples, the desperation and impotence felt by the artists during their encounters with the police can be felt throughout a large amount of Grime songs (Ghetts 2021, JME 2015).

Another recurring theme in Grime songs and present in Martínez’s interpretation of resistance in Rap is the lack of help and investment poor areas and its inhabitants receive from the Government. In his song “Question Time”, Dave acknowledges the hard work NHS workers have to endure when making double shifts for lack of money, while Kano criticises the country for only spending money on disadvantaged neighbourhoods when in interest of higher social classes, as he states “if it weren’t for Olympics these p***** wouldn’t of put dough(=money) into East London” (2017, 2008). At the end of the song, Kano takes a more direct approach towards a possible solution to the problem by saying “we need to put something back, into communities where they think the way out is shotting crack”, making clear not only his opinion on the matter, but looking for what Stewart considered to be “collective problem-solving efforts” (2008; 2005, 204). In a similar manner, Little Simz also acknowledges the lack of housing facilities and the Government’s will to continue its city re-generation while explaining how it directly affects inhabitants of poor council estates, in her song “Introvert” (2021).

All the themes mentioned and condemned in these examples have a clear connection in that they all stem from racism and racist institutional attitudes. Therefore, Grime music is not only “an eloquent, albeit angry, testimony of stigmatisation, marginalisation and criminalisation” but a public denunciation and sign of resistance, with the will to change the established order and hold hegemonic institutions and leaders accountable (Fatsis 2019, 1310).

4. From wrong models to role models

By calling out discrimination, Grime artists are both critical of the way they are treated while letting people in similar situations know they are not alone. We have already mentioned homology as one of the defining traits of subcultures and possibly the most important one for Grime.

“We are Brits, recent migrants [...] not quite really Caribbean any more with newer arrivals from Africa itself and certainly not American, but not yet confident enough to speak with our own voice, alienated from the nation in which we were born” (Akala 2019, 260)

With these few lines, rapper and activist Akala summarises the thoughts and feelings of a big part of the Black British population, often feeling disenfranchised and part of a country and system where they do not belong. Similarly, Derek Owusu explains how young Black boys have lacked opportunities to speak their minds, be heard and have positive role models to look up to. He believes if Black boys “have no access to the perspectives and thoughts of Black British males, [they’re] forced to accept what popular media, books and movies tell [them] about who [they] are” (2019, 4). But Grime fights against both of these ideas. Even if in complete agreement, Grime MCs have taken upon themselves to not only talk about their lived experiences but send messages of positivity towards Black and working-class communities, and especially the younger generations (Adams 2019, DJ Target 2019, Fatsis 2018, White 2014).

Crimes such as car theft, drug dealing and knife fights are present in Grime due to the “Roadman” culture that has accompanied Black adolescent boys for generations. “Roadmen” are lower-class people living in council estates and resorting to criminality as a means of survival

(Boakye 2019, 357; Swain 2018). Since poverty, illegality and violence have always been very present in the neighbourhoods Grime artists grew up, it is not surprising to see these themes appear in their music. Yet, the intention of the majority of MCs rapping about roadmen culture is not to brag about the status and respectability that is often believed to be tied to it, but rather steer the younger council estate population away from these dangerous and harmful ways of life. In his song “Kidulthood to Adulthood” actor and artist Bashy raps about his journey from a criminal past to his new life of legality and legitimacy while at the same time encouraging adolescents to do the same by “break[ing] from the cycle” (2008). In a similar manner, JME also invites adolescents trying to make it in the music business to street clear from violence and crime by stating that

Jus 'coz we come from the gutter
We know about scraping the bottom of the butter
Don't mean we have to be sinners
Major labels don't want killers (JME, 2008)

Other positive messages that can also be found in Grime music often relate to education and the will of rappers to convince young kids to stay in school. JME and Mc Chip have often talked about their university degrees in songs or radio appearances and even use their songs to let children and adolescents know about the importance of education (Kintue 2009, JME 2008). But the reason why there are so many Black students dropping out of school, compared to other ethnicities in the country, is not only due to their background and lack of economic support but often related to the discriminatory behaviours they face from teachers, classmates and the schooling system (Akala 2019, Owusu 2019). This lack of opportunities and the notion of having to work twice as hard as other people is also criticised in songs such as “I’m From a Place” by Meridian Dan or “Black” by Dave, where they divert the attention to the people keeping Black kids from school, instead of the kids themselves (2014, 2019).

The song “Black” by Dave is actually a perfect example of positive messages transmitted through Grime. Dave talks about the beauty, suffering, effort and grace that come with being Black in a white world. Praising the physique, their capacities, the history, their accomplishments, the struggle and their ability to endure it all, the rapper sends a powerful message to the Black population by reminding it of its glorious past. The messages transmitted in

this song can accomplish a great deal for Black listeners accustomed to hearing all negative elements often associated with them. Stormzy's song "Superheroes" has the same intention of bringing confidence and pride to his "brothers and sisters" while at the same time encouraging them to continue to excel, to love themselves, stand together against adversity and constantly praising their strength and bravery throughout the song (2019). During the sentence "Black queen you're immaculate, it's coming at the world, they ain't ready for your magic yet", the video for Stormzy's "Superheroes" shows a picture of a Black woman known in the music industry as Little Simz (2020). Already mentioned in this study, the MC appearing in Stormzy's video is one of few better known female artists of the Grime genre. With this sentence, the male rapper acknowledges a fellow MC while at the same time bringing attention to the lack of presence women have in the genre, caused by the patriarchal world in which we live in.

5. Women in Grime

Female artists such as Ms. Dynamite, Lioness and Shystie have been in the Grime scene since its very beginnings and are still making music nowadays. Even if often deemed as too masculine and aggressive, an attitude various of them admit of embodying at the beginning of their careers, in order to increase their chances of being accepted by the male artists in the scene, the talent and stage presence of the MCs quickly allowed them to get some of the first record deals ever offered to Grime artists and make the music they wanted, how they wanted (Hancox 2018, White 2014).

A recurring theme in these artists' songs, as well as in the ones performed by other Grime women MCs such as Lady Sovereign, Lady Leshurr or Little Simz, is that of female empowering fuelled by basic feminist ideas and sometimes even the most radical ones. In her song "Woman's World", Shystie imagines scenarios where women are the superior sex and men are treated the way women are in our current reality (2004). While the song seems at first to simply switch up a few of the stereotypes surrounding men, women and their romantic relationships, the song follows through with critics of sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, prostitution and even the image of men kept in "kennels" as if they were dogs and women "only let them out to do the difficult jobs" (Ibid). Trying to lead a women's revolution in the last few verses of the song,

Shystie was not the only female MC to use her platform in an empowering way. With her song “Don’t Tell Me”, Lioness demands the following of men:

Don’t tell me what I should say
How I should spit
What I should spray
They wanna dictate my days
But it’s my life
Get off my way (Lioness, 2011)

Through this message of self-affirmation, accompanied by the zero-tolerance attitude and determination the rapper emanates during the song, Lioness shares her thoughts with both men trying to dictate her life, and women finding themselves in a similar situation. With just a few lyrics, she elaborates an instruction guide that could give the means to other upcoming female artists or just women in general, to stand up and not adhere to the established patriarchal system.

The amount of self-asserting messages female MCs introduce in their Grime songs, is therefore another example of the positive messages that the music genre can have, from feminist stances, to anti-crime and violent activities, going through advices relating to education, behaviour and even community involvement, proving that Grime music is more than simple entertainment but a positive and enriching subculture to be part of (Fatsis 2018, Hancox 2018, Adams 2019, Perera 2018, Boakye 2018, Charles 2018)

V. Conclusions

Grime has been explored in this study, through the lenses of subculture, as a means to prove the musical genre has become more than simple entertainment, a cultural and political movement, ready to empower a whole generation of Black Britons.

Emerging in a moment of discomfort, economic instability and hostility towards the so-called alien populations living in the country’s council estates, Grime allowed escapism for the third, fourth and fifth generations of African-Caribbean people living in the UK. The genre was a

sign of resistance, refusal towards the hegemonic system that subjugated the Black and Asian English people. The music, through techniques such as bricolage and homology, would create a sense of unity and belonging to which the disenfranchised and unwelcomed youth could adhere to. Seen as a threat, and similarly to other subcultures, Grime would be subjected to a process of recuperation still in place today.

Recuperation, either through commodification or ideological vilification, was the method employed by the Government forces to stop a movement taking shape with strength. Often a clear ally of hegemonic structures, the media played its part behind the curtains, slowly moulding the public's opinion, with its usage of charged terms and incendiary concepts, slowly infecting the views of society and allowing law enforcement to act freely on any suspicious activity, as long as the harassed population was the one the press deemed as dangerous and vile. The fact that the targeted population would mainly consist of Black and Asian Britons, is a clear indicator of the structural racism embedded in British institutions, especially when wrongly accused of behaviours extrinsic to them.

Hegemony is difficult to fight, but even if performed in a non-obvious manner, Grime was able to set its ground and oppose it. Jumping over all the hurdles the music industry, the media, the legal institutions and political entities, set in front of them, Grime artists were able to unite and create all the necessary tools the music needed to survive and thrive.

It has been argued throughout this study, that Grime MCs are nowadays of crucial importance for the coming generations, not just as people talking about the often invisible realities they experience every day of their lives, but as fighters for justice, willing to put themselves on the line to speak out against the institutional racism surrounding them and people not only of different ethnicities but different social classes as well. Leading by example, Grime artists used their self-made platform to spread messages of resistance, change and empowerment, turning their music into a defence mechanism and peaceful tool to fight against hegemony.

Just like the students contained by the police, on the afternoon of the 9th of December, listening to Grime songs and enjoying themselves as a response to the MET's dangerous police tactics, the Black British population constantly harassed, persecuted and jailed by the British judicial system and its enforcers, was able to use the same creative and musical expression, to

not only endure but slowly fight back against the racist and discriminatory hegemonic power ruling the country.

Nonetheless, this study has not been without its limitations. Being a relatively new music style, there is an important lack of analytical writing on the matter. The geographical distance of analysing a genre and movement from a different country also brings its disadvantages, only heightened by the usage of slang in the lyrics of songs. The wording employed by Grime MCs is full of innovations and metaphors not always completely understandable for a foreigner. Despite the knowledge and help obtained to properly interpret the meaning of the songs, it might be possible for some aspects to not have been grasped in its entirety, limiting the depth of the analysis of this study.

Now, regarding the continuity of this work, there are a lot of possibilities available for branching out on the study of Grime and music as resistance. While this dissertation has focused on the subculture and its members in a general mind-set and without many distinctions regarding its impact on men and women, an interesting follow-up study could focus on a more feminist framework, allowing for a better exploration of the role of women MCs and the impact the music has on the female population. In a similar manner, and being often described as a very masculine type of music, an exploration of Grime through the lenses of masculinity and specifically, Black masculinity could also broaden the study of the genre and its social and psychological aspects. Lastly, another way to continue on this work while at the same time distancing ourselves from Grime, could be the analysis of equivalent types of music, stemming from marginal or ethnic minority populations and showing resistance to hegemony, in other countries such as France with its Algerian, Maghrebi or African population, or such as Spain with its Moroccan, Latin-American or Romani population.

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Song List

Avelino, "Prey", GRM Daily, Self-released, 2020, CD

Bashy, "Kidulthood to Adulthood", Track 21 on Adulthood Soundtrack, Altered Ego, 2008, CD

Dave, "Question Time", Track 2 on Game Over, Self-released, 2017, EP

Dave, "Black", Track 3 on Psychodrama, Neighbourhood, 2019, CD

D Double E, "Street Fighter Riddim", Track 1 on Street Fighter Riddim, Self-released, 2010, CD

Ghetts, "Fire and Brimstone", Track 3 on Conflict of Interest, Ghetts Limited, 2021, CD

JME, "123", Track 2 on Famous?, Boy Better Know, 2008, CD

JME, "69 Fuckries", Track 2 on Integrity>, Boy Better Know, 2015, CD

JME, "Serious", Track 15 on Famous?, Boy Better Know, 2008, CD

Kano, "Don't Come Around Here", Track 10 on 140 Grime Street, Bigger Picture Music, 2008, CD

Kano, "SYM", Track 10 on Hoodies All Summer, Parlophone, 2019, CD

Kano, "T-Shirt Weather in the Manor", Track 2 on Made In The Manor, Parlophone, 2016, CD

Lethal Bizzle, "Police on my Back", Track 10 on Back To Bizznizz, V2 Records, 2007, CD

Lioness, "Don't Tell Me", Track 7 on Roariness, Self-released, 2011, CD

Little Simz, "Introvert", Track on Introvert, Prettybird UK, 2021, CD

Meridian Dan, "I'm From a Place", Noisey Production, 2014, Youtube Release

Shystie, "Woman's World", Track 5 on Diamond in the Dirt, Universal, 2004, CD

Skepta, "Konnichiwa", Track 1 on Konnichiwa, Boy Better Know, 2016, CD

Stormzy, "Superheroes", Track 14 on Heavy Is the Head, #Merky, Atlantic Records UK 2019, CD

Tinie Tempah, "All You Ft. G Frsh & Wretch 32", Track 5 on Junk Food, Disturbing London Records, 2015, CD