

The Church of Worship
An exegesis presented in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Art
At Massey University, Wellington,
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Abstract

The Church of Worship is a cult-like religious hyperreality performance and net-based project that explores and negotiates the parallels between religious devotion and celebrity adoration demanded by popular culture. This thesis uses the postmodern semiotic concept of hyperreality through Jean Baudrillard's simulation and simulacra, as it's theoretical framework. The project also explores Persona as a method for exploring the parallels between celebrity and religious icons or the concept of the 'Hero'. The outputs of the church of worship include; a digital space of worship, performances, literature, and a series of overly refined fine art photographs. This project uses humour, abjection, and consumer and pop-cultural critique as central modalities.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people in my life that got me to this point. Friends and family, I could not have done this without your support.

-

Ollie, this is for you.

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Introduction

The Church of Worship is a cult-like religious hyperreality performance and net-based project that explores and negotiates the parallels between religious devotion and celebrity adoration demanded by popular culture. This thesis uses the postmodern semiotic concept of hyperreality through Jean Baudrillard's simulation and simulacra, as it's theoretical framework. The project also explores Persona as a method for exploring the parallels between celebrity and religious icons or the concept of the 'Hero'. The outputs of the church of worship include; a digital space of worship, performances, literature, and a series of overly refined fine art photographs. This project uses humour, abjection, and consumer and pop-cultural critique as central modalities.

To understand the aims and scope of the project it is important to define the key ideas this thesis explores, we must define *culture* in order to frame the project. Raymond Williams gives us three very broad definitions of culture. The first being 'a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development', the second 'a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group' and the third being 'the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity' (Williams, as cited in Storey, 1998, 2).

Each of these definitions speaks to the notion of culture being informed by the ongoing interaction between dominant societal narratives and values, political principles and technological advances. Popular culture is related to Williams' second and third definitions of culture, signifying the cultural texts and practices that inform it. The celebration of Christmas for example falls within Williams's definition of culture, although to fully understand Christmas as a cultural practice we must first explain the role that ideology has in the shaping of popular cultural practices. (Williams, as cited in Storey, 1998)

Although there are competing definitions of ideology we can generally agree that ideology is the set of values, opinions, beliefs and/or ideals held by a group or community. For the purpose of this thesis we choose to use Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser's understandings. Building upon Jacques Lacan's work, Althusser hypothesizes that "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" moving from the Marxist idea that the 'real' world is hidden by pervasive ideology (Felluga, 2011).

Althusser contends that ideology does not "reflect" the real world but "represents" the "imaginary relationship of individuals" to the real world.

Althusser has in mind the way in which certain rituals and customs have the affect of binding us to the social order, which is marked by enormous inequalities of wealth, status and power; he uses the example of Christmas as an ideological practice (Felluga, 2011).

Christmas is of particular interest as a religious ritual conflated with consumer culture. A perversion of the birth of Christ, Santa clause acts as capitalism surrogate 'god', an old bearded man able to see when you sleep, able to know if you've been naughty or nice this year, one with a list of people who are good or evil. This god's judgments are manifested in the giving and withholding of material goods, luxuries and excessive consumption.

Religious devotion is a key term in this project; which can be broken down to the components of belief and practice. Belief being a reasonable acceptance of the truth in particular propositions for example that god exists and loves you, that if you follow his path you will go to heaven or reach enlightenment. As well as the cognitive feature, devotion also includes behavioral components. A person's religious conviction is associated and connected to certain behaviors both in the observance of sacraments and rituals, and in patterns of moral behavior.

Similarly, celebrity worship or adoration also contains these two elements of belief and practice. Although belief in celebrity worship sometimes falls in more conspiratory territory, with some of it's worshipers believing in the existence in the illuminati for example or that Tupac is alive in Cuba, or that Avril Lavigne died shortly after the release of her debut album Let Go and was replaced by a look a like as a way to explain how different her music became and so on (Bassil, 2015).

Behavioral devotion can also be seen in the celebrity worshipper. For example, camping out for days to buy a pair of shoes created by a celebrity eg, (Yeezy Boost 350), or perhaps changing ones appearance to become closer to (burning a celebrity autobiography and rubbing its ashes into one's skin for example) or better resemble a celebrity; for example, taking a picture of a celebrity to the hairdressers or getting plastic surgery. With celebrity worship being a para-social relationship these beliefs and behaviors tend to be highly individualized or specific to the worshipper.

The church of worship aims to exploit any idea of religious worship and worship of celebrity in a pop cultural context being mutually exclusive. Instead the project reimagines them as existing on a continuum with common characteristics rather than two discrete realms deserving of different degrees of validity. To worship the frivolous and the superficial, that is to say to find it's depth, is to fight against conservative values, find beauty in things we are told are ugly or superficial. It is only by alignment with the elite, (that is the wealthy and the powerful) and assimilating to the 'beigeness' of the elite that the lowbrow celebrity icon can transcend their class station

The example given earlier of plastic surgery as a behavior of a celebrity worshipper is also an example of what the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard calls the hyperreal. The created plastic surgery face effaces the distinction between "natural" and "artificial" in the syntax of beauty. Baudrillard explains in his 1981 thesis *Simulacra and simulation*. In *simulation and simulacra* Baudrillard begins his treatise explaining the precession of the simulacra with the analogy of the cartographers map (Baudrillard, 1981).

The map that is drawn so accurately, charts the empire in such scale and detail that it becomes impossible to tell it apart from the empire it maps. The map, a simulation, becomes confused for the real terrain until it rots away. He poses that in the first precession of the simulacra that we exist on the map not the terrain. However this allegory, to Baudrillard is outdated in the postmodern society as the simulation no longer reflects reality or even references it, the creation of the new 'real' is based on models that no longer reflects reality. This is the 'hyperreal', an existence built on signification, on where that difference between territory and map completely disappears (Baudrillard, 1981).

Baudrillard gives many examples of simulacra, Disneyland being the most well known. Baudrillard claims Disneyland is a 'deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real', it was created as a fantasy land to make the surrounding area appear real; Baudrillard believes that Los Angeles and America as a whole are not real as Disneyland would have us think, but in fact hyperreal. Baudrillard ultimately condemns the contemporary conditions that create the hyperreality, that it is in short the end to culture and meaning (Baudrillard, 1981).

My understanding and relationship to the hyperreal is less apologetic, I think there is a freedom when the real no longer exists. Excessive attention paid to celebrities through

entertainment media are often denigrated and dismissed as facile; a shallow and superficial distraction from the 'real' news of the day. Of course through Baudrillard we know that the news isn't really the news, and that the real is never quite as satisfying as the realer than real or hyperreal. The hyperreal 'news' of reality stars and PR created stories of entertainment news is where our attention is supposed to be anyway.

In this way the church of worship's relation to celebrity is an attempt to destroy the master's house by simulating the master's tools. When hyperreality and simulacra itself is doubled it emerges as a reflection through a funhouse mirror, the edges that were once sharp are now warped, the church in a sense tries to reach the event horizon of popular culture and celebrity worship.

The Church of Worship's focus on celebrity adoration is therefore infused with references to popular culture. As with culture and ideology, definitions and framings of popular culture are also contentious. For the purposes of this thesis my definition of popular culture will employ neo-Gramscian hegemonic theory. In this understanding popular culture is a "site of struggle between the forces of 'resistance' of subordinate groups in society, and the forces of 'incorporation' of dominant groups" (Storey, 1998).

Popular culture is then neither an imposed culture by hegemonic forces nor is it an oppositional culture by the people, for the people. Instead we see popular culture as a terrain of exchange between the two, one marked by incorporation and resistance. Popular culture is also synchronic, meaning shifting between resistance and incorporation at any given moment (Storey, 1998).

As a pop-cultural figure and product, rapper/mogul Jay-z can be seen to have embodied this definition throughout his life and career. Growing up in the Marcy projects in Brooklyn, he has gone from rapping about his life in the projects and selling drugs (these being cultural products of resistance from a position of subordination) to performing his song '*Picasso Baby*' in the Pace Gallery with Marina Abramovic to a room full of artist, curators and people of 'high' culture. Perhaps both the pace gallery performance and the subsequent music video mediates this struggle between resistance and incorporation from both ends. In elevating rap music to high culture and lowering the gallery to pop-culture, we must wonder which side of the ideological fence jay-z sits. Are his motivations those of resistance or incorporation?

Jay-z is a highly contested persona within the church of worship, one explored in the second performance of the church. Persona and the construction of celebrity identity are central to the project, specifically the cult of personality constructed and framed around the formation of celebrity. The term Persona originates from Latin where it referred to the mask worn by theatrical actors. Persona as used in recent academic discourse also describes the wider practice of constructing and constituting forms of public identity, with celebrities providing some of the most visible, performative and pedagogic examples of the practice (Marshall, et al. 2014).

Through the proliferation of networked and social media, the formation of celebrity has not only speed up and extended celebrity culture but as Marcus argues, has also significantly altered it. This project investigates celebrity persona and the construction of the public self, mediated through digital technology/ social media.

'By simultaneously bringing fans and publics closer and keeping them apart, social media appeal to fans' desires to approach celebrities in both senses of the word: to get closer to them and to become more like them.'

(Marcus, 2015)

In investigating the parallels between celebrity adoration and religious devotion, I found both similarities and differences in regard to persona and identity construction. Celebrities, to their most devoted fans draw parallels to religious icons. Acts or worship and pilgrimage are seen in the celebrity, Elvis Presley for example. Who's home at Graceland has been compared to a Christian pilgrimage by his fans The house who's visitor numbers of 750,000 per year, acts as a shrine for devoted fans to visit to pay their respects. Elvis can also be considered an immortal figure; despite dying in 1977, there have been numerous sightings of him across the globe since his death. His music and films are also a way in which he has lived beyond his death (Van Krieken, et al. 2014)

The personas of Celebrities and religious icons are both revered for their super-humanness; embodying attributes those followers strive for, making up for what the followers lack within them. Followers use social media not only to become more like celebrities but to also get closer to them as explained by Marcus earlier. A celebrity's social media account gives the follower access to the celebrity's personal life and thoughts; the celebrity is giving the followers a site that acts as an indefinite sermon. Whereas, religious devotees/followers in contrast will either make a weekly pilgrimage to a house of worship or continuously re-read an ancient and static text in

order to be closer to their subject of devotion. Rapper lil B is the most literal example of the follower/celebrity relationship online which will be discussed in the chapter about the church of worship's Facebook page as a similar site of reverence.

Another similarity in persona across religious and celebrity devotion can be seen the 'Hero concept'. In his 1962 book *Image: the pseudo-event in America*, Daniel Boorstin claims celebrities are simply "known for their well knownness" and fundamentally different from the hero he goes on to say that 'The hero was distinguished by his achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark. The hero created himself; the media creates the celebrity. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name' (Boorstin, 1962) . The Hero, as Boorstin describes would include biblical figures as such Jesus. However one could argue that Jesus is the original celebrity, and that the binary opposition Boorstin claims exists instead on a Venn diagram, one with considerable and unavoidable overlap.

In the subsequent chapters of this exegesis I will use the theoretical frameworks outlined in this introductory essay, as a way to unpack the church of worship in regards to its online and performance outputs. These chapters will also explore artist's whose work is influential to the project as well as celebrity figures the church of worship devotes itself to.

The Church of Worship: *Online Actions*



The Church of worship's facebook page was created to explore an interest in the emerging solidification of what is collectively described as "Weird Facebook" (Pedersen, 2012) (Wilcox, 2015), web 2.0/ social media (Kholeif, 2014), and its influence on the performance of both fan and celebrity. Through this digital site the church aims to embody what Chris Rojek describes as celebrities being "myth bearers; carriers of divine forces of good, evil, lust and redemption"(Rojek, 2006, p.251). The Church employs iconography from Christianity, conspiracy groups, and celebrity/pop/fan-culture (specifically American hip-hop/rap culture). The page acts as a sacred online space for the church of worship to present its messages and values.



The Church of Worship shared William David Berry's post — 🤖 feeling shocked.

Published by Deet Doot [?] · 31 January · 🌐

omg i can't believe they predicted lady gaga's egg stunt for the grammys over 3000 ys ago!!!!



William David Berry

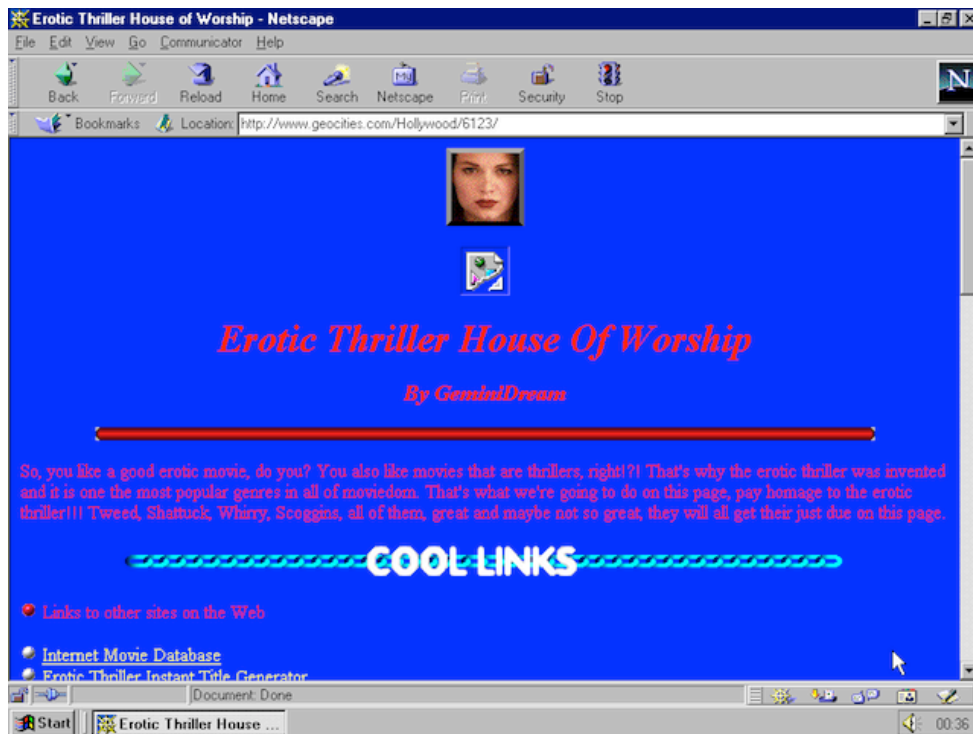
31 January · 🌐

#The #Real #XFilez ~

#Ancient #Alienz 101

"WRITTEN IN STONE OVER 3000...

The Church of Worship's Facebook page is an example of Web 2.0. A term used to describe the shift in net culture from personal websites like GeoCities to blogs and blog site aggregation, from publishing to participation, from web content as the outcome of sizeable investment to an ongoing and interactive process" (flew, 2008, p.19). Web 2.0 perhaps best exemplified by social media I.e.: *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter* among others.



An example of a typical GeoCities page.

These platforms have led to a greater connectivity between fan and celebrity; different ways of making and distributing art and created a space for site-specific celebrities (YouTube, Instagram, Vine, Facebook etc.) When a social media attains a level of ubiquity in culture that connotes being more than just a website, it becomes an extension or adaptation of the self (van Dijck, 2013). As such it is a site for identity construction, and the construction of persona and branding.



Facebook as an institution (which has existed since Facebook's conception as an exclusive site for people enrolled at Harvard) can be described as culturally hegemonic in regards to Gramsci's definition. It is an institution that privileges the western narrative; positioning marriage, travel to exotic lands and capitalistic milestones (among others) as core signifiers of success (news worth sharing). Facebook posits itself as *'The Social Network'* a place enmeshed in capitalism and consumerism, it's users performing a curated self, they are hyper aware of the gaze of their internet persona.



An example of a 'weird Facebook' meme page post.

Its content is restrictive; the Facebook 'persona' in its normative construction adheres to acceptability politics that ought not transgress hegemonic values. It bans nudity¹ and other 'offensive' content through self-policing and regulation. This is both the social network your prospective employer is expected to examine, and arguably the only social media platform on which you would chose to be friends with your aunt or second cousin or people you went to high school with.



Facebook is the social media that everyone's already on. Facebook encourages the promotion of physical networks, you are meant to have met all of your friends on Facebook in real life. Its tie to the corporeal is positions the Facebook persona as an extension of irl self in a way that is less explicit than twitter and instagram.

The transgression of the principles held by Facebook was the driving factor in it's creation, Facebook is not a place for writers or artists in the way that instagram and twitter are, so occupying this space seems vital to the project as it provides an interruption of the banality and hegemony of Facebook.



In this way the church's use of its Facebook page aligns itself with the Gramscian approach to understanding popular culture as a site of resistance against that of incorporation from hegemonic groups and Facebook as an institution.

The Church's complex relationship to fame and wealth is at the center of its focus on celebrity adoration to the extent that while the worshipper of celebrity values the character and personal values of the celebrity, they also worship the financial and social capital the celebrity represents.



By posting an 8-minute watch commercial, the church of worship displays this complicated relationship to consumerism/wealth. It both values the culture and the capital in equal measure; but is more interested in the value attributed to the video/object/concept than the inherent value the video/object/concept claims to possess. The watch itself is an artifact and an art object, a piece of jewellery and an index of wealth and taste etc... that serves little by way of function and acts more as a signifier, icon and symbol.

The Church simultaneously reveres and critiques consumerism/capitalism through its focus on celebrity and popular culture; the post below is another reference to this complicated relationship.



One of the key artistic influences of the Church is Ryan Trecartin. Specifically the Church's relation to the branded body; Trecartin creates open networks; in his films 'brands become bodies and personality is realized in an act of synesthetic over-identification with consumerist ephemera' (Langley, 2012). It is at this point that our engagement in culture and consumerism is a form of enmeshment; a metamorphosis is created by the identification with ideas and online personalities, as exploited in the Church's Facebook page.

Another artist, who embodies the free-form energy of self-invention online and rejects similar binarism as Trecartin, is Rapper Lil-B. Lil b serves as an artist study embedded with popular and Internet culture.



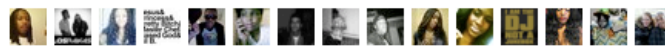
@LILBTHEBASEDGOD

Lil B From The Pack

isn't it weird that a machine can print
money with a code on it and label it and
that means its worth \$ wow what the fuck?
- Lil B

1 hour ago via [Mobile Web](#) ☆ [Favorite](#) ↻ [Retweet](#) ↩ [Reply](#)

Retweeted by [SupaCrankIt](#) and 19 others



After hermetically sealing himself in the Internet, and emerging a nearly unrecognizable entity with his own world, slang, and philosophy, Lil b is ~pure content~ once claiming he spends 22 hours a day on the internet. (Millard, 2013) His near every thought either tweeted or rapped about, so prolific that at 26 he has massed body of work that includes over 75 mix tapes (some of which are several hundred songs long)(Battan, 2012), a series of lectures at universities across the united states (McCartney, 2012). Through his demonstration of ~super-human~, ~god-like~ feats of production he has attained a dedicated following.



Lil B From The Pack @LILBTHEBASEDGOD

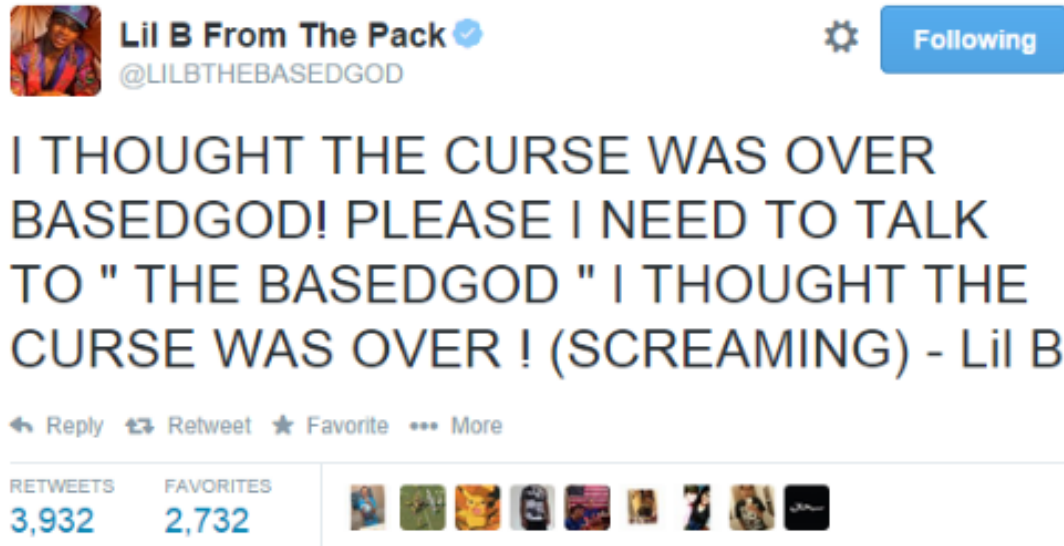
Love you and your family glad your alive to read this - Lil B

[Expand](#) ↩ [Reply](#) ↻ [Retweet](#) ☆ [Favorite](#) ⋮ [More](#)

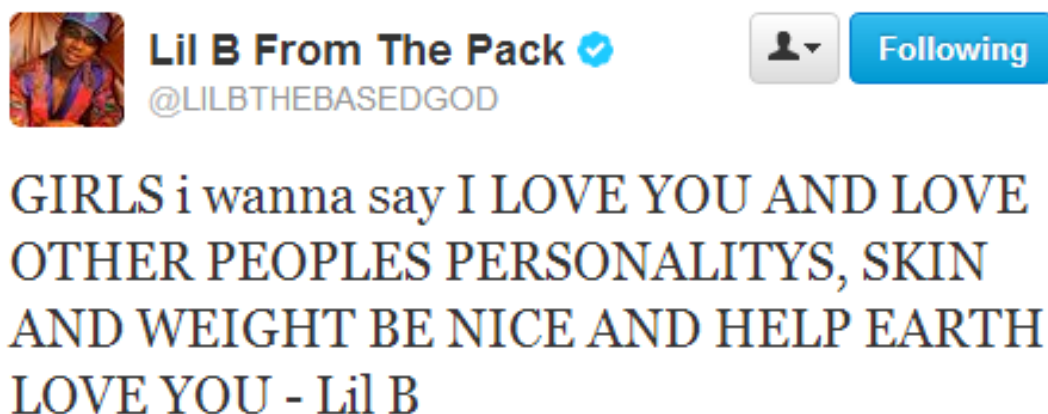
With fans feeling such a strong connection to Lil b and his philosophy; his performances register more as religious gatherings rather than shows, many devoted fans dress up in his image (wearing chef costumes in reference to his cooking dance²), they rap his songs back at him before he even has the chance to rap them. Being in his presence is a religious experience (Battan, 2013). His engagement with fans is reciprocal, the more open and personable he

² In a way similar to midnight screenings of rocky horror picture show and the room.

becomes with his fans, the stronger and more devoted they become. To his fans (called either based world or bitchmob) (Millard, 2012) he is the BasedGod who they promise to “protect at all costs”. It is hard to argue that even if part of lil-b’s appeal is ironic, it isn’t without a sense of sincerity or with investment on the part of the fan.



The church of worship implements approaches to net content used by both Trecartin, *weird Facebook* and Lil b to explore the muddy water of sincerity (or perhaps new-sincerity) and satire/irony and it’s relation to web 2.0 and social media to frame the actions of the Church, and locate it primarily online through documentation of live actions. The Facebook page gives a center to the project and makes it decidedly from the Internet.





The Church of Worship

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The Sermon

The Sermon is a piece of writing that was the basis for the first two performances of the Church of Worship; the first iteration of the Sermon was performed alongside a communion. Taking place in the context of Grad Camp Dark, a mid point presentation of the masters candidates research, it was performed by PiuPiu Maya Turei, as a proxy for myself as the 'leader' of the church; PiuPiu was given the role of 'the prophet'. Having another person perform this piece was a way for me to see the work from the perspective of the audience or follower.



It was at this point in the research that I wanted to see if I needed to be present in the work or if it was something that was outside of my body. Although I thought muddying the water of authorship was an interesting way to approach the project I was ultimately unsatisfied with how it was performed. This project is very much apart of myself, how can I expect someone to connect with references that aren't their own? I thought the esotericism in the writing needed to be performed by someone who lives them; so even if the audience doesn't understand them, they would be able to feel them through me.

This need for myself to embody the writing leads me to re-perform the sermon. I was walking through Cuba Street on Friday the 27th of June when I saw that Kanye West's latest shoe the Yeezy Boost 350 was going on sale at midnight that night I knew this was the perfect opportunity. I went home and practiced the text for a few hours then walked down to Area 51. There were about 30 people lined up with blankets and lawn chairs waiting for their chance to buy the \$300 shoes. I talked to the people in line about why they were there, if they liked the shoes for their design, whether they were big Kanye fans, what they're favorite album of his was, what they thought of the name north west etc. I performed the sermon to a group of semi-interested people in the line at 11:11pm, because it felt appropriate.

The text is found, appropriated and recontextualised, a stitching together of words, references, and imagery. The sermon uses language from Bryan Tamaki and Jim Jones preaching's, a verse from *damn it feels good to be a gangster* by the Getto Boys, sound bites from news interviews, a Nietzsche quote and part of an Allen Ginsberg poem; all interjected with/next to and equal to pop-culture and rap/hip-hop cultural references and iconography. At the points of reference to Kim Kardashian's app game and Danny DeVito's Lemmon cello; the product has become an extension of the celebrity, an extension of the para-social³ relationship between the fan and celebrity/ between devotee and icon.

The construction of the text comes forth from what Ryan Trecartin calls *culture mud*.

'With media, I'm often much more interested in how it's translated by people sharing that media, rather than the media itself. I feel like that's where it exists, between the piece and the sharing of it. So I'll be inspired by drunk people in a bar talking about a show that they just saw or something. It's about collecting all these moments of sharing things and having them be in the culture mud, rather than a one-to-one ratio or pointing to different influences. It's more

³ Parasocial interaction, as originally hypothesized by Horton and Wohl (1956), offers an explanation of the ways in which audience members develop their one-sided relationships with the media being consumed.

letting things digest and then feeling the rawness of the vibe rather than a particular articulation of it.' (Trecartin, 2012)

His work, although chaotic, has an undercurrent of utopianism. It believes that technological advancement will remove the need to define our experiences and ourselves in a fixed and inflexible way. Pervaded by culture, the worlds Trecartin creates are open networks. Brands become bodies and personality is realized in an act of synesthetic over-identification with consumerist ephemera (Trecartin, 2012).

The Communion

The consumerist ephemeron in the case of the project is best seen through the communion. The communion is a ritualization of opulence and excess. It makes the communion a sacrament to capitalism, consumer culture, and the pseudo-event⁴ as much as it is to the Church of Worship.

The pseudo-event is a term coined by historian Daniel Boorstin used to describe events such as presidential debates and press conferences, events that are solely manufactured in order to be reported on, it is a simulation of an event (Boorstin, 1961).

There is a seduction in the excess of offering a sacrament of gold leaf and Champaign; the affect of opulence and luxury hopes to become a religious experience. The gold leaf transubstantiates from the tastelessness of decoration to an ~opulence~ that is better and more rare⁵ than the body of Christ in ~cracker form~. Moët is more alluring and affective than communion wine could ever be unless one is a true believer in Christian transubstantiation. In the church this process treats this as a symbolic gesture with a hedonism and gaudy excessiveness that if nothing else brings the warm feeling of camp⁶. This sense of camp is in the gold leaf through its use in publicity stunts like the Guinness Book of World Records' most expensive dessert Costing \$1000 and covered in 23-carat gold leaf⁷.

The Gold leaf is also an homage to Marina Abramovic, whose use of gold leaf during her performance recreating Joseph Beuys's "How to Explain Pictures To a Dead Hare", part of the performance series *Seven easy pieces*. Recreating 5 seminal performances the series is both an adaptation and simulation of the originals, Abramovic's only reference to the original performances are limited photographic documentation and word of mouth. Because of performance's ephemeral nature early documentation strategies often failed to capture the affect and processes of the work, as such she begins her performance of how to explain pictures to a dead hare simulating the iconic Beuys's image. These poses in replication of the performance

⁴ A pseudo-event, [...] is a happening that possesses the following characteristics:

- (1) It is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planted, or incited it [...]
- (2) It is planted primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced. [...]
- (3) Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. Its interest arises largely from this very ambiguity. [...]
- (4) Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy [...]

⁵ Although not as rare as the based god

⁶ Susan Sontag, notes on camp

⁷ The Golden Opulence Sundae of Serendipity 3, which was created in anticipation and to boost the publicity of the restaurants 50th anniversary, used gold leaf to create a pseudo-event in 2004.

indexes and signifies the original, it begins with simulation and works to autonomy. The approach to documenting performance here becomes the work much in the same way the church of worship uses photography as a recreation and simulacra of the actions.



The Sacrifice



The Church of Worship (2015). *The Sacrifice* [Iphone video]. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/thachurchofworship/videos/vb.458506084312260/471388059690729/?type=2&theater>

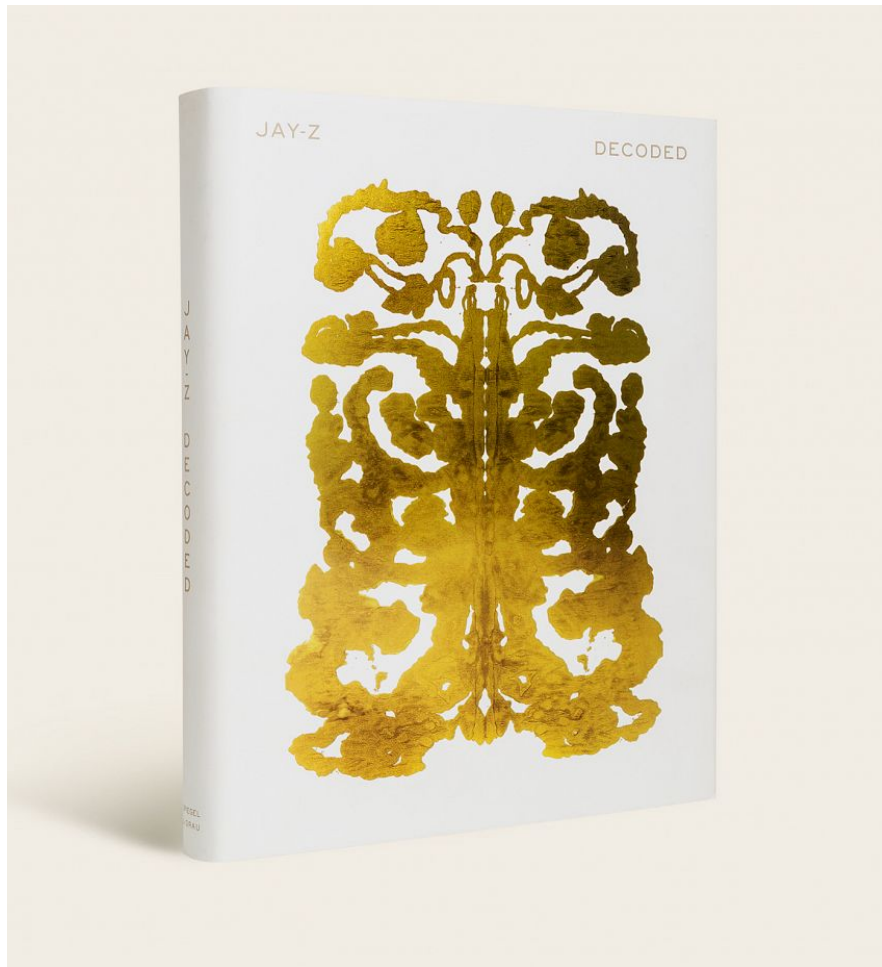
With respect to claims made by Christopher Rojek (2011)

Music is the means of communicating belonging that has the capacity to override economic, political, social and cultural divisions (...) the lives and music of stars like (...) jay-z (...) operate as lightning rods channeling much wider questions of culture, economy, politics and society.

The Sacrifice [refer to appendix two] was performed at thistle hall gallery on the 7:30pm on the 27th of August as a component of the group show ‘_ āke tonu atu tāu_ – | *urs is all time*’ curated by PiuPiu Turei. The performance involved reciting a found text⁸ while massaging ash from a burnt copy of Jay-z’s 2011 autobiography *Decoded* into my clothes, skin, hair and face. A monitor displayed a video of the book burning, set to music⁹.

⁸ The transcript from a *Lipstick Alley* thread responding to a blind item on the *crazy days and nights* website.

⁹ The song was Ave Maria sung by his wife Beyoncé Knowles



Rodigo Corral Studio. (2010, November). *Decoded* - Jay-z [photograph of book cover]. Retrieved from <http://rodrigocorral.com/projects>

The book the Church chose to sacrifice was rapper Jay-z's¹⁰ auto-biography/memoir *Decoded* (co-written by himself and Dream Hamilton)¹¹. *Decoded's* cover, *Rorschach* an inkblot test in gold by Andy Warhol¹² (1984). It's gold cover providing a visual reference to the gold communion the church performed; and the image of the Rorschach being a symbol of an open interpretation, of both Jay-z's lyrics and the ambivalent relationship the church has with him¹³.

The church of worship was interested in Jay-z's presentation of an alternate biographic form that as presented by Sutton (2015) 'eschews the primacy of narrative' (p.220). Through his almost

¹⁰ <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/jay-z-mn0000224257/biography>

¹¹ The collaborator of his first attempted auto-biography, the Black Book

¹² According to the MoMA website, 'This painting belongs to a series modeled on the famous "inkblot" test invented by the Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach'.

¹³ *Watch the Throne* (2011) is an amazing album, and he's married to Beyoncé so I love him off the top for giving her the second coming of queen Bey in their daughter Blue Ivy Carter. * Emoji prayer hands *

exclusive use of para-textual¹⁴ information (through the book's uncaptioned images of street scenes, collaborators, and artistic inspiration; and the small introductions to the transcription of his lyrics); The Church agrees with Sutton that it serves as a diversionary tactic, the absence of a transparent biographical narrative maintains the impressionistic view of Jay-z both as an artist and a mythic pop-cultural hero, the book omits reference to controversies and lacks insight into his public and personal life. With the connection between text and image only associatively linked, Jay-z challenges his readers to prescribe meaning and to construct the myth of Jay-z for themselves (Sutton, 2015).

In regards to paparazzi images, (although the comparison is perhaps fair in broader senses speaking to proliferation of celebrity images in most contexts as symbols of capital/consumerism) McNamara (2011) claims

Celebrities, as hypermobile entities, endeavor to leave traces of their bodies (and of the information they promote in their travels), through these pictures, by a less mobile audience. In this sense, celebrities can exist 'beyond their bodies' as transcendental hypermobile entities.

To destroy a copy and symbol of their image is a gesture of little consequence¹⁵; but represents the privileged given to book and to Jay-z. *The Sacrifice* dismantles the book's fixed, tangible, objectness and concrete authorship; in part for it's contradiction to the celebrity discussion/gossip forum, and for the privilege given to the singular author opposed to the collective and collaborative narrative construction¹⁶.

The 'gossip forum' acts as a hive mind¹⁷ or a collection of contributors who continually author/curate a different myth of Jay-z. The forum puts its faith in anonymous authors. The forum from which the text was taken is from Lipstick Alley although the 'Blind Item' that led to the threads creation is from Crazydaysandnights.com.

¹⁴ According to Sutton the para-text supplements the dialogue between subjects and readers with a second discourse parallel to the text proper. Introductions, forewords, and blurbs often interpellate readers directly, instructing them on how to contextualize and read the text that follows, while discographies and sessionographies complement more subjective narratives of career accomplishments.

¹⁵ One of thousands of copies of one book in a career spanning 3 decades does little to stop the proliferation of his myth

¹⁶ The 'true' construction of myth

¹⁷ Urbandictionary.com defines a hive minds1. A group of people who act or think in unison as if they are all the same individual. 2. A group of people who think the same thoughts as and/or carries out the objectives of either one Leader or each other.

The website Crazydaysandnights.com primarily operates as collection of 'blind items'¹⁸ and 'reveals'¹⁹ written by a Hollywood insider under the pseudonym 'Enty'²⁰. Written as blind items (gossip that conceals the identity of subject to avoid liable prosecution) Enty provides a system to help the reader interpret the text by identifying celebrities by their profession; (singer/reality star/ mostly movies actress etc.); their lineage (referring to subjects as celebrity offspring), their status in celebrity both current and past (eg past A list, current C+ list with A-list recognition). With contribution from the comment section, the reader and comment network assign an often-contested celebrity as the subject.

'Reveals' are blind items reposted with the celebrity they belong to post beneath the gossip. Lipstickalley.com references sites like crazydaysandnights.com among others for its gossip and also provides an incognito function for its users to share their own gossip and stories. However compared to 'Enty' who through the celebrity gossip reputation economy has maintained an audience for years and has appeared though backlit in several E! Entertainment documentaries about the sordid lives of the rich and famous. The reputation of truth in Lipstickalley.com relies on 'receipts' or hard evidence from its anonymous sources. (Siggins, 2012)²¹.

The destabilization of the author as part of the ideology of the Church, in these format contrasts the concreteness of the authored book; where the truth lies in both tellings is both muddy and secondary, Jay-z is, after all a myth. He is a myth insofar as he is not only his account of himself and his personal mythology, Para-textually inferred in Decoded; he is also our account of him. As a celebrity, myth, hero, and ~god~, he is subjective, and open to interpretation, reinterpretation, contextualization and recontextualization. He is a believer in his denominational interpretation of himself just as the Church, his fans, haters, and gossip followers believe in his myth as their denominations of faith and belief interpret him.

The 'truth' of Jay-z (if there is one?) belongs as much him and his telling of his life-- the rags to riches fable, living in the Marcy housing project of Bed-Sty selling, crack to becoming a multi-millionaire rapper and entrepreneur; as he belongs to the conspiracy theorists telling of Jay-z as a Satanist, illuminati, and/or reptilian (Bebergal, 2014).

¹⁸ <http://www.crazydaysandnights.net/category/blind-item>

¹⁹ <http://www.crazydaysandnights.net/category/blind-items-revealed>

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/entylawyer>

²¹ Siggins, C. M. (2012, January 10). The Rise Of The Blind Gossip Item.

In reaction to the challenged proposed by the lack of personal narrative, and the much speculated, but seldom seen accounting for his personal mythology; the Church sacrifices the book, turning it into ash to consume while performing a ritual of penance and purification, both for the Church, and Jay-z.



The Church of worship. (2015, August 29). The Sacrifice (*ʊˈɜːʃʊˈɜː) [Video Documentation].

Retrieved from

<https://www.facebook.com/thachurchofworship/videos/vb.458506084312260/472426246253577/?type=2&theater>

This ritual, based off the Christian tradition of receiving ashes in preparation of lent²² complicates the implication of the fan's role in the celebrity system. Ashes in Christianity are used as a symbol in a few ways. As symbol of mortality - 'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return' (genesis 18:27); of penance, seen in (Jonah 3:6) with the king of Nineveh putting on sackcloth and sitting in ashes after hearing Jonah's message of repentance; and of purification (Hebrews 9:13-14) "For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. It is in this way the church use the book's ashes to tie together religion and celebrity ideology.

²² The Catholic season before Easter in which members of the church give up a luxury as a symbol of penance.



Romanek, M. (2013, August 2). *Jay-z - Picasso baby: A performance art film* [Video Still]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/80930630>

The Jay-z song (2013) *Picasso baby*²³ was played while the ritual was performed, the song is from Jay-z's his twelfth studio album *Magna Carta Holy Grail*. *Picasso Baby* talks about Jay-z wanting to own all of these famous artists work --"I just want a Picasso in my casa, no my castle...I want a Rothko, no a brothel... Jeff Koons balloons, I want to blow up, Condos in my condo, I want a row of" (Carter, 2013) etc. This song is a way of Jay-z arguing that rap music and fine art are 'cousins' as he said in the music video/performance documentary of the song. The film was shot at the pace gallery in Brooklyn, New York (Jay-z home town) as a 6 hour performance based off the Marina Abramovic performance "the artist is present"²⁴. During the 6-hour performance a number of famous musicians, artists, actors, and performers sat while Jay-z rapped to them, Abramovic herself was part of the performance.

Much like the *Picasso baby* music-video/performance/video art crossover; the act of destruction/to burn something (not otherwise for heating, and even then a little) seems flamboyant and campy. The theatricality of burning books, music, sage, witches, or photo's of your ex-husband always had a certain draw for the Church of Worship. Perhaps this is John Waters' sentiment, that to have your book burnt, sacrificed, or destroyed in protest is the ultimate literary honor. The sacrifice of Jay-z's 2011 autobiography/memoir *Decoded* is in part a protest against, and a sacrament to the book, to Jay-z and to personal mythology/ persona.

²³ <http://genius.com/Jay-z-picasso-baby-lyrics>

²⁴ <http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/marinaabramovic/>

The Baptism



The Baptism was performed at 10:00pm on September 11th 2015 at the Inner Most Gardens Hall on Lawson Place, Mt. Victoria, Wellington. *The Baptism* involved being water-boarded with a bottle of Moët Champaign while wearing a heavily beaded mask as a baptismal veil as a commissioned song played in the background.

The Summit was a collaborative project initiated and curated by first year MFA candidate, Christopher Ulutupu. The summit also included

performances by Mathew Wightman and Hannah Beatrice McDougall.

As a reinterpretation of an earlier event for Ulutupu, the summit addresses September 11th and its effect on global politics, pop-culture, terrorism, and violence in the media. In consideration of the creative direction of the event, the church of worship took this opportunity to make a gesture that references the psychological torture the United States government implemented in Guantanamo bay using popular music (Worthington, 2009); and to perform concluding ritual/sacrament in a public space. A song was commissioned for the baptism that used ‘*all eyez on me*’ by Tupac (1996) as the primary vocal sample, the song also featured samples which all have been documented as music used as torture. (Worthington, 2009)

As the final ritual for the project in the context of the MFA program there was a need to conclude the project with a ritual to symbolize a rebirth, to signify the changes this series of

actions has created, represented through the use of the mask during the performance and using the removal of the mask to signify the end of the performance, in turn indexing the identity change the ritual created.

Baptism is the first sacrament of the Catholic Church and marks the start of a person's journey with god reference, either performed by emersion or affusion (pouring on one's head) with holy water. The Baptism is a ritual of cleansing, of removing all and original sin, and rebirth of the candidate, marking the transformative process of the progression of the church.

The church's ritual is a hybrid of the sacrament of baptism and the torture act of waterboarding; the interpretation of this action is fluid and interchangeable it is both a baptism and a waterboarding. Affusion is the method of baptism where traditionally a priest pours holy water over the head and face of the candidate, this visual relationship between baptism and the action of waterboarding is also a reference to hip-hop culture where the act means to pour a 'drink on the ground in tribute, typically to respect a dead or incarcerated friend. The drink symbolizes one which should have been enjoyed by the absent person'²⁵. As a cleansing ritual and a confirmation of faith, one complicated by the implication of the military industrial complex; the Baptism in it's water-boarding hybrid state expresses the ambivalent relationship the church has with the US as the creator and epicenter of celebrity culture but also one with an aggressive hold on the globalized dominant culture (forces of incorporation) and the proliferation of Islamophobia because of the war on terror initiated by the US military (Hultkrans, 2008).

²⁵ Urbandictionary.com -To pour an alcoholic drink on the ground in tribute, typically to respect a dead or incarcerated friend. The drink symbolizes one which should have been enjoyed by the absent person.

After Jim died, his friends decided to pour one out whenever they drank together, in honor of his memory.

"One for me, and one for my fallen homies," Chris said, as he poured one out.

The baptismal veil is an altered balaclava; the mask is embroidered with hundreds of hand sewn pearl beads. Using a balaclava as the base of the mask was an aesthetic and conceptual decision (a nod to both pussy riot, spring breakers and in keeping with the direction of the event) and with its being a cheap, proletariat material and easily manipulable. The aesthetic of the mask is influenced by the work of Martin Margela (particularly the series of custom made masks for Kanye West's yeezus tour)²⁶, the 2011 footwear collaboration between Kanye west and Giuseppe Zanotti, Leigh bowery and The elephant man in David Lynch's 1980 film.

'Masks are not simply pictures of the spirits, animals or other beings they represent (when,



indeed, they do represent); masks are also and simultaneously icons and indexes of identity' (Pollock, 1995). The transformation of identity is at the core of the action, the power that both religion and the state have in creation of identity is something that was important to enact. The mask and veil both have long histories in various religions and rituals globally, to keep such a universal symbol for 'ritual' the center of the performance was important in it's affective quality in concealing the identity of the candidate and it's transformative power to enact the other (Pollock, 1995).

The pearls are sewn tightly together, with multiple layers, sizes and colours; they catch and diffuse the Champaign. The baptism isn't really a waterboarding at all, instead of simulating drowning as waterboarding is intended to do; the Moet trickles softly over the face (it is both an imitation of a waterboarding and a simulation of a baptism). The Champaign caresses the skin, the experience is meditative and relaxing, it feels like a massage. The bubbles dissipate and pools in the hollows of the face. The acidity of the Champaign stings the eyes, which begin to water, completing the transubstantiation of wine to water.

²⁶ Greenburg, Z. O. (2013). Kanye West Makes His Own Artpop On Yeezus Tour. Forbes.Com, 10.



As an exercise in the abject and grotesque extreme of glamour, the over-embroidered mask takes on a tumorous appearance, the weight of the pearls deforming the mask and hanging heavily over the face. They are however beads simulating pearls, they are cheap, ubiquitous, of little value and made of

plastic; The mask attains a level of value from labour, although the aspiration for glamour is not met, the materiality of the mask is cheap. It is not the mask itself that is abject; it is the incorporation of the balaclava by the pearls that makes it grotesque.

We must acknowledge that good taste is problematic. It exists in a place of extreme privilege, with the arbitration of taste being dictated upon under the hegemony and forces of incorporation. Readings of popular, and celebrity culture being seen as lowbrow and feminine, and within hegemonic views of success and history (which is maintained through aggression and global capitalism) a frivolous one. To worship the frivolous and the superficial, that is, to find its depth, is to fight against these repressive values.

Champagne exists at the intersection of art and commerce, consumerism, luxury and exclusivity. It is more than a type of wine; it has a relation to site (that of the Champagne region in France) that is branded and legally binding. It has long been sacrificed as a symbol of wealth and extravagance, at points where consumerism and religion meet. The christening of a ship or airplane by breaking a bottle of champagne over it for example is a ritual that is derived from christening a baby, a form of baptism.

Moët is the champagne brand used in both the baptism and the sermon; chosen by the church of worship because it is the official champagne of the academy awards, a brand that both speaks to elegance and luxury while still having a fairly low price point. Moët, and champagne generally has had close relationship to rap and hip hop culture since the early 1990's when artists like as

Nas, Jay-z and Notorious B.I.G frequently referenced the sparkling wine in their songs “*Who rock grooves and make moves with all the mommies? / The back of the club sipping Moët is where you'll find me*” (*The Notorious B.I.G., Big Poppa, 1994*). The relationship between Champagne and hip hop is not a static one, as an adaptive icon is has evolved from aspirational such as its mention in *Big Poppa* (1994) to its self-consciously showy presents in bling-ear excess, embedding itself in hip hop vernacular with terms like *sippin cris*’, and *popping bottles*.

As Hip-hop’s unofficial sommelier, Harlem emcee Branson B recalls the early days of hip-hop’s relationship to champagne “Growing up in the streets of Harlem, there were a lot gentlemen—doctors, lawyers, contractors, hustlers, gamblers—who indulged in champagne as their drink of choice,” Branson says. “It was more of an aspirational thing: You want to do well, and champagne is supposed to be a high-end way to enjoy yourself when it comes to an alcoholic beverage.” Hip-hop’s conspicuous consumption of champagne can be seen as a way to reclaim sovereignty, more than just a display of wealth, champagne is a symbol of success and transcendence over of race and class designations.

Champagne’s ubiquitous, though contentious presence in hip-hop during the golden era of rap shifted champagne from an aspirational symbol to an exploitable one. Contention perhaps best exemplified by Jay-z and his frequent references to Louis Roederer’s Cristal champagne. With four references Cristal in his 1996 album *Reasonable Doubt* alone, the brand entered into the greater rap lexicon. This attention however was not warmly received, in a 2006 interview with the economist, when asked about the attention hip-hop brought to the brand Louis Roederer president Frédéric Rouzaud was dismissive, saying, “What can we do? We can’t forbid people from buying it. I’m sure Dom Perignon or Krug would be delighted to have their business.” Denouncing Cristal as racist, jay-z vowed not to mention Chirstal again, omitting the reference in older songs that mentioned it; and in the video for “*Show Me What You Got*” Jay-z waves off the bottle his butler offers him, instead bringing out a bottle of Armand de Brignac (a.k.a., “Ace of Spades”) symbolically killing one icon and christening another.

The Images



When thinking about how I would resolve this project and decide on a final act to represent the Church, I felt at such a loss to tie up all the loose ends of my research and my ideas. I needed a way to talk to the totality of my work and inquiry but knew that I would never really be able to nail something down; make something finite and representative, something that would qualify the work.

I should at this point sign post a number of artist who explore persona and hyperreality through self/portraiture and influenced the aesthetic of the final work: Cindy Sherman, Robert maplethorpe, Andy Warhol, Jill Greenberg, Marilyn Minter, Gillian Wearing, Christian Thompson and Yvonne Todd.



The images are hyperreal, overly refined, hung in large, pristine, white frames. Hung together, as a triptych, a holy trinity, slightly above eye level, the presentation strategy was to create an altar of sorts. The images are portraits of three performances, and three personas. The three images correspond to the baptism, the communion and the sacrifice.

There is a section in the procession of the simulacra that talks about religion and the simulacrum of divinity, and what happens when divinity reveals itself in icons and when it's multiplied in simulacra. Baudrillard talks about the iconoclasts and questions whether in religious imagery, if it remains the supreme power that is simply manifested in images as a visible theology; or if it volatilizes 'itself in the simulacra that, alone, deploy their power and pomp of fascination - the visible machinery of icons substituted for the pure and intelligible Idea of God' (Baudrillard, 1981).



This goes on and on in circles because in either case, of the celebrity, of god, and of the church of worship that (the idea of god / the divine) never existed; 'that only the simulacrum ever existed, even that God himself or Jay-z, or the church was never anything but their own simulacrum. He goes on to talk about the iconoclasts and how the iconoclasts were the only people who accorded religious imagery with its true value. Saying the image doesn't conceal anything at all, that the images are in essence not images, but perfect simulacra 'forever radiant with their own fascination. Thus this death of the divine referential must be exorcised at all costs.' (Baudrillard, 1981)

He compares the iconoclast to the iconolaters, who saw reflections with the images and were happy to worship a filigree god. He considers the iconolaters as the most modern minded because in the appearance of having god become apparent in images they were already enacting his death and his disappearance in the epiphany of his representations, in the knowing that it's dangerous to unmask these images since they hide the fact that there isn't anything behind them. To efface the performances by constructing images to represent them, knowing how impossible that is. I felt the only way to resolve the project was to symbolically kill it (Baudrillard, 1981)

‘The king or the chief is nothing without the promise of his sacrifice’

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Appendices

Appendix One – *The Sermon*

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?

God is in culture, in music, movies, art, books and most importantly the celebrities we idolize, their shining lights fulfill us. We are connected to them even though we have never met, they speak to us even though our tweets are rarely answered, they are gods of the modern world! This is a beautiful and powerful thing, they walk amongst us, representing the life we should want to lead, role models in excess and glamour, they create and we consume!

We are nothing and it's all because of them that we are who we are and that we know who we are; that Drake preached so well and told us that it's important to know yourself, whether you are running through the six with your woes or that Sometimes it's the journey that teaches you a lot about your destination; And we know who we are and what we've got to do.

To live in the mystery and to find purpose and to live in the now, magic!

To follow the true path, to get to A list on Kim Kardashian: Hollywood and for Yeezy season to approach us.

This! I remember this! This is the memory and this is the adventure we are all on together... alone!

Live in the moment, don't get old, don't judge people, let your digital mausoleum be filled with Ferrari squats and good hair days, curate yourself and align yourself with the righteous, be based! Because you can't be free if you judge people! Love now! Create! Inspire! Consume culture! Be on fleek! Be a heather, not a booger!

There is no two ways about it, the truth sets you free. And I don't often teach, but when I do, they're precious gems for your consciousness, and you better listen to them closely, because they will kiss you through the phone and they're the keynote to salvation. How long will you halt between two opinions, the opinion of self that says hold on to all that you've got. Give a dollar here, or five dollars there, or ten dollars there, there is no flex zone and have your color TV at home, and your clothes that you need.

You know I — You've got to live like the queen bey walks, except from that faithful day when she fell on stage with her sisters Kelly and Michelle. I have put on yeezus, you see. I have followed after the example of yeezus. Children, children of the church listen to me, listen to me; you have to stay close to the church! Feel the call around you, it'll be your relationship with the church and that will get you out of trouble!"

When you see me, that's the mystery. That's the mystery. It's no longer the profit here. I am crucified with the based god, nevertheless I live, yet not I but the based god that lives here. Now lil b is in this body, I own cars and land and gold chains and drink Danny DeVito's Limon cello, and let diddy's ciroc vodka wash past my lips and enter my physical manifestation of worship. Money does not possess me because mo money mo problems and I love a bad bitch, that's my fucking problem! But what a good problem that is!

Try not to figure out my, my calling in your own understanding. You have not suffered enough. You have not walked through the dens of thieves. So you could not understand my spirit. I have given everything. I would die for everyone in this room, not to mention the children that are close to the heart of yeesuz, not to mention the disciples of the Beyoncé. I would go even for you that are followers of u2, I would die for you. So you could not understand me. Someone said Wednesday; I did not understand what you were doing. How could you understand, because you are in another plane, you've not yet reached to that which I am.

Holy the sea! Holy the desert! Holy the railroad! Holy the Maybach! Holy the visions! Holy the hallucinations! Holy the miracles! Holy the eyeball! Holy the abyss!

Peace. Peace. You don't know your right hand from your left. You show it by your ignorance. When they were going to take the based god, He said, for what good work do you take me? Some people say, I — you're not just like the based god; you've not done everything He's done!

Now hear ye hear ye want to see Thee more clearly
I know he hear me when my feet get weary
Cause we're the almost nearly extinct
These rappers are our role models they rap we don't need to think
I ain't here to argue about his facial features
Or here to convert atheists into believers
I'm just trying to say the way school need teachers
The way Kathie Lee needed Regis that's the way I need yeezus

It was an immense honor to have the opportunity to talk to you today as the prophet of the church of worship, this church has changed my life in so many ways and I am so glad to be able to talk to you!! The church has answered so many questions I have had. For my entire life I have been looking for something to believe in, from the moment we killed god in 1882 and since that moment we can found our new gods, from Ronald Reagan and Arnold Schwarzenegger to Lucy Lui and Paris Hilton, they shape the cultural landscape and teach us about the world and our selves!

I would now like to conclude by inviting you all to take a communion of gold leaf and Moet champagne. Let the gold and Moet enter your body and soul and cleanse you of mediocrity.

After the communion when we have been cleansed sister Joanne will be taking questions about the church on behalf of the executive who is deeply saddened that they could not be here today.

I love you all!

Till next time, take care of yourselves and each other <3

Appendix Two – the script from the second performance of *The Sacrifice*

/Enty (Crazy days and Night) has new Fan fiction Blind Item about Beyoncé

Today's Blind Items – She's Just Like Britney

Did you know there is another A+ list singer out there that is just like Britney Spears? The only thing that has managed to keep this other A+list singer out of the headlines is that she is watched 24/7 much like Britney is now. Our singer was headed down a road of hair shaving and pink wig wearing but then got involved with a celebrity who saw their potential as a power couple. He loved the idea of creating a brand with her while at the same time being able to do whatever he wanted with whoever he wanted and she would never say or do anything. It is just not in her nature. Apparently she is almost dead behind the eyes and is happy just taking photos of herself and traveling the world. She would rather stay home then to have to get dressed to the level of what is expected. She would rather just watch television or talk to her friends. Her guy loves it. He goes out all of the time alone and is never asked about his life by her. Others close to her call him out, but not her.

Top Guess Beyoncé

/Why fan fiction though? I believe it

/we have yet to get answers for elevator gate...

/The writer of the Beyoncé unauthorized bio claims he has answers.

/Totally Beyoncé. I think she pops pills, hence the dead behind the eyes look and her being caught looking zoned out in recent years. I

/I really don't think she's been "happy" for a while dealing with that mofo Jay. When I see photos of her now, I just don't get a fulfilled person anymore. And some of her behavior has been really erratic, especially with the IG photos with her photo shopping her thigh gap, etc.

/I do think at some point she will have enough of playing the charade with that relationship. Jay is starting to become old ass dead weight, using her for his sinking ship business ventures (Tidal, Made In America).

/I believe this!! It is so obvious. It is displayed right before our eyes.

/We won't get elevator answers for another 20 years, I've said this before but I firmly believe that site (after following it for years) writes it's blinds based upon popular rumors and photographs.

/I don't think Beyoncé is as submissive as some people think and I think she created the "Sasha fierce" character because she wanted to express that side of her without giving up the good girl humble image her team created for her back then.

/Somebody from tumblr submitted this lol

/I would not have believed this if I didn't see Solo put her foot to Jays throat NARROWLY past Beys face where she didn't flinch. You never really know what's going on in someone's personal life. All I know is that when it comes to her craft she about her business and that's all that I care about.

/Now my mascara running, red lipstick smudged

Oh he so horny, he want to fuck
 He bucked all my buttons, he ripped my blouse
 /Some of you are so DUMB, it's obvious the lacking of reading comprehension so far...
 /Interesting how these blind items changes to fit whatever theory they have. Weren't there some about her being a bitch and her and Jay having a full knock-out drag-out fight? Can someone find those blinds pls? Mess!
 /Did Jay have on a hat and Solange knocked it off? I love Solange.
 /every time I see this, this reminds me of an episode of basketball wives.
 Malaysia vs. Laura
 Jay is clearly Laura.
 /The lights are on but nobody's home. Sad.
 /she hit him square in the head.
 /Honestly, I think the real tea is that Solo is on that narcotic or has a serious mood disorder (bipolar and ADHD as alleged).
 /Maybe she was just fucking drunk. SMH.
 /For whatever its worth, I don't think this is about Bey and Jay.
 /she was drunk and Jay called her out on it and she couldn't deal with it.
 /even bey was blasted but she knew that camera was in the elevator and kept her composure.
 /she was more of so mad at Solange but felt like she had to play mediator.
 /She could have been tipsy but I don't think there is anything wrong with Solange. Jay probably said or did something she didn't like, and she had to get him in order. I don't think blind item is about them either.
 /Lies. Nothing but lies.
 /the real truth is Beyoncé is the one who changed Jay Z and she's really running the show.
 /She makes sure he makes decisions that will benefit them as a family.
 /Beyoncé is far from a push over. After seeing her action in person, she's definitely the brains behind the operation. She really knows her shit.
 /but wasn't her and Jay-z together way back like before Britney even went crazy? So how would he see her headed the Britney route and decide to step in and save the day.
 /Like clock work