

Practice Final Exam
(30 minutes)

The following two images by Belgian surrealist artist René Magritte are well-known critiques of the process of representation. Using them as a starting point to discuss



examples and topics in these two classes thus far, examine how the complexities, problems, and meanings in cultural representation that these two images call attention to may also be evident in material we have encountered regarding identity (Who Are You?) and place (Where Are We?).

Who Is an African American?

The shock of Magritte's "This is not an apple" and "This is not a pipe" attached to what seems clearly to be an apple and a pipe is one of confusion and then of recognition. The nonsense of denying what is obviously true gives way with the second shock at our nonsense in taking dots of ink to be a real apple. This nonsense becoming sensical happened when we looked at African Americans and listened to rap music. What started as "black noise" became a self-expression, denial of the status quo, a political statement and a weapon. Loud annoying sound that meant nothing but a negative reflection on African Americans as rowdy, cultureless, brutes, Trisha Rose explains and argues, are actually thoughtful and intertextual creative engagements of the self-singer/rapper and the cultural and political context in which he lives.

The opposing tension between the represented and the real that Magritte demonstrates is very descriptive of the situation of African Americans. What used to be black expressions like "You feel me?" or "Know what I mean?" have entered common casual usage, no longer restricted to the ghetto. From the scientific origin of mankind to the ideological "dark continent," cultural representation of African Americans are fraught with "this is not itself" irony, and gender-significant irony. While Africa was archeologically the cradle of civilization, African and African descendants were seen as less than human, primitive and worthy of scorn. While

Africa was seen as benighted, its peoples—like the Hottentot Venus—became specimens that fed and informed the largely male European Enlightenment. While ...

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This is not an African American. There is no African American. In stating the obvious, that a picture representation of a thing is not the thing, Magritte . The apple anger, the