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## The Racialization of the Cultural Commodity

### Introduction

Having fleshed out the macro factors that shape the production of discourses of race in the cultural industries, the purpose of the following two chapters is to look more closely at the production of representation at the micro level. This entails getting to grips with the particular nature of cultural production under capitalist conditions – what Bill Ryan (1992) calls the corporate form of production<sup>1</sup> – bearing in mind that representations of race are consumed in the form of cultural commodities. Cultural production in contemporary times is shaped by the market, but also by forms of policy that attempt to regulate the market, though under neoliberalism regulation involves facilitating the spread of market logics into previously noncommercial spheres and work cultures. Legacies of empire and colonial ideologies impact also upon the production of representations, and of course help explain – though not entirely – the resolute persistence of historical constructions of Otherness. Pulling these strands together, I argue, first, that the production of representations in contemporary times is a process of commodification, and takes on an increasingly industrial form; and, second, that commodification acts as a technology of racialized governmentalities. I have stressed throughout that this is an ambivalent process, but within the neoliberal conjuncture commodification is mostly constraining and reductive in terms of labour and ideology. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate, through a greater focus on cultural production, how the cultural commodity is racialized. It unpacks the ways in which cultural industries continue to make race in a remarkably consistent and

<sup>1</sup> Ryan's notion of 'corporate production' is indeed referring to commodity production within media corporations. However, he also makes clear how this corporate form of production has spread into noncorporate spheres of the cultural industries. As such, like Ryan, when I talk about 'corporate production', I am essentially referring to the industrial practices that characterize the core cultural industries, employed by both corporate and independent entities.

homogenous fashion, despite the attempts of cultural producers – not least those from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds – to subvert and destabilize the reproduction of racist and Orientalist tropes. To illustrate this, I draw from empirical research into cultural production, often based on participant observation and interviews with those involved in the making of what Karim Hammou (2016: 70) calls ‘Othered cultural goods’.<sup>2</sup> I will also include case studies from my own ethnographic research into British South Asian cultural production.

As explained in chapter 2, there is a relatively small number of studies of production in relation to race in the fields of production studies/media industry research and of critical race studies, but there is growing interest in these areas. One body of work I did not cover in that chapter were studies of cultural production in the context of race critical studies. The few examples that exist in this field mostly approach this issue in terms of authorship, shaped by cultural studies roots in literary studies, where an analysis of the author’s practice is seen to deliver a deeper understanding of the aesthetics and meaning of the text (Gray and Johnson, 2013; Chow-White et al., 2015). When thought through more explicitly in terms of production, the study of authorship involves an interest in ‘how meanings are produced and negotiated’ (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003: 1) and how a text is encoded – or ‘transcoded’, as Martin (2015) puts it – with meaning. Georgina Born is one of the most important writers on authorship, describing how ‘by eliciting producers’ exegeses about their creative work, and by elucidating the wider critical discourses that attach to the cultural object’ (through ethnographic work in particular), we get a deeper understanding of the aesthetic discourses that surround said cultural object and the practices that go into their making (2010: 191). According to contributors to a weighty volume on authorship (Gray and Johnson, 2013), contrary to Roland Barthes’s famous pronouncement, ‘the death of the author’ has been greatly exaggerated. But the essays within this collection do stress a need to broaden the way that we understand authorship. Particularly rel-

<sup>2</sup> Hammou (2016: 70) defines the ‘Othered cultural good’ as a commodity whose value is determined by its conceived distance from the ‘reference group’ or dominant culture. This is a useful definition as it distinguishes between the practices of those minority (and nonminority) cultural producers who foreground, articulate and/or explore a particular racial or ethnic experience in their work in an assertive way, and those minorities who do not do so (of which there are many). Like Hammou, my interest is in the ways that cultural goods become ‘Othered’ during production. One of the key questions is whether or not this Othering is in line with the producer’s intentions.

evant to this book is the idea that, as Busse (2013), for instance, shows, it is still important to recognize the role of the author – albeit in terms of the Foucauldian notion of ‘authorial function’ – since this helps us to understand how particular discourses work and gain power. Gray and Johnson (2013: 10) argue that authorship under capitalism is increasingly shaped by industry practices, where it exists in a ‘direct relation to the commodification of culture and the reification of social identities’. In other words, industry practice takes on an authorial authority in itself, which in turn shapes dominant discourses of race. What this literature on authorship underlines is the importance of production contexts to our understanding of the text, and of particular discourses of race. But what remains under-researched is how cultural industries construct racial discourse. As I have stressed throughout, addressing this lack is critical to the development and formulation of counter strategies that can transform the standardized and reductive representation of race into something more unsettling and productive.

I use this brief discussion of authorship<sup>3</sup> to open up the notion that industrial production has an authorial function, within which the actual author of the text is just one component.<sup>4</sup> The task of this chapter is to unpack the industrial processes, including the behaviours and actions of the individuals who operate within them, that determine the production of representations. As I argued in chapter 2, the cultural industries tradition is best equipped for exploring the different dimensions of cultural production; in this chapter I take cues from this approach, paying particular attention to the dynamics between structure and agency, and macro and micro forces, while being sensitive to complexity, contestation and contradictions. As stated, the aim of this chapter is to unpack in more detail the notion of the racialization of the cultural commodity that I outlined in chapter 3, which argues for a more discursive take on the making of race in the cultural industries in contrast to the functionalist and determinist tones of a certain argument regarding the ‘commodification of race’. The chapter asks: how do the cultural industries make race during the production process? How are cultural texts racialized at specific stages in the production process? To answer these questions, I will initially examine

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller discussion of authorship in relation to race and production, see Havens (2013: 11–14).

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, this point has been made by the ‘production of culture’ perspective (see Becker, 1984; Peterson and Anand, 2004), though my formulation of cultural production will stress to a much greater extent issues of conflict and struggle.

some of the general ways in which the impact of media production on representation has been understood, including the burden of representation, questions of risk and the concept of segregated visibility. I then focus on a particular cultural studies approach to race and production. This approach draws attention to the knowledge that creative managers work with – what Havens (2013) calls ‘industry lore’ – that goes into the production of representations. Cultural studies scholars who explore this issue stress how such ‘lore’ is not just economically derived, but is constituted by broader social, cultural and political values, and indeed common-sense societal-held ideas around race. This provides a very persuasive argument about the unconscious biases and behaviours that feed into cultural production that can help explain why historical constructions of Otherness persist. Yet, as I will demonstrate, there is a gap in this argument in that it neglects how racial ideologies become entrenched within industrial logics and processes themselves. The final part of the chapter will detail my notion of the ‘racializing/rationalizing logic of capital’ that draws attention to how the very forms of rationalization that constitute cultural production in its corporate form are, far from being race-neutral, instead deeply racial in their effects. This, I argue, offers a more satisfying and fuller explanation for the reproduction of Orientalist discourses of race, and the one-dimensional, reductive and devastating manner in which race continues to be made in the cultural industries.

### **Media production as racial governance**

The topic of race and cultural production is relatively underresearched, but that is not to say that scholars interested in media representation have not considered these issues. As stated, authorship is the frequent starting point for scholars of race and media intrigued by the question of production. One common line of discussion is in terms of the burden of representation. As Gilroy (1993b: 98) states, ‘in the ironic milieu of racial politics, where the most brutally disposed people have often also proved to be the most intensely creative, the idea that artists are representative public figures has become an extra burden for them to carry’. This ‘burden of representation’ once figured widely in discussions of racial cultural politics (Hall, 1996b; Mercer 1994; Gilroy, 1993b). As an example, Rupa Huq (1996) deals with this issue in relation to British South Asian popular culture, using the case study of the post-Bhangra music scene. In this example, she interviews British Asian musicians, who demonstrate how they at times resent the burden of having to speak on behalf of – or to – what is in fact

a diverse and heterogeneous community, especially when their music doesn't sound particularly 'Asian'.

As Huq states, 'the burden of representation is intrinsically bound up with media representation because of the mass media's role in legitimation of cultural production' (1996: 67). What Huq is referring to here is how the media, through the burden of representation, limit the possibilities and scope of representation for Asian cultural producers in particular. However, there is little discussion in her account of how the media actually enforces this burden. While the notion of the burden of representation is useful in helping to understand those moments when people of colour working in the media feel a tension between wanting to represent their community narratively but not wanting to be contained within their ethnic or racial identity,<sup>5</sup> the predominantly cultural studies accounts that explore this issue are limited in that they do not really have an explanation of how this burden manifests itself during production, and nor are they able to identify its source (that is, whether it is commercial or sociocultural). Put another way, absent in these accounts is the question of the structural determinants that constrain the creativity of minority cultural producers, where the burden of representation is just one expression of the multiple ways that their practice is impeded, as this chapter will demonstrate.

The obvious place to begin to unravel how the structure of the media constrains symbol production for minorities is by stressing how cultural production is inherently risky and creative managers in response often act conservatively. The risk-averse nature of the cultural industries invariably has a negative impact upon black and brown cultural producers in particular, who are seen as a dangerous<sup>6</sup> investment (Greene, 1994; Ross, 1995; Gandy, 1998; Fitts, 2008; Fuller, 2010; Molina-Guzmán, 2016). Cultural industries scholars (Garnham, 1990; Ryan, 1992; Hesmondhalgh, 2013) explain risk in terms of the intrinsically unpredictable nature of the cultural commodity form, whereas political economists, particularly in the Schiller McChesney tradition (Hesmondhalgh, 2013), tend to focus on how the conservative nature of cultural production is an outcome of commercialization and media concentration. As outlined in chapter 3, according to this perspective media concentration has led to an oligopoly where media conglomerates, wanting to protect their market share, finance only products

<sup>5</sup> This is a common theme in journalism studies and research into the experience of journalists from minority backgrounds; see Cottle (2000) and Johnston and Flamiano (2007).

<sup>6</sup> In this instance, I mean 'dangerous' in commercial terms.

seen to have commercial value. This disadvantages minority cultural production, which is perceived as lacking mass appeal. As an example of this political economy approach, Blevins and Martinez (2010) analyse the fall-out following the repeal of the Minority Tax Certificate Programme in the USA – a programme that, following civil rights campaigning, was a way to incentivize black media ownership. Its abolition in 1995 unsurprisingly led to a drop in the number of black-owned media. But in response, Blevins and Martinez argue that rather than campaign for the reinstatement of tax-incentive policies specifically designed to address racial inequalities in media ownership, the focus should instead be on regulation that breaks up monopolies. They argue that it is the intensification of media concentration that has had a bigger impact on the fall of minority ownership rather than the repeal of the tax incentive. This argument is typical of a particular political economy approach to media diversity that engages at the level of redistribution rather than recognition or representation.

As should be clear by now, I have serious misgivings about such an argument for underplaying the ideological nature of media production. Put another way, media concentration is not enough to fully explain why historical constructions of Otherness persist. A more productive way of understanding the particular governance of race by the cultural industries comes when we look at Stuart Hall's (1996b: 471) concept of 'segregated visibility', as discussed in chapter 4. Hall uses this concept to describe the limited nature of the gains made by black cultural production within the mass media – a form of inclusion at arm's length.<sup>7</sup> Hall is talking about this at the level of ideology (in terms of visibility and the politics of recognition), but we can apply it to the structural governance of race in the cultural industries.

Segregated visibility is apparent in Keith Negus's account of the way that rap music is governed within the music industry, amounting to what he describes as 'regimes of containment' (1999: 93). In his empirical study of corporate music production, based primarily upon interviews with executives and cultural intermediaries, Negus<sup>8</sup> describes how rap is some-

<sup>7</sup> While Hall (1996b) admits that the gains made by black cultural production amount only to a form of segregated visibility, he argues that we should understand them as gains nonetheless.

<sup>8</sup> Negus (1999) is interested in the nature of corporate production in the music industry rather than in race-making per se. However, his study of the production of both rap and salsa music provide rare in-depth case studies related to the topic of race and cultural production and is the reason why his research receives significant attention in this chapter.

what disparagingly regarded as a ‘wild cat’ operation by executives who are ‘uncertain about its future aesthetic changes and nervous when trying to predict “potential market growth”, and by business personnel who are uncomfortable with the politics of black representation foregrounded by the genre and anxious about confronting political pressure from the moral opponents of rap’ (1999: 87). Negus refers to two logics that define the production of rap – one that is economic (rap as perceived as not having the same longevity as other genres, nor having the same catalogue value), and one that is cultural (the feeling that rap music is controversial, and too culturally specific, lacking international appeal). The play between these logics will be unpacked further in the next section. But the point here is that particular economic and cultural understandings of rap have led to its formal separation from the core music industry, through (1) the creation of rap divisions within corporate record labels and (2) independent labels, where the major label acts as a financier and distributor. In terms of the first pathway and the formation of separate rap divisions within the major labels, Negus highlights how this industry move was in part a product of the civil rights movement, where campaigners were fighting for the recognition of blacks in the cultural industries. But it additionally follows a logic of bureaucratization (Ryan, 1992) following a 1971 report by the Harvard Business School, which, since black music exists in its own separate sphere, recommended the formation of black music divisions, with separate radio stations, promoters, touring circuits, record stores and so on, all relying on specialist knowledge. The benefit of this move was the creation of a space where black personnel could be employed in an industry otherwise structured by racial hierarchies, and where black artists could be supported by staff who understand the music, its production and its audiences. Yet these divisions are vulnerable to cuts and corporate restructuring. Black divisions are historically the biggest victims of such cutbacks. Negus cites an instance where Capitol Records closed its urban division in 1996 – sacking 18 members of staff, most of whom were black. As one insider speaking to Negus (1999: 89) said, ““this happens so much whenever there is a budget cut to be made; it’s always the black department that suffers””. Having to contend with boom–bust cycles once the cultural industries were fully embedded within structures of financialization (Winseck, 2011), black divisions became the most exposed. This is further compounded by under-investment in rap, which as a genre does not receive the same resources as, for instance, rock (Negus, 1999; Fitts, 2008). In terms of the second pathway that Negus identifies, in which major labels manage rap acts via an independent label, he finds that sharp boundaries are created

between the label and the act/genre/scene, amounting to another regime of containment. In these relationships, the major labels effectively only deal with those cultural entrepreneurs who bring in and manage acts. Thus the way that major labels place the responsibility of producing rap acts on independent labels, for both economic reasons (it is the indie that bears most of the financial risk) and cultural reasons (since rap acts are seen as unpredictable), is a form of spatial management that can in turn be read as a form of racial governance.

### **Culture makes industry and the racialization of production**

In contrast to political economy accounts that simplistically place all the blame for the poor representation of minorities on an inherently conservative media, Keith Negus's notion of 'regimes of containment' opens up a more productive route towards unravelling the governance of race in the cultural industries. An important component of his argument is the attention he draws to the ethnocentric understandings of black music held by creative managers, which become another obstacle for black cultural producers to surmount in addition to the general commercial challenges intrinsic to industrial cultural production. A particularly interesting part of Negus's analysis of rap is his discussion of the discourse of 'the street' that is the language through which the production of rap is organized and made sense of. I shall unpack this specific example in more detail shortly, but first I want to highlight the connections between Negus's conceptualization of 'the street' in the context of rap music to Timothy Havens's (2013) notion of 'industry lore', originally discussed in chapter 2, as they both describe a specific dimension to how creative workers manage production. With this chapter's interest in the micro practices that shape the production of representations, 'lore', as I will show, has particular value.

Havens formulates the concept of 'industry lore' specifically in relation to the making and global circulation of African American television. But we can extend its use and define 'industry lore' more broadly as a form of power/knowledge that shapes the production and distribution of cultural commodities in general. As discussed in chapter 2, industry lore is produced through a complex web of knowledges: commercial, regulatory and technological, which coalesce to form the 'lore' that informs decisions about what type of cultural commodities get produced and how. Lore then is the executive's understanding of how an audience is going to react to a particular cultural good, gleaned from a combination of market research,

experience and gut feeling. Lore is additionally shaped by trade magazines and industry reports (such as the Harvard Business School report cited above). While Havens dwells slightly less on this point, the individual actor's own cultural and social values inform industry lore, as I shall explore shortly. Consequently, when it comes to the making of Othered cultural goods, industry lore has a racialized dimension, which of course is Havens's precise point.

Havens is particularly interested in international syndication, since television shows are, increasingly, very rarely made with just domestic audiences in mind. As such, the industry lore that shapes black programming forms around the specific question of how particular shows will be received by international audiences. One dominant lore, particularly prevalent in US cultural industries, is that black actors/films/TV shows do not perform well internationally (Quinn, 2013b). Former singer turned law professor Dennis Greene (1994: 29) alludes to lore in relation to cinema when he refers to the 'self-serving and self-fulfilling myths based on the unspoken assumption that African-American films can never be vehicles of prestige, glamour, or celebrity'. He continues:

The relationship players have convinced themselves that black films can do only a limited domestic business under any circumstance and have virtually no foreign box office potential. They assume that the only dependable African-American audience is teenagers. They also assume that films that exploit black urban violence are all the black teenage audience and the limited crossover audience want to see about black life. Any significant increases in production and marketing costs are projected as a wasted expense that cannot greatly increase the audience for African-American films. (1994: 29)

This demonstrates not just how black representations of black experience are sidelined in the name of common business sense, but how particular types of representations of black experience are privileged – in this case, a spectacularized version of black urban life that appeals to the fantasies of black youth and the 'crossover audience'. Lore is strongly evoked when Greene describes how the 'relationship players have *convinced* themselves' (my emphasis) that this is the way that black films are received. The important thing to note here, I argue, is not necessarily the question of whether this conviction is grounded in reality or not, but rather how it becomes the dominant lore that ultimately determines how much money black cultural production receives for production and marketing.

Returning to Havens (2013), his interest is in US television, exploring the industry lore that formed following the huge and unexpected success

of black-cast sitcom *The Cosby Show*. Havens argues that executives downplayed the racial and class elements of the show and instead chose to explain the sitcom's success in terms of its universal family themes, which supposedly transcend race. In other words, television executives produced a lore that suggested that *The Cosby Show* was a success in spite of its blackness. Cultural industries rely on formula, but, as Havens demonstrates, rather than resulting in a proliferation of 'non-stereotypical' representations of black life, the industry lore that formed around *The Cosby Show* instead produced a spurt of more conservative (nonblack) family sitcoms. Yet, stressing the mutability of industry lore, Havens describes how the unexpected international success of other black-cast sitcoms *Fresh Prince of Bel Air* and *Moesha*, both of which contained a more unabashed representation of blackness, led to the questioning of this lore, whereby executives began to consider how the particularities of African Americanness, rather than alienating foreign audiences, can actually resonate with them in a number of ways (albeit both progressive and conservative). What I want to underline in Havens's analysis is how the concept of 'industry lore' provides an account of the way in which production determines representation, but in a way that challenges the determinist and functionalist tendencies of weaker forms of political economy analysis. Note as well that the lore can have enabling potentialities, as in the case of the success of *Fresh Prince of Bel Air* and *Moesha*, something that I shall explore in much more detail in the following chapter<sup>9</sup>.

Industry lore is a relatively new concept, but it is evoked in other studies of race and cultural production, particularly when explaining how executives anticipate and make sense of audience reaction to Othered cultural goods.<sup>10</sup> For instance, Wolock and Punathambeka (2014) explore the failure of two US-based desi productions – a brand new MTV network called MTV Desi, and NBC sitcom *Outsourced*. The authors argue that both were impeded by an understanding of – or, indeed, the lore around – the US desi audience, constituted by essentialist ideas of Indian American culture: 'a pleasant, reductive image of a highly educated and pliant "Indian" demographic' (2014: 674). That is, the US desi audience is primarily constructed in terms of its Indian rather than its North American identity. Wolock and Punathambeka demonstrate 'how the American

<sup>9</sup> Both programmes were the product of the industry strategy of 'narrowcasting' that, as stated, will be covered in more detail in chapter 6.

<sup>10</sup> As Negus (1996) states, the production of cultural commodities is not based on what will sell well, but on what is perceived to sell well – on what is seen to be commercial.

television industry's imagination and cultivation of minority audiences remains mired in a nation-centric understanding of race and ethnicity' (2014: 665), where lore based around national characteristics is seen by executives as being less controversial (in contrast to its being based upon supposedly racial traits). On the contrary, Wolock and Punathambeka find that the creation of the *desi* promotional subject and audience in these two cases was in fact reductive, essentializing and, indeed, racist. In another example, taken from his research into the corporate production of music, Keith Negus (1999) describes how US-made salsa music suffers from a lore based on a lack of knowledge and expertise. Negus argues that creative managers struggle with the production of salsa, and one reason for this is that they are working without accurate data, since so much of the sales of salsa music come through independent, local Latino stores not covered by Soundscan – the technology used to track sales – which is installed only in major record stores and the bigger independents.<sup>11</sup> The absence of data produces uncertainty in an already unpredictable market, so labels defer to the distribution divisions that are perceived to have a better understanding of the salsa audience. But these have no more market knowledge than the label managers themselves and salsa music therefore falls down their list of sales priorities in contrast to other genres like rock, which can be more confidently dealt with. The lack of specialist knowledge means that, quite often, Latin division personnel, when asking for more resources, encounter ignorant responses from the executive board – for example, that they should not expect any extra investment until their acts sing in English. The point is that the knowledge around salsa – and the lack thereof – means that it is treated as a niche market at best, and a cultural ghetto at worst. As the president of marketing at WEA Latina states, in Negus's account: “the Anglos don't want to know that Latin music will cross over. That's the bottom line. The bottom line is that they want to keep us in the ghetto, ghettoised” (1999: 145).

The types of lore referred to in these examples explain the ways that minority cultural producers get sidelined and silenced. In addition – and this is particularly relevant to my argument in this book – it is not hard to find case studies that draw attention to how a form of industry lore comes to shape representations of difference. For instance, Isabel Molina-Guzmán (2006) explains that the pressure to appeal to global (rather than local) Latina/o and non-Latina/o audiences led to the particular Orientalized

<sup>11</sup> Of course, the new forms of digital production and circulation would now give record companies much more data not just on sales, but also on listening habits.

aestheticization of the film *Frida* – the biopic about Frida Kahlo starring Salma Hayek. According to Molina-Guzmán (2006: 241), the ‘use of accented-English, tropical colours, indigenous cultural artefacts, folkloric Mexican music, and Hayek’s eroticised Latina body evoked dominant panethnic constructions of Latina/o identity’. Thus, the production of *Frida* was based on a lore that states that selling Latina/o culture to global audiences depends on delivering a strong sense of the ‘authentic’ – but, as Molina-Guzmán states, such an authenticity is constructed around what are in fact essentialist tropes of Latina/o identities. Returning to the case of music, Fitts (2008) discusses the formulaic nature of hip-hop videos – specifically, the production of the ‘booty-video’ genre – in spite of directors’ attempts at innovation and originality. Fitts explains this in terms of the labels’ unwillingness to take risks, but also in terms of a type of lore, where the booty-video ‘fits a packaged image or a stereotypical urban sensibility that consumers unconsciously desire and that producers attempt to mimic in order to sell albums’ (2008: 223). So the continuous reproduction of hypersexualized representations of black women in rap videos is formed through a lore that is fearful of rejection from what Fitts describes as the ‘Top 40 demographic’, who (are perceived to) have a clear expectation about what rap is and should be.

The key point I want to underline, and what is most troubling about these different takes on what Havens calls industry lore, is how the racist logic is disguised as common business sense. To illustrate this point we can return to Negus’s (1999) discussion of rap, and the unique challenges rap music faces, which, it should be stressed, remain in place despite the genre’s huge commercial success. Negus finds that although record labels say that the decisions behind the underinvestment in rap, or cutbacks in personnel – or indeed the closing of divisions – are purely economic, they are in fact ‘informed by a number of value judgements and cultural beliefs’ (1999: 88). These judgements and beliefs can be unpacked via a deconstruction of the discourse of ‘the street’ through which the production of rap is made sense of. ‘The street’ clearly has racial undertones but, surprisingly, Negus sidesteps this issue,<sup>12</sup> focusing instead on how ‘the street’ is merely the language used to describe rap music’s promotional practices – for instance, embodied in the industry lingo ‘taking it to the streets’ (i.e., marketing) and

<sup>12</sup> Hammou (2016), on the other hand, refers explicitly to the racial dimensions of ‘the street’ in the production of rap, describing how this discourse falsely equates originality and innovation with cultural singularity and supposed authenticity, which leads to ‘discriminatory management based on exoticist assumptions’.

'bringing it from the streets' (i.e., market research). The point here is that what appears as common business sense belies its racist effects in terms of the containment of rap. Negus (1999: 91) suggests that 'racial identity, racism and the history of racial antagonism inform relationships that are often blandly referred to as "business decisions" within the corporate suite'. He additionally describes how 'broader cultural political tensions are structured into what are often taken to be straightforward economic organizational practices' (my emphasis) (1999: 146). Thus, disguising racist logic as common business sense is not merely disingenuous or a discursive trick, but something that is structured into, or embedded within the very industry logics of cultural production. This is a crucial point, but one that Negus does not unpack further (perhaps because his interest is more on corporate music production rather than the making of race). However, it will strongly inform my main argument, which I unpack in the following section.

In a nutshell, while Negus is specifically interested in the dynamics of cultural production, what we can take from his case studies on rap and salsa is an understanding of how assumptions about race from the outside inform the production of race inside the cultural industries. In this sense, the lore or rationales that shape the production of Othered cultural goods can be interpreted as a form of unconscious bias that reproduces social values and understandings of race during the production process. 'Unconscious bias' is a term currently in vogue with industry and policy-makers, with many media workers undertaking 'unconscious bias' training as part of an organization's diversity initiatives, focusing on exposing how hidden assumptions about racial difference inform work practices and treatment of minorities in particular. In scholarship on race and cultural production, unconscious bias features less explicitly as an explanation for the marginalization of race. However, it is alluded to in many of the cases cited in this section. For instance, Molina-Guzmán (2016: 441) describes how 'mainstream media's tendency toward homogeneity, structural stability, and binary representations of Otherness is a result of implicit and explicit racial and gender biases by those in control of the production of popular images and narratives'.

Drawing on Hall's particular reading of Althusser and the mass media as ideological state apparatus, Molina-Guzmán is trying to make sense of the persistent whiteness and maleness of Hollywood. According to this argument, Hollywood acts as a cultural institution constituted by and constituting broader social inequalities in society. Consequently, the reproduction of historical constructions of Otherness are a result of colonial ideologies

that are still strong in society and also the biases of those who are responsible for the production of representations. This has strong resonances with Negus's argument, although he, like other sociologists of media industries, argues strongly against the more functionalist tendencies of a Althusserian approach to the media, contending that production is a much more contested and contradictory process than a notion of media as ideological state apparatus would allow. This is articulated strongly in Negus's (1997) call for a shift in emphasis from the notion that *industry produces culture* to the idea that *culture produces industry*. In this formulation, he is challenging political economy approaches that focus solely on the production of culture in terms of ownership, concentration and commercialism, arguing that such analysis tends to be functionalist, deterministic and instrumentalist. He is dismissive of the predictable conclusions of political economy that insist that corporate control amounts to social control over the artist and the consumer, and how this has a detrimental effect on the music. Fundamentally, he criticizes political economy for ignoring human mediations, 'which come in between the corporate structures and the practices and sounds of musicians, most notably the work of intermediaries of the music and media industries' (1999: 16). Utilizing the work of Bourdieu and focusing on these 'cultural intermediaries', Negus (1999) describes how artistic work is not just contained within an organization, but is influenced by broader, social, economic and political contexts where aesthetic judgements are made and cultural hierarchies established. As such, his aim is to see how class divisions, lifestyles and habitus intersect with corporate practices; how knowledge is collected about consumers, how this influences strategies and how this knowledge becomes the 'reality' – or, as Havens would put it, the industry lore – that guides the industry personnel. In relation to this chapter, the way in which aesthetic judgements are made and cultural hierarchies established has a clear racial component and will inform how race is understood and made within the cultural industries. What, in effect, the studies cited in this section argue is that industrial cultural production is inscribed by understandings of race that circulate in wider society, which, when they encounter industrial cultural production, take the form of (unconscious) racial bias wrapped up as common business sense that shapes the production of representations of race. Since common-sense understandings of race are formed through the lingering, though no less powerful, effects of empire, this then provides a persuasive explanation for why historical constructions of Otherness persist in the media.

However, I have reservations about this argument. One concern is that

if we follow the logic of this argument to its conclusion, it suggests that inserting more minorities into the cultural industries will inherently challenge, or provide an alternative to, the unconscious biases of the media's predominantly white workforce. Greene (1994) tries to explain the persistence of certain industry lore around black cinema and puts it down to two main reasons: first, industry executives grew up in a time where there was a limited range of black representation in the cinema, and, second, these executives fundamentally do not want their status challenged (which is what black cinema inherently does). Thus, one would surmise that the increased presence of people of colour in the production process should have an inherently destabilizing – and productive – effect. This returns us once more to the question of whether increasing diversity will lead to more diverse representations, something that I have questioned throughout this book. The fact remains that racial minorities can often be the very authors of representations of race that reproduce Orientalist, racist tropes. Greene (1994: 29), for instance, attacks those 'desperate and Machiavellian African-American film producers, directors, and writers who would transform *The Birth of a Nation* into a black musical if that would provide them with gainful studio employment'. This statement is typical of a particular account of racial betrayal (Kennedy, 2009) that slips into polemics. Karen Ross (1995: 82) produces a more nuanced account when she describes how 'the ambiguous relationship between black filmmakers and their sponsors raises issues about the politics of representation and the intensions of black filmmakers to either integrate themselves into the existing codes of film production or to forge a new cinematic language which embraces the diversity of the African American experience'. What Ross is alluding to here is how black filmmakers are coerced into accepting the status quo and common sense ideas about what types of blackness sells. As I discussed in chapter 2, journalism scholars, in my view, produce a more sensitive account of how people of colour, or rather their management, comes to reproduce whiteness. For instance, Peter Parisi (1998) demonstrates how black reporters internalize white mainstream understandings of race. Similarly, Drew (2011: 363) quotes a black journalist who discusses the totalizing effects of whiteness: "If you get writing for a white newspaper for long enough, you start to write and even think in a white voice".

I argue that there is a further point to be made. It is not just that the production of cultural commodities is inscribed with the social and cultural values and understandings of race that creative labourers bring with them to work each day. Instead, there is something about the processes and logics of industrial cultural production that steer the production

of representation in reductive ways. Most troublingly, this can happen despite the cultural producer's explicit intention to challenge Orientalist or racist representations of race. This is not a slip into economic determinism, as I still insist that contradictions do occur. But in the final section of this chapter I want to argue that the very processes of standardization and rationalization that characterize cultural production in the corporate age are ingrained with racial logics, or, rather, paraphrasing Negus, have racial logics structured into them that ensure that race is made in a consistent, reductive and homogenous fashion. This argument will become evident when we directly address how cultural commodities come to be racialized in the cultural industries.

### **The rationalizing/racializing logic of capital**

In chapter 4, I referred to an argument by Gwyneth Mellinger which suggested that more minority-owned media would provide a space that would allow those groups to mount their own counter discourses and formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs – an argument shared by media scholars and activists alike.<sup>13</sup> I challenged this assumption based on a cultural industries argument that independently owned media do not necessarily act as an alternative to corporate media, not least since they often work according to the same market logics and adopt the same processes and industrial standards (Ryan, 1992: 180; Negus, 1992: 18; 1996: 42–45; Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 235).

For instance, Chávez and Stroo, in their study of the production of the black-owned US television network ASPIRE, conclude that 'despite having greater control over the means of cultural production, African-American television owners remain beholden to industry practices that indelibly shape their social mission' (2015: 67). ASPIRE was a new television network founded by basketball superstar Earvin 'Magic' Johnson<sup>14</sup> that set out to provide an alternative, positive and, indeed, aspirational vision of

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, in the USA the question of media ownership was a civil rights issue in the 1960s. Campaigning led to the creation of the Minority Tax Certificate Program, a policy intended to support the sale of broadcast properties to minority owners on the basis that '[f]ull minority participation in the ownership and management of broadcast facilities results in a more diverse selection of programming' (FCC, quoted in Blevins and Martinez, 2010: 222).

<sup>14</sup> ASPIRE was one of several minority-owned channels that Comcast were required to carry in order to acquire a stake in NBC Universal (following pressure from a pro-diversity campaigners).

African American life; as Johnson states, 'I wanted a vehicle to show positive images and to have stories written, produced and directed by African Americans for our community' (quoted in Braxton and James, 2012). However, Chávez and Stroo argue that the emphasis on this upwardly mobile black community (at the expense of the working-class black community) did not reflect a social mission, but was borne out of economic necessity, as a middle-class construction of blackness was seen as holding greater appeal to advertisers. They state:

As a commercial television network whose primary goal is to remain profitable, ASPiRE must actively find ways to solidify their subscriber base, minimise production costs while seeking greater advertising revenue. Thus, it is limited in its capacity to act as a transformative agent within the field of television production. Industry practices such as brand positioning, audience segmentation, and programming strategies are designed to enable television networks to efficiently channel resources. The employment of these practices, however, locks owners into a logic that indelibly shapes the network's mission. (2015: 78–79)

In this example, Chávez and Stroo demonstrate how industry practices shape the supposed social and cultural goals of black cultural production. Put another way, they show how commercial pressures determine the particular representation of black experience shown on ASPiRE, which they claim is not as progressive or radical as the network thinks it is, and in fact produces something rather more conservative. What I want to highlight in this quote is the reference to industry practices (brand positioning, audience segmentation, programming strategies), as it is these rationalizing techniques, which are employed in the cultural industries to bridle the unpredictability of the market, that effectively shape ASPiRE's mission (both commercial and representational). In this final section, I develop this line further and argue that technologies of rationalization become the means through which cultural commodities get racialized – commodification as a technology of racialized governmentalities. This adds a different dimension to narratives on industry lore, or culture produces industry perspectives regarding how race is governed in the cultural industries. Before making this argument, I will unpack what rationalization in the cultural industries actually entails, focusing primarily on the work of Bill Ryan (1992) and his comprehensive account of the specific nature of corporate production.

In his historical political-economic account of the development of cultural production in capitalist systems – and following Nicholas Garnham (1990) – Ryan sees rationalization as the defining logic of the corporate

form of cultural production. Alongside Hesmondhalgh's (2013) notion of the 'complex professional era' (which is his own modification of Raymond Williams's (1981: 38–56) description of the 'corporate professional' age of production), cultural industries theorists are essentially describing the moment that cultural production takes on an industrial form, mostly along capitalist lines, marking a separate stage from when the making of culture took a more artisanal, craft form.<sup>15</sup> Ryan himself highlights a shift from an era when the relations of artistic production governed the process of creation (that is, the patronage stage – see Williams, 1981), to the corporate era, characterized by the industrialization and marketization of cultural production, where relations of capitalistic/economic production – including forms of rationalization – now govern creative practices. The employment of rationalizing techniques – encompassing bureaucratization, formatting, packaging and marketing – is the method through which creative managers deal with the inherent unpredictability of the cultural market, but also the unpredictability of cultural workers and symbol makers. Bureaucratization, for instance, entailing the management and standardization of workplace practices, was the corporate response to shop-floor conflict and growing unionization, and is a method to make worker behaviour more predictable. For Ryan, bureaucratization consequently has an ideological dimension (controlling workers through habitual day-to-day practices rather than direct hierarchical intervention) as well as a profitable one. Bureaucratization is based on both written forms of policy (rules, codes, best practices, memos, manuals, trade magazines) and discursive forms within the cultural organization that construct 'the everyday understandings and values of workers and management' (Ryan, 1992: 149). Negus (1999: 102) effectively describes a form of bureaucratization in his discussion of the role of portfolio management in rap music, 'as a way of allocating staff, artists and investment, [which] directly intersect with the deployment of a particular type of knowledge used to understand the world and to produce a "reality" that informs the perceptions and activities of staff'.

If bureaucratization represents the corporate response to the unpredictability of the worker, then formatting is a form of creative control that is the corporate response to the uncertainties of the cultural marketplace.

<sup>15</sup> Hesmondhalgh (2013) highlights how the complex professional era, which, as he states, began roughly in the 1950s, consists mostly of the corporate form of production, but also other types from earlier periods, including public service, and patronage and 'market professional' models.

Formatting – that is, creating a cultural text according to a production format or formula – is also the way in which creative managers deal with the fundamental tension within corporate cultural production between an urge to homogenize and standardize cultural production (in order to keep costs low), and the need to produce something original and different in order to keep audiences satisfied. Formatting involves market research – defining audiences, their demands, their size and propensities – and producing goods according to a format, which (1) meet these demands, and (2) can be reproduced. The most common form of formatting is through genre (e.g., romantic comedy films, or country music), but there are other forms of formatting, such as serials (e.g., James Bond or Tyler Perry films or Tom Clancy novels) or stars (Tom Hanks or Will Smith) (see Hesmondhalgh, 2013: 31–32). Formatting in essence is producing an original to type – or, as Ryan (1992: 163) puts it, ‘stylistic variations on known themes’ – where the creative imperative shifts from the artist to the creative manager. Ryan (1992: 168) continues: ‘The right to imagine, once the preserve of the artist, is structurally relocated and authorised as the (cultural) task of the general management (including the producer), and transformed into the bureaucratic power to determine what will be produced.’ But, as he stresses, even in the most commercial settings, artists can never be wholly dominated by formatting, not least since managers understand that, while their job is to encourage authors to understand how formats work, they cannot impose it wholly as this will impede their ability to come up with an original (albeit according to type). Therefore, in a nutshell: “By transforming the production of originality into a process governed by company-advocated rules, formatting serves to rationalise the otherwise arbitrary and idiosyncratic play of imaginative creativity and routinely steers artists towards repetition of the particular cultural forms in which companies have invested” (Ryan, 1992: 178). There is an inherent flaw within formatting though, as reputation and formula can be rejected by audiences. Therefore, large sums of money need to be spent on marketing in order to differentiate products that follow the same type. Thus, formatting depends on effective marketing – another way to discipline the marketplace – in order to differentiate products that are essentially the same. Indeed, for Ryan, marketing has ‘displaced prices as the primary form of competition’ (1992: 187).

Marketing in the cultural industries consists of two components: research and promotion. It entails turning cultural commodities/producers into brands, constructing their identity and promoting them as such. They are brands in the sense that extra values and qualities are associated with them – a guarantee of worth, which deems a brand to be superior or at

least equal to other brands (often based around fantasies of upward mobility and increased status). In this regard, packaging is a key component of marketing the cultural commodity – a way of making the product stand out from the field of indistinguishable and similar products. Ryan describes packaging as the ‘textualization of identity’. He states:

symbols are made to surround its physical form, playing upon and becoming, in effect, its external surfaces . . . designers select signs from various discourses and collect them and their conventional meanings around the object. As a text, the packaging becomes a polysemic but powerful voice apparently emanating from the commodity itself. (1992: 190–191)

For Ryan, then, marketing and packaging involve positioning the commodity in a market and segmented niche, and then branding it in a way that places upon it a higher status. Moreover, through its aestheticization the cultural commodity becomes a powerful carrier of particular discourses. This speaks to the intrinsic symbolic nature of the cultural commodity, which becomes particularly apposite to the discussion of racialization that is to follow.

The relatively detailed analysis of rationalization that I have provided underpins the next stage of my argument regarding how cultural commodities come to be racialized. I argue that the processes of bureaucratization, formatting, and marketing/packaging, as presented by Ryan, contain strong racializing tendencies or logics – such that even minority producers cannot at times escape them. This challenges theories of unconscious bias, or weaker takes of the culture produces industry perspective (i.e., where the racialized nature of cultural production is simply put down to the media as an extension of a wider, racist society), suggesting that the rationalized nature of cultural production itself steers the production of representation in very specific ways. It is through what I call the rationalizing/racializing logic of capital that this happens.

Murali Balaji (2009) offers an excellent entry into a discussion of how cultural industrial production is racializing, at the same time demonstrating the value of a cultural industries approach to race and cultural production. The case study that I want to focus on is his account of the formatting of former child actress Keke Palmer as she moved into a pop music career. Balaji describes the tension between Keke and her label Atlantic Records, which wanted to present her as a more raunchy, urban star, despite her middle-class, non-urban African American identity (for a closer examination of how the format of rap genders and sexualizes black women, see Fitts, 2008). Keke, wanting to present or, indeed, commodify herself as a

more wholesome, teen singer (in the early part of her career she worked with Disney), resisted Atlantic's attempts to format her as an urban singer. As a consequence, she fell out with Atlantic and eventually left the label. Working within Ryan's framework, Balaji initially explains the logics behind formatting: that it helps guide creative intermediaries during the production process and is a safe way for corporations to (re)produce commodities that minimize risk and increase the potential for high profit. But Balaji also argues that formatting is inextricably bound up in processes of racialization and sexualization. Indeed, his aim is identical to mine: to demonstrate how the rationalized nature of cultural production leads to the reproduction of historical constructions of the Other. As he states (2009: 229): 'Attempting to make Keke into the Other, in much the same way as other black female artists, involved little innovation and few resources, but it has the potential to reap significant rewards for the corporations.'

There are three things that I take from Balaji's argument. First, rather than being an example of the commodification of race, the production of race where minorities are involved is a process self-commodification. Balaji stresses how Keke is not resisting commodification itself, just the particular way that Atlantic Records was attempting to commodify her; she wanted to commodify herself in an alternative way. This simple point needs to be foregrounded in any analysis of the nature of symbol production in the complex professional era. Moreover, it underlines how a notion of the racialization of cultural commodity better captures the dynamics of race and cultural production, more so than the concept of commodification of race that, to repeat once again, too often slips into an economist and functionalist interpretation of the media. As a further point, Balaji's research, following the cultural industries tradition, highlights how this process should be understood as contested and a site of struggle, occurring through a fraught dynamic between structure and agency. Indeed, as shall be explored in much more detail in the following chapter, self-commodification is an ambivalent process and contains intrinsically enabling properties as well as reductive ones.

Second, formatting has a strong ideological dimension, and involves a complex interplay between economics and culture. As Balaji says in relation to Keke, 'representations of black women might be grounded in historical constructions of Otherness, but the way in which their identities are produced, distributed, and marketed is inherently linked with the economics of culture' (2009: 227). His account of how formats become racialized and gendered complicates weaker versions of the 'culture makes industry' perspective discussed earlier in this chapter; or rather (like Negus

to be fair<sup>16</sup>), he stresses how cultural production has both the ‘culture produces industry’ and ‘industry produces culture’ dynamics working simultaneously. The point here though is that formatting contains an ideological function where production formats set black artists as the Other, ‘restricting their ability to move too far outside of an ideologically constructed zone that caters to dominant culture’s perceptions of blackness’ (Balaji, 2009: 229). Formats effectively get tied to particular types of authentic experience – producing very powerful understandings of how black artists are supposed to sound and appear,<sup>17</sup> which is particularly constraining for women of colour.

The third factor that I take from Balaji’s account of Keke is a challenge to the simplistic pariahization of white men in suits. While the media remains ‘hideously white’, as former BBC Director-General Greg Dyke once famously put it (Hill, 2001), blaming poor representation on white executives alone is a rather lethargic explanation for the marginalization of race in the cultural industries. Balaji, on the other hand, produces a more nuanced take in his analysis. So, for instance, he recognizes the ‘Anglocentric’ nature of cultural production (see also Ross, 1995) that attempts to commodify Keke in a racialized and sexualized way. But he also wants to challenge the argument that Negus slips into, and others like him (see Basu, 2006), that the struggles of black production mostly result from the cultural values of predominantly white music executives who run the cultural industries. As Balaji (2009: 228) states: ‘Negus’s argument overlooks the fact that the creative intermediaries tasked with producing the artists often have intimate knowledge of how to connect the artist to a market of consumption.’ The point he is making here is that, whether white or black, cultural intermediaries are following the logic of the market, where formatting appears commonsensical (as Balaji argues, it

<sup>16</sup> My reference to weaker versions of the ‘culture versus industry’ perspective is in contrast to Negus’s own conceptualization, which is a more nuanced take on the interplay between culture and industry. However, Negus’s determination to critique crude Marxian accounts of the production of culture means that he can occasionally sway too much towards a culturalist perspective of production – overemphasizing the ‘messiness’ of human agency in cultural production, while downplaying the structural constraints placed on the individual actor’s labour.

<sup>17</sup> While she does not refer explicitly to formatting, we can find an example of the ideological dimensions to formatting in Ross’s (1995: 82) analysis of African American film production when she describes the challenges facing those black filmmakers who ‘don’t fit neatly into Hollywood’s perception of what African American film should look like, that is, they should portray African American communities as a permanent underclass without a sustaining culture or heritage’.

is the way for the corporation to maintain control without appearing to do so), disguising its ideological, racializing underpinnings. So while he is claiming that pinning the blame on white men in suits is far too easy, Balaji is also challenging the idea that people of colour working in the cultural industries have no agency or should know/act better. Put another way, struggles in cultural production occur over the question of how to format, rather than should we format in the first place.

This returns us to the rationalizing/racializing logic of capital. The purpose of this concept is to understand, first, how rationalization produces racializing effects and, second, how this is the particular logic of capital in the corporate era of production. This, I argue, is more satisfying than the 'culture produces industry' perspectives, as it highlights the specificities of cultural production that steer the production of representation in a way that reproduces historical constructions of Otherness. As I am going to illustrate further, when it comes to the cultural production of people of colour, the logic of rationalization – and by extension, capital – bound up in processes of bureaucratization, formatting, marketing and packaging, racializes their cultural goods in very specific ways. There are two aspects to this that need stressing. First, drawing from Negus, rationalizing processes appear during production as bland or neutral common business sense, obscuring their ideological function such that these processes go unchallenged. Second, we can see how people of colour working in the cultural industries are also steered into producing reductive tropes of race and gender despite their best intentions. As Balaji (2009: 228) puts it, 'these intermediaries are ultimately bound to profit-making imperatives of the corporations they work for'. Crucially, this also happens in the independent sector when minorities own the means of representation. Indeed, this is what my own research into British South Asian cultural production finds, and to end this section I want to refer briefly to three of my own case studies that illustrate how the racializing/rationalizing logic of capital works on racialized minorities, providing an empirical illustration of how commodification acts as a technology of racialized governmentalities.

My first example comes from a case study on British Asian independent record labels and the experience of self-formatting (Saha, 2011). The labels I worked with were involved in the 'new Asian dance music' (Sharma et al., 1996), which was a club scene that emerged in the mid-1990s that fused South Asian musical influences (classical Indian, Bollywood soundtracks, etc.) with Western dance genres like drum and bass and breakbeat. At first, the scene was lauded by scholars and cultural critics alike for its defiantly syncretic aesthetic, in both images and sound, which challenged normative

understandings of Asian youth (as uncool, conformist, passive, victims of racism), while constructing a more inclusive notion of Britishness – it was no longer the case of being Asian or British, but *British Asian* (see Sharma et al., 1996). But eventually this aesthetic became co-opted, or, indeed, made into a production format that bracketed all Asian music together, transforming the formerly disruptive potential of the hybrid musical form into exoticized, reified difference (Sharma, 1996). My study examined the challenges facing one particular independent label which was struggling to cross over into the mainstream. On the one hand, the label complained about being seen as just an ‘Asian label’, and articulated a desire to transcend the ‘Asian dance niche’. But in trying to find a brand identity and a unique selling point (USP) (specifically in order to attract the attentions of a major label that had shown an interest in developing a distribution deal), the label formatted itself according to its most visible characteristic: its *Asianness*. As a consequence, this self-branding employed a slightly exoticized, Orientalist depiction of Asian culture that the label was, in fact, critical of in other labels. My argument is that rather than internalizing white perceptions of Asianness, the label in fact internalized corporate promotional techniques that steered it in a direction that ultimately led to self-exoticization, compounding its status as different and Other in the process.

In an example based on theatre (Saha, 2013a), I demonstrate how arts funding governmentalities steer the work of a British South Asian theatre company called Rasa Productions into reproducing racialized tropes. Rasa, founded by a Malaysian woman of South Asian descent who was the main writer and performer behind all the company’s productions, was the beneficiary of ring-fenced money from Arts Council England as part of the Decibel scene, mentioned in chapter 4. This money was ring-fenced for ‘culturally diverse arts’ and, as the only culturally diverse theatre company in the particular region that the money was set aside for, Rasa attained highly coveted regularly funded status. The nature of the funding suited Rasa, which was unashamedly *culturally diverse*, with a strong postcolonial feminist narrative running throughout its work. Like the label discussed above, Rasa adopted the rationalizing, formatting techniques that, along with forms of bureaucratization and managerialism, had spread into arts production from the corporate sector (Fraser, 2004). These techniques worked to great effect when Rasa marketed its play *Curry Tales*, which, from the title, to the hyper-eroticized/exoticized (albeit kitsch) promotional image, to the gimmick of real curry being made live on stage, gave Rasa, to quote the producer, ““treble USPs”” (Saha, 2013a: 827) – which helped the play become a relative hit. By Rasa’s own admission, it pur-

posefully played with Orientalist images to draw in a white, mainstream audience, based on the rationale that these Orientalist assumptions would then be challenged inside the theatre by the subaltern, feminist themes of the play. But with its next production, called *Too Close To Home*, about a Muslim family and a son involved in a terrorist plot, Rasa avoided an 'ethnic' production format, and tried to do something universal in order to downplay the racial/religious element of the storyline that it feared could be sensationalized. In other words, it went in the complete opposite direction from that of *Curry Tales*. Yet *Too Close to Home* was poorly reviewed and commercially not as successful as *Curry Tales*, which led the producers to question the way that they were originally lauded for *Curry Tales*; those press reviews, while glowing, had tended to reproduce an Orientalist reading of the play (featuring lots of curry-flavoured puns), which Rasa, in hindsight, became ambivalent about. In other words, breaking from the ethnic format that had been such a success for Rasa had serious repercussions on how the company felt that its future work was received and how it was allowed to represent itself.

In my third and final case study, I draw from an example in broadcasting, and a culture of 'noise'-making that leads a British Muslim commissioner into producing what many strongly argue are sensationalist representations of Islam (Saha, 2012). This case study involves the head of religion and multicultural programming at Channel 4 – a commercial channel with a public service remit that, at the time of the research, had adopted a mainstreaming diversity policy. The commissioner in question was a British-born Pakistani with working-class roots, who, in our interview, spoke of the challenge of developing religious programming for prime time viewing. Knowing that religious programmes do not generally attract high ratings, the commissioner described to me his strategy of making 'noise' instead – that is, by generating press coverage and winning awards, and ensuring that a programme gets talked about. He explained this strategy of 'noise-making' as something he learnt on the job, a process of getting to know the culture and feel and "flavour" (Saha, 2012: 433) of the channel – very much echoing Ryan's description of the discursive forms of bureaucratization. But Channel 4 has received a lot of criticism for its sensationalist representation of Islam (Campion, 2005; Malik, 2008; 2014) and looking at the titles of the shows he commissioned – *Inside the Mind of a Suicide Bomber*, *The Cult of the Suicide Bomber*, *Women Only Jihad*, *The Fundamentalist*, *The Road to Guantanamo*, *Putting the 'Fun' in Fundamental* – one can see why. These titles appear sensationalist, though I stress that the shows themselves for the most part delivered a sensitive and nuanced take

on controversial topics. Yet the way that they were presented nonetheless played on very powerful discourses. While the programmes themselves might have tried to challenge a particular take on Muslim experience, their titles and the way that they were packaged contribute to a discursive formation (including other popular cultural texts, news stories, political speeches, anti-terror measures and so on) that reinforce the idea of Islam as absolutely and irreconcilably different from Western culture.

The aim of presenting these brief case studies is to show how the rationalizing/racializing logic of capital takes hold during cultural production – through (self-)formatting, marketing and packaging. This I argue is the way that race is governed in the cultural industries. To reiterate: what the concept of the rationalizing/racializing logic of capital refers to is how the very forms of rationalization that characterize industrial cultural production in the complex professional era are the means through which historical constructions of Otherness are reproduced in an unchecked form (during production at least). The assemblage of processes, apparatus, rationales and logics that are embodied in each stage of production is what I refer to when I describe commodification as a technology of racialized governmentalities. And it is through these means that commodities come to be racialized in a reductive way that reflects the interests of the dominant culture. To answer the question that has run throughout this book about whether increasing the number of minorities working in the cultural industries will ‘improve’ the quality and diversity of representation, my response is they will not do so as long as minority cultural producers have to contend with the rationalizing/racializing logic of capital.

## Conclusion

Although I assert that increasing the number of minorities in the cultural industries by itself will not lead to a more diverse and varied range of representations of race, let alone to the destruction of historical constructions of Otherness, to conclude this chapter I want to raise a question that is less certain: based on the case studies covered, is it ideology or economics that primarily defines the making of race in the cultural industries? Of course, the easy and no less correct answer is to say both. Yet I argue that the industry standard of making commodities according to (racial)type can in fact be commercially self-defeating. For instance, in Balaji’s study of the commodification of musical act Keke, he questions the executives’ choice to format her as a black, urban, sexualized female given that she could have sold a lot of records if they had instead targeted the much larger (and

whiter) pre-teen and teen market. Balaji concludes that the label's decision to commodify Keke according to a black urban format was ideological, describing this tension between the economic and the cultural as the contradiction of cultural production. Negus similarly suggests that in the cultural production of Othered cultural goods such as rap or salsa music cultural values trump economic fact; as he states (1999: 146; my emphasis):

Uncritically received cultural assumptions and common-sense ideas about a world of discrete markets and separate social worlds are inscribed into business practices. These are deployed systematically, ignoring all evidence of the contrary (*which would, I suspect, produce a type of cognitive dissonance that would undermine the logic of the system*), and this contributes to the separation of knowledge and experience.

Negus's comment – that challenging common-sense ideas about the 'world of discrete markets', or, put another way, whole groups of people, would lead to 'cognitive dissonance that would undermine the logic of the system' – is said off the cuff in parenthesis, and, frustratingly, he does not unpack this point any further. But what I take from the quote is how it highlights the very entrenched nature of cultural – or indeed racist – values in production that, if exposed and called out, would in effect undermine the entire logic of the system. The idea that cultural production is characterized by a 'separation of knowledge and experience' where all 'evidence of the contrary' is ignored again highlights the ideological dimension to cultural production in relation to race and ethnicity.

It is in this way that I argue that commodification is a technology of racialized governmentalities. The process of commodification in the context of the cultural industries is precisely the way that race is governed. As Balaji (2009: 235) put it, 'the production of culture is not purely an economic process, but one driven by ideological considerations as well'. The rationalized processes that constitute cultural commodification – bureaucratization of the workplace, formatting strategies, packaging and marketing – are the means through which commodities are racialized. In the production of Othered cultural goods, each of these processes is shaped by common-sense understandings of race, but conducted in the name of following standard business practice. There are three points that I have discussed that I want to reiterate. First, while rationalizing processes are not inherently racist, due to the institutional whiteness of the cultural industries, Eurocentric, ethnocentric understandings of race are structured into them (for instance, in the way Balaji argues that formats are racialized and gendered). Second, the logic of rationalization (embedded within

these racializing logics) is so strong that it is internalized and adopted by workers throughout the cultural industries, which helps explain why minorities themselves are steered into reproducing historical constructions of Otherness. Sometimes this process occurs following the direct interventions of white gatekeepers, but this can also happen when there are no white gatekeepers in sight – which is why the concept of governmentality has value. Third, the ideological dimensions to the representation of race in the cultural industries are hidden within supposedly neutral commercial reasoning. What appear as purely commercially rationalized and race-neutral processes are in fact deeply racial in their effects. To reiterate, I am not arguing that rationalization is inherently racializing, rather that it is the vehicle through which racialization occurs undetected. Thus, once again, commodification in the context of the cultural industries acts as a form of governance that reproduces racist discourses. The fact that it is hidden by common-sense business speak is how this reductive process persists.

Yet, as I have stressed throughout, commodification nonetheless has intrinsically enabling capacities (as well as a constraining one), and the cultural worker does have agency in the face of the rationalizing/racializing logic of capital. As such, there are still spaces within the cultural industries for resistance and contestation and the enactment of a politics of production that can open up representational practices. This is the topic of the final chapter.