Abstract: Producer and Product: Kanye West’s *Yeezus*

Kanye West is both loved for his award-winning music and derided for his public persona, so it is fitting that the world is speculating whether he'll duplicate the sound of his last album, *Yeezus*, or go in a new direction. Jon Dolan for *Rolling Stone* characterized the album as “a brilliant, obsessive-compulsive career auto-correct,” suggesting that the album was intended to erase the personal blunders that overshadow West’s work. But in order to understand the significance of West's future work, it is crucial to delve deeper into his music's lyrics and sounds, and understand what drives it. One of the mechanisms underneath West's music is the ontological relationship between being a producer and making a product, while also becoming that product. The conflation between the two roles consumes *Yeezus*, but also has larger implications — it has the ability to affect the way we experience the artist and the album, as well as postmodern art.

This paper and presentation explains the producer/product relationship in relation to the rapper and his latest album. Using Terry Eagleton’s definition of production and Michel Foucault’s discourse theory to analyze *Yeezus*, I argue that the conflation between West’s persona and his lyrical content has serious consequences for how we comprehend his music and perceive his personality. Moreover, the producer/product relationship affects how West forms and presents his own identity. As album reviews and West’s interviews indicate, the media’s perception of West is different from how he views himself and the purpose of this work. By looking at an artist like West and the art he makes, we can begin to ask better questions about the function of postmodern art and understand how cultural pressure influences the perception of that art.