

## Image 7: Transcription of Textual Analysis Page Image

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### Textual Analysis Assignment: "Many Moons" and Intersectionality

#### Introduction

Janelle Monae does more than create catchy, soulful music. She tells stories. With the release of her debut EP, *Metropolis, Suite I: The Chase*, it was clear Monae had a message to send. This was reinforced with the release of her full-length album, *The ArchAndroid*, a mysterious, dynamic, and stirring concept album telling the story of the city of Metropolis, Cindi Mayweather, and her quest to free the citizens from the Great divide, "a secret society using time travel to suppress freedom and love throughout the ages" (Monae). Many consider Monae's as a part of the Afro-futurism aesthetic which combines [hyperlink] science fiction, fantasy, and Afrocentricity (among other things) to critique the present-day and historical events and dilemmas of people of color. It is clear from both albums though that Monae yearns for freedom of the [hyperlink] oppressed, not just people of color, but all those who, because of society's systematic limitations, cannot be truly free as an individual or as a people. Specifically, in Janelle Monae's song "Many Moons," the use of imagery and symbolism combined with concrete references in her lyrics and music video display the theory of intersectionality, protesting society's oppression of people of color and those who defy [hyperlink] socially constructed gender norms.

Discussions of intersectionality are found primarily in the fields of [hyperlink] feminist study and critical race theory, including but not limited to subjects of [hyperlink] sex, gender, race socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religious belief, [hyperlink] sexual orientation, age, and ability. It can be defined as "the multiple complex ways" in which "various forms of oppression interact with one another" (Gary 826). This interplay of oppressions, particularly of people of color and non-typical gendered bodies, are critiqued in "Many Moons."

#### Race

Monae uses textual poetic images as well as visual images to represent her conception of the oppression of people of color in today's society. In the music video, this song is set in the fictional city of Metropolis in which, what can be considered Monae's alter ego, Cindi Mayweather performs wildly on a stage as droid women are actioned off in front of a crowd of screaming girls and various official men. Most of the girls in the audience are white. In the first line of the song, Monae sings, "We're dancing free but we're stuck here underground," whilst moving her feet chaotically across the stage. By using the word "we" and engaging in the physical movement of dancing, Monae implies that she identifies herself with the oppressed people she is singing of. She is one of them. The fact that she is a woman of color further implies that she is singing of people of color as a whole. Continually, the image of being "underground" in the context of race

brings to mind the Underground Railroad, a covert system of travel used by runaway slaves in the late 1800's to escape the horrors of slavery in the south. This connects the present-day . . . [image cuts off].